

# insurance

## NIA introduces USSD verification method, registers three million vehicles

Stories: Nike Popoola

**T**HE Nigeria Insurers Association has introduced an Unstructured Supplementary Service Data that motorists can use to verify the authenticity of their vehicle insurance certificates.

During the official introduction of the USSD code in Lagos, the Chairman, NIA, Mr Tope Smart, said the industry had registered over three million vehicles on its Nigerian Insurance Industry Database.

Smart said, "The USSD is a Global System for mobile communication technology used to send text between a mobile phone and an application programme in the network. It works independent of Internet connectivity. In this instance, any mobile phone (not necessarily a smartphone) would communicate with the NIID system to retrieve policy status whenever required."

While explaining further, he said a motorist could send sms on any network using the code "\*565\*11#."

He said motorist could verify their motor insurance for a fee of N20 using "\*565\*11#" to any network without having Internet

network on the phone.

Smart said that the USSD represented another giant step towards bringing insurance closer to the people and ultimately eliminating fake insurance certificates in the market.

He recalled that in 2010, the association took a major step towards eliminating fake insurance certificates in the market through the introduction of the NIID.

The database, he added, went live in 2011 and insurance policies obtained by motorists could be checked online on the Internet and through dedicated hand-held devices.

He said the objective of the NIID was intended to serve as an authentic database of the Nigerian insurance industry data, provide qualitative statistics/analysis of the industry data; as a vehicle for easy verification of genuine insurance certificates by all stakeholders; and to reduce incidences of fraudulent insurance transactions especially for motor and marine policies.

The chairman of the association said the industry had continued to reap the benefits of the scheme.

Prior to the establishment

of the platform, he said cloning and faking of insurance certificates were a thriving business but the establishment of the database had assisted the industry in reducing the incident of fake insurance certificates in the market.

He said, "The platform has been enhanced to include stolen vehicles and claims reporting modules in response to the challenges thrown up by actions of suspected fraudsters

## WAPIC introduces ombudsman to boost consumer confidence

**A**S part of the efforts to boost insurance confidence, Wapic Insurance Plc, has established an ombudsman desk where displeased policyholders can lodge their complaints.

During the inauguration in Lagos on Friday, the company said that the ombudsman would investigate and mediate in disputes between a company and its customers across the country.

The Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer of the company, Mrs Yinka Adekoya, said the ombudsman would ensure fair hearing from both parties, and settle every dispute amicably

that made multiple claims with the intent to defraud the industry over the last few years."

Smart noted that the NIID platform had been operational nationwide, but with challenges in verification in areas with poor Internet coverage.

"Verification of motor certificates through the dedicated devices became highly impaired due to the

customers of the best medium to channel their disputes and build confidence in existing and prospective customers on the firm's services and ability to handle their expectations.

"Our customers should know that we are continuously transparent in our business operations. Our goal is to continue to strengthen business relationships," she added.

She said the desk was independent, and its resolutions would not be manipulated. According to her, the desk reports to the management and board and that it has been empowered to handle all claims-related cases,

irrespective of the amount involved.

vicissitudes of Internet operations in the hinterlands," he added.

He said this led to the introduction of the USSD technology.

He said, "It is hoped that with the USSD, we would have fully overcome the problems associated with the dedicated devices as it guarantees uninterrupted service throughout the country and on all networks.

While the notion of having an ombudsman desk was not new in the developed societies and some parts of Africa, including Nigeria, she said it was the first time an insurance company would introduce such.

"It is a feat for us as an organisation and this also buttresses our vision, which is to transform and illuminate the insurance industry for the benefit of our customers and stakeholders, as well as our mission, which is leading in all that is worthy," she said.

Adekoya added that the desk was launched to inform the company's

Our existing and prospective customers now have the opportunity to confirm the genuineness of their respective policies at the time of purchase to avoid any embarrassment should claims occur."

According to him, the partners in the project are Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System Plc, and Courteville Business Solutions Plc.

irrespective of the amount involved.

An Executive Director, Bode Ojeniyi, said the pilot scheme of the initiative started in 2018 and since then, more than 57 cases had been resolved amicably.

He highlighted the benefits of the desk to include speedy resolution of customers complaints, strengthening business relationship with customers after resolution of disputes, serves as a channel of feedback, identification of potential risks and problems areas in business relationship with customers and advise accordingly, and minimise risk of lawsuits against the company, among others.



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