

Special points of interest:

- Join our email list for up to the minute information—info@oldfirerecoverygroup.org
- Come to our weekly meetings for community support
- Get a list of Fire Survivor discounts on our website or a printed list at our meetings!
- Find links related to this newsletter on our website www.oldfirerecoverygroup.org

Volume 2, Issue 1

Feb 01, 2005

A Year in Review

The start of a new year makes one stop and ponder the previous year. As we were collaborating on this newsletter, we talked about the previous year and how far we've come.

A year ago...

We NEVER could've written the "Know Your Numbers" article on page 2 without the help of CARE Inc.

We thought our houses would be done by now!

We didn't know what a scope of loss was.

We thought the Calvary was running a tad late, but they would still arrive.

We thought the insurance company was supposed to pay us based on how much it would cost to build our NEW house, not how much it would conceptually cost to build our OLD house.

The fires were still on people's minds and our neighbors were still sympathetic.



We didn't realize what wonderful friends we would find because of the fire.

The terms "actual cash value" and "replacement cost value" were just beginning to make sense.

We still thought it was a good idea to give the insurance adjuster the phone number of our contractor.

2004 was a year full of discovery, healing and learning. We hope that the healing process is progressing well for you.

Remember, we are all still working our way through the phases of recovery and most of us are here:

3. Repair/Rebuilding Phase - lasts from 3 weeks to 6 months. *Emotions* - Shock, grief, inability to move forward, despair, confusion and nightmares. Blame and anger are directed to officials, agencies and often self. Discouragement sets in as community loses interest and money dwindles.

4. Recovery Phase - up to 3 to 5 years. *Emotions* - self-ownership of recovery and life-focus turns forward to the future instead of emphasis on disaster. Disaster no longer defines self-image, emotions, plans and relationships. There is acceptance.

Meet the Building Department

On Sunday, February 27, 2005 at 2:00PM we will be having both the city and the county building departments at our meeting.

Last September we had the city building department at our meeting and it was a big success. They answered questions, handed out information on the building permit process and even handed out personal busi-

ness cards of the people in charge of Old Fire rebuilds. We hope this meeting will be an even bigger success with the addition of county personnel.

If you have questions or even if you've completed any part of the process and have some insight (remember, we are survivors helping survivors), please join us at the Calvary Baptist Church at 3701 Sierra Way.

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Know your numbers when negotiating

When you're dealing with the insurance company whether it's on your own or with the help of a professional, you need to know your bottom line.

Dwelling

The insurance company insured your house as it stood before the loss. Most policies include language that they will pay for "like kind and quality". This means if the dwelling had plaster walls, single painted aluminum windows and hard wood floors, they should pay for these items without regard for what you're planning on replacing it with.

The following coverages are not an exhaustive list and each are usually tied as a percentage to the dwelling coverage.

Other Structures

Your "Other Structures" clause will read something like: "We will cover other structures on the residence premises, **separated** from the dwelling by clear space. This includes structures connected to the dwelling by **only** a fence, utility line or similar connection." [emphasis added; information provided by CARe, Inc.]

Personal Property

This includes items that you would normally take with you when you move. Don't leave out small items such as band-aids and toothpicks. These items can add up to thousands of dollars. Potted plants should also be included here.

Additional Living Expenses

CARe has a handout filled with potential

examples of what should be covered (ask us for copies). Some frequently forgotten examples are:

Additional miles you drive due to relocating; hookup fees for utilities at your temporary location; laundry bills above your normal costs; costs of replacing certificates and diplomas; supplies only used in an RV if now living in an RV such as toilet chemicals; electrical bills above what was previously paid (Edison charges more for electricity at a temporary pole).

Other Coverages

- Debris removal
- Landscaping
- Building Code Upgrades
- Land Stabilization
- Emergency repairs
- Food Spoilage
- Emergency evacuation

Scope of Loss

In most cases, it will benefit you to get an outside scope of loss for your dwelling prepared by a general contractor who is not tied to either you (i.e. a friend or the contractor rebuilding your house) or the insurance company (i.e. they do *any* other work for the insurance company). This will be the basis of how much you should be paid.

The Bottom Line

Generally speaking when you add the dwelling coverage with all of the other coverages you approximately double your coverage amount as in the following ex-

ample (percentages will vary by policy).

Dwelling	\$200,000
Other Structures 10%	20,000
Personal Property 50%	100,000
ALE 30%	60,000
Landscaping 10%	20,000
Debris Removal 5%	10,000
Total	\$410,000

You should make a list of all of the possible coverages and create a bottom line before even considering a final negotiation.

Professional Fees

Remember that many professionals charge a percentage of money they collect. So if they charge 40% and collect \$100,000 above what you collected on your own, they would get \$40,000 and you would get \$60,000.

Keep this in mind when negotiating a settlement and calculate 66.67% above your target number so the fee is covered and you have enough to rebuild.

Why? Because 40% of \$140,000 is \$56,000 leaving you with only \$74,000, but 40% of \$166,667 is \$100,000.

Negotiation with the professional is also possible. Remember, it costs money for a lawyer to go to court.

Contact us for more information, details or copies of handouts!

"84% of fire survivors who lost homes in the San Bernardino valley are still living in temporary housing"

Rebuild Statistics Update

The fire brought destruction to many areas in Southern California. In the San Bernardino Valley alone there were at least 538 total losses, not including partial losses which number over 300.

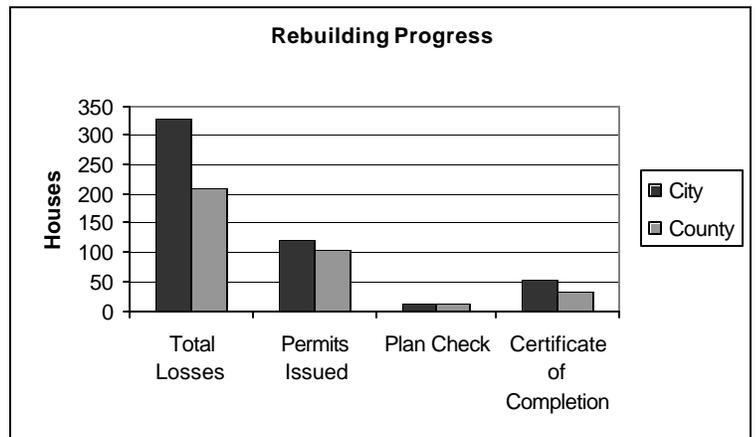
As of Dec 31, 2004, of the 330 total losses within city limits, there were 14 sets of plans in plan check, 122 permits issued and 54 completed their homes. Of the 208 total losses in the unincorporated portion of San Bernardino valley, 12 are in plan check, 105 permits have been issued and 32 have completed their homes.

This means that about 85% of fire survivors who lost homes in the San Bernardino valley are still living in temporary quarters.

This is actually much higher than in other parts of the fire area such as

Julian and Cedar Glen where significant infrastructure problems prevented survivors from starting before the infrastructure problems were solved.

These results are typical of disasters where rebuilding can take about 3-5 years and in some cases, more than a decade passes before the last home is rebuilt.



CDI Commissioner John Garamendi, DA Bonnie Dumanis Announce Restitution Settlement for San Diego Fire Survivors

January 6, 2005 (#002)

Insurance adjuster agrees to pay nearly \$129,000 in fines and restitution after investigation into unlicensed adjuster who allegedly misled fire survivors

CREST - Standing with survivors of the devastating 2003 Southern California wildfires, Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi and San Diego County District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis on Thursday announced a \$128,707.92 settlement with a Los Angeles public adjuster stemming from its handling of fire survivor claims.

Speaking in front of a home under construction for a Crest family, the Commissioner noted that although it has been more than a year since the October 2003 fires, many families are still waiting to settle claims and rebuild their homes. The unlawful activity of public adjusters, he said, exacerbates the problem.

"The survivors of the firestorms have looked to public adjusters for help and guidance in the wake of the disaster," said Commissioner Garamendi. "Instead, these families were allegedly duped into signing bad contracts

that cost them tens of thousands of dollars, money they needed to rebuild their lives. This is wrong, and I will continue my efforts to fight this scam so others won't be victimized."

Investigators into the current case alleged that Kapilow & Son of Los Angeles unlawfully hired unlicensed public adjusters, who then misled four families in East



San Diego County into signing the contracts. All four families have received restitution in the case.

"When the fires raged through the back country, our office promised that victims would not be re-victimized. Today we are here to fulfill that promise," said San Diego District Attorney Bonnie M. Dumanis.

The investigation began after an anonymous tip late last year to the Ramona Fire Resource Cen-

ter. Complaints of unlicensed public adjusters soliciting business in the Julian, Ramona and Crest communities had begun to surface. Investigators contacted the four families and found that the unlicensed adjusters had told them that the cost of adjusting services would only be 10% of any new money the insured received. However, the actual contract called for the adjuster to receive 10% of all money received from claims settlements.

After the investigation, Kapilow & Sons agreed to a final judgment of a civil complaint filed by the San Diego District Attorney's office. Without admitting wrongdoing, the company paid \$72,757.92 in restitution to the victims and \$55,950 in investigation costs and penalties. It also agreed to lifetime injunctions against further violations. If you are a wildfire survivor and believe you have been a victim of a public adjuster or any type of fraud, call the Department of Insurance hotline at 1-800-927-HELP

* * *

"When the fires raged... we promised that victims would not be re-victimized. Today we are here to fulfill that promise."

Disaster Preparation in the California state Legislature

It's been over a year since the fire, and many people are looking back to see what could be improved during the next disaster.

Last year insurance was a big issue and the legislation which was introduced reflected this issue. This year the legislation which is a direct result of the fire is regarding disaster preparedness at the governmental level.

One of the senators introducing such legislation is local senator, Nell Soto.

Due to a lack of organization after the fire, there was an inequity between what fire survivors got in some areas compared to others. For example, several areas in San Diego and even Lake Arrowhead has a long term "disaster recovery center" where fire survivors and disaster relief organizations and

even individuals offering support can meet. In other areas such as the San Bernardino valley, this does not exist and there is a greater amount of confusion out there regarding what is and is not available to survivors.

Legislation currently being introduced will be a starting point in equalizing this situation. Keep in touch for more information and exact bill language.



**Old Fire Recovery
Group**

*Old Fire Survivors
helping Old Fire Survivors*

The Old Fire Recovery Group is a group of survivors from the Old Fire who have banded together for a quicker and more informed recovery. We are dedicated to providing cost-free disaster recovery support and information.

We have also networked with fire survivors in other areas from past and present fires to find what solutions have worked for them. We realize that the Old Fire was not the first urban wildfire and it is not the last. We want to learn from the lessons of others to make our recovery as easy and informed as possible.

We hope to find assistance for survivors in these areas:

- Rebuilding
- Architects and Contractors
- Insurance
- Mental Health
- Survivor Discounts

If you are in need of assistance, please contact us so we can find help for you!

Lila Hayes

Upcoming workshops

For an updated schedule, visit our website at www.oldfirerecoverygroup.org or call us at 909-266-1459.



Date	Day	Topic	Location
Feb 13 2:00 PM	Sunday	Hiring and Working with Contractors” by Frank Williams of the BIA (Building Industry Assoc.)	Calvary Baptist Church 3701 Sierra Way
Feb 27 2:00 PM	Sunday	City and County Building Department Q&A Workshop with George Kehrer of CARE	Calvary Baptist Church 3701 Sierra Way
Mar 13 2:00 PM	Sunday	Workshop with George Kehrer of CARE	Calvary Baptist Church 3701 Sierra Way
Mar 27 2:00 PM	Sunday	Interior Design Basics with Denise Turner ASID Workshop with George Kehrer of CARE	Calvary Baptist Church 3701 Sierra Way

Please note that we are only meeting on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. Please call if you need assistance!

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Los materiales de The Old Fire Recovery Group están disponibles en inglés, y español. Por favor llame Ramona al 909-882-3258