

Unfortunately, the things that mean the most to us are usually the hardest to recover in light of a disaster. It is your duty to take initiative today and protect those memories.

Consider also these disasters other than the "Acts of Nature"

- *box of photos gets inadvertently put in the trash*
- *coffee spill*
- *household fire*
- *computer hard drive crashes and the digital camera photos are wiped out*
- *kids borrow their pictures for a school project and the pictures don't come back*
- *refrigerator art gets crumpled or torn*
- *water pipe breaks*

SCAN BEFORE A DISASTER HAPPENS TO YOU

Disasters happen when we least expect them and often are unprepared. You have a duty to prepare and protect your household in case of an emergency. By creating a simple disaster plan at home you'll save time, money and energy and protect the legacy of your family when a crisis strikes. Here we'll discuss how to prepare, evaluate, assess, inventory, scan, backup and maintain a personal emergency plan.

INTRODUCTION

Disasters often strike when we least expect it and without warning. When it comes to our homes and businesses, natural disasters tend to slam a tsunami of work and expense on us so suddenly that most individuals are ill prepared to handle it. Our first response is shock and disbelief.

The last two years of varying emergencies throughout the United States and Canada has raised a higher level of awareness that each of us needs to do more to prepare ourselves in the event of a natural or man-made disaster that could destroy our homes..

A Citizen Corp National Survey in 2009 revealed that only 44 percent of Americans have a household emergency plan and some 57 percent have supplies set aside in their homes for emergencies. If fewer than half of all households prepare for an emergency, it's safe to say that an even small percentage have an emergency plan that includes an inventory and backup archive of their cherished possessions.

In the last two years alone we've seen tornadoes rip through close-knit communities in the mid-west, tearing apart evidence that each home had a family that once lived there, business hosted jobs that no longer exist, schools educated our children, and roadways kept us connected. Residents had little time to prepare, maybe seconds.

The more 130 wildfires that continue to rage through the western part of the United States this year have put millions of residents on notice to plan to evacuate, even as flames skip across neighbors on a whim. In most cases, residents have a little time - a day or a week - to prepare to leave.

Along the East Coast, residents had an entire week's warning that a storm of historic proportions was going to increase in volume and strength and provide a rare direct hit onto the New Jersey coastline in late October last year. Residents there heard the warnings before and dealt with their fair share of tidal flooding. They made judgment calls, however, based on their experiences in prior storms. Some took the warnings seriously before Hurricane Sandy destroyed the New Jersey coastline, but many did not. Planning to lose their home and its entire contents was not something most people anticipated. Yet, the Garden State lost 15 percent of its housing stock and an untold number of businesses.

ASK YOURSELF

Where is your emergency checklist?

What important papers should be compiled into your grab-and-go file?

Do you have a compiled list of your important phone numbers and passwords?

What do you need to protect and preserve?

What items are most critical to take with you?

What can't be replaced? What is documented and digitized?

Where is it? Are there emergency supplies that you need to gather from your checklist

Is there anything else?

There's a great loss of identity associated with the destruction of personal property, particularly when it comes to the sentimental items that can't readily be replaced: our family history documents, heirlooms, photographs and legal documents. Once people are allowed to return to their homes and begin sifting through its remains, those personal items - the sentimental family legacy that acts as a placeholder in time and gives our lives a sense of history through generations - is what we want most.

What people want is a record that they've been here, evidence they once lived a decent happy life and the details of what they owned. If we could hit the reset button on a few dozen natural disasters to befall this nation in recent years, here is the advice we'd recommend in creating a personal emergency plan that everyone can begin to incorporate in case the worst scenario actually happens.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Here is a thought to keep in mind when it comes to your home and business.

If your possessions, memories and history are important enough to you that their loss would be devastating, then you have a duty to protect, preserve, document and detail their existence. Begin by thinking ahead of a disaster.

Most states and local offices of emergency management have disaster planning kits readily available online that will enable you to prepare your property - the physical building - for a disaster and help you to survive several days without power or utilities. Let's expand that discussion to include your household contents that you can't live without - they are your history.

If you only have 10 minutes to get out of your home then you have to grab your children, your pets and any medications and leave. If you have more time then you have the opportunity to implement your emergency plan.

ASSESS

The first step in developing a personal emergency plan is assessing the scenarios of disasters that could affect your home. Ask yourself: What is the worst case scenario that could destroy your home or its contents. Based on the typical weather patterns where you live, what are the most likely problems you could face? For instance, if you live in an area that's prone to street flooding in the spring, you may want to consider how items are stored in your home in case you face water issues. If you live in multifamily housing, such as apartments and townhomes, you may consider how your neighbors' habits could affect you. Is fire an issue? Do broken pipes happen?

Is your state regularly faced with natural disasters such as dust storms, wild fires, flooding, ice storms, tornadoes and strong wind storms? Are critters and random acts of wildlife a problem? Do you live close to streams? Do falling trees pose a problem? Are you in an area subject to sink holes? Could theft, misuse, loss or pet infestation affect the most important items in your home? What about terrorism? Do you live near a military base?

This September marks the ninth anniversary of National Preparedness Month, which is sponsored by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to encourage Americans to take steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, businesses, schools and communities. It is part of a governmental effort to strengthen the United States' preparedness capabilities and encompasses prevention, protection, response, and recovery efforts in the event of a disaster

There are electronic disasters too. Much of the world's transactions are now done online. From social interaction to keeping track of finances, the internet is now a large part of the average citizen's life. It has its risks, as viruses cause billions of dollars in losses annually. Are your electronic photos, videos, audio recordings, legal documents, and private papers backed up? According to a recent study by InformationWeek Research, computer viruses around the globe will cost businesses more than \$1 trillion this year.

CREATE A LIST

Create a simple list of these likely emergencies. It will help you gauge how to prepare and invest in your emergency plan.

Maybe flooding, broken pipes and pest infestation are your biggest challenges and you need to store a collection of antique books in water tight containers, but you can't afford to do it all at once. Plan for it and buy your first container while you create an archive of your collection and back it up with digital images of the book covers.

CREATE AN INVENTORY

Ask anyone trying to rebuild their life following Hurricane Sandy and they will tell you the daunting task it takes to create a personal household inventory to submit to their insurance companies. If they could turn the clock back, knowing how forceful that storm really was, they would have packed the car up two days earlier and found a friend on higher ground to store their possessions. With an emergency plan in play they would have had a checklist of all the personal possessions they couldn't live without and they would have had digital photos to prove it.

Go room by room, closet by closet and create a written inventory of your home. Don't get overwhelmed by this task. Just start in bite-sized chunks of time, say 15 minutes a day. Include on the list all your furniture, electronics, paintings, decorations, tools, cookware, dishes utensils, linens, draperies, office supplies, toys, pet supplies, medical equipment, sports equipment, musical instruments, tools, autos, jewelry, collections, antiques, private papers, photographs, and sentimental mementos.

What are your most important household items? Prioritize them on this list. Photograph each room.

Creating this inventory has numerous benefits. First, it empowers you to look through everything in your home and decide whether it still holds value to you. You will naturally decide to cleanse some items. Secondly it gives you peace of mind in knowing that you've thought about the worst case scenario and how you would prepare for it. If an emergency happens you'll have a checklist to implement and a backup stored elsewhere.

You can repurpose your list and use it other ways, such as estate planning.

Your inventory worksheet doesn't have to be fancy. It can be anything from a simple legal paper or a graph in a Word document or a spreadsheet complete with photos. It has to be something you can add to and change.

TO DO LIST

- 1) Decide what's important
- 2) Scan
- 3) Create a Grab-and-Go file
- 4) Back it up

Your inventory checklist should include the following information.

- What is it - List the item
- Grab-and-Go - In an emergency do you need to take this with you? Yes or no.
- Description - describe it in color, shape, size and purpose
- Conditions - are there any special conditions? (fragile, antique, heavy)
- Where is it located - is it accessible to reach quickly
- Value - Does it hold monetary or sentimental value
- Digitized - Do you have an electronic image of it? Is it scanned? Can it be scanned or must it be photographed?
- Insured - some items such as jewelry, art or electronics require added insurance policies.
- Other identifying information
- Cost - Original cost/Replacement cost/Appraisal
- Backup - Is this list and a digital image of this item backed up
- Preservation - What needs to be done to preserve, protect and document this item

TO DO LIST

1) DECIDE WHAT'S IMPORTANT

Now you can easily decide what household items are most important to you in an emergency. If these items are a part of your everyday furnishings, by all means, don't feel obligated to hide them away, because they're too precious to lose. Enjoy them, but inventory them. Summarize the larger inventory with a simple list of possessions and backup drives you need to take with you in an emergency. That's why we suggest creating a grab-and-go column next to each item on your list. A summarized list can easily fit into your grab-and-go file.

You may not be able to take your grandmother's china closet with you, but may chose to take your great, great grandmother's teapot and a thumb drive that holds images of all the china in the closet.

2) SCAN

Photos are our memory keepers. They are placeholders in time that remind us of a life lived. If photographs are among your most cherished possessions you need to consider how you will preserve them in the event of

an emergency. Are all your photographs important to preserve or do you want to save key images from various events in your life and that of previous generations? Scanning your photos and backing up your digital files is the



Your grab-and-go file can be as simple as a plastic container, an accordion folder or an elaborate archival-quality ringed binder in a box.

I've only had my Flip Pal for a couple of weeks, but I don't know how I did without it! I a genealogist, which includes copying old pictures to flash drives. I have a lot of down time waiting for my sons at various practices and school events, so I bring along a photo album and my Flip Pal. I can get an album of about 200 photos done during one practice time! An added plus is that I meet a lot more people because most want to know what I am doing and what the Flip Pal is. I love it!
- Kathy, FL

surest way to protect your history. Scanning your images today has never been easier. You can do it while you're watching television or talking on the phone. It can be done minutes at a time.

3) CREATE A GRAB-AND-GO FILE

In addition to your household inventory you must consider what important papers are in your grab-and-go file. Most emergency management plans suggests you compile a list of items (or copies) that include the following:

- drivers licenses
- passports
- social security cards
- military documents
- mortgage papers
- leases
- checking accounts
- typical monthly bills, including student loans, utilities, and credit cards.
- diplomas
- church documents such as baptismal records
- marriage licenses
- medical records
- medication schedules
- health insurance cards
- last will and testament
- living will
- power of attorney
- medical power of attorney
- photos of each room of your home
- family photos (remember most will be digitized on your backup drives)
- insurance polices
- banking records
- Investments
- tax returns
- business incorporation papers
- list of family contacts, doctors, and community phone numbers including the local office of emergency management
- website passwords - make a list
- calendar (either printed or electronic)
- cash
- notebook and pens.
- your backup drives
- waterproof containers or bags - to store it all in, even temporarily

A grab-and-go file this large could easily fill a 30-gallon storage container or half your car trunk. That's why assessing your household items is so important. You can't take it all with you. You can, however, carry thousands of images and records in digital files on a back-up drive.

What a wonderful device! I have 1,000's of unsorted photos, and many albums, and had despaired of ever being able to organize and preserve them. My regular scanner made copying each photo a chore and I was afraid I would never live long enough to do them all. Flip-Pal is just wonderful!
- Margaret,
California

Remember if a possession is so important to you that its loss would be devastating you have a duty to protect, preserve and document it. So ensure that it's digitized. Create a duty to scan. For example, most of us could replace home decorations, but a digital image of a fourth graders' prize-winning art project that was professionally framed would provide a renewed sense of preservation and comfort in the event of a disaster.

4) BACK IT UP

In museums and libraries across the globe the best practices in preservation and disaster planning call for all inventories to be backed up three times on two different forms of media and stored in two different locations. Consider doing the same for your household.

For instance, take everything listed in your grab-and-go file and scan it. Take your time, but give yourself a deadline. Back it up to archival-quality DVDs and an external hard drive. Make three sets. Maybe you don't want to purchase three external hard drives immediately, but you could purchase one and then make three sets of DVDs. Keep one set with your grab-and-go file. Put one set in a fireproof safe, and perhaps also in a waterproof container if you live near a flood zone. Find a trusted family member or friend who can store the other set. Make sure that person doesn't live in the same town or faces the same disaster.

Finally, consider storing a copy of your digital files also on a cloud-based site such as Dropbox or Carbonite. In the event you face an emergency where one type of file - say your hard-copy printed files - is ruined, you'll have a backup to use. If you rely only on electronic files, but the internet and power are out following an emergency, you'll have your hard-copy files with you.

You might consider the easy-to-use backup device called Picture Keeper. Just plug the Picture Keeper drive into a USB port on your computer and it will walk you through the process of backing up your photos. The software is already installed on the USB drive and is ready to start saving your digital photos and scans.



Picture Keeper will backup new and updated images. Let's say a month has gone by and you were reminded to back up your pictures again by the Picture Keeper auto-reminder. Plug the Picture Keeper device into your computer and it will automatically back up any photos or scans that were added or changed. That is all there is to it! It certainly cuts down on duplicate copies of images on your hard drive or backup device.

Plug the Picture Keeper drive into a USB port, click "Start Backup" and Picture Keeper automatically begins searching for and saving all of your digital images. No software to install or setup. No wires. No passwords. No monthly fees. After the initial backup is complete, each subsequent backup runs faster as Picture Keeper only copies recently added or modified photos.

The Picture Keeper 8 (PK8) is available from the Flip-Pal.com shopping cart.



In December 2012, the Flip-Pal team created "Flip-Pal Cares" to help with photo restoration efforts in the wake of Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey.

Browse here for more information: flip-pal.com/news/press-coverage

This e-guide was developed by various team members at Couragent, Inc., makers of the Flip-Pal mobile scanner, who are passionate about preserving family photos and documents. While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this e-guide, the publisher and authors assume no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.

KEEP IT UP

Being fully prepared for emergencies doesn't happen overnight. Be proud of the fact you'd successfully begun the process. Your personal emergency plan to inventory your home should be reviewed annually, if not at the start of each new season.

GOOD JOB

There are so many things you need to do to prepare when an emergency looms. Having the peace of mind in knowing that you've already created an emergency disaster plan for your home that includes a grab-and-go checklist will reduce the stress you face should an incident arise.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Consult your local office of emergency management.

Federal Emergency Management Agency
www.ready.gov/make-a-plan

Flip-Pal blog on preservation and scanning
www.flip-pal.com/category/preservation/