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## Key Insurance Tips for Emergency Preparedness

**Salem, Oregon** – *National Preparedness Month* in September is a good time to assemble an emergency supply kit or make a family plan for communicating after a disaster. It is also a great time to take stock of insurance coverage, which is intended to protect you against financial disaster.

“Step one is to simply understand what your insurance policy covers so you can make sound decisions about whether you are adequately protected,” said Teresa Miller, Insurance Division administrator for the Department of Consumer and Business Services.

Consumers may think they do not need disaster insurance because federal programs will offer relief. However, most federal programs require the president to declare a disaster of a defined magnitude. In addition, federal programs are limited in everything from the amount of coverage to the type of assistance provided. For more information on what federal relief may be available go to [www.fema.gov/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/index.shtm).

Here are a few key points that may help with your insurance preparedness:

1. Parts of Oregon are seismically active and wet, yet the typical homeowner and renters insurance policy does not cover earthquakes or floods. Special coverage can be purchased for both, but do not wait until the last minute. Flood insurance must be purchased 30 days before coverage kicks in. You probably will be unable to purchase earthquake insurance for a period of time following a significant seismic event.
2. Earthquake insurance does not cover a loss caused by landslides, erosion, tsunami, or volcanic eruption, even if an earthquake causes them to happen. Coastal residents can get flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program that will protect against a tsunami. Visit [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov). Landslide and erosion coverage are available through specialty programs.
3. Sewer and drain backup can flood your home and is a common cause of loss that is often excluded on homeowner insurance policies. Many companies offer optional coverage for sewer and drain backup with a special limit, usually \$5,000 to \$20,000, for a small additional premium. Consider this option and make a conscious choice before you suffer a loss. Even if you are a renter and the owner insures the damage to the building, that coverage will not extend to your personal property.

A final tip: Creating an up-to-date inventory of the contents of your home backed up by photos/videotapes, will make insurance claims much easier if the worst happens and you suffer a major loss as a homeowner or a renter. Keep a copy of the inventory away from your premises, with a friend or relative or in your safe deposit box.

The Oregon Insurance Division provides additional information about earthquake, flood and wildfire insurance and how to obtain coverage at: <http://tinyurl.com/oregonhomeowner>. Also, this inventory checklist may help you document your possessions: <http://tinyurl.com/homechecklist>

Insurance questions? Call our consumer insurance advocates at 1-888-877-4894 or 503-947-7984 in the Salem area.

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