



FEMA

W-06072

September 27, 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR: Write Your Own (WYO) Principal Coordinators
and the NFIP Servicing Agent

FROM: WYO Clearinghouse

SUBJECT: David Maurstad Article in the *Orlando Sentinel*

The attached article is copied from the Opinion page in today's *Orlando Sentinel* newspaper. Federal Insurance Administrator David Maurstad issues a reminder that the 2006 hurricane season officially continues through the end of November. He strongly urges all Florida residents living in Special Flood Hazard Areas to ensure that they are protected by flood insurance.

Please distribute this information within your organization as appropriate.

Attachment

cc: Vendors, IBHS, FIPNC, Government Technical Representative

Suggested Routing: Claims, Marketing, Underwriting

OTHER VIEWS MY WORD

FEMA official: Protect yourself with flood insurance

David Maurstad
September 27, 2006

Although the 2006 Atlantic hurricane season has been relatively calm thus far, the threat is far from over -- especially for residents of Florida. Damaging storms and hurricanes can form and potentially strike the U.S. coastline through the end of November. We can't control the weather -- that's a given. But we can control the level of financial protection that homes, businesses and communities have against the disastrous consequences of floodwaters.

The most important thing Floridians can do is to make sure that 100 percent of Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) properties are protected with flood insurance. Those areas receive that designation because history and geography show that significant floods have occurred and will occur in the region. Banks and other mortgage lenders require home purchasers in SFHAs to get flood insurance in order to receive a mortgage.

But it's not just those with a mortgage who are at risk. People who own their homes or businesses outright and renters need to assess their flood risk and protect themselves with flood insurance. Not to do so is shortsighted and dangerous, especially since the average cost of flood insurance, even in the most high-risk areas, is around \$500, roughly equivalent to a year's cable television subscription.

But what will it take to bring flood insurance coverage in SFHAs up to 100 percent?

A solid grassroots effort requires commitment from three critical groups: community leaders and local officials, real-estate and financial-services professionals, and insurance agents. All play a crucial role in educating the public about flood risks and encouraging flood protection. The message can't come from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and its National Flood Insurance Program alone. The responsibility is one we all share.

The flood-insurance program is committed to doing its part. Every single flood-insurance policy represents someone who made the smart decision to purchase flood insurance. Last year's hurricane season, the worst in the nation's history, resulted in more than 240,000 flood-insurance claims across the Gulf Coast and Florida. The flood-insurance program has paid these claims (more than 90 percent are closed) and will continue to do so this hurricane season, and every season.

Boosting flood-insurance coverage must be a priority for hundreds of American communities. Only when 100 percent of households in SFHAs are covered will these communities be prepared to withstand the economic and emotional devastation caused by floods. And only when every household in America is covered can our citizens count themselves as being fully protected.

Until then, we are a nation whose homes and businesses, along with our economic prosperity, are at the mercy of nature. And if the 2005 hurricane season taught America anything, it's that nature does not feel obliged to be merciful.

David Maurstad is the federal insurance administrator and director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's mitigation division.