

- **Storage:** A safe deposit box is best for a birth certificate and originals of important contracts. Your passport, medical care directives and identification should be stored safely at home because you might need these on short notice.
- **Emergency Evacuation:** Upon learning of the possibility of a severe storm or other natural disaster that could trigger an evacuation, pack a bag as a precaution. You may never need it, but it can save you valuable time and keep you from leaving important items behind. Most of what you should pack will be related to personal safety – first aid kits, prescription medications, flashlights and so on. But your emergency kit also is the place to keep some of the essential financial items and documents noted previously.
- **Safe Deposit Box Key:** Only your key will enable you to open your safe deposit box, no matter how many forms of identification you have.



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FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES



Unforeseen disasters and emergencies can impair your ability to conduct routine financial business. Here are some suggestions about what you can do to protect yourself, brought to you by your credit union.

PREPARATION IS YOUR BEST DEFENSE

If you had only a few moments to evacuate your home – and were forced to be away for several days or weeks – would you have access to cash, financial services and the personal identification you need to conduct your day-to-day financial life? Victims of emergencies and natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, had to face this question. The fact is, natural and man-made disasters strike without warning and can happen to anyone . . . and can seriously impair your ability to conduct essential financial transactions.

CHECKLIST FOR FINANCIAL CONTINUITY

Here are some items to retain securely to ensure your financial life is not overly disrupted:

- **Checks/Share Drafts** – These should include deposit slips as well – enough to last a month. With just a copy of a check or your checking account number, you can authorize an important payment by providing the recipient (for example, an insurance company) your checking account number over the phone.
- **Your credit union membership number** – This can help you identify your accounts, if you do not have your member number or primary share number memorized.

- **ATM, Debit and Credit Cards** – These cards give you access to cash and the ability to make payments on outstanding bills. Don't assume that merchants and ATMs in areas affected by a disaster will be immediately functioning as usual – that's why it's important to have other options available for getting cash and making payments.
- **Cash** – The amount you should have available will depend on your ability to use ATM, debit and credit cards to get more cash or make purchases. But remember that cash in your house or wallet and not in your credit union account can be lost or stolen.
- **Identification** – These primarily include driver's licenses (or state ID cards for non-drivers), insurance cards, Social Security cards, passports and birth certificates.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE NOW

You can take steps today to make life a bit easier during an emergency. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- **Direct Deposit** – Having your paycheck and other payments transmitted directly into your account through direct deposit will give you better access to those funds.
- **Automatic Bill Payments** – Initiating this service, if available from your credit union, will enable you to make scheduled payments – such

as your phone bill, insurance premiums and loan payments – and avoid service interruptions.

- **Internet Services** – If your credit union offers online bill payment from your accounts, you can conduct your financial business without writing checks or physically traveling to the credit union.

Nobody can predict when or where a disaster or emergency will strike. So be proactive and take these important steps today. And, as always, consult your credit union to learn more.



FORMING YOUR STRATEGY

Once you know what to save, have a plan for saving it.

After gathering your most important financial items and documents, protect them as well as you can, while also ensuring you have access to them in an emergency. Here's a reasonable strategy for many people:

- **Copies:** You'll want duplicate copies of your important documents for yourself, but also consider giving copies to loved ones or at least let them know where to find your records in an emergency.