

Four questions to ask before hiring a public adjuster

It is important to do your homework before you hire any type of professional. Ask these four questions before hiring a public adjuster.

1. Is the public adjuster licensed in Oregon?

Public adjusters must be licensed. Visit the Oregon Division of Financial Regulation's get help page at dfr.oregon.gov or call 888-877-4894 (toll-free) to check the status of their license. A public adjuster needs to be licensed individually or as part of a firm.

2. How are the public adjuster's fees structured?

Most public adjusters charge contingency fees of 5 percent to 15 percent of your insurance settlement. Any fee you agree to pay should be based on the needs of your specific claim.

Before signing a contract, be sure you understand what portions of the settlement the public adjuster will charge fees for services. For example, will the adjuster charge a fee for payments you receive for additional living expenses or any payments the insurance company has agreed to pay before you hired the public adjuster. If you only want the public adjuster to handle certain parts of your claim, negotiate that up front.

It is also important to know if the adjuster or their firm will be listed on every check you receive from the insurance company.

3. What is the process for terminating the contract before a settlement is finalized?

Before signing a contract, be sure you understand if the contract can be terminated before a settlement is finalized, and what it will cost you. Make sure it is clearly written in the agreement.

4. What references does the public adjuster have from the past three years?

Make sure the public adjuster you consider hiring provides you with references of customers they have helped in the last three years. Try to talk to at least three references and ask about their claim experience with the public adjuster.

Some good questions to ask the reference are:

- Was the fee calculation easy to understand and fair?
- Which coverage categories did the adjuster charge a fee on?
- Was the adjuster responsive to your questions?
- Did the adjuster work directly on the claim for you?