

# Who is CARE?

## What We Do

Our mission is to provide free comprehensive information about disaster recovery, including the insurance claim process, to disaster survivors so they may effectively reestablish their homes, lives and communities.

## History

With funding from Fannie Mae, CARE originated in Los Angeles in response to the Northridge Earthquake. Since April 1994, CARE has helped tens of thousands of homeowners, at no cost to them, to obtain information and resources, including insurance education, to rebuild properties damaged by earthquake, hurricane, tornado, fires and floods.

## Non-Profit Status

CARE is an educational 501(c)3 non-profit California organization established by community leaders in San Fernando Valley after the 1994 Northridge Earthquake.

Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

“ We are passionate about the work we do and help because we have been there and know what you are going through. ”

## Disaster Survivors on Staff

All CARE volunteers and staff have been directly effected by and successfully recovered from natural disasters. They've been there and understand the needs of disaster survivors.

It is the passion for “paying it forward” that draws survivors back to our organization to help survivors of the next disaster.

## Free Services

CARE's goal is to provide free comprehensive information about disaster recovery — including the insurance settlement process — to disaster victims so they may effectively re-establish their homes, lives and communities.

## Funding

CARE is funded solely by grants and the generosity of individuals. We do not accept donations or funding from public adjusters, builders, construction estimators or attorneys or any entity that may represent a conflict of interest. We do not solicit donations from disaster victims while they are going through their recovery, but donations are always welcome.



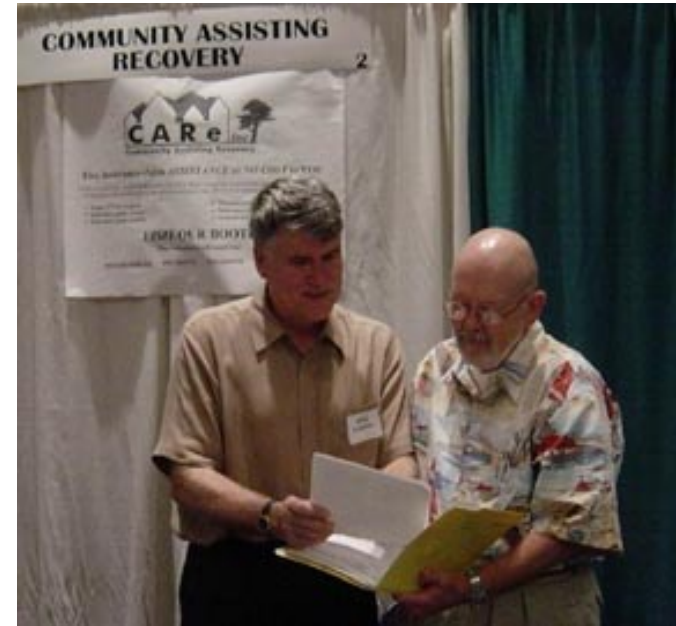
**CARE, Inc.**

7918 EL CAJON BLVD

STE N346

LA MESA CA 91942

[www.carehelp.org](http://www.carehelp.org)



**Community Assisting Recovery**

DISASTER RECOVERY SUPPORT

INSURANCE LESSONS  
FOR  
DISASTER SURVIVORS



*“Survivors Helping Survivors”*



# TOP TIPS

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

Our website, provide specific tools for learning about long term disaster recovery and the insurance claim process.

## DOWNLOAD PRINTED SELF-HELP MATERIALS

Our handouts range from one sheet explaining the difference between ACV and RCV, a free 120+ page downloadable workbook, to a free 80 page, 3,500+ item list to help with the personal property inventory.

## START A CLAIM DIARY

Keep notes on every phone call you make and every conversation you have. Include the date and time of the event and who was there.

## TAKE THE MONEY

Unless the insurance company tries to close your claim by stating on the check (or accompanying letter) that the check is a final payment (which is rare) deposit the check into an interest bearing, insured account.

## GET A COPY OF YOUR POLICY

Call your agent or the home office and ask for a copy, but always follow up this request *in writing*.

## PUBLIC ADJUSTERS/LAWYERS

Avoid signing with professionals right away. After a total loss many insurance companies will pay the policy limits without the need for professional help.

## DEBRIS REMOVAL

Before you remove the debris, you must document your loss. Details on what you need to do can be found in our Debris Removal Handout.

## DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

The insurance claim process is all about documenting what you lost and proving how much it was worth. Whenever you think, “How do I ask the insurance company to pay for that?” change the question to, “How can I document how much that was worth?”

# INSURANCE LESSONS FOR DISASTER SURVIVORS

## Introduction to Insurance

The ultimate goal of an insurance claim is to determine the value of the loss and collect all of the money owed by the insurance company. **It is your job to determine the total amount of the loss. It is the insurance company’s job to determine how much of the loss they will pay.**

The difference between the two amounts will be negotiated between you and the “adjuster”, the person representing the insurance company. The adjuster is a “negotiator” and the insurance settlement process is a “negotiation.”

## How do you Determine Your Loss?

Most people instinctively want to rely on the insurance company to value their loss, but if you let the insurance company determine your loss, the results will always be in the Insurance Company’s favor. But how do you determine the loss? With as much documentation as possible, which includes:

1. Appropriate comfortable living quarters (collect receipts and/or estimates).
2. Your own repair/replacement estimates (prepared by *your* contractor) for all damaged and lost property, also called a Scope of Loss.
3. Your own personal property list. Work on it consistently until it is complete. Submission of a “partial list” is acceptable and keeps the process moving. Do not stop at policy limits; exhaust your memory. Download the sample list from our website.
4. Download the “Confidential Loss Worksheet” to track your loss.

## Initial Tasks

Besides the Top Tips found to the left, consider the following:

1. Get names and contact info for the adjuster, his boss and someone in charge of them at the main office.
2. Obtain enough office supplies to run the claim: a computer, a solid backed notebook, a digital camera, writing instruments, and a filing system. You will also need the ability to email, copy, and sometimes even print.
3. Protect your property from further damage and take every reasonable step to make sure that more damage does not occur and that you aren’t exposed to a liability claim by not protecting your property from new dangers. (For example: cover holes, install fencing, consider potential debris flow, etc.)

## Your First Recovery Goals

Your first insurance related goals should be as follows:

1. Read and understand your insurance policy, duties and rights as much as possible. Download “A Survivor’s Guide to Insurance” and other handouts at the download section of our website.
2. Obtain the dwelling estimate or Scope of Loss prepared by the insurance company.
3. Obtain *your own* Scope of Loss or repair/replacement estimates for all coverages.
4. Obtain policy limits. FYI—On large losses, the mortgage company is always included as a payee on the dwelling and real property checks.

## Long Term Recovery Goals

Once you’ve received money equal to your policy limits and know the amount of your loss, you can then compare the numbers and determine if you’re underinsured and then decide if you should do anything about it. This should become evident around six to nine months after the loss.

## Warning Signs

Watch for these warning signs as a signal to seek outside advice:

1. Payments that include paperwork to sign; especially troublesome are checks which include a release.
2. Insurance company requests a recorded statement over the phone
3. Insurance company denies coverage for something that seems to be covered.
4. You are asked to sign a Proof of Loss early in a high value loss.
5. Insurance company provides severely inadequate loss estimates and won’t consider the loss estimates you provide.
6. Insurance company wants to negotiate with you or have a private meeting to “talk things out” especially if they tell you a lawyer will be present.
7. Adjuster is intimidating, being suspicious or accusatory for no apparent reason.
8. Adjuster suggests the homeowner add things to their inventory or house that they did not really have.

See page 91 of our free eBook “A Survivor’s Guide to Insurance” for more information on recognizing trouble.