



WHEN TO MAKE A WATER LEAK HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE CLAIM

CALL US: 949-878-9525



- ✓ What types of water damage are covered by insurance?
- ✓ What types of water damage aren't covered by insurance?
- ✓ Why is coverage denied?
- ✓ The takeaway

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Roughly one in 50 homes will have a water damage claim every year, according to the Insurance Information Institute. Water damage can be caused by a number of scenarios, including frozen pipes, storm damage and faulty plumbing systems.

Most home insurance policies cover water leak damage, but there are many exceptions. Some scenarios, like gradual leaks, are specifically excluded from standard policies. If you have a water damage claim, it's important to know what your insurance policy does and does not cover.

What types of water damage are covered by insurance?

Water damage is a common problem in homes, and it can be caused by a variety of issues. However, there are only a handful of water damage scenarios that will be fully covered by your homeowners insurance. These types of water damage include:

- Sudden or accidental water discharge
- Storm-related water damage
- Accidental sewer backup or overflow (you may need an endorsement)
- Flood damage (if you have flood insurance)

Homeowners insurance will only cover water leaks and water damage if the cause is sudden or accidental. For example, if a pipe bursts out of nowhere, the damage will likely be covered by your insurance policy. Gradual water damage, which occurs slowly and over time, is not covered by homeowners insurance.

Additionally, some homeowners insurance policies will cover resulting damages from water leaks. Resulting damages occur because of the initial damage. For instance, if a pipe bursts and the water damage destroys a nearby wall, you might be able to get reimbursed for the cost of repairing the wall.

However, not every homeowners insurance policy covers resulting damage, so check your policy's wording to see exactly what is included. If resulting damage is covered, keep in mind that it will not extend coverage to sources of the water leak. So if a pipe burst and caused resulting damage, the cost of a replacement pipe wouldn't necessarily be covered.

What types of water damage aren't covered by insurance?

The main type of water damage that isn't covered by insurance is gradual damage. Unlike accidental or sudden damage, gradual damage is caused by normal wear and tear, which isn't covered by insurance. With time, your home's pipes and plumbing system start to deteriorate, which makes them more susceptible to water leaks.

When it comes to gradual damage, there are a handful of scenarios that are common, but aren't covered by insurance. Some examples include:

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1. Lack of maintenance: If you had a leaky faucet, failed to repair it, and it causes extensive water damage in the future, it would not be covered.
2. Broken pipes: If a pipe breaks due to gradual damage, the water damage wouldn't be covered by insurance.
3. Mold and rotting: Mold, rotting or corrosion that occurs in your home due to water leaks is not covered.
4. Foundation seepage: If a crack in your home's foundation lets water in, your standard policy does not cover the damage.
5. Roof damage: If a tree falls on your roof and lets water in, you would be covered for the roof repairs and the water damage. However, resulting damages, like mold, most likely would not be covered.

Nearly every homeowners insurance policy excludes coverage for wear and tear, and gradual damage, regardless of your coverage limits and what type of policy you have. However, it's possible for some policies to cover gradual damage.

To find out if your insurance covers gradual damage, you'll have to check the specific wording in your policy statements. An insurance agent can help you interpret the policy's wording and tell you exactly what is or is not covered by your insurance.

Why is coverage denied?

If you file a claim for water damage, it's possible your claim could be denied. One of the biggest reasons why water leak claims get denied is because the damage is found to be gradual.

Water damage can seem sudden, when it's actually been happening over a long period of time. Pipes and plumbing systems aren't easily visible, hidden within your home's walls. If a leak was slowly building up, you likely wouldn't notice it until a major water damage incident occurs.

Additionally, you might only be covered for certain water damages if you have an endorsement policy. If you file a claim and get denied, ask your insurance company if there is an add-on policy that would have covered this type of damage. If they don't offer a water damage endorsement, consider finding a different insurer with better coverage options.

If you believe your water damage claim should have been approved based on your coverage, you can always get a second opinion. Find an independent insurance professional or consumer advocacy organization to review the claim. You can also contact your state insurance commissioner to file a formal complaint.

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Tips for filing a successful water leak insurance claim

If your home sustains water leak damage, here's how you can increase your chances of filing a claim successfully:

1. Document the leak with photos of the initial and resulting damage
2. Control the leak and make minor repairs to prevent further damage
3. Contact a contractor or independent loss assessor to determine the extent of the damage and the cost of repairs

In addition, make sure to do regular maintenance on your home throughout the year. Keep your receipts for repairs and maintenance services, so you can show them to your insurance company in the event of a claim.

The takeaway

1. Home insurance policies cover water damage when it is sudden or accidental.
2. Most insurance policies do not cover gradual water damage that occurs over time.
3. You can find out if your insurance covers gradual damage by reviewing your policy's specific wording.
4. In order to get coverage for water damage, you may need an endorsement.
5. To successfully file a water damage claim, record the damages, make minor repairs and have the damage assessed by a contractor or loss assessor.

If you file a claim and it gets denied, contact your insurance provider to learn why. It's possible that you might need an endorsement policy to get water damage coverage. The best practice is always maintenance and proper servicing of potential sources for water damage, as well as evaluating your coverage to see where gaps may need to be filled with endorsements or add-ons.