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Understanding your auto claim

Filing a claim

If you have storm damage to your vehicle, report the incident to your insurance company or agent. Follow the company's instructions when making your claim. According to Missouri law, insurance companies are required to handle claims promptly and fairly.

Insurance
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apply "betterment." Betterment is an improvement that increases the value of property and is more extensive than mere repairs. You would be responsible for those charges. For example, if the tires are damaged or the battery must be replaced, the insurer may replace new for old. The betterment would depend on the age of the older item being replaced.

Understanding your claim

- **Physical damage insurance** typically is the comprehensive and collision coverage on your vehicle.
- **Comprehensive insurance** pays for damages to your car from perils such as windstorm, damage from storm debris, fire, theft, explosion, hail, vandalism, glass breakage and animals. Covered perils are listed in your policy under the insuring agreements section. This coverage may have no deductible, a \$100 or \$250 deductible or more. The deductible is the amount of any loss you must pay before the insurance company will cover damages.
- **Collision insurance** covers damage caused by the collision of your car, regardless of who is responsible. This type of insurance usually includes a deductible. Again, you pay the deductible amount when you have an accident, and the insurance company pays the rest, up to the limits of your policy.

What is actual cash value?

An insurance company is required to pay the fair market value of a vehicle. Your car's fair market value can be found by surveying dealers in your area, receiving information from recognized groups such as CCC or ADP AutoSource, or an industry guide such as "NADA" to determine the average retail price. When disputing the company's offer of settlement, you must prove that your vehicle is worth more than what the company is offering.

The insurance company will adjust the value based on physical wear and tear as well as any pre-existing damage. If the company determines some replacement items are better than the ones damaged, they may

Estimates

An insurance company is obligated to pay for repairs "in an amount for which it may be reasonably expected the damages can be satisfactorily repaired."

It is common for insurance companies to review estimates submitted for repairs. However, you are the only one who can authorize repairs to your car. Therefore, you can take your car to a body shop of your choosing, but if the insurance company has a lower estimate from another body shop, then the lower amount is all the company is obligated to pay.

According to Missouri regulation 20 CSR 100-1.050 (2)(F), when the insurer elects to repair and designates a specific repair shop for automobile repairs, the insurer shall restore the vehicle to its condition prior to the loss at no additional cost to the claimant, other than as stated in the policy and within a reasonable period time.

What about rental reimbursement and loss of use?

Many companies offer an endorsement that you may purchase to cover rental reimbursement costs that you may incur in the event your car was damaged. The maximum waiting period before coverage begins is 48 hours. The minimum payment is \$10 per day or \$300 per rental occurrence. The insurer may terminate these payments when they extend a reasonable settlement to the insured.

If a claimant does not rent a vehicle, some companies will offer a small amount per day to help absorb expenses such as public transportation and getting rides from friends or family.