

## Preparing Your Evacuation “Grab and Go” Box



Recent natural disasters have emphasized the importance of emergency preparedness. Everyone should have individual and family evacuation plans in place. Extensive planning should include all members of the family. Keep in mind that an

emergency plan may be different for every family, yet there are common elements. It is critical that each family have a planned evacuation arrangement and an evacuation “to-go” box ready for emergencies.

### Steps to Creating Your “Grab and Go” Box

#### ► Step 1

- Place papers in sealed, waterproof plastic bags.
- Store in a durable, sealed box. (A portable, fireproof and waterproof box or waterproof backpack is recommended.)

#### ► Step 2

Store box/backpack at home in a secure, easily accessible location.

#### ► Step 3

If you must evacuate:

- Grab box and take with you.
- Keep the box with you at all times.
- Do not leave box unattended in your car.

### Your “Grab and Go” Box Should Include:

- ◆ Cash or traveler’s checks for several days living expenses.
- ◆ Rolls of quarters.
- ◆ Emergency phone numbers:
  - Doctors, pharmacies.
  - Financial advisors.
  - Clergy.
  - Repair contractors.
  - Family.
- ◆ Copies of important prescriptions:
  - Medicines.
  - Eyeglasses.
- ◆ Copies of children’s immunization records.
- ◆ Copies of health, dental, and/or prescription insurance cards or numbers.
- ◆ Copies of auto, flood, renter’s or homeowner’s insurance policies (at least policy numbers).
- ◆ Insurance company telephone numbers, including local agent and company headquarters.
- ◆ Copies of :
  - Deeds.
  - Titles.
  - Wills and/or trust documents.
  - Durable power of attorney.
  - Healthcare directives.
  - Stock and bond certificates.
  - Recent investment statements.
  - Home inventory.
  - Birth, death, adoption and marriage certificates.
  - Passports and other identity documents.
  - Employee-benefit documents.
  - First two pages of previous year’s federal and state income tax returns.
- ◆ Back-up copies of computerized financial records.
- ◆ Keys to safe deposit box.
- ◆ Combination to safe.
- ◆ Negatives for irreplaceable personal photos.
- ◆ Computer user names and passwords.
- ◆ List of numbers:
  - Social Security
  - Bank account
  - Loan
  - Credit card
  - Driver’s license
  - Investment account
- ◆ List of debt obligations, due dates and contact information.

It is important to have a safe deposit box to protect your important papers. These boxes are located at local financial institutions. Securing important papers located in a safe deposit box will help to eliminate potential stressful situations if you are unable to take your "grab and go" box with you during a disaster. For added security, it is recommended that original documents, other than wills, be housed in your safe deposit box. For additional security, these documents should be photocopied or digitally scanned and secured with a trusted out-of-state friend or family member.

### **Secure in Your Safe Deposit Box:**

- Copies of will/trust.
- Copies of power of attorney.
- List of insurance policies.
- List of financial account numbers.
- Family birth, marriage and death certificates.
- Adoption papers.
- Citizenship papers.
- Military service records.
- Loan agreements.
- Certificates of deposit.
- Real estate deeds.
- Vehicle titles.
- Mortgage paperwork.
- Stock and bond certificates.
- Inventory of home contents.
- Jewelry/precious metals.
- Employment contracts, business agreements.

### **Inform Others:**

Informing friends and family about your evacuation plan is beneficial in case of injury or if families become separated. Having other people aware of your plan will reduce anxiety during stressful situations. It is also beneficial to prepare an emergency contact card for each family member to keep on their person. This card should contain contact information for all household members, an out-of-town contact and other key emergency and medical providers. A printable form for preparing emergency contact cards can be downloaded at <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/ECCard.pdf>

### **Ask an Out-of-State Friend or Relative to Secure:**

- Paper or digital copies of documents in your "grab and go" box.
- Emergency contact information (including e-mails and cell phone numbers).
- Contact list for heirs and advisers.
- Copies of documents in safe deposit box.

Planning and preparation can prevent the unexpected from becoming a harsh reality. Taking the time prior to the emergency to prepare and organize important papers and documents will save you from unwanted stress and chaos in the case of a disaster.

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