



Your Financial Future

Minimize Disruption Of Personal Finances After Natural Disasters



(NAPSA)—With the recent increase of incapacitating natural disasters, it's vital to prepare now for what might happen down the road. The best way to avoid a major disruption in your financial life after a disaster is to automate critical transactions that are currently done on paper. With tornado season from April through June, hurricane and typhoon season from June through November and the potential for earthquakes at any time during the year, there is no time like the present to ensure that you will have access to your money and personal documents in case of emergency. The following are five things you can do now to prepare for the next natural disaster:

1. Sign up for Direct Deposit of your paycheck or Social Security benefit. One of the major problems in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was that people paid by checks had no access to their money. On the other hand, people paid through Direct Deposit were paid on time automatically. If your employer doesn't offer Direct Deposit, send them to the business section of www.electronicpayments.org to see the benefits of offering the service, not only to their employees, but also to the bottom line of the company.

2. Consider online banking so that you have access to your account records if your paper records are destroyed and/or if your bank branch is not accessible. In the aftermath of a disaster, phone lines, cell towers and businesses could be shut down for months while online access to your bank accounts will be virtually uninterrupted by the natural disaster.

3. Ensure that your insurance premiums, car payments, mortgage and other important bills are paid automatically even if you don't have access to the mail or to your checkbook. Sign up with your billers for Direct Payment. Your bills are paid automatically each month, so you are assured that you will have insurance when you need it and that your car and house payments will remain in good standing.

4. Make a photocopy of everything in your wallet, scan the copies into your computer and save them on a disk. Keep the disk with your preparedness supplies. This takes 15 minutes to do and will save you if your wallet and financial records are destroyed or stolen. In case of power outage, also keep a paper copy of these records in a safe place like a bank vault. It's vitally important to have this information if you need to cancel credit cards, have proof of identification and insurance coverage.

5. Get an ATM card or Check-card even if you only plan to use it in an emergency. In a disaster, cash is king with some retailers, at least for the short term. If you need immediate supplies, you will want to have access to cash through an ATM. In the days after a disaster, it can be virtually impossible to cash a check or to find retailers whose credit card systems are working.

For more information on signing up for Direct Deposit or Direct Payment, visit www.electronicpayments.org. For more information on ATM cards or online banking, ask the bank where you have your accounts.