

How to deal with Claims – Damp after an event

Scenario:

An insured event occurs, say storm damage to a roof where tiles are moved and water enters the roof cavity (area between roof covering and ceilings i.e among the rafters). The damage is immediately repaired and the damage being minimal, i.e. involves adjustment of a few tiles, no insurance claim is submitted at the time. Four weeks later, an owner returns from holiday and advises the trustees of damp above his ceiling and walls behind a built in cupboard causing a dank smell and appearance of mould. Let's assume that the owner immediately began efforts to dry the area by way of heater, fan and aeration which now seems to have dried the area however, damage to walls, built in cupboard and ceiling remains.

Background:

As we well know, "*Damp*" is not considered a claimable event. If a client reports damp, the insurance clerk should try to ascertain from the owner as to the cause of the damp. Usually, if an owner reports damp, the body corporate management would deal with it as a maintenance problem and seek out the cause. Say it is ascertained that roof waterproofing membrane was worn and needed repair, the damp being gradual, ordinarily there would not be a claim. The reason for claim rejection by the insurer would usually be twofold
1) Cause was wear and tear 2) occurred over an extended period of time.

We all know that **structural damp** is the gradual penetration of water through the porous areas of walls, cavities, bricks or other material making up the building structure.

Causes of such damp would usually be associated with Roof defects such as faulty flashing, cracked or moved, missing slates or tiles, faults in the brickwork or plaster works, porous bricks, defective damp proofing around windows and doors, blocked weep holes, poor cavities or poor paintwork / waterproofing.

Dealing with the claim

In this case however, we know that there was storm damage directly above the damaged area. We also know the date of the storm as well as details of the repair (repair invoice).

The common mistake most insurance clerks / portfolio managers make is they simply complete the word "damp" as the cause of the damage often to the detriment of the owner as straight "damp" claim would be rejected by the insurer. Accurate details and any additional information is vital in ensuring claim admission.

The issues to overcome here would be a) the delay in reporting and b) linking this "damp" to a specific claimable event.

The claim form should be completed as far as possible. The two important sections on the claim form would be "Detailed Description of damage to property" and "What caused the loss / damage / injury?"

The form should be more or less completed as follows – see "correct way":

The **correct way** of completing these sections on a claim form under these circumstances:

Detailed description of damage to property	<i>Water damage to ceiling above cupboard - Repair (R,5250)</i>
	<i>Water damage to cupboard carcass - swelling of melamine / chipboard - replace (R3,500)</i>
	<i>Wall - paint bubbling / peeling - restore - (R3,000)</i>
	<i>See attached quotes - Total claim approximately (R11,750)</i>
What caused the loss / damage / injury?	<i>Direct resulting damage from storm which occurred on 15 May 2016. Repairs immediately undertaken (repair invoice dated 20 May 2016 from ABC Roofing refers).</i>
	<i>Attached report from Repair contractors confirming / supporting</i>
	<i>Cause to be water damage resulting from storm damage to roof</i>

The **incorrect way** of completing these sections on a claim form under these circumstances:

Detailed description of damage to property	<i>damp</i>
What caused the loss / damage / injury?	<i>Recent rains</i>

The managing agent / insurance clerk should motivate perhaps with an explanation from the owner by email or statement saying something like:

“My name is Joe Bloggs and I am the owner of Apartment 1 at Lighthouse Body Corporate. I returned from holiday on 14 June 2016 and found damage to my cupboards which were in perfect condition before departing on 10 May 2016. A recent storm (15 May 2016) caused damage to the roof just above the damaged area of my section. Written confirmation of the repair (invoice) as well as contractors report and repair quotes are enclosed. Furthermore I can confirm that I have dried out the area and it seems clear that the cause of the loss (roof) was repaired effectively as last night’s rain caused no further damage.”

The contractor’s roof repair invoice should reflect the cause i.e. “Storm damage” plus description of repairs.

The quotation for repairs to the damaged section should include:

1. Description of proposed repair job as well as measurements and costs per line item
2. Opinion as to cause of the damage e.g. “ Repairs of resulting water damage from storm of 15/5/2016”

Good practice would be to always advise the insurer after a storm event of possible resulting damage to sections nearby thus noting / intimating a claim in case of late notification. Insurers are however, usually reasonable in this regard.

Always good to provide more than one quote. The more information provided will allow the insurer to possibly agree to settlement without a lost adjuster's input if everything is provided and the claims manager at the insurance company can clearly see that the amount claimed is in line. [Always provide photographs](#). From photographs and informative quotes with quantities of materials reflecting will often allow a claims manager to make a desktop assessment.

A properly completed claim form with all the facts is the sure fire way to have a claim settled in record time. Quick service reflects well on both Addsure and the Management of the Body corporate – we are all only as good as our claims service!

[CLICK HERE](#) to Return to Addsure's Home Page