

Action 9 investigates water damage company and gets results

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ORLANDO, Fla. - Many homeowners face serious water damage repairs after Hurricane Matthew, and signing the wrong contract could really hurt them.

Two weeks after buying her first house, Danielle Jimenez discovered a disaster under her laminate flooring.

“I was probably sobbing for two hours,” said Jimenez.

An engineer found a builder's defect had caused water penetration through the concrete slab. It ruined flooring, cabinets and part of the walls.

The first step was drying out the house. Jimenez found United Water Restoration, which told her that her homeowners insurance covered everything.

“I said, 'But how much does it cost?' And he said, 'It's okay. It's okay.' So I didn't know how much,” said Jimenez.

United Water Restoration took over her insurance claim and then set up a dozen dehumidifiers for nine days and removed her baseboards.

But her insurance company denied the claim as pre-existing damage.

The contractor's bill arrived, and it was for nearly \$18,000.

"I certainly, for \$18,000, would have said, 'Hold. Let's put on the brakes here,'" said Jimenez.

She disputed the charge, but she said the company didn't call back.

When the family picked the contractor, United Water Restoration was rated A+ by the Better Business Bureau. But not anymore. Its membership was revoked, after its sister company was rated F.

Other complaints against United complaints also involve billing.

Action 9's Todd Ulrich went to the company's Winter Park office for answers.

"She said there was never an estimate and never agreed to that. How did it turn out so high?" asked Ulrich.

"Have to ask my corporate office," replied the manager.

Later, another company manager said Jimenez's case was going to be reviewed anyway. And now both sides have worked out their differences. Danielle Jimenez withdrew her complaint, and she does not have to pay the \$17,500 bill for work that was already done.

Many restoration and roofing companies will want to take over the insurance claim by asking homeowners to sign an assignment of benefits.

If you assign your benefits, consumer experts say, it's good to have your insurance adjuster involved first.

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