

How to Prepare for a Disaster

1. Introduction

This short guide will help you prepare for a disaster. Preparation is critical to recovering after a disaster. There are many simple steps you can take to be better prepared.

2. Know Your Community's Risk Factors

It is very important to know your community's risk factors and needs. Every community has its own disaster risks and preparedness challenges. Make sure to understand your community's situation and needs, so you can be prepared for any disaster.

You should learn about what disasters happen most often in your area, and what resources you have available. You should watch your local news to predict what types of disasters might happen, and when they are most likely.

3. Keep Certain Documents Safe

You will need many documents after a disaster. You should keep as many of these documents, or copies of them, in a safe location you can easily get to. Make sure these documents are safe when disasters are likely to strike.

Where should you keep the documents? Secure locations should be waterproof and fireproof. A safe or lockbox are the best place to store the documents. You can put the documents in a plastic container on a high shelf if you do not have a safe or lockbox. You can store some documents online in a cloud service, but it may be difficult to get paper copies of them. The easiest way to keep back up copies online is to email pictures of the documents to yourself. Make sure that the pictures are extremely clear, and you can see all corners of the page.

Please see the attached checklist to know which documents you should keep safe.

4. Disaster Kit

A disaster kit is important to have when a disaster hits. Many checklists for disaster kits have been created, and some examples are listed below. The basics of a kit include:

- Important documents (See the document checklist on the next page)
- Food and water
- First aid kit
- Contact info
- Cash
- Flashlight
- Radio
- Cell phone and charger
- Chargers for electronic devices
- Batteries



Document Checklist

Document	Saved?	Location
Driver's license or other state identification card; Passport; Green card/visa		
Recent photos of you, your loved ones, and your pets		
Birth Certificate		
Social Security Card		
Veteran's or military ID		
Pet ID tags/Microchip numbers/Vet records		
List of medications/prescriptions (including eyeglass prescriptions)		
Blood type cards		
Accessibility documents (e.g., ESA or service animal paperwork)		
Disability documentation		
Doctor information		
Immunization records		
Allergy information		
Other important medical records		
Deed/lease agreement		
Utility bills		
Contact information for household members, emergency contacts (including phone numbers, emails, alternate addresses, and emergency meet-up locations)		



Insurance policies/proof of insurance cards (life, medical, renter's, homeowner's, vehicle)		
Medicaid/Medicare cards		
Adoption papers		
Child custody documents		
Orders of protection/restraining orders		
Marriage/Divorce papers		
Wills		
Powers of attorney		
Declaration of guardianship		
Orders granting a name change		
Trust documents		
Recent photos of your home, business, automobiles, and other personal property owned with date/time stamps—(multiple pictures from various angles, and model and serial numbers for major electronics)		
Checkbooks		
Bankbooks		
Bank account documents/numbers		
Loan documents/numbers (mortgages, student loans, etc.)		
Sources of income/income proof		
Tax statements		
Information about bills/other financial obligations		
List of important and/or expensive possessions that might need locating or replacing		

