

SAFETY SENSE

Emergency Preparedness: Protecting Important Documents

(NAPS)—Home is where people usually feel safe. However, when a hurricane, flood, tornado, wildfire or other disaster strikes, it's sometimes safest to pack up and go to another location.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the nation's consumer protection agency, says that when it comes to preparing for situations like weather emergencies, financial readiness can be as important as a flashlight with fully charged batteries. The FTC offers these tips:

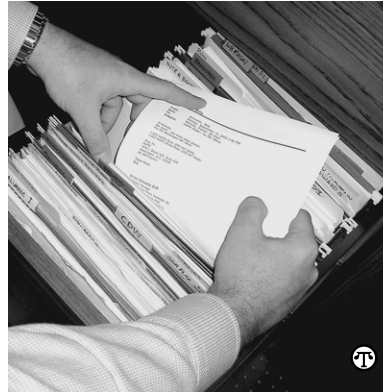
Keep It Safe

Buy a lockable, fireproof file box. Place important documents in the lockbox and keep the box in a secure, accessible location in your home so you can "grab it and go" if the need arises.

Take Inventory

Conduct a household inventory. Make a list of your possessions and document it with photos or a video to help with insurance claims. Keep one copy of the inventory in your lockbox. Keep another in a safe-deposit box or a different secure location. Additional items to keep in your lockbox include:

- A list of emergency contacts, copies of current prescriptions and health insurance cards or information, policy numbers for insurance and a list of telephone numbers of your insurance companies;
- Copies of other important financial and family records including deeds, titles, wills, birth and marriage certificates, passports, and relevant employee benefit and retirement documents and Social Security cards;
- A list of phone numbers or e-mail addresses of your creditors, financial institutions, landlords and utility companies, as well as a list of all account numbers;



It's important to keep important papers together and in an easily accessible location, should you need to quickly grab them in an emergency.

- Backups of financial data you keep on your computer, an extra set of keys for your house and car, the key to your safe-deposit box and a small amount of cash or traveler's checks.

Choose Out-Of-Town Contacts

Ask an out-of-town friend or relative to be the point of contact for your family, and make sure everyone in your family has the information. After some emergencies, it can be easier to make a long-distance call than a local one.

To learn more about organizing your important documents in case of an emergency, see *Financial Readiness: As Critical as Fully Charged Batteries* at ftc.gov/credit.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit www.ftc.gov or call, toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357); TTY: (866) 653-4261.