

**GEORGE DALE**  
Commissioner of Insurance  
State Fire Marshal

**LEE HARRELL**  
Deputy Commissioner



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**  
Mississippi Insurance Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

George Dale, Commissioner of Insurance/State Fire Marshal  
Mississippi Insurance Department  
Jackson, Mississippi  
Tuesday, August 30, 2005

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Visit MID's website: <http://www.doi.state.ms.us>

### **DALE ASKS FOR ASSISTANCE AND PATIENCE IN HANDLING INSURANCE CLAIMS**

Mississippi Insurance Commissioner George Dale and his staff extend their thoughts and prayers to all Mississippians who have suffered damage as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Dale said his office started last week making contact with the insurance industry to be sure they were getting ready for the storm and had sufficient resources and staff to handle any damage.

However, Dale says I don't think anyone could foresee or predict the severity of the damage that we are seeing in the State of Mississippi. The insurance companies are ready to send in catastrophic loss teams as soon as they are allowed in. However, in many of the more heavily damaged areas they are still conducting search and rescue missions looking for survivors. In fact, Dale stated that part of his staff in the State Fire Marshal's Office and the State Fire Academy are working on the emergency teams with Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

Dale asks that everyone be patient and remember numerous local insurance company offices have damage and may be without electricity. All of the insurance companies are ready to bring whatever staff is needed to ensure that all claims are promptly and properly handled.

The Mississippi Insurance Department will be setting up emergency offices where needed throughout Mississippi. We have already been contacted by other Insurance Departments and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners volunteering to send their employees to assist our office in working with our consumers. We may be calling on these volunteers in the next few weeks after we get a better understanding of the devastation in Mississippi.

**Dale also recommends the following steps for losses or damages:**

- \* If you have damage you should contact your agent or insurance company. If you are unable to do that, please contact the Mississippi Insurance Department at 1-800-562-2957 and we can contact your insurance company for you. We will also be putting out numbers and locations of emergency claim operations for all of the major writers in Mississippi.
- \* Please keep any receipts for expenses you incurred in making emergency repairs.
- \* Before entering any damaged property please inspect and be careful for any gas, live electrical wires and structural damage that could collapse.
- \* Take pictures or video of any damage.
- \* Where possible and safe you should make emergency repairs to prevent any further damage.
- \* Before hiring any contractors please check to make sure they are licensed. Any one with questions regarding contractors should contact the Mississippi State Board of Contractors at 1-800-880-6161.
- \* If anyone sees or suspects price gouging they should contact their local law enforcement or the Mississippi Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-281-4418.

Dale also urges everyone to be patient in this very critical time of need because we are all suffering. The public utilities will be getting to everyone as soon as they can, but remember that Mississippi has hundreds of thousands of consumers without electricity, water and phones. Also, be aware there have been some stories of gas stations running out of gasoline, if you don't have to travel, please stay off the roads. Also, before returning to homes in South Mississippi, check with law enforcement officials to ensure access to the impacted area.