

Financial Emergency Kit
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The best lessons learned are often those learned the hard way. Natural disasters such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita, tornados, ice storms, flooding, and wild fires often require that families evacuate the area—in a hurry, leaving with no more than the clothes on their back. Those same sudden disasters may create dysfunction of entire communities, counties or regions for extended periods of time. During the disaster period, consumers may not have access to communications or financial assets.

Everyone needs to prepare a financial ‘emergency kit’ that is ready “to go” in the event of a disaster. Preplanning for such an emergency can save time, frustration, and money during disaster recovery. Having enough cash on hand to provide for basic needs outside your community is important; there may be widespread electrical outages leaving consumers without access to financial resources.

In addition to creating a family ‘emergency plan’ where a pre-determined contact person or location is identified, there are financial records and other important information that may be required to apply for disaster assistance. These items can be gathered and stored in a portable, fireproof, waterproof box/bag that is complete and ready to go should a hurried escape be necessary.

Creating your Evacuation Financial Emergency Kit:

- Gather the following items; place them in folders/envelopes and store inside sealed, airtight and waterproof plastic bags.
 - ✓ Cash or traveler’s checks for several days/weeks living expenses
 - ✓ Rolls of quarters
 - ✓ Emergency phone numbers for:
 - Family/friends
 - Workplace
 - Schools
 - Doctors, pharmacies, veterinarian [pet owners]
 - Financial institutions
 - Insurance companies [both local agent and company headquarters]
 - Credit card companies [write down credit card numbers]
 - Clergy
 - Repair contractors
 - ✓ Make copies of:
 - Insurance policies/information [vehicle and homeowners]
 - Prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses
 - Health, dental and prescription insurance cards
 - Children’s immunization records
 - Bank account information; account numbers
 - Photo copy front and back of all credit cards

- Birth certificates and passports
- Copies of last two years of income tax statements
- Military service records
- Driver's licenses for everyone in the household
- ✓ Back-up disc of computerized financial and other important records
- ✓ List of computer user names and passwords

While it is important to keep copies of certain financial records, tax and other important documents in a safe deposit box, keep in mind you may not have access to banking services following the disaster to retrieve your information.

Natural disasters can strike suddenly but the after effects can last for months or years. Wise consumers prepare for an emergency by assembling a portable file they can grab during a quick getaway.

Resources:

Cosgrove, Susan E., "Preparing Your Evacuation 'To Go' Box," Mississippi State Extension Service; July 2006..