

# Ready for Anything

Believe it or not, floods happen everywhere. How prepared are you?

The thunder on that July day in 2001 was loud and dangerously close, recalls Wanda Blankenship. Then came the rains cascading from the West Virginia sky—almost 11 inches in a few short hours.

Fortunately, Blankenship had purchased flood insurance to safeguard her two businesses, a convenience store and a supermarket. The insurance helped cover losses from the flood and repairs to the stores.

Her house did not fair as well. Water filled the Mullens, W.Va., home up to the kitchen cabinets. The home couldn't be salvaged. And it got worse.

"I really intended to get flood insurance on the home but never did," Blankenship says. "It was just one of those things that I kept putting off, thinking that it would be okay."

## Do you need flood insurance?

Blankenship's not alone. Uninsured flood disaster victims often echo the same sentiment. Or, like many people, they assume that regular homeowners insurance covers flood damage.

"Consumers don't realize until it's too late that all basic homeowners insurance policies exclude flood damage," says Terry McConnell, manager of ERIE's Personal Lines Underwriting. "Only flood insurance will cover losses in the event of a flood."

What's more, the risk of flooding is, literally, everywhere.

According to that National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), flooding occurred in all 50 states in 2006. Already this year, flooding has been so severe in parts of Indiana, Tennessee,

Kentucky, Nevada, Missouri, Hawaii and Arkansas that it led to federal disaster declarations.

In fact, a third of all claims submitted to the NFIP are on policies in communities considered to be low to moderate risk areas. New housing developments are also especially susceptible, particularly if natural runoff paths have been diverted or trees have been leveled to make room for houses.

"When consumers think about floods, they may imagine hurricanes and severe storms that cause massive flooding," says Terry McConnell. "However, winter storms and melting snow are the most common and overlooked types of floods."

## Purchasing coverage

Depending on where you live and your risk of flood, you may be able to buy coverage for your home and its contents for as little as \$119 annually. You may even want to consider flood insurance if you rent to protect your contents.

Flood insurance is available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA)

National Flood Insurance Program and Erie Insurance. Talk to your ERIE agent to find out how you can obtain this coverage. And if interested, do so sooner rather than later. There's a 30-day waiting period before the policy goes into effect. ●

### what are the chances?

**Your home is three times more likely to be damaged by flood than fire.**

Source: National Flood Insurance Program

