

Disaster Relief - Preparing Your Evacuation “To Go” Box

Are you prepared to evacuate quickly with important documents if disaster strikes? Natural disasters can strike suddenly. Taking time now to assemble important papers in a box that is safe and ready to go at a moment's notice can save a lot of time and frustration in the event of a fire, storm, or flood. Prepare now by creating a portable file that you can grab and go.

Steps to Create Your Evacuation “To Go” Box

Step 1

- Place items in paper folders or envelopes.
- Store these inside sealed, airtight and waterproof plastic bags.
- Place in durable, sealed box, preferably a locking one. A portable, fireproof and waterproof box/bag is recommended.

Step 2

- Store box/bag at home in secure location that is easily accessible.

Step 3

- If you must evacuate, grab box and take it with you.
- Keep box with you at all times.
- Do not leave box unattended in your vehicle.

Here's What Your “To Go” Box Should Include:

- Cash or traveler's checks for several days living expenses.
- Rolls of quarters.
- Emergency phone numbers. (Include local/toll-free.)
 - Doctors, pharmacies
 - Financial institutions
 - Insurance companies (Include local agent and company headquarters.)
 - Credit card companies
 - Clergy
 - Repair contractors
 - Family/friends
 - Workplace
 - Schools

- Copies of:
 - Homeowners, auto, flood or renter's insurance policies AND policy numbers
 - Prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses
 - Health, dental and prescription insurance cards or numbers
 - Children's immunization records
 - Deeds
 - Titles
 - Wills and trust documents
 - Durable power of attorney
 - Healthcare directives (living will)
 - Stock and bond certificates
 - Recent investment statements
 - Home inventory (Printed and digital version if available.)
 - Birth, death, adoption, marriage certificates
 - Passports
 - Employee benefit documents
 - First two pages of previous year's federal and state income tax returns
 - Military service records
- Back-up of computerized financial records
- Keys to safe deposit box
- Combination to safe
- Labeled photos of family members and pets
- Negatives or disks of irreplaceable photos
- User names, passwords
- List of debt obligations, due dates, and contact information
- Photocopies, front and back, of all credit cards
- List of numbers:
 - Social Security
 - Bank account
 - Loan
 - Credit card
 - Driver's license
 - Investment account
 - Other account numbers – for utilities, etc.

A safe deposit box is recommended to store your original papers and other valuables. These boxes are located at your financial institutions. Note that most original documents should be stored in your safe deposit box.

Secure in Your Safe Deposit Box

- Deeds
- Titles
- Mortgages
- Birth, marriage, death certificates
- Adoption papers
- Child custody papers
- Copies of passports
- Military/veteran records
- Appraisals
- Leases and other contracts
- Stocks, bonds and certificates of deposit
- Trust documents
- Copies of power of attorney, will/trust
- Insurance policies
- Home improvement records and receipts
- Household inventory (list, photos, and/or digital)
- Jewelry, precious medals, other collectibles

Digital Files

The most portable files for your “To Go” Box are digital files. Take the documents you have collected and scan them. Save these images to a CD. Also scan the contents of your safe deposit box and save to the same CD. Send a copy of this CD to a *trusted* friend or relative who lives at least 300 miles away. However, remember that in an emergency, you may not be able to access the electronic information and you will want to have a hard copy as well. You may also want to provide your attorney with a copy of the CD in a sealed envelope to be opened with your permission if you become incapacitated.

Tip: Be sure to add a list of important items you would like to remove from your home in an emergency evacuation situation so you can locate them easily and quickly.

Our lives are constantly changing when there are births, deaths, moves, marriages, divorces, etc. occurring. You may buy a new house, acquire real property or sell some. The best Evacuation “To Go” Box will not last forever. As things change, update the “To Go” Box and your safe deposit box by adding to or deleting your documentation. Review at least annually. Planning and preparation can help the unexpected from becoming a harsh financial reality.

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