



Rodents blamed for thousands in damages at storage facility

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SANFORD, Fla. - A local man just discovered his belongings were badly damaged inside a storage unit and his insurance policy won't protect him. He says rodents caused thousands of dollars in damages, but the company's insurance covers just a fraction of his losses. Before moving, Jim Shupe rented a storage unit for his valuable hunting collection. Months later he discovered rodent droppings plastered across the floor. Mice and rats had eaten pieces of his mounted animals that had cost thousands in taxidermist charges. "I can't tell you how devastating it is," he said. "It's utterly devastating." Shupe paid \$240 a month to Public Storage in Sanford for a climate-controlled unit. "Did you assume it was safe to store your property?" Action 9's Todd Ulrich asked. "Absolutely," Shupe said. He showed Ulrich droppings throughout the unit and a rodent trap nearby was broken open and being used as a door stop. Shupe found out the storage company would not pay for anything due to a section of the contract, one many renters do not read. The contract says the renters are responsible unless they have insurance, which is a storage industry standard. Shupe thought he would be covered because he had bought coverage sold by Public Storage. After filing a claim, though, he discovered that the insurance limit for rodent damage just \$250 and that's after a \$100 deductible. When Shupe did not get a company response, he called Action 9. Ulrich went to the Sanford office to get answers. "What can the company do for him?" Ulrich asked. "Oh, that's why we provide our insurance program," replied a manager. "He doesn't feel he really had coverage for what happened here," Ulrich said.

"Ummm, all right," the manager said. Managers claim there is routine rodent control in all buildings. Action 9's calls to the district manager's office were not returned. "Because I'm the total loser in this, there is really no recourse," Shupe said. The Public Storage contract is standard in the industry and any insurance coverage is very limited. Chances are homeowners insurance won't cover this kind of loss. Customers are urged to carefully check out any storage location, before renting a unit.