

UP Press Conference Highlights Ongoing Insurance Claim Problems

“TWICE BURNED”

WHAT: 2008 Freeway Complex Fire Survivors from Yorba Linda and Anaheim Hills hold press conference as they face one-year fire anniversary to discuss insurance obstacles to rebuilding and call for action

WHEN: Friday, November 13, 2009 at 10:00 am

WHERE: 475 S. Laureltree Drive, Anaheim Hills

2008 Freeway Complex Fire Survivor Patrick Craft's Lot

Directions from I-91: Exit Weir Canyon/Yorba Linda Blvd. Head south approx. 1 mile.

Make a left on E. Canyon Vista/Serrano. Make a left on S. Laureltree Drive.

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by the insurance industry, State Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner and other elected officials. 2008 Freeway Complex Fire Survivors are angered that they cannot get the insurance money needed to rebuild the homes they lost in last year's devastating wildfire. Citing pervasive underinsurance and other insurance problems such as low-balling and poor claims handling, they are gathering to discuss broken insurance promises and to call for immediate action by the insurance industry, State Insurance Commissioner Steve Poizner and other elected officials. '08 Freeway Complex Fire Survivor and Anaheim Hills resident Patrick Craft says, "I bought my homeowners policy from a top-rated company and paid a sizeable premium every year. I purchased every policy upgrade my agent offered, to make sure I was properly covered. I received written confirmation from my insurance company that my home was insured to 100% of its replacement cost. I made no major changes or improvements to the property, yet I am seriously underinsured. Worse yet, my insurance company claims that the underinsurance is my fault. I cannot understand how they can claim that I am responsible for being underinsured when they are the ones that set the policy limits and confirmed in writing that I was 100% covered."

'08 Freeway Complex Fire Survivor and Yorba Linda resident Karla Rinskopf agrees, "I did everything I could to be properly insured. I bought a policy from a top-rated insurance company and provided them with accurate information about my home. In 2007, my brother-in-law lost his home in San Diego's devastating Witch Creek Fire. He was insured by the same company as me and was significantly underinsured. So, my husband contacted our agent to make sure we were properly covered. Our insurance agent assured him that we had enough insurance coverage on the house. Yet, when our home was destroyed in last year's Freeway Complex Fire, we discovered that we were drastically underinsured. Our insurance company is now refusing to pay the cost to rebuild our destroyed home, saying that we were responsible for setting our policy limits. I don't know what else we could have done to be properly insured. Insurance companies need to fulfill their promises to homeowners and our elected officials, including Insurance Commissioner Poizner need to require them to do so."

2003 Cedar Fire Survivor and United Policyholders Disaster Recovery Aid, Outreach and Education Coordinator Karen Reimus says, "It's bad enough that these people lost their homes and belongings last year. But, now they're being burned again...this time by their insurance companies. It's outrageous that our elected officials have not fixed the underinsurance problem. Last year, Insurance Commissioner Poizner promised to audit San Diego 2007 Wildfire claims, to look for patterns of bad behavior by insurance companies, and presumably to try and fix this problem. What has he and our other elected officials done? How many fires is it going to take before these problems are solved? All you have to do is take a look at just how few homes are being rebuilt and you know how serious this is."

About United Policyholders: United Policyholders is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to integrity in the insurance system and to educating the public on insurance issues and consumer rights. UP has been providing ongoing outreach and support services to property owners who lost homes in the November 15, 2008 Freeway Complex Fire. www.unitedpolicyholders.org.