



Important Documents for Your Disaster Preparedness Kit

Thunder and lightning and high winds, oh my. Depending on where you're stationed, you may face volcanoes, tsunamis, flash floods, disease outbreaks, terrorist attacks or any number of man-made disasters. Learn how to prepare for any threats that might come your way at each new duty station. Reduce stress by preparing for an emergency with ample food and supplies, and making sure you have a safe place for your legal, medical and financial documents.

Don't be caught unprepared when the zombie apocalypse strikes. Instead, be ready by building a disaster preparedness kit. Don't forget to include enough food, water and all the important documents you may need before, during and after a disaster.

Here's a helpful list of the important documents you should have in your kit:

Important legal documents

- **Birth certificate(s), adoption papers, marriage license or divorce papers** — Have copies of these documents in your kit. If you need additional copies, contact the state health or Social Services Administration Office for each applicable state.
- **Social Security card(s)** — As a U.S. citizen, you are required to have a Social Security number to work. You can request a card by calling your local Social Security office or by visiting the [Social Security Administration website](#).
- **Passport** — Replace your passport if it's expired or lost. Make a copy. It will speed up replacing it if it's lost. Get more information at the [State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#).
- **Naturalization documents** — This is the only acceptable proof of citizenship if you were born outside the United States. Visit [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) for more information.
- **Last will and testament** — Create your last will and testament for free through an installation legal assistance office. It will let your family know what to do with your property after your death. Visit the [Armed Forces Legal Assistance Legal Services Locator](#) to find your installation's legal assistance office.
- **Living will** — A living will allows you to describe what medical treatments you do or do not want in case of a terminal illness. It will also identify who should make medical decisions for you if you're not able. Get your living will for free through an installation legal assistance office.
- **Power of attorney** — This document gives someone you trust the authority to act on your behalf for legal or economic issues. Get your power of attorney for free through an installation legal assistance office.
- **Property deeds and titles** — Include your mortgage deed, car titles and registration. To get a copy of your deed, contact your lending institution. Proof of home ownership may be required in order to receive federal disaster assistance. If you own a vehicle, you should include your title or registration as well. If you don't have either, you may be able to get them reissued at your local Department of Motor Vehicles office.

Check

out the Federal Emergency Management Agency's, "[The Emergency Financial First Aid Kit](#)."

Important financial documents

- **Tax statements** — Include a copy of your previous year's tax returns, any property tax statements and personal property tax statements.

These could be required to apply for new loans or to verify qualification for income-based assistance.

- **Financial accounts statements** — Include bank and credit union statements, credit or debit card statements, retirement account statements, and statements from investment accounts. Each should have the financial institution's contact information, the account holder's name and the account number.
- **Sources of income** — Include recent pay stubs as well as any government benefits you or your family members receive.
- **Financial obligations** — Include copies of your mortgage statements, leases, utility bills, car payments, student loans and any other obligations. These documents can be useful for qualifying for income-based assistance following a disaster.
- **Insurance information** — Include policy numbers and contact information for your property insurance, rental insurance, auto insurance, life insurance and any other insurance you have. You'll need this information to file an insurance claim after the disaster.

Medical information

- **Health insurance identification cards** — Include copies of everyone's current health insurance identification cards. Contact your health care provider if you need copies.
- **Record of immunizations and allergies, and a list of necessary medications** — Include a list of your family's medications and allergies. Also include your family's immunization records. You may need them to ensure everyone receives proper medical care.

Storing your documents

Keep all original documents, photographs and computer backup disks in a secure place to safeguard your personal and financial information. Consider an off-site safety deposit box or a fireproof and waterproof metal safe inside your home to protect these important documents.

Be prepared for any emergency. Find out how to create your [disaster preparedness kit](#) to make your life easier when you need it.

Assemble

your [disaster kit](#). It can make life bearable when you need it and can provide great peace of mind when you don't.

Create

your [family emergency plan](#), there is no time like today to get started.