

Once A Storm Threat Becomes A Watch Or Warning, It Is Too Late To Get A New Insurance Policy In Florida Or Make Changes To Existing Insurance Coverage

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INSURANCE INFORMATION INSTITUTE

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TAMPA, August 23, 2012 — With Tropical Storm Isaac posing no immediate threat to Florida, there is still time to obtain a new insurance policy or make changes to existing coverage. However, once an official storm warning or watch for Florida is issued by the [National Hurricane Center](#) (NHC), it's too late. The [Insurance Information Institute](#) (I.I.I.) and [Florida Insurance Council](#) (FIC) want consumers to know that insurance coverage decisions must be made well before a storm approaches. While all insurers stop writing new business and restrict coverage changes if

a storm is imminent, the triggers for coverage suspensions differ for those insured by private insurance companies and for those insured by state-run Citizens Property Insurance Corp.

Most private insurance companies rely on the NHC's issuance of tropical storm or hurricane watches or warnings, and they suspend writing new policies or allowing people to purchase additional coverage only in those areas of the state impacted by the watch or warning. This means restrictions only occur in certain geographical areas of the state. Citizens Property Insurance, however, suspends writing coverage throughout the state when a storm impacts any part of Florida.

Temporarily suspending the ability for people to change coverage or get a new policy when a storm is imminent is a long-time practice. It prevents an insurance purchase from being made when the chances of having damage from a hurricane are greatly increased. "Insurance is available because the possibility of loss is unforeseen or unknown," said Lynne McChristian, Florida representative of the I.I.I. "No one would offer insurance protection if a loss were a sure thing, and that is much more likely to happen when a storm is on the horizon."

Being unable to buy a new policy only affects those who don't already have insurance coverage. In other words, people who neglected to purchase insurance for their home, vehicle or boat will not be able to change their mind when storm watches and warnings exist in their area. "For example, a boat owner cannot decide to get coverage for an uninsured boat at the last minute," said Sam Miller, executive vice president for FIC. "People who scramble for insurance when a storm is bearing down will not be able to find it."

Before a storm watch or warning is issued, policyholders are urged to review their insurance coverage and talk to their insurance company or agent to make adjustments. To learn if Citizens Property Insurance is operating under storm restrictions, its policyholders should access the Citizens website (<http://www.citizensfla.com>), click on the Policyholders tab, and look for the status graphic.

The I.I.I. and FIC offer these reminders about the definitions of a weather watch and warning:

- **A weather watch means conditions are right for dangerous weather.** It means "watch out" for events that could come and go quickly, such as a tornado or thunderstorm, and for tropical weather that is not yet a threat. It means be ready to act.
- **A weather warning means dangerous weather is on the doorstep.** A warning means it's time to evacuate or move to shelter.

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Facts and Statistics: [Florida Hurricane Fact File](#)

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