

Prepare Your Customers For Winter Flooding Risks

The arrival of cold weather doesn't mean that the risk of flooding is over. In fact, winter often brings severe conditions such as snow, heavy rains, melting, and ice jams, which can pose major threats to your customers' properties. In coastal areas, winter storms such as Nor'easters often generate high winds that can cause widespread beach erosion and coastal flooding. Some communities in western states face days and even weeks of rain during the winter months, and others face an increased risk of flooding because of wildfires that burn away vegetation and leave the ground barren and unable to absorb water. Near the end of the season, melting snow can flow into lakes, streams and rivers, causing excess water to spill over their banks or overtop levees.

Now is a good time to ensure that your residential and commercial customers are protected by flood insurance. Visit Agents.FloodSmart.gov to learn more about tools and resources that can help you, such as the Co-Op advertising program, desktop direct mail program, free referrals and interactive tools that you can put on your website to demonstrate the risks and costs of flooding to your customers.

Many of these resources are also available at the newly launched Partner section at www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/partner/partner_index.jsp. This section also offers a Map Updates Toolkit and links to information about map changes around the United States, as well as a Flood Outreach Toolkit and Levee Toolkit.

Are You a FloodSmart Agent? Tell Us Why.

One of the first items you'll see when you visit the home page of Agents.FloodSmart.gov is a video testimonial from Ocean City, Maryland agent Beth Gismondi, who discusses the importance of selling flood and how it's helped her grow her business. As a FloodSmart agent, Beth appreciates the value of FloodSmart tools such as the Co-Op advertising and direct mail programs, free referrals and our interactive widgets for engaging her customers by demonstrating the causes of flooding and its steep financial costs.

In the next few months, FloodSmart will be creating an additional testimonial video, so if you've got a great story to tell we want to hear from you! Beth focuses on coastal flooding risks in her story, so we're especially interested in hearing from agents who have experience in protecting customers from other causes of flooding, such as the winter rainy season, wildfires, overflowing rivers and lakes and risks near dams and levees.

The agent who's selected for the video will be featured at Agents.FloodSmart.gov. If you're interested, please write to us at info@femafloodsmart.com and tell us why selling flood is important to you. And let us know if you have any particularly good stories about customers who avoided significant financial loss because of your efforts.

FloodSmart Continues to Support Partnerships with Key Agent Associations

The FloodSmart team continues to support long-term partnerships with the Professional Insurance Agents (PIA), the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America (IIABA), the Council of Insurance Agents and Brokers (CIAB) and the International Association of Insurance Professionals (IAIP). Through these partnerships, we are committed to supporting insurance agents through national, state, and regional collaboration. In the coming year the FloodSmart team will:

1. Provide updates about agent resources through association publications and online media venues;
2. Engage association members through presentations and attendance at key conferences;
3. Create webinars and presentations to support agent efforts to communicate flood risks and encourage their customers to obtain flood policies; and,
4. Keep association partners apprised of media plans, direct mail campaigns and other initiatives that agents can leverage to support their own marketing efforts.

Look for updates in future editions of this newsletter!

Two-Year PRP Eligibility Extension Continues to Benefit Policyholders

On January 1, 2011, FEMA launched a new rating option called the Two-Year Preferred Risk Policy Eligibility Extension that enables property owners who find themselves newly mapped into high-risk areas to save money on their policies. To help launch the new rating option, FEMA used the FloodSmart campaign to reach out to the public, agents, WYOs, community officials and other stakeholder groups. The purpose was to inform them about the new cost-savings option and how property owners could apply. The various stakeholder groups showed great support by sharing the information.

FEMA recently updated a WYO industry committee on its progress and reported that over 40,000 PRP Extensions are currently in force (through August 2011), with up to \$100,000 expected by year's-end. FEMA complimented and thanked the WYOs, agents, and community officials for helping make this a successful launch!

Make sure as your county or community goes through a mapping change that you are promoting both grandfathering and the 2-Year PRP Extension as well. For more information, go to FloodSmart.gov/prpextension.

Announcements

NFIP Extended Until December 16 - With the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) facing expiration on November 18, 2011, Congress passed on November 17th (and the President then signed) a short-term funding bill that included an extension of the NFIP. This extension expires on December 16, 2011. It is important that insurance agents and WYO companies continue to monitor the status of the NFIP. Should the Program lapse, FEMA has issued updated guidance for agents and WYOs in NFIP Bulletin W-11084 (www.nfipiservice.com/stakeholder/pdf/bulletin/w-11084.pdf).

Top Three Selling Tools - The Agents.FloodSmart.gov website contains three interactive tools for use to demonstrate flood risk to consumers. The Levee Simulation, Cost of Flooding, and Flood Risk Scenario tools are shareable and usable on any website. Visit <https://Agents.FloodSmart.gov/manageagent/marketing-and-advertising/interactive-tools> for more information.

Share your thoughts on this newsletter - As part of our continuing effort to ensure that our newsletter is meeting your needs, we are soliciting input on its content, frequency, and subject matter. Please let us know what you think by emailing us at info@femafloodsmart.com.

*Based on an Article written by the National Flood Insurance Program (FEMA)