

# PREPARING FOR **EMERGENCIES** **+ DISASTERS**

FINANCIAL TIPS FOR CONSUMERS



## PLAN AHEAD

- Have a bank account with ATM access.
- Establish direct deposit for your wages and benefits.
- Set aside savings in an emergency fund or have a zero-balance credit card for emergency use.
- Maintain a good credit history to enable you to obtain emergency loans and qualify for better pricing on loans and insurance.
- Make sure you have adequate insurance coverage—the right type of insurance and enough coverage—to repair your home and auto if damaged.
- Make a household inventory of your property—photos help.
- Make copies of important documents and keep them in a safe location away from potential damage yet accessible to you.
- Keep chosen family members and your financial advisers informed and aware of how to access your information if necessary.

## EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

- Cash on hand for immediately following a disaster.
- Key to your safe deposit box.
- Credit cards, bank account numbers, and personal and financial documents safely stored and ready to take with you if you have to evacuate—remember Social Security numbers for the entire family.
- Current backup of important files.
- Camera to document damage to your home and auto.
- List of contact phone numbers or Web sites for your bank accounts, credit cards and loans, insurance company, your employer, and family or friends.
- Make sure others who may depend on you are also prepared and have their personal and financial information at hand.

## RECOVERY AND REBUILDING

- Take photos to document damage to your property.
- Save all receipts for repairs and replacement of property.
- Develop an emergency family budget to meet your initial priorities and begin to determine whether you'll need financial assistance.
- File your insurance claim promptly and register for federal emergency assistance if it is available.
- Make getting back to work a priority and keep your employer informed of your situation.
- Contact your bank and your creditors to learn if payments can be rescheduled and if additional credit may be available. Forward statements to a new address if you're relocated.
- Make sure you understand the penalties and costs involved in tapping retirement accounts and obtaining loans for recovery expenses.

## AVOID SCAMS AND FRAUD

- Consult a financial adviser or government disaster specialist to help you identify possible scams.
- Protect your financial and personal information from others.
- Ask for photo ID from government staff, insurance adjusters, and repair workers.
- Research companies that you will hire to do large or expensive jobs.
- Use licensed companies or workers for home and appliance repair.
- Get written estimates and signed contracts for larger repairs.
- Do not make full payment in advance for repairs and services—wait until the job is completed to your satisfaction.
- Be careful when financing the repair with the company doing the work or one of its affiliate businesses.
- Avoid charity fraud by making donations to agencies already familiar to you.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### American Red Cross

[www.redcross.org/services/disaster/](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/)  
[www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/FinRecovery/](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/FinRecovery/)

### Bank Regulators

[www.fdic.gov](http://www.fdic.gov)  
[www.federalreserve.gov](http://www.federalreserve.gov)  
[www.occ.gov](http://www.occ.gov)  
[www.ots.gov](http://www.ots.gov)

### Operation Hope Planning Guides

[www.operationhope.org/pdpg/](http://www.operationhope.org/pdpg/)  
[www.operationhope.org/effak/](http://www.operationhope.org/effak/)

### U.S. Department of the Treasury “Weathering the Storm” Brochure

[www.ustreas.gov/offices/domestic-finance/financial-institution/fin-education/weathering-the-storm.pdf](http://www.ustreas.gov/offices/domestic-finance/financial-institution/fin-education/weathering-the-storm.pdf)

### U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

[www.fema.gov/](http://www.fema.gov/)

### U.S. Government Official Web Portal

[www.firstgov.gov/](http://www.firstgov.gov/)

### LEARN MORE OR REPORT FRAUD AT

[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)

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