

Flood insurance leads to happy endings for two coastal homeowners

# after the flood

Houston, Texas meteorologist Frank Billingsley knows plenty about the danger of flooding in coastal communities. His own home was just barely spared when Tropical Storm Allison dumped 40 inches of rain on the region in 2001, and in 2008 Hurricane Ike sent more than three feet of water rushing into a beautiful house he had just built in the coastal town of Galveston.

"In Houston I wasn't insured for flooding," he remembers, "so the entire time I was on the air reporting about the storm I had to worry about impending financial disaster at my own house. It was a scary lesson that paid off – I had a policy when the water hit Galveston, and saved \$9,000 in out-of-pocket expenses."

For Norfolk, Virginia resident Laurie Fox, the scare came not from a hurricane but from a Nor'easter last November that swept an onslaught of water and muck from a nearby tidal marsh into her home's foundation, destroying her heating and air conditioning system.

"It was heartbreaking to see the kind of damage nature can

do," she notes. "Fortunately, I was forewarned and forearmed. My agents at State Farm had recommended I obtain a policy even though I was only in a moderate risk zone. I've thanked them 100 times for everything they did to put my home back together and can't imagine how I would have gotten through this without them."

Billingsley and Fox remain staunch advocates for flood insurance, which is made available through FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in partnership with insurance companies nationwide.

Talk to your agent about flood insurance, and visit [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov) to learn more.

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—Laurie Fox

## key facts about floods

- ✓ Only flood insurance covers damage from floods; most homeowners policies offer little or no protection.
- ✓ Flooding can happen anywhere. Approximately 25 percent of all flood claims come from moderate-to-low risk areas.
- ✓ A few inches of water can cost tens of thousands of dollars in damage. The average flood claim was almost \$27,000 in 2009.
- ✓ Policies can be surprisingly affordable. The average flood insurance premium is \$566 per year, and can be as low as \$119 a year in moderate-to-low risk areas.
- ✓ Don't wait until the waters rise. Most flood insurance policies take 30 days to go into effect.



FRANK BILLINGSLEY



LAURIE FOX