

Insure against wildfires, earthquakes and other disasters

*Submitted by Barbara Roths, Family Consumer Sciences Agent, Butler County Extension Office.
Information by Elizabeth Kiss, with Connor Orrock and Katie Allen, K-State Research and Extension*

Insurance is an important safeguard. However, it is easy to get overwhelmed with the insurance process, with all the options available. The recent tornadoes and wildfires in Kansas remind us that it's important to have insurance to protect our homes and other buildings. And recent seismic activity in Kansas and Oklahoma may have you wondering about earthquake insurance.

Know the Details of Your Policy

"It is important to be familiar with the details of all your insurance policies, so that you know what you are covered for," said Elizabeth Kiss, associate professor in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University. "In regard to policies that cover wildfires, floods or earthquakes, ...know what triggers them and when you can file a claim."

Policyholders should be familiar with the **perils** covered, which are the causes of the loss. Some **common perils** on a policy are fire and theft. Typically flood, earthquake, war and nuclear accidents are NOT included, but can be added separately.

Kiss, a family resource management specialist for K-State Research and Extension, said the fastest way to see if you have earthquake insurance or to change your policy to get earthquake insurance is to contact your insurance agent.

Guidelines for flood insurance coverage are contained in the National Flood Insurance Program (<https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program>). Homeowners, renters and businesses are eligible if their community participates in the NFIP. The average flood insurance policy costs about \$700 per year, Kiss said. "Many places that experience flooding are not actually in areas where you are eligible," she said. "While the program is subsidized, it is still relatively expensive."

Review Your Insurance Policies Every Year

Kiss stressed the importance of reviewing your insurance policies at least once a year, before renewing your policies. As the value of possessions changes, it is critical that you are neither over- nor under-insured. Your coverage should be up-to-date.

"There is a difference between what you paid for your house and what it would cost to rebuild," Kiss said. "To rebuild a house is probably more expensive than what was paid for it if the house is several years old."

How Can I Save Money on the Cost of My Policy?

You can lower your premium (cost of policy) by having a higher deductible. However, if you need to use your policy, this means you'll have to pay more money "up front" or "out of pocket" before the insurance monies become available to you. Ask your agent about potential discounts, as well as policy limitations.

Homeowners' Insurance: Property vs. Liability Coverage

"Your homeowner's insurance usually covers property and structures such as your home and garage," Kiss said. "You'll also want to know what kind of personal property is covered inside the home and garage." Ask about specific coverage for outbuildings.

Liability coverage is needed in case anyone gets injured on your property or if your property causes injury to someone else.

For more information about insurance and how to choose a policy, visit the Insurance Information Institute online: <http://www.iii.org/> For information about items related to family resource management, contact K-State Research and Extension, Butler County at: 206 N. Griffith, El Dorado, KS 67042 316.321.9660 www.butler.ksu.edu .