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TIME TO START STASHING CASH?

LOGAN — Increasing numbers of Americans are growing wary of the global financial system. Declines in the stock, housing and job markets have caused many to reconsider where they keep their money.

“Because of these concerns, stashing cash in the home is becoming a growing trend in the United States,” said Adrie Roberts, Utah State University Extension family and consumer sciences agent for Cache County.

Cash stashing is crossing generational lines as the economy crumbles, she said. There are many who wish they had stuffed their savings under the mattress so they would not have lost thousands of dollars in the stock market and other investments.

Roberts said it is important to remember that money held in U.S. banks and credit unions in most basic savings accounts is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation for up to \$250,000 per account. Money stashed at home is not insured by the government — and not even by homeowners insurance. Money stashed at home also runs the risk of being stolen.

In spite of these concerns, Roberts noted that money experts recommend having an emergency cash stash at home in case there is a need to evacuate, when banks are closed or there is a power failure and ATMs won't work.

“Experts recommend that you start with at least a few hundred dollars and add to it each month,” she said. “Income tax refund time is the perfect time to start an emergency cash stash. Smaller bills and rolled coins are recommended in case it becomes difficult to make change in an emergency. Budget a small amount each month to add to your cash stash.”

As far as hiding places, Roberts said if safes or fireproof boxes are used, they should be bolted down so they can't be easily removed. However, these are obvious first places a burglar would look. Consider these less obvious, lower cost hiding places.

Hide the money in an empty VHS tape box. (Make sure to remember which one.) Put the box on the shelf with the other videos. Most burglars will steal DVDs rather than videos.

Put cash in envelopes. Tape an envelope to the back of a wall decoration, the bottom of a toy box, the inside of a Christmas decoration box or to the bottom of a kitchen shelf.

Almost any container or package can be used for hiding. There are a number of decoy or diversion safes on the market that look like common household items such as fire extinguishers, dictionaries, deodorant containers, paint buckets, cans of potato chips, smoke detectors, peanut butter jars, flower pots and lamps. Many of these can be purchased online by searching for “decoy safes.” Many of these safes can also be made at home.

Hiding a cash container at a higher or lower-than-normal line of sight will increase the chances of it being overlooked by a thief. A location requiring a ladder or stepladder will be a helpful deterrent.

“Make sure at least one other person knows where your hiding places are located,” said Roberts. “If something happens to you and nobody knows where your stash is, it's unlikely that it will be found. Worse, it could be accidentally thrown away. By far, the worst hiding places are closets, dresser drawers, night tables, under a mattress, inside old clothes, under carpets, couches or in jewelry boxes. These are the first points of interest for a burglar.”

Having an emergency cash stash is an important part of an overall financial plan, Roberts concluded. Having cash stashed in a safe, well-hidden location will be invaluable in the event of an emergency.

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