

Money for Life

April 2006

Dear Readers,

As we begin severe weather season, events such as floods, fires, tornadoes, or similar events could result in the evacuation of a home. Disasters also damage or destroy property or personal belongings. Natural or man-made disasters strike without warning and can happen to anyone. They can also seriously impair victims' ability to conduct essential financial transactions.

Certainly, your first concerns in an emergency should be your safety and basic needs such as shelter, food and water. But you also should be ready to deal with financial challenges, such as how to pay for supplies or temporary housing, if necessary.

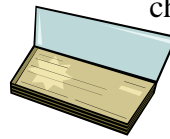
If you had only a few moments to evacuate your home — and were away for several days or even weeks — would you have access to cash, banking services and the personal identification you need to conduct your day-to-day financial life? Here are some tips from the FDIC.

What to Have Ready

Consider keeping the following documents, bank products and other items in a secure place and readily available in an emergency.

Forms of identification: These primarily include driver's licenses (or state ID cards for non-drivers), insurance cards, Social Security cards, passports, and birth certificates. These documents will be crucial if you or your family should need to rebuild lost records or otherwise prove to a government agency, a bank or other business that you are who you claim to be.

Your checkbook with enough blank checks and deposit slips to last a month or so: Your need for checks will vary depending on how long you may be displaced or how often you write checks. Even if you rarely or never write checks, at least consider having a copy of a check or your checking account number handy. That's because, in an emergency, you can authorize an important payment by providing the recipient (for example, an insurance company) your checking account number over the phone.



ATM cards, debit cards and credit cards: These cards give you access to cash and the ability to make payments on outstanding bills. Most ATM and debit cards require the use of personal identification numbers (PINs), so make sure you know those numbers. Don't write your PINs on or near your cards in case they are lost or stolen. Also, don't assume that merchants and ATMs in areas affected by a disaster will be immediately functioning as usual — that's why it's smart to have other options available for getting cash and making payments.



Cash: The amount you should have available will depend on several factors, including the number of people in your family and your ability to use ATM, debit and credit cards to get more cash or make purchases. But remember that cash in your house or wallet and not in your bank account can easily be lost or stolen.

Phone numbers for your financial services

providers: These would include local and toll-free numbers for your bank, credit card companies, brokerage firms, and insurance companies. You may need to defer a payment, replace lost cards or documents, open new accounts, or otherwise request assistance. If you have people you regularly deal with, have their phone numbers on your list, too.

Important account numbers: These would include bank and brokerage account numbers, credit card numbers, and homeowner's or renter's insurance policy numbers. Copy the front and back of credit cards and keep in a safe place. If you have a copy of your credit card and a valid ID, you may be able to make a purchase without having your actual card. Plus, the photocopies can help you keep track of your account numbers and company phone numbers.



The key to your safe deposit box:

You can't get into your safe deposit box at the bank without your key, no matter how many forms of identification you have. Also, while many banks issue two keys when a box is rented, simply giving someone else a key doesn't allow that person access to a box in an emergency. He or she also must be designated in the bank's records as a joint renter or be appointed a "deputy" or "agent" who has access to your box. Contact your bank about the proper arrangements.

What to Keep Where

After you've gathered your most important financial items and documents, protect them as well as you can, while also ensuring you have access to them in an emergency. Make backup copies of important

documents. You'll want duplicates for yourself, but also consider giving copies to loved ones or at least let them know where to find your records in an emergency. Because a disaster can



cover a wide area, backups should be stored some distance away from your home. An efficient option for copying is to scan them onto disks, which can hold significant amounts of images and are easy to store or send to others.

Determine what to keep at home and what to store in a safe deposit box at your bank. A safe deposit box is best for protecting certain papers that could be difficult or impossible to replace but not anything you might need to access quickly. Store items you might need on short notice in a durable, fireproof safe. Seal the most important original documents in airtight and waterproof plastic bags or containers to prevent water damage. Be aware that safe deposit boxes are water resistant but not waterproof.

Prepare one or more emergency evacuation bags. Most of what you're likely to pack inside will be related to personal safety, But your emergency kit also is the place to keep some essential financial items and documents, such as cash, checks, copies of your credit cards and identification cards, a key to your safe deposit box, and contact information for your financial services providers. Also periodically review the contents of the bag to make sure the contents are up to date. It won't do you any good if the checks are for a closed account. Make sure each evacuation bag is waterproof and easy to carry, and that it's kept in a secure place at home.

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