



Navigating Your Contents Claim

February 26, 2025

2024 and 2025 California Wildfires

Roadmap to Recovery® Webinar

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Download and follow the slide deck here: Uphehelp.org/Feb26

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EVENTS

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Navigating Your Contents Claim

Wednesday, February 26, 2025
5:00 pm PT

Zoom - Registration Required

2024 and 2025 California Wildfire survivors

[REGISTER HERE](#)

In this webinar you will learn how to tally up personal property/contents destroyed so you can collect the full amount owed on those items, and strategies for completing your home inventory and understanding depreciation.

RESOURCES

- [Depreciation Basics](#)
- [10 tips for settling a contents claim](#)
- [Home Inventory and Contents Claim Tips](#)
- [Navigating Your Contents Claim Slide Deck](#)

United Policyholders (UP) and the Roadmap to Recovery[®] Program

- UP is a national 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization based in California that is a trusted information resource and respected voice for insurance consumers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia
- A 34-year track record and expertise assisting wildfire-impacted households and communities through information, tools, resources, events and advocacy work
- The Roadmap to Recovery[®] program = *Post disaster guidance and services focused on financial, insurance, real estate and construction decision-making and emotional recovery*
- UP's work is funded by donations and grants, volunteers/*pro bono*. You can't hire us; our services are free but limited
- Our partners include other non-profits, state and federal agencies and professional and trade associations

Team UP

- Professional staff
- Government and nonprofit partners
- Volunteers
 - Previous catastrophic loss survivors
 - Consumer-oriented professionals
 - Attorneys that specialize in insurance
 - Claim Adjusters (Public and Independent)
 - Tax and financial planning experts
 - Construction and real estate professionals

Our Three Programs

Roadmap to Recovery[®]

- *Guidance on insurance, restoring assets and getting back home after a catastrophic loss*

Roadmap to Preparedness

- *Helping households and communities reduce risk and be resilient to disasters and adversity*

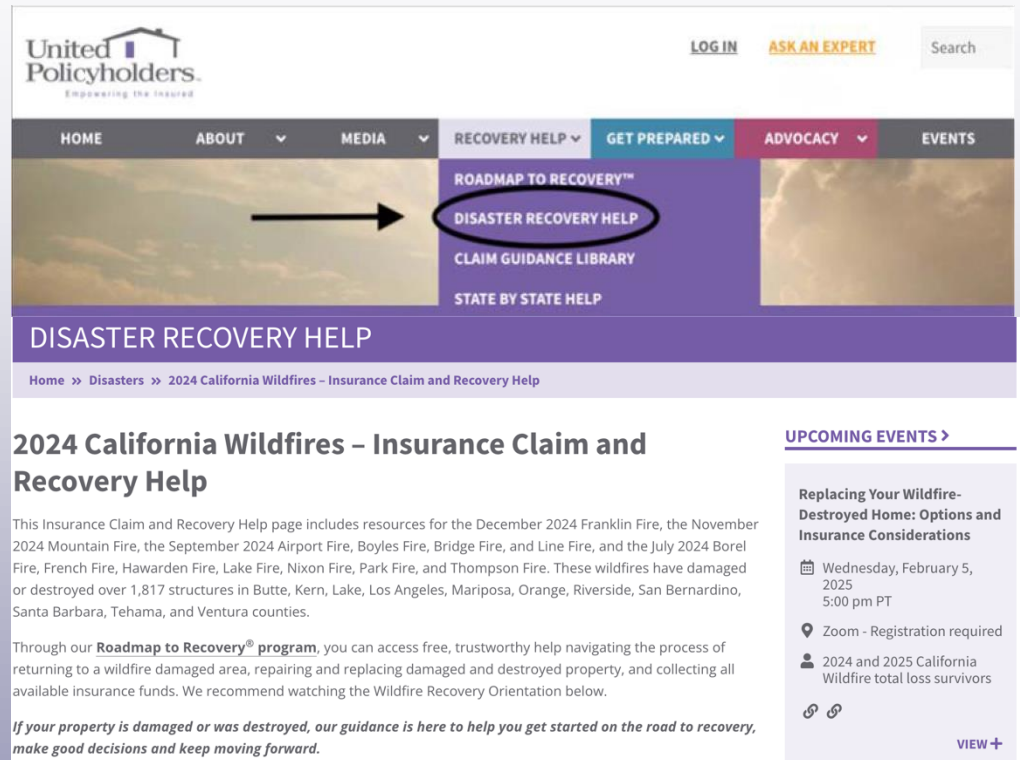
Advocacy and Action

- *Fighting for insurance consumer rights and protections*

Disaster Insurance Help Libraries

uphelp.org/recovery/disaster-recovery-help

- State Specific Resources with Step-by-Step Guidance
- One Click Links to Sign UP for Events And Email Notifications
- Links to Pro-consumer Professional Help
www.uphelp.org/findhelp
- Sample Letters & Claim Forms
www.uphelp.org/samples
- Survivors Speak Tips
www.uphelp.org/survivorsspeak
- Upcoming Workshops and Resources
www.uphelp.org/events

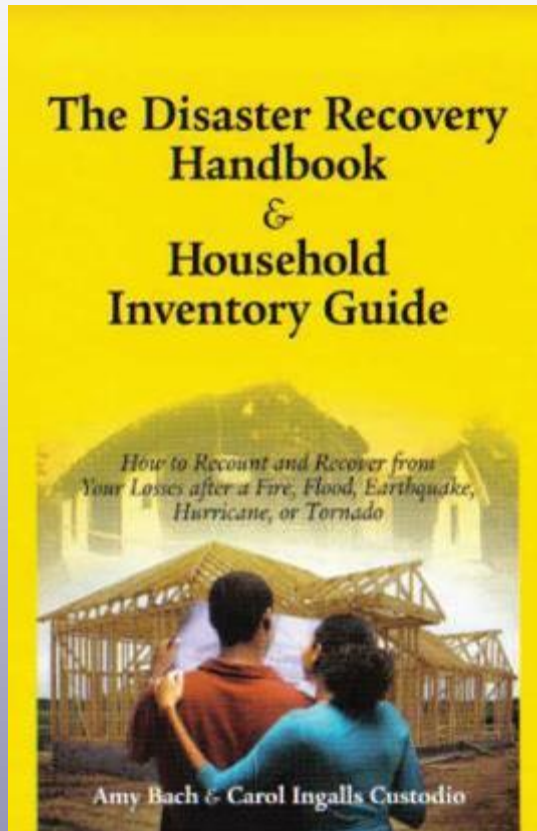


The screenshot shows the United Policyholders website. The header includes the logo, navigation links (HOME, ABOUT, MEDIA, RECOVERY HELP, GET PREPARED, ADVOCACY, EVENTS), and a search bar. The main navigation bar has a dropdown menu for RECOVERY HELP, which is expanded to show options: ROADMAP TO RECOVERY™, DISASTER RECOVERY HELP (circled in red), CLAIM GUIDANCE LIBRARY, and STATE BY STATE HELP. Below this is a purple banner for DISASTER RECOVERY HELP. The main content area features a heading for '2024 California Wildfires – Insurance Claim and Recovery Help' and a detailed text block about the insurance claim and recovery help page. On the right side, there is a section for 'UPCOMING EVENTS' with a listing for 'Replacing Your Wildfire-Destroyed Home: Options and Insurance Considerations' on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at 5:00 pm PT. The page also includes a 'VIEW +' button.

The Fine Print

- This workshop is intended to be general guidance only, not legal advice
- We do not endorse or warrant any of the sponsors listed at www.uphelp.org or speakers at our workshops
- Our speakers are volunteering their time as educators
- If you have a specific legal question, we recommend you consult an experienced policyholder attorney

R2R Guidance and Tools



“The Little Yellow Book”

Email info@uphelp.org with a current mailing address and we will mail one to you

Recovery is a marathon, not a sprint



Guiding principles

- Focus on documenting the full extent and value of your losses
- Give your adjuster/insurer a chance to do the right thing, but do not be a pushover
- Leverage and negotiation are key
- Two words describe the best demeanor you can adopt during this process:
POLITE ASSERTIVENESS
- Get help when you need it

Knowledge equals power AND...



The more you understand about your insurance benefits, your rights, and the value of your losses, the more benefits you will recover to rebuild your home and life **and** the smoother your claim will go

Think of your insurance claim as a business transaction

- There is a natural tension between the policyholder and the insurance company
 - The insurance company wants to MINIMIZE \$ paid out on the claim
 - The policyholder wants to MAXIMIZE \$ paid out on the claim
- Adjusters vary in personality and experience

Speak “UP”

- Present your requests clearly and in writing
- Explain what you need, when you need it, and why you are entitled to it
- Keep a Claim Journal
 - Take notes on who you talked to, the number you called, date and time, what was said. Keep all of your paperwork organized and together
- Use your “working copy” of the policy
 - “Can you show me where it says that in my policy?”

Keep up that paper trail

It should...

- Confirm you are cooperating
- Tell the insurer what you need/want and why
- Ask what they need from you to resolve your claim
- Point out specific things they have/haven't done that are holding up resolution of your claim
- Politely remind them about your personal situation
- Give them a specific time frame to reply/comply



Today's Presenters

Valerie Brown

Program Specialist, United Policyholders

Corey M. Locke,

Founder, Corey Locke Public Adjuster

Goal of today's presentation: To help you collect the *full* amount your insurer owes you for every personal property item that was damaged or destroyed (up to your policy limits) in the *least time-consuming* and *painless* manner possible

Basic strategy:

- Document/list and value every item
- Produce available receipts, photographs and other evidence
- If needed, get extensions of time by making a written request

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CONTENTS COVERAGE

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Know Your Policy, Your Limits, and Your Insurance Company

- Read your complete policy, looking for limits on specific contents items, riders or schedules with increased coverage (typically artwork, jewelry, computers, cameras, etc.)
- Be organized – save all receipts, scan, keep track of all insurance contents claim communications
- Network with other survivors with the same insurance company and see if they have had more success in negotiating less stringent requirements

Personal Property/Contents Coverage

- Covers personal property owned by the insured while it is anywhere in the world
- If you imagine taking the roof off and shaking your house, what falls out is personal property (but also includes property outside)
- Check your policy for any “off premises” coverage and/or limits
- May cover guest’s property if destroyed at your home
- Many items subject to specific coverage limits

Contents Coverage – Example

COVERAGE C - Personal Property

We cover personal property owned or used by an "insured" while it is anywhere in the world. At your request, we will cover personal property owned by:

1. Others while the property is on the part of the "residence premises" occupied by an "insured";
2. A guest or a "residence employee," while the property is in any residence occupied by an "insured."

Our limit of liability for personal property usually located at an "insured's" residence, other than the "residence premises," is 10% of the limit of liability for Coverage C, or \$1000, whichever is greater. Personal property in a newly acquired principal residence is not subject to this limitation for the 30 days from the time you begin to move the property there.

Know Your Policy Limits

Personal Property - Coverage C

SAMPLE HOMEOWNER POLICY DECLARATION PAGE ¹

Policy Number:

Policy Period: 03/10/2007 to 03/10/2008 12:01 AM Local Time

NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF INSURED

AGENT NAME AND ADDRESS

A	B	C	D	E	F
DWELLING	SEPARATE STRUCTURES	PERSONAL PROPERTY	LOSS OF USE	PERSONAL LIABILITY	MEDICAL PAYMENTS TO OTHERS
\$500,000	\$50,000	\$350,000	12 Months	\$XXX,XXX	\$X,XXX

Loss Deductible for Section I: \$1,000

Earthquake Deductible: See Message Below

COVERAGE FORMS

FORM NUMBERS

PREMIUMS

Special Form – Homeowners Policy	WG HO 300 (7/91)	\$x,xxx
Replacement Cost Composite	WG HO 301(7/91)	Incl.
Increased Limit for Coverage E & F	Section II	Incl.
Mold, Fungus, Wet Rot, Dry Rot, or Bacteria	WG HO 303 (05/02)	Incl.
Premises Alarm or Fire Prot. System	HO-216 (4/84)	Incl.
Mortgage Payment Supplement	MP 606 (3/84)	Incl.
Lender’s Loss Payment Endorsement	4388FU NS (5/42)	

Important – Earthquake Coverage is Not Included – Contact Your Agent For Further Information.

The Policy Does Not Include **Building Code Upgrade** Coverage.

Extended Replacement Cost Coverage Does Not Exceed 200% of Limit “A” – Dwelling.²

Coverage Includes **Personal Property Replacement Cost**.³

501 Old River Rd.
Bakersfield, CA 93311-9501

Named Insured

AT2 001007 0046 H-02-3748-FB14 H F

Insured, Joe
111 E DOVER CT
ANYTOWN CA 95111-1726

Policy Number	57-L8-111-1111	
Policy Period	Effective Date	Expiration Date
12 Months	MAY 12 2017	MAY 12 2018
The policy period begins and ends at 12:01 am standard time at the residence premises.		

81.3
8100-0000

HOMEOWNERS POLICY

Automatic Renewal - If the pol
premiums, rules and forms in ef
Mortgages/Lienholder written not



Requested By: Policyholder

This policy does not provide cover
This policy includes Building Cod

Coverages & Property

- SECTION I
- A Dwelling
 - Dwelling Extension up to
 - B Personal Property
 - C Loss of Use
- SECTION II
- L Personal Liability (Each Occurrence)
 - Damage to Property of Others
 - M Medical Payments to Others (Each Person)

Coverages & Property		Limits of Liability
SECTION I		
A Dwelling		\$ 469,500
Dwelling Extension up to		\$ 46,950
B Personal Property		\$ 352,125
C Loss of Use		Actual Loss Sustained
SECTION II		
L Personal Liability (Each Occurrence)		\$ 100,000
Damage to Property of Others		\$ 500
M Medical Payments to Others (Each Person)		\$ 1,000

Loss Settlement Provision (See Policy)

- A1 Replacement Cost - Similar Construction
- B1 Limited Replacement Cost - Coverage B

Forms, Options, & Endorsements

- Homeowners Policy EP-7955 .CA
- Homeowners Policy Endorsement EE-3422
- Amendatory Endorsement FE-3247
- Jewelry and Furs \$1,500 Each Article/\$2,500 Aggregate Option JF
- Firearms \$2,500 Each Article/\$5,000 Aggregate Option FA

Policy Premium	\$ 636.00
Discounts Applied:	
Home Alert	
Home/Auto	
Claim Record	

Know Your “C” Limits

- Start on your “Declarations” page and find the dollar limits for your Coverage “C” Contents or Personal Property
- Seek out any and all endorsements/extras that increase the amount of your contents
- Do the math - your contents limits is usually a percentage of your dwelling limits (75%)
- Check for “scheduled” items that have added insured value (artwork, jewelry, valuables)
- Check your limits for “sub-limits” on personal property items, (cash, stamps, firearms, jewelry, watches)
- Double check the sub-limits based upon type of “Peril”

Personal Property – Special Sub Limits

Special Limits and Additional Coverages Coverage Level: Travelers Protect®

*The limit shown for each of the
Special Limits of Liability and Additional Coverages
is the total limit for each loss in that category.*

Personal Property – Special Limits of Liability	Limit
a. Money, bank notes, coins, stored value cards	\$250
b. Securities, accounts, passports, tickets, stamps	\$1,500
c. Comic books and trading cards	\$1,000
d. Collectibles, figurines, glassware, marble, porcelains, statuary	\$1,000
e. Theft of jewelry, watches, precious stone	\$1,500
f. Theft of furs	\$1,500
g. Theft of silverware, goldware, pewterware	\$1,500
h. Theft of firearms and related equipment	\$1,500
i. Theft of tools and their accessories	\$1,500
j. Theft of rugs, tapestries and wall hangings	\$1,500
k. Business property on the residence premises	\$3,000
l. Business property away from the residence premises	\$1,500
m. Trailers or semitrailers not used with watercraft	\$1,500
n. Motor vehicle parts or equipment not attached to motor vehicle	\$500
o. Electronic apparatus while in or upon a motor vehicle or watercraft	\$1,500

The Special Limits of Liability do not increase your Coverage C – Personal Property Limit.

3. Special Limits Of Liability

The special limit for each category shown below is the total limit for each loss for all property in that category. These special limits do not increase the Coverage C limit of liability.

- a. \$200 on money, bank notes, bullion, gold other than goldware, silver other than silverware, platinum other than platinumware, coins, medals, scrip, stored value cards and smart cards.
- b. \$1,500 on securities, accounts, deeds, evidences of debt, letters of credit, notes other than bank notes, manuscripts, personal records, passports, tickets and stamps. This dollar limit applies to these categories regardless of the medium (such as paper or computer software) on which the material exists.

This limit includes the cost to research, replace or restore the information from the lost or damaged material.

g. \$2,500 for loss by theft of firearms;

h. \$2,500 for loss by theft of silverware and goldware;

Items that are usually not covered – “Exclusions”

- Items that are specifically insured elsewhere (i.e., jewelry, art with its own coverage)
- Animals, birds, and fish
- Property of sub-tenants/roommates
- Motor vehicles (exceptions for certain vehicles not registered for use on roads and/or for handicapped assistance)
- Recreational vehicles

The Flow of Contents Coverage Insurance Funds

Advances

ACV payments when
values are set

RCV payments upon
proof of expenditures,
replacement, repairs
completed

ACV Paid then Replacement Cost Paid When Repairs are Completed – Most Policies

5. How We Settle Covered Loss.

Covered accidental direct physical loss or damage will be settled as follows.

- a. Coverage A (**Dwelling**) and Coverage B (**Separate Structures**). We will only settle covered loss or damage on the basis of use as a private residence.

- (1) Settlement for covered loss or damage to a specific **component part(s)** of the **dwelling** or **separate structures**, except for **roof materials** and fences, will be settled at reasonable and necessary replacement cost, without deduction for depreciation, for the lesser of the costs to repair or to replace the specific damaged **component part(s)**, but for no more than the lesser of the following:

- i. the applicable **stated limit** or other limit of insurance in this policy that applies to the damaged or destroyed **dwelling** or **separate structure(s)**;
- ii. the reasonable repair or replacement cost of that specific **component part(s)** damaged for equivalent construction with materials of like

kind and quality on the **residence premises**, determined as of the time of loss or damage;

- iii. the reasonable and necessary amount actually spent to repair or replace the specifically damaged **component part(s)** of the **dwelling** or **separate structure(s)**; or
- iv. the loss to the interest of the **insured** in the property.

When the cost to repair or replace damaged property is more than \$2,500, we will pay no more than the **actual cash value** of the damaged specific **component part(s)** of property until actual repair or replacement is completed. If the damage to the **dwelling** should be a total loss, then the **actual cash value** payment will be no more than the lesser of the **stated limit** or the fair market value of the **dwelling** until actual repair or replacement of the **dwelling** is completed.

If the **dwelling** or a **separate structure** is rebuilt or replaced at a different location, the costs described in subsection ii. above are limited to the costs which would have been incurred if the **dwelling** or **separate structure** had been rebuilt or replaced at its location on the **residence premises**.

Requirements vs Requests

- Locate the policy language that states what your duties and responsibilities are in documenting your loss for **personal property/contents**
- Compare this policy language with what the adjuster is asking you to provide (extra requested info)
- If you do not believe it will assist your claim to provide this extra requested info, ask adjuster to show you where it is in your policy
- Check with your State DOI to understand the laws and guidance that apply to your claim
- Provide everything you can manage to help you receive the full amount you are owed under the policy

Renters Policy

D. Loss Settlement

Covered property losses are settled at actual cash value at the time of loss but not more than the amount required to repair or replace.

Optional Coverages

Optional Coverages

Personal Property Replacement Cost Loss Settlement

Endorsement

HQ-290 MA (05-17)

Limit

Premium Included*

**Note: The additional cost or premium reduction for any optional coverage or package shown as "Included" is contained in the Total Policy Premium Amount.*

- Look for a Replacement Cost Endorsement on your declarations page and attached to your policy

THIS ENDORSEMENT CHANGES THE POLICY. PLEASE READ IT CAREFULLY.

HOMEOWNERS
HO 04 07 05 11

PERSONAL PROPERTY REPLACEMENT COST LOSS SETTLEMENT – CALIFORNIA

A. Eligible Property

- Covered losses to the following property are settled at replacement cost at the time of the loss:
 - Coverage C; and
 - If covered in this policy:
 - Awnings, outdoor antennas and outdoor equipment; and
 - Carpeting and household appliances; whether or not attached to buildings.

2. This method of loss settlement will also apply to the following articles or classes of property if separately described and specifically this policy and not subject to agreed settlement:

- Wool, silk, rayon, and other fabrics; and garments; fur; and items made with fur; or items consisting principally of fur;
- Cameras, projectors, projection machines, films and articles of equipment;
- Refrigerators, freezers, air conditioning equipment and related articles of equipment;
- China, glassware, silverware, silver-plated ware, goldware, and silver-plated ware and pewterware, but excluding:
 - Pens or pencils;
 - Flasks;
 - Smoking implements; or
 - Jewelry; and
- Golfer's equipment meaning golf clubs, golf clothing and golf equipment.

Personal Property Replacement Cost loss settlement will not apply to other classes of property separately described and specifically insured.

B. Ineligible Property

Property listed below is not eligible for replacement cost loss settlement. Any loss will be settled at actual cash value at the time of loss but not more than the amount required to repair or replace.

- Antiques, fine arts, paintings and similar articles of rarity or antiquity, which cannot be replaced.
- Memorabilia, souvenirs, collectors items and similar articles, whose age or history contribute to their value.
- Articles not maintained in good or workable condition.
- Articles that are outdated or obsolete and are stored or not being used.

C. Replacement Cost Loss Settlement Condition

The following loss settlement condition applies to all property described in A. above:

- We will pay no more than the least of the following amounts:
 - Replacement cost at the time of loss without deduction for depreciation;
 - The full cost of repair at the time of loss;
 - The limit of liability that applies to Coverage C, if applicable;
 - Any applicable special limits of liability stated in this policy; or
 - For loss to any item described in A.2.a. – f. above, the limit of liability that applies to the item.
- If the cost to repair or replace the property described in A. above is more than \$500, we will pay no more than the actual cash value for the loss until the actual repair or replacement is complete.
- We must be notified within:
 - 24 months after our payment for actual cash value if the loss or damage relates to a state of emergency under California Law; or
 - 12 months after our payment for actual cash value in all other cases;
 that you intend to repair or replace the damaged property.

All other provisions of this policy apply.

LEARN THE LINGO

Learn the Lingo

- Replacement Cost (**RC**)
- Actual Cash Value (**ACV**)
- Depreciation (or **holdback**)

Replacement Cost (RC)

RC is the price that it would *actually* cost to repair or replace a damaged or destroyed item right now with a new item

- i.e., a new couch, mattress, or shirt

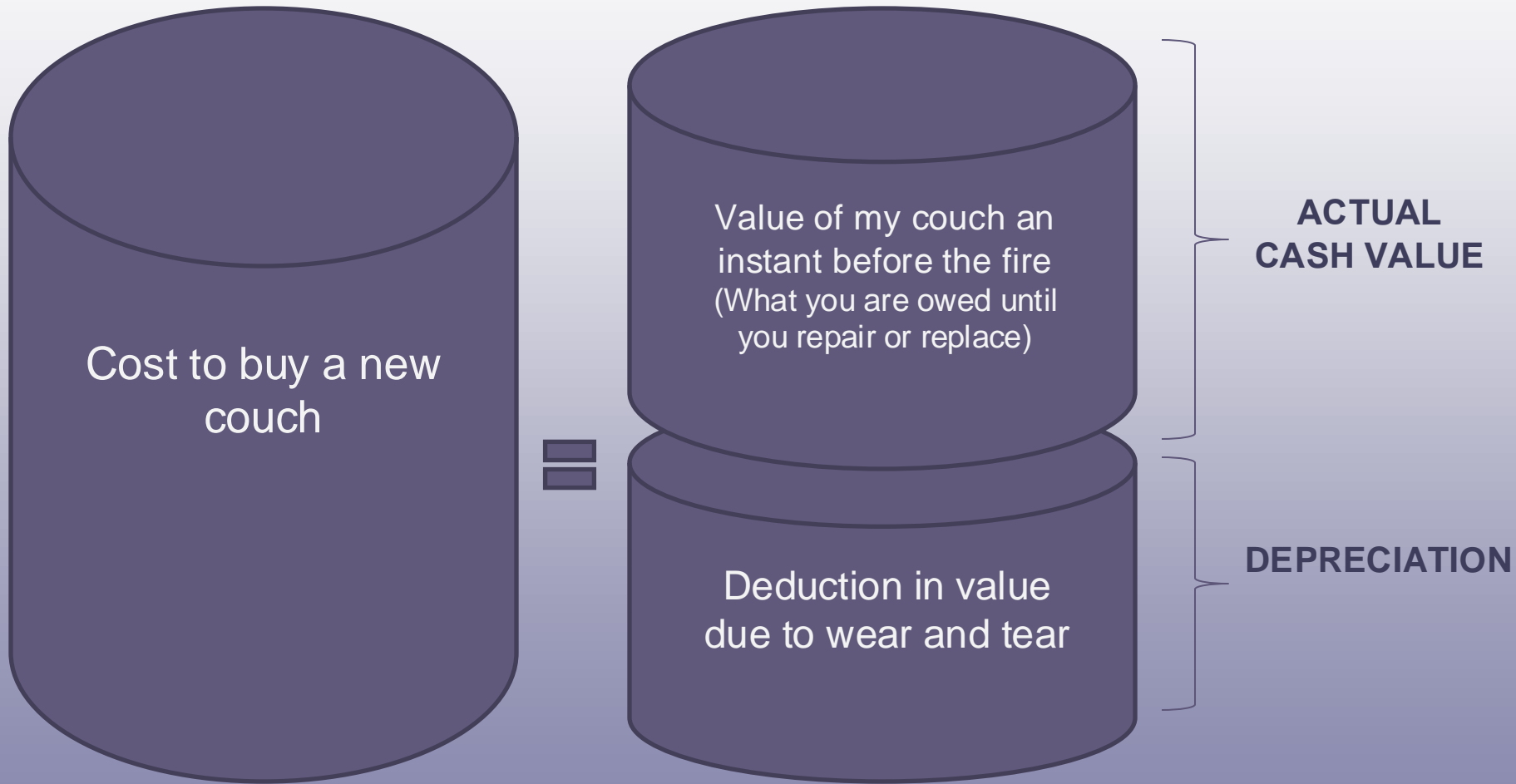
Most homeowner's policies, but not all, are *REPLACEMENT COST* (RC) policies

Actual Cash Value (ACV)

ACV is the pre-loss value of an item

- the price a willing buyer would have paid you immediately before the loss
- The item is depreciated to what its value was an instant before the loss (“Craigslist” price)
- Some policies limit payouts to ACV and that is all they pay (especially manufactured home policies)
- Actual Cash Value is also usually defined by the following formula: **ACV = RC – Depreciation**

Replacement Cost vs. Actual Cash Value



REPLACEMENT COST

I have a Replacement Cost policy, why is my insurance company only paying the Actual Cash Value?

- Your insurance may initially “hold back” an amount of money from a payment to you because of depreciation
- Most policies have “Loss Settlement Provisions” that specifically state that you are owed ACV (replacement cost less depreciation) until the property is repaired or replaced
- To collect the full amount you’re entitled to under an RC policy, you have to **actually replace** the items and send the receipts to the insurer with a demand for the balance they owe you

“Section I – Loss Settlement”

COVERAGE B - PERSONAL PROPERTY

1. B1 - Limited Replacement Cost Loss Settlement.

a. We will pay the cost to repair or replace property covered under **SECTION I - COVERAGES, COVERAGE B - PERSONAL PROPERTY**, except for property listed in item b. below, subject to the following:

- (1) until repair or replacement is completed, we will pay only the cost to repair or replace less depreciation;
- (2) after repair or replacement is completed, we will pay the difference between the cost to repair or replace less depreciation and the cost you have actually and necessarily spent to repair or replace the property; and
- (3) if property is not repaired or replaced within two years after the date of loss, we will pay only the cost to repair or replace less depreciation.

b. We will pay market value at the time of loss for:

- (1) antiques, fine arts, paintings, statuary and similar articles which by their inherent nature cannot be replaced with new articles;
- (2) articles whose age or history contribute substantially to their value including, but not limited to, memorabilia, souvenirs and collectors items; and

(4) any applicable Coverage B limit of liability.

2. B2 - Depreciated Loss Settlement.

a. We will pay the cost to repair or replace less depreciation at the time of loss for property covered under **SECTION I - COVERAGES, COVERAGE B - PERSONAL PROPERTY**, except for property listed in item b. below.

b. We will pay market value at the time of loss for:

- (1) antiques, fine arts, paintings, statuary and similar articles which by their inherent nature cannot be replaced with new articles;
- (2) articles whose age or history contribute substantially to their value including, but not limited to, memorabilia, souvenirs and collectors items; and
- (3) property not useful for its intended purpose.

However, we will not pay an amount exceeding the smallest of the following for items a. and b. above:

- (1) our cost to replace at the time of loss;
- (2) the full cost of repair;
- (3) any special limit of liability described in the policy; or
- (4) any applicable Coverage B limit of liability.



State Farm General Insurance Company
 A Stock Company With Home Offices in Bloomington, Illinois

500 Old River Rd.
 Bakersfield, CA 93311-9501

Named Insured

AT2 001007 0046 H-02-3748-FB14 H F

Insured, Joe
 111 E DOVER CT
 ANYTOWN CA 95111-1726



ST 3
 01/01/2000

HOMEOWNERS POLICY

Automatic Renewal - If the **policy period** is shown as **12 months**, this policy will be renewed automatically subject to the premiums, rules and forms in effect for each succeeding policy period. If this policy is terminated, we will give you and the Mortgagee/Lienholder written notice in compliance with the policy provisions or as required by law.

Location of Residence Premises
 Same as Insured's Address

Requested By: Policyholder

This policy does not provide
 This policy includes Building

Coverages & Property

SECTION I

- A Dwelling
- B Dwelling Extension
- C Personal Property
- C Loss of Use

SECTION II

- L Personal Liability (Each Occurrence)
- M Damage to Property of Others
- M Medical Payments to Others (Each Person)

Loss Settlement Provision (See Policy)

- A1 Replacement Cost - Similar Construction
- B1 Limited Replacement Cost - Coverage B

Forms, Options, & Endorsements

- Homeowners Policy FP-7955, CA
- Homeowners Policy Endorsement FE-3422
- Amendatory Endorsement FE-3247
- Jewelry and Furs \$1,500 Each Option JF
- Article/\$2,500 Aggregate
- Firearms \$2,500 Each Article/ \$5,000 Aggregate Option FA

DECLARATIONS PAGE

COVERAGE SUMMARY
 OCT 27 2017

Policy Number	57-L8-111-1111	
Policy Period	Effective Date	Expiration Date
12 Months	MAY 12 2017	MAY 12 2018
The policy period begins and ends at 12:01 am standard time at the residence premises.		

Loss Settlement Provision (See Policy)

A1 Replacement Cost - Similar Construction

B1 Limited Replacement Cost - Coverage B

Forms, Options, & Endorsements

Homeowners Policy FP-7955, CA

Homeowners Policy Endorsement FE-3422

Amendatory Endorsement FE-3247

Jewelry and Furs \$1,500 Each Option JF

Article/\$2,500 Aggregate

Firearms \$2,500 Each Article/ \$5,000 Aggregate Option FA



DEPRECIATION

Depreciation

- “Depreciation” is the loss in value of an item due to age **and** condition (wear and tear)
- You may also see the terms “Holdback”, “Withheld”, “Recoverable Depreciation”, “Non-recoverable Depreciation”

Depreciation is negotiable

- The more depreciation your insurer applies - the less you collect up front
- There is no *official standard* for how much insurers can depreciate your property
- It can be hard to pin down an adjuster on how they calculated depreciation, but these calculations affect your pocketbook. Challenge the numbers if they seem unfair
- **Be aware of items that should not be depreciated (antiques, fine art, jewelry, etc.)**
- **Ask, in writing, that your insurer give you a copy of the depreciation schedule/method they used**

Why Depreciation Matters

- Coming up with cash to buy replacement items can be hard, especially if your insurer has heavily depreciated your property
- Your insurer typically “depreciates” the value of your damaged/lost property to account for its used condition and age
- For all items that are covered for Replacement Cost Value, unless insurer relaxes or waives the requirement, you often actually replace and submit proof to recover withheld/held back benefits

Fair Depreciation

Most policies allow an insurance company to depreciate property to reflect the condition it was in at the time of the loss

Consider **both age and condition** of the property. Depreciation should only apply to property normally subject to repair and replacement during the useful life of the property. You have the right to know how your insurance company calculated depreciation and how they calculated their settlement offer

No “official” depreciation schedule, insurance companies vary on these calculations, so you should advocate for fair valuation of your property

Age is not everything!

- Condition can be more important than age, so your inventory should list age AND condition
- Even if an item was old, it may have been in good to excellent condition. You can argue that depreciation should be based upon the “Remaining Life Expectancy” of an item, not the age of the item
- Only you know the condition of the items that were destroyed

Age & Condition

Based On Age And Condition:




Family with no children.
Five year old sofa, **maybe 20%**



Family with kids and pets.
Five year old sofa, **maybe 80%**

Item #	Room	Brand or Manufacturer	Model#	Item Description	Quantity Lost	Item Age (Years)	Item Age (Months)	Condition	Cost to Replace Pre-Tax (each)	Total Cost
174	Living Room			textbook	1.00	2.00			79.00	79.00
175	Living Room			blow up pool tube	1.00	0.00	6		30.00	30.00
176	Living Room	Nike/Adidas/and1		Nike/Adidas/and1 , men's sweatpants	10.00	2.00			33.99	339.90
177	Living Room	golf		golf , men's dress pants	1.00	0.00	6		69.99	69.99
178	Living Room	classic fashion		classic fashion , men's dress pants	1.00	0.00	6		56.99	56.99
179	Living Room	apt 9		apt 9 , men's dress pants	1.00	2.00			59.00	59.00
180	Living Room	croft and barrow		croft and barrow , men's pajama pants	7.00	3.00			19.99	139.93



 **Liberty Mutual**
New England Region
PO Box 1053
Montgomeryville, PA 18936-1053
Office: (800) 566-0323
Fax: (866) 479-8438

Description	Qty	Unit Price	Estimate Amount	Additional *	Replacement Cost Value	Depreciation	Actual Cash Value
17. Shirt - Men's - Casual - Standard grade Orig. Desc. - customs men's tee shirt	7.00 EA	\$11.00	\$77.00	\$4.89	\$81.89	-\$30.71	\$51.18
18. Calculator Orig. Desc. - large electric calculator	1.00 EA	\$21.00	\$21.00	\$1.33	\$22.33	-\$8.93	\$13.40
19. Tie / Necktie - Men's - High grade Orig. Desc. - Pierre Jacques , men's silk tie Brand: Pierre Jacques	1.00 EA	\$21.00	\$21.00	\$1.33	\$22.33	-\$11.17	\$11.16
20. Sweater - Ladies' - High grade Orig. Desc. - basic additions , women's turtle neck Brand: basic additions	1.00 EA	\$22.00	\$22.00	\$1.40	\$23.40	-\$5.85	\$17.55

Be aware of excessive depreciation

- Negotiate depreciation and ACV hold-backs on a case-by-case basis to reflect the condition of each item
- Depreciation guides can help you determine the value of your contents. “www.claimspages.com” offers a list of standard depreciation amounts that you can view or print out free of charge (“**Documents**” tab, then search “**Depreciation Guide**”)
- Visit www.uphelp.org/samples for consumer-oriented depreciation guides

Resolving a dispute involving depreciation

- Negotiate depreciation and ACV hold-backs on a case-by-case basis to reflect the condition of each item
- If your insurer applies a fixed percentage across all items, you can challenge this by negotiating a much lower percentage (3-5%, for example)
- Make a specific request for what you feel is a fair resolution and back it up with documentation and your best arguments to support your position
- Go up the chain of command at the insurance company, (www.uphelp.org/speakUP)
- File a Request for Assistance with the California Department of Insurance
- Mediation and/or Litigation

Deep Breath



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CREATING YOUR LIST

Options for completing your Contents/ Personal Property Claim

- ❑ Prepare a detailed list (inventory) that describes and values everything you lost and submit it to your insurance company – later sending receipts as you replace items
- ❑ Ask in writing for a full/partial policy limits payout and a waiver for all/part of the inventory itemization requirement; **or** 100% waiver worth requesting especially if significantly underinsured
- ❑ Hire professional help

Documenting and valuing your Personal Property

- If the insurer insists on a detailed inventory, gather available receipts, photos, available records and get help from the adjuster assigned to your claim to build a complete and accurate list of everything that was damaged or destroyed
- **Trust but verify** the adjuster's valuations on your possessions by getting prices/estimates from objective sources (stores, experts,...). Fight back if your adjuster tries to unfairly depreciate your property
- Use UP's free tools:
 - www.uphelp.org/contents for claim inventory and claim tips
 - www.uphelp.org/guide/contents-claim-help for samples files and more!

Download the following publications to learn about strategies from experts and other disaster survivors on completing a home inventory and negotiating the contents portion of your claim:

- Example of a completed home inventory - 2003 Cedar Fire Survivor has donated her contents claim form to UP
- UP Home Inventory Worksheets (Excel) - Complete and save on the computer.
- Contents Claim Tips
- Depreciation Basics
- Speak UP: How to communicate with your insurance company
- Sample Letter Requesting Copy of Policy
- Sample Letter Asking for the Waiver of the Contents Itemization Requirement
- Sample Letter Asking for a Personal Property Claim Settlement

[Download all sample files](#)

Home Inventory and Contents Claim Tips

Goals: Collect the value of every personal property item that was damaged or destroyed (up to your policy limits) in the least time-consuming and painful way possible.

Basic strategy: Document/list and value every item. Produce available receipts, photographs and other evidence. Get extensions of time if you need them by making a written request that proposes a reasonable amount of extra time.

Timesavers:

- Use UP's Home Inventory Spreadsheet
- Go to a large store and use a wedding gift registry scanner to list and value items you had
- Family and friends can help you remember and complete your inventory.
- Use the internet to set a value for every lost item what it will cost to replace it.
- Negotiate a "cash out" settlement at or just below your contents policy limits to avoid the painstaking task of reconstructing a complete inventory list.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
1	© 2011 United Policyholders, All rights reserved.								
2	Description of Property	Type	Room	Year Acquired	Qty	Cost Each	Total cost	Condition of Item	Additional Notes
3	example: item 1	type 1	Kitchen	2005	4	3	12	Good	
4	© 2011 United Policyholders, All rights reserved.								
2	Description of Property	Type	Room	Year Acquired	Qty	Cost Each	Total cost	Condition of Item	Additional Notes
3	example: item 1	type 1	Kitchen	2005	4	3	12	Good	
4	Dishwasher	Appliance	Kitchen				0		
5	Freezer	Appliance	Kitchen				0		
6	Microwave	Appliance	Kitchen				0		
7	Oven and Range	Appliance	Kitchen				0		
8	Refrigerator	Appliance	Kitchen				0		
9	Cookbooks	Books	Kitchen				0		
10	Ajax	Cleaning	Kitchen				0		

Step One: Start with a List

- Start your list room by room, by topic, by category, whatever works for you to fill in the inventory
- Use UP's [Home Inventory Spreadsheet](#) or the lists in the *Disaster Recovery Handbook and Household Inventory Guide* to help you remember
- Use family and friends to help you complete your inventory. They may have photographs to share or be willing to list a room for you
- Go to stores with a gift registry scanner to list and value items you had. Or use the internet to build your list – many stores with gift registry scanners also have online registries
- Celebrate every success, no matter how small. Creating an inventory is a massive task

Step Two: Add to your list

- Keep a running 'list' with you
 - pen and paper
 - “note” in your smartphone
- Check with your bank or credit card companies for records of previous purchases. Some stores keep purchase records for several years, including: Costco, Home Depot, Amazon. Always ask stores you frequently shop
- Ask family, friends, and neighbors to review your list and add items they recall
- Go 'window-shopping' with a gift registry scanner, especially home good, hardware and other high value item stores. Visual cues can help jar your memory. You'll be surprised how "many" you had of what you see
- Use UP's free tools to see what other disaster survivors had in their inventories that you might have missed

Step Three: Estimate Quantities

- Books and CDs are generally in stacks or on shelves. Estimate how many feet of shelving you had. Ask a friend to or go to a store and measure a foot of shelving (measure hardback and paperback separately) and book width (take your tape measure), find an average price by type, and then calculate roughly how many books/CDs were on each shelf
- Do the same for clothing – if your closet was 6 ft. wide and 2 ft. contained hanging shirts, go to a friend's closet or a store rack, arrange them as closely as you normally do, and count the number per foot
- Knowing rough dimensions can help you estimate how much of something was contained within a closet, drawer, cabinet, or storage container

Refining quantity estimates

- Books and CDs are surprisingly compact; measure how many are in a foot of space (stacked or on a shelf). Then estimate how many feet of shelving you had
- Did you know the average American woman owns 103 articles of clothing; the average American man 50 shirts? 82% of the clothes were unworn. Ask family/friends if they can count their drawers and closet to give you a real estimate
- Craft and art supplies are easy to undercount – check craft stores to see how many skeins of yarn, etc. are in a reasonable approximation of how you stored them

Step Four: Pricing

Included in the “duties after a loss” is listing the replacement cost of damaged personal property

- Make sure the pricing reflects what it would cost to replace normally. **DO NOT USE SALE PRICES** – by the time you replace an item, the sale may be long gone
- Use pricing that reflects the quality of the items you had (Waterford vs. Walmart Pyrex bowl)
- Contact your credit card companies and banks for copies of old statements.
 - But remember, you’re looking for the cost to replace – this may not be the price it was purchased at. Divide and conquer – take advantage of people who offer to help. Ask them to price a page/room/list and create backup documentation for replacement costs (PDF)
- Work together with other survivors

Pricing valuable collections

Characteristics of Value

- Status of artist in marketplace
- Type of work
- Medium
- Size
- Condition
- Provenance
- Rarity
- Celebrity ownership increases value

Resources:

IRS Qualified Appraiser

<https://clockhappy.com>

What the insurer won't tell you

If the supported **Contents** (Coverage “C” or “B”) loss exceeds the full policy **Replacement Cost Value Coverage “C” limit** when you total up your **Actual Cash Value** inventory spreadsheet, request the claim be settled/resolved, and paid at the **full Replacement Cost Value limit**, without any need to replace or submit receipts

Protect yourself

Never intentionally claim items you did not have

- People often believe that they need to “pad” their claim in order to get a fair settlement
- They feel their adjuster will lowball pricing so they “go high” by inflating the value, quality or quantity of damaged or destroyed items to counter the lowballing
- Innocent mistakes are very common on claim related inventories and forms and do not amount to insurance fraud
- Insurance fraud (intentional misrepresentation) is a felony
 - Claiming items you did not have can jeopardize your entire claim and subject you to severe legal penalties
- If your insurance adjuster or company believes you are substantially “padding” or inflating your claim, the path to a fair and prompt settlement will be fraught with delays and obstacles

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOU SUBMIT YOUR INVENTORY

What next

- **Trust but verify** the adjuster's valuations on your possessions by getting prices/estimates from objective sources (stores, experts...). Fight back if your adjuster tries to unfairly depreciate your property
- Condition matters as well as age. Negotiate depreciation to reflect the condition of each item
- You're unlikely to replace everything you lost and it's a hassle to have to keep providing receipts over time, so try to maximize your ACV payments by arguing for lower depreciation, especially on the big ticket items and identifying the true replacement cost of items at standard, not discount retailers

Negotiating via Paper Trail (Claim issues)

- Document unreasonable delays, claim handling regulation/law violations
- Clearly explain the balance of benefits owing and why you're entitled to them
- Document rotating adjusters and why it's a problem (3 in 6 months = status report)
 - Refer to your claim diary
 - Be as specific as possible
 - Go up the chain of command

Be politely assertive

Your insurance company cashed your premium payment checks in return for promising you three things: 1) Peace of mind, 2) Loss reimbursement and 3) Prompt claim service. Your contract with your insurer entitles you to all three of these things. Your rights under the contract are protected under California law

The best way to stay on track is to keep good notes in your claim journal of what's been agreed to and what's still being worked out

Your personal leverage

- Sudden tragedy turned your life upside down
- You're doing your best with the MANY details
- Special circumstances (senior citizen, commuting worker, working parent, young kids, business owner, disabled/ill, etc.)
- You lost a life's worth of possessions
- Good help is extra hard to find now, prices are much higher
- Records are all gone and painstaking to recreate

Go “up the chain” until the disputed issue is resolved...

- If you are unable to resolve an issue with your adjuster, go above his/her head “up the chain” within the insurance company
- The higher you go...the greater your chances of success in resolving your dispute

Be organized

- Save all receipts (recommend scanning or photocopying and emailing, so you have a copy for your records)
- Document and track all insurance contents claim communications
- Track all contents payments
(<https://www.uphelp.org/pubs/insurance-accounting-spreadsheet>)
- Open a separate bank account when replacing items if possible

Track your claim payments



<https://uphelp.org/claim-guidance-publications/insurance-accounting-spreadsheet/>

- HOME
- ABOUT
- MEDIA
- RECOVERY HELP
- GET PREPARED
- ADVOCACY
- EVENTS
- SUPPORT UP



CLAIM GUIDANCE LIBRARY

Home » Claim Guidance » Insurance Accounting Spreadsheet

Homeowners

- SHARE
- PRINT
- PDF

Insurance Accounting Spreadsheet

This is a spreadsheet to help you keep track of your insurance payments. It includes columns that allow you to track expenses by type of coverage and payments received, as well as line item tracking of your coverage limits.

This document was donated by a Woolsey Fire survivor.

Coverage	A		B	C	D	E - Additional Coverages			Total
	Dwelling		Other Structures	Personal Property	Loss of Use (ALE)	Ordinance of Law	Debris Removal	Trees, Shrubs & Plants	
	Structure	Replacement							
Coverage (Declarations Page)	100%	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Construction Estimate		\$ -							\$ -
Limit of Coverage	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Payments Received									
Date	Check #	Purpose							
									\$ -
									\$ -

Be strategic

You're unlikely to replace everything you lost and it's a hassle to have to keep providing receipts over time, so try to maximize your ACV payments by arguing for lower depreciation, especially on the big ticket items and identifying the true replacement cost of items at standard, not discount retailers

Some total loss claims work on their contents lists over a year or two, and that's OK. Your insurance claims has many moving parts, so prioritize and take your time – get your temporary housing situation settled while you work on your dwelling and contents claims

Do what's best for you and your family

- No one but you can assess your tolerance for this process
- Some may need/desire to recover every dollar in their contents coverage to be made whole
- Some may settle for less, knowing they are leaving money on the table
- Choose the best path for your family and your finances

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

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Your Insurance Consumer Rights

Here are the places where your rights as an insurance consumer are spelled out:

<https://uphelp.org/claim-guidance-publications/insurance-claim-rules-in-california-2025/>

<https://www.insurance.ca.gov/0250-insurers/0300-insurers/0200-bulletins/bulletin-notices-commiss-opinion/upload/2025Notice-SigCALaw-ResIns-DeclSOE.pdf>

California Unfair Insurance Practices Act (Cal. Ins. Code sections 790 through 790.15)

Fair Claims Settlement Practices Regulations (Cal. Code of Regs., Title 10, sections 2695.1 through 2695.12)

Insurance Mediation laws (Cal. Ins. Code sections 10089.70 through 10089.83)

Stay informed – Sign UP

To be added to our mailing list for notices of future events and updated guidance:

Encourage friends to sign up:
uphelp.org/2024CAwildfires
uphelp.org/2025CAwildfires

To request a copy of today's slides or video,
email: info@uphelp.org

Stay connected to other disaster survivors – S2S Forums

- Great source of information about:
 - Insurance and rebuilding
 - Negotiation and financial strategies
 - Referrals and warnings re: professionals
- Important source of emotional support
 - No one else understands your challenges and emotions like another survivor

Find upcoming Survivor 2 Survivor Forums and register at: <http://www.uphelp.org/events>



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE



**Wildfire resources
and insurance
information**

**FOR FREE, PERSONAL ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR
CLAIMS OR UNDERINSURANCE ISSUES**

CALL US AT: 1 800 927 4357

OR GO ONLINE: insurance.ca.gov

Upcoming Roadmap to Recovery[®] Events

The screenshot displays the United Policyholders website navigation and event listings. The top navigation bar includes the logo, 'LOG OUT', 'MY QUESTIONS', 'ASK AN EXPERT', 'FORUMS', a search bar, and a magnifying glass icon. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links for HOME, ABOUT, MEDIA, RECOVERY HELP, GET PREPARED, ADVOCACY, COMMUNITY, EVENTS, and SUPPORT UP. The main content area features three event cards:

- Underinsured? Strategies and Remedies for Wildfire-Impacted Property Owners**
Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 5:00 pm PT
Location: Zoom - Registration Required
Audience: 2024 and 2025 California wildfire survivors
- Survivor to Survivor Forum (for wildfire survivors)**
Date: Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 4 pm HT/ 7 pm PT/ 8 pm MT
Location: Zoom - registration required
Audience: All wildfire survivors
- Navigating Wildfire-Damaged Home Insurance Claims (Standing Homes/Partial Losses)**
Date: Wednesday, March 19, 2025, 5:00 pm PT
Location: Zoom - Registration Required
Audience: 2024 and 2025 California wildfire survivors

Each event card includes a 'VIEW +' button at the bottom right.

www.uphelp.org/events

Register for upcoming events.

View recordings of past events and related resources.

Ask an Expert Forum

uphelp.org/ask-an-expert/

- Register. It's free.
- Write in your questions.
- Get an answer from an expert in construction, insurance, laws and disaster recovery.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the United Policyholders website. The logo is in the top left, and 'LOG IN' and 'ASK AN EXPERT' are in the top right. The main navigation menu includes 'HOME', 'ABOUT', 'MEDIA', 'RECOVERY HELP', 'GET PREPARED', and 'ADVOCACY'. Below this is a green header for 'ASK AN EXPERT' with sub-menu items: 'COMMUNITY', 'ASK AN EXPERT', 'MEET OUR EXPERTS', 'FORUMS', and 'ACCOUNT'. The main content area contains a paragraph explaining the forum's purpose, a notice for January 2025 prioritizing wildfire-impacted California residents, and a disclaimer about response times. At the bottom, there is a search bar with the text 'WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?' and a 'Filter: All' option.

United Policyholders
Engineering the future

LOG IN ASK AN EXPERT

HOME ABOUT MEDIA RECOVERY HELP GET PREPARED ADVOCACY

ASK AN EXPERT

COMMUNITY ASK AN EXPERT MEET OUR EXPERTS FORUMS ACCOUNT

This website offers extensive information, links and resources. Please use the navigation bar and “Search” box to find what you need. If you are an insurance consumer (policyholder) and you can't find what you need by searching this site, you can post a question in this forum, and we will do our best to provide an answer from our staff or expert volunteers. Expert volunteers include professionals in construction, insurance claims and insurance law.

JANUARY, 2025: We are currently prioritizing answering questions from wildfire-impacted California residents.

PLEASE ALLOW TIME TO GET A RESPONSE. We're not able to respond to urgent or time-sensitive questions. UP staff reserves the right to view and approve your question before it appears on our site.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?

Search

Filter: All

Thank you to our funders for their generosity!



Anthony Pritzker
FAMILY FOUNDATION

