Property Insurance Checklist

First-party property insurance generally covers physical damage to property owned by the policyholder, typically called “covered property.” It typically includes protection from loss of business income, through various business-interruption (BI) coverages, which include coverage, contingent BI extra expense, civil authority, ingress-egress, and other coverages. These coverages are subject to the conditions and exclusions of the insurance policy.

This checklist outlines some of the steps that are commonly required for presenting a claim under a first-party property insurance policy, and some of the documentation that may be necessary. Commercial property insurance policies, in particular, may differ greatly in their provisions, and policyholders need to review the particular requirements, restrictions, and exclusions of their policies.

1. **GATHER INSURANCE POLICIES AND RELATED INSURANCE RECORDS.**

   If you cannot find your policy, contact your insurance company or insurance broker or other agents (like lawyers who may have copies) to request a copy.

2. **GIVE NOTICE TO YOUR INSURANCE AGENT AND INSURANCE COMPANY(IES) IMMEDIATELY, PREFERABLY IN WRITING.**

   Notice should provide at least the following basic information:

   - Name and address of the policyholder.
   - Location of loss.
   - Time of loss.
   - Contact name, phone, and fax numbers.
   - Brief description of the loss.

   Check the policy’s condition on “Notice” or “Duties in Case of Loss” to see what other additional information the contract requires with the notice documentation information in addition to that listed above.

3. **COLLECT AND ORGANIZE BACKUP DOCUMENTS.**

   - Vital records, ledgers, and other proof supporting valuation.
   - Photos or videos as proof of damage.

4. **PREPARE A PROOF OF LOSS.**

   - Provide details identifying the property destroyed or damaged, and document the amount of loss incurred. Generally, any information substantiating the claim (photographs, receipts, records) can become part of your proof of loss.
   - Check with your insurance company and check your insurance policy for the specific information required. Some insurance companies may have a detailed list of documents they seek or require you to fill out a particular form.
   - Make sure the proof of loss is submitted timely, or ask for an extension in writing. Check the policy provisions addressing the proof of loss.
   - Particularly for a business-interruption loss, consider obtaining help from an accountant to evaluate and present the loss.
   - Check the valuation provisions of the policy.
5. **SUBMIT YOUR PROOF OF LOSS, PHOTOS, AND REPORTS TO THE INSURANCE COMPANY TIMELY AND IN WRITING; AND ASSIST THE INSURER IN ITS INVESTIGATION.**

6. **“COOPERATE.”** PROPERTY INSURANCE POLICIES TYPICALLY INCLUDE A PROVISION ENTITLED “DUTIES IN THE EVENT OF LOSS” THAT ALLOWS AN INSURANCE COMPANY TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CLAIM WITH THE POLICYHOLDER’S COOPERATION.

For example, it may require the policyholder or any additional insured to:

- Submit, if requested, to interviews of the policyholder in a process often called “examinations under oath” (EUO).
- Allow the insurer to inspect the property damaged or destroyed.
- Take reasonable steps to protect the property damaged or destroyed.

Courts generally have enforced such provisions. Consult an advisor with regard to any questions.

7. **IN CASE OF A DISPUTE, INITIATE LITIGATION BEFORE THE PERIOD SPECIFIED IN THE “SUIT LIMITATION” CONDITION WHICH COURTS HAVE HELD TO BE A CONTRACTUAL STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS. HIRE COUNSEL WHO ARE EXPERIENCED IN LITIGATING CLAIMS FOR INSURANCE COVERAGE.**