

How to Create a Home Inventory after a Major Loss

You've just experienced a major property loss, what do you do?

First thing, call your insurer, so the claims process can begin. Do not start any clean up until after your insurance adjuster visits. If necessary, protect your house and any salvageable items from further damage, but your adjuster needs to see the damage intact. If you must clean or dispose of anything for safety or sanitation purposes, meticulously document, photograph, and video the state of your home and all items damaged or thrown out.

Next, your insurance company will request a list of everything you lost. Your insurance claim is an inventory demonstrating proof of possession, quality, and condition. After a loss, you will need to build your inventory from memory.

I operate one of the few home inventory services in the US that prepares people for a major loss by documenting the proof insurance companies require. What I know can help you right now.

These steps will help you remember what you lost, so you can prepare your claim:

Hire a Public Adjuster

- The claims process is difficult and can wear you down.
- A major loss is one of the most stressful times in your life. You need help.
- A public adjuster understands the process.
- They will help you with everything listed below and much more.

Gather Photos

- Pictures are the best proof for replacement cost insurance claims.
- Photos of your home help you build a more detailed claim.
- Look for any photos or videos that show the interior and exterior of your home.
- Search your phone, computer, and cloud backups.
- Ask friends and family to send you any they have.
- Search your social media.

Make Lists

- Start a list of anything and everything you can remember and its value.
- Use a spreadsheet, keeping it organized and up to date.
- You will remember things at any time, so always have a way to take notes.
- Get copies of your credit card and bank statements. Search them for purchases to help you remember what you had and their cost.
- Online shopping and payment services, such as Amazon and PayPal, can also provide purchase records.

Visualization

This technique helps you remember what you had. You may remember more if you have someone, like a public adjuster, guide you.

The process is long and tedious. Room by room, this is how it goes:

1. You are standing in the doorway, what do you see? A table to the right.
2. What is on the table? A lamp.
3. What kind of lamp? Designer lamp.
4. Make notes to research each item's value later.
5. Are there any drawers? Yes, two.
6. What is in the first? . . .
7. Repeat this for every room, closet, cabinet, and drawer.

Organize All This Information

Compile your spreadsheet, photos, and videos electronically to submit your insurance claim.

Keep In Constant Contact with Your Insurer

- After you've filed your claim, be sure to meet or negotiate your insurance company's deadlines.
- Check in regularly to be sure you don't miss any important communication.

Building your inventory from memory is difficult, time-consuming, and stressful, but it's essential to getting a sufficient settlement. I hope these tips will help you file a more complete claim so you can rebuild and recover.

All the best,
Ken Aaron, Founder

