

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Pennsylvania Insurance Department Urges Property Owners to Consider Flood Insurance & Provides Tips to Cut Premiums

Harrisburg, PA – Acting Insurance Commissioner Teresa Miller today reminded Pennsylvanians that spring flooding is common throughout the state, and urged property owners to consider purchasing flood insurance to protect their homes, businesses, and possessions. The recommendation is part of the department’s recognition of National Flood Awareness Week, March 15-21.

“Melting snow, combined with spring rains, inadequate drainage, excessive runoff, or dam failure can cause major damage, so I recommend homeowners and business owners talk about flood coverage with their insurance professional as soon as possible,” Miller said. “Standard homeowner policies do not include coverage for flood damage, and there is a 30-day waiting period before a policy becomes effective. The sooner you get coverage the better.”

Figures from the Federal Emergency Management Agency show Pennsylvania residents filed nearly 18,000 flood insurance claims in the nine years from 2006 through 2014, and received more than \$551 million in payments. Claims were filed from every county except Fulton. “These statistics show flooding is a serious problem throughout all of Pennsylvania,” Miller said.

Information detailing coverage and how to obtain flood insurance can be found at www.floodsmart.org, the official site of the National Flood Insurance Program, a federally-funded resource for flood victims.

There are also certain precautions property owners can take to lower the chance of suffering major flood damage. Among these are:

- Install a sump pump and make sure it is working; install a battery-operated backup in case of a power failure.
- Install “check valves” to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Seal walls in your basement with waterproofing compounds.
- Clear debris from gutters and downspouts.
- Anchor any fuel tanks.
- Elevate your furnace, water heater, washer, dryer, and electric panel, if you live in a high flood risk area.

“If you have taken these or other steps to lessen the potential for costly flood damage, make sure you

talk with your insurance professional about any premium reductions for which you may be eligible under your policy,” Miller said.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is continuing an update of maps which show flooding risks for individual properties. If your property is mapped out of a high-risk area, your flood insurance costs will likely decrease. If you've been mapped into a high-risk area, you will be required to purchase flood insurance if your mortgage is through a federally regulated or insured lender. But you can save money with the Preferred Risk Policy (Eligibility Extension and through a process known as "grandfathering" provided by the NFIP. If your property was newly mapped into a high-risk flood zone after October 1, 2008, you may qualify for a PRP flood insurance policy.

Property owners can also challenge a flood map they feel is inaccurate. Information on how to challenge a flood map is available at <http://msc.fema.gov/portal>.

More information on what property owners can do to lessen potential flood damage, and possibly lower premiums, is available at <https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program>.

Also, for insurance purposes, be sure to keep a written and visual (i.e., video or photographic) record of all major household items and valuables, even those stored in basements, attics or garages.

Create files that include serial numbers and store receipts for major appliances and electronics. Have jewelry and artwork appraised. These documents are critically important when filing insurance claims.

For more information, visit www.knowyourstuff.org.

Additional information on preparing your family to meet an emergency is found at www.ReadyPa.org.

For more information on insurance products and protections go to www.insurance.pa.gov or call 877-881-6388.

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