

FAQs About NFIP Standard Flood Insurance Policy (SFIP) Coverage

What Does an SFIP Really Offer Me?

The NFIP SFIP is a flood insurance policy that has limits on the types of causes of loss it covers and what property losses (and other expenses) it covers. If you're thinking of getting flood insurance, understanding your flood risk (which [zone](#) your building is in, shown on your [flood map](#)), how the structure of your building affects your premium (see our "Lowest Floor" fact-sheet), and what the SFIP actually covers will help you plan for any loss.



Understanding SFIP Coverage (SFIP § II)

Q: What's a flood?

A: **An SFIP only covers defined floods**, which FEMA describes as any "general and temporary condition where 2 or more acres of normally dry land or properties are inundated by water or mudflow." Thus, there can be flooding in your home that is not covered by an SFIP.

Q: What is earth movement? Does my policy cover damage caused by it?

A: **No**. Damage caused by earth movement (described as "[earthquake](#), [landslide](#), [land subsidence](#), [sinkholes](#), destabilization, movement of land resulting from the accumulation of water in sub surface land areas, and gradual [erosion](#)"), even if the product of a flood, will likely be **excluded**. Thus, damage to a building's foundation usually leads to engineers arguing about "long-term settlement," and "differential settlement" due to "soil saturation" or "densification of soils;" these are phrases that mean NFIP wants to use the exclusion to deny you coverage.

Q: What is a basement?

A: A basement is "an area of [a] building having its floor subgrade on all sides," **even if only by a matter of inches**. A building with a basement generally is more expensive to insure. **There is also limited structure and contents coverage** for basements (SFIP § III(A)(8) & III(B)(2)).

Q: What's a building, and what's a dwelling?

A: **A policy covers one dwelling**. A dwelling is a "building designed for use as a residence"; for most homeowners that means a single condo or a 1-4 family home. A building must have at least two rigid walls, a roof, and be secured to its site.

A dwelling's status as a primary residence and 1-family or multiple-family dwelling affects many factors, including fees, payment methodology, and rates.

NYLAG's Storm Response Unit is available to assist homeowners. Contact us at (212) 381-0701 or StormHelp@nylag.org