

# ICA warns of disaster chasers after catastrophic Halloween hailstorm

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By Roxanne Libatique



The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) warns of disaster chasers preying on the victims of the recent hailstorm that struck south-eastern Queensland on Halloween.

Within hours of the recent SE Queensland hailstorm, disaster chasers had already started seeking damaged homes to exploit vulnerable homeowners, according to the ICA.

Disaster chasers will offer urgent inspections or repairs for cash, but they leave the work either poorly done or incomplete. They usually don't have a building license, trade qualifications, professional indemnity insurance, or an ABN. Some have also been known to use standover tactics to demand money or falsely claim that an insurer has sent them.

“Disaster chasers emerge soon after a natural disaster and target householders who have been affected. They leave many families, elderly, and disabled Australians much worse off, with large bills and homes that remain badly damaged,” said ICA chief executive officer Andrew Hall.

“Insurers have received reports that disaster chasers are already active in the areas worst-affected by the recent hailstorms in south-east Queensland.”

Some disaster chasers operate as small businesses, such as roofers. They pressure the homeowner to sign a contract on the spot and promise that an insurer will pay for the work. However, insurers don't usually pay for unnecessary or cosmetic repairs as they will only pay for approved work covered by the policy.

“Disaster chasers are a menace and are becoming bolder. Identifying disaster chasers and reporting them to the relevant authorities will help bring them to account. And if they threaten, harass or intimidate anyone, police should be notified immediately,” Hall concluded.