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Florida public adjuster reacts to insurance commissioner's report on rising sinkhole claims

Florida public adjuster Tutwiler and Associates warns policyholders to educate themselves on dangers of losing sinkhole coverage following a recent Office of Insurance Regulation report on this year's claims uptick.

(PR NewsChannel) / November 12, 2010 / TAMPA, Fla. / In his recent presentation on sinkhole findings to the Florida Cabinet, Florida Insurance Commissioner Kevin McCarty spoke about the increase in sinkhole claims that "he attributed the trend in part to the role of public adjusters" but acknowledged that "public adjusters in many cases play a valuable service, particularly when a company has been nonresponsive."

"While the commissioner's report reflected a rise in sinkhole claims, the root cause of why more claims were being reported was not identified," says Charles R. "Dick" Tutwiler, founder and CEO of Florida public adjuster firm Tutwiler and Associates. "Clearly, people are more aware about sinkhole damages given all the publicity from insurance company officials and media reports of sinkhole losses and this fact alone may account for the increase number of sinkhole claims."

The licensed and certified public adjuster Tutwiler and Associates operates throughout Florida and in nine other states, as well as in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Those with the firm say they are pleased with McCarty's positive report on public adjusters, who help those consumers who have experienced sinkhole losses.

While in the past, most of the media's reporting has been on the insurance industry representative's view which has been to try and imply that some of the claims may be illegitimate. But in fact, insurance companies have failed to report little suspected fraud to the Department of Financial Services, those with Tutwiler and Associates say. The department has received 203 complaints of possible fraud since 2006 which is less than 1% of all the claims that were included in the "data call" for sinkhole information. The public adjusters at Tutwiler & Associates believe multiple factors have led to this increase in claim filings for sinkhole losses, including weather events, greater public awareness, policyholder fear of losing coverage, and urban growth in sinkhole prone areas.

Tutwiler and Associates encourages all Florida policyholders to speak with their insurance agents and their legislative representative about how to avoid the ramifications of having no sinkhole coverage for damages at a time when insurers are eliminating or trying to reduce this very important coverage. Homeowners should still have the right to investigate whether a sinkhole caused serious cracks in walls, foundations, and other parts of a structure, says Tutwiler. He adds that elected officials should preserve the rights of policyholders who face insurers working to undermine the coverage for a sinkhole loss that was put in place by the Florida legislature years ago when the original law was passed. Sinkhole damage is a real and known problem to property owners in Florida and the damages should not be dismissed as minor cracks for what may be a homeowner's biggest asset.

For more information, please visit www.PublicAdjuster.com.

About Tutwiler and Associates: Tutwiler and Associates is a firm of public adjusters licensed in 10 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands specializing in commercial and residential property loss adjusting. With well in excess of \$113 million in client success stories over a 27-year history, the Florida public adjusters work exclusively on behalf of policyholders to help them achieve the maximum settlement amounts they can fairly and honestly recover based on their loss and their policy provisions. Professional help from the adjusters at Tutwiler and Associates can help clients obtain a fair recovery under their policy. The Gulf Coast based public adjuster firm is committed to public service and strives to educate its clients about commercial and residential windstorm and hurricane losses, flood damage, fire, smoke and water damage, collapse, hidden decay and mold losses, sinkholes, loss of stock, and business interruption.