Key Wealth

Key Wealth Institute

Natural Disasters – A Financial Guide for Mitigation, Preparedness, and Recovery

Most communities could be impacted by some type of natural disaster. These disasters may include wildfires, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, or floods. It can be very overwhelming to recover and rebuild your life both financially and emotionally when a disaster strikes. This guide looks at disaster planning from the following perspectives: mitigation, preparedness, and recovery.

Mitigation — Reducing or taking actions to prevent the impact or consequence of a disaster.

Preparedness — Being ready and equipped through planning for a disaster that cannot be mitigated.

Recovery — Recuperation, restoration, rebuilding, and healing from the emotional and financial burdens of a disaster.

Mitigation — through home maintenance

Protecting your home: Routine maintenance involving proactive and reactive care of the inside and outside of your home to ensure optimal condition and functionality, safety, and aesthetic appeal, to retain higher value, and comply with safety codes.

There is no substitute for preparation when it comes to a natural disaster. Prepare your home before the wind, rain, fire, or earthquake strikes. Improving your home's physical ability to withstand the storm can save you time, agony, and money.

Home hardening addresses the most vulnerable components of your house with building materials and installation techniques that increase resistance to the elements that threaten your home. Whether it is the heat, flames, and embers that accompany wildfires or the rain and wind that causes the most damage during hurricanes, there are ways to improve your home's ability to withstand the next extreme weather event.

Flooding: To avoid flood damage, purchase water detectors and install them in a utility closet. The detectors alert you if there is a leak by emitting a loud alarm sound, sending a notification to a smartphone, or both. Some detectors can also be set to shut off your water at the first sign of a home leak. Detectors with automatic water shut off tend to cost more than those that just sense leaks.

Consider a sump pump for your basement. A sump pump is the best line of defense against basement flooding, no matter where it came from. These pumps sit in the lowest part of the basement and pump any water out. The sump pump should have a backup power source so that it will continue working even in a power outage.

High wind, hurricanes or tornados: If you live in an area susceptible to hurricanes, tornadoes, and other types of windstorms, you can ensure that your roof is securely strapped down. The best time to add this protection to an existing home is when you replace the roof. Or, if you are not replacing the roof, you can add roof straps, metal connectors, or retrofit clips in your attic. A few inexpensive upgrades can make a substantial difference. You may even earn a premium discount from many insurers for these mitigation items.

Impact-resistant windows, doors, and garage doors can withstand extreme weather conditions. These types of doors and windows go through rigorous tests to ensure they will not shatter against high-speed winds or heavy rain. Consider installing hurricane shutters.

Wildfires: Homeowners who live in or close to wildfire zones should keep gutters clear of debris and clear any brush surrounding your home. You also want to create what are known as "defensible safe zones" around your property. In the 5-foot area around your home, remove any flammable outdoor furniture and other combustible materials, such as firewood.

Another mitigation to consider — make sure you have fire-resistant siding and consider replacing wood-shingled roofs with less flammable materials.

Earthquakes: Hire a professional to anchor or bolt the main frame of the home to its foundation. Check with your city to see if it has a standard retrofit plan ready for permitting. Look for a licensed, insured contractor with seismic retrofit training from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Consider installing flexible gas and water pipe fixtures when it comes to your utilities. These pipes will usually not rupture during an earthquake, and you may avoid any gas leaks, water leaks, or fire breakout. Most importantly, install an earthquake-activated shut-off valve on the main gas line into the house. You should know exactly where and how to shut off your gas, water, and electric utilities. And do not keep any flammable liquids in your garage.

Inside of the home use child-resistant latches to keep cabinet doors shut. Bolt bookcases and tall furniture to wall studs. Secure overhead light fixtures to beams or rafters. Use straps to secure your water heater.

Mitigation — through property insurance

Protecting your property: Have adequate auto, homeowners, and umbrella insurance coverage in place. Understand what the policies cover and do not cover. Most homeowners have a misconception about what is covered by the homeowner policy, leaving them with unexpected expenses when a disaster strikes. Reviewing the insurance policy to ensure coverage for the environmental threats your part of the country suffers will ensure you can rebuild and continue living in the community you call home.

Buying adequate insurance: Although you cannot prevent a disaster from destroying your home or possessions, you can prevent it from destroying your finances by purchasing adequate insurance. Know what exclusions are not covered by your homeowner's policy. Perils covered by property insurance typically include select weather-related afflictions, including damage caused by fire, smoke, wind, hail, the impact of snow and ice, lightning, and more. Property insurance policies normally exclude damage that results from a variety of events, including tsunamis, floods, drain and sewer backups, groundwater seepage, standing water, and a number of other sources of water. Mold is not usually covered, nor is the damage from an earthquake. In addition, most policies will not cover extreme circumstances, such as nuclear events, acts of war or terrorism.

Standard insurance policy: Standard coverage only pays for the actual cash value or replacement cost discounted for age or use. Example: Coverage pays you the replacement cost minus depreciation. If the destroyed items are 10 years old, you may get the value of a 10-year-old item and not the value of a new one. Typical policies cover personal property at 50% of dwelling coverage, so you may need to purchase more coverage.

Replacement cost policy: Replacement cost coverage will rebuild a home up to the limits of the policy, regardless of the actual cash value. Replacement cost covers the cost of repairing or replacing property at the same or equal value. The coverage is based on replacement cost values rather than the actual cash value of items.

Guaranteed replacement cost policy: Guaranteed replacement cost coverage provides further protection and will pay to rebuild your home regardless of policy limits, even if it costs more to rebuild your home than it did to build it originally, because of increased material and labor costs and building code changes. This coverage is more expensive than standard coverage.

Insurance riders: Use riders for specific personal property or expensive items, such as jewelry, antique cars, and rare art. This type of property is usually not covered or only up to a predetermined limit for certain valuables.

Flood insurance: If you are worried about flooding, review your local flood maps to see if your area is at risk. Go to http://fema.gov/flood-maps and scroll down to the FEMA Flood Map Service center to find your community flood map.

Homeowners' policies do not cover damage from flooding. However, you can purchase flood insurance separately. The cost of flood insurance depends on several factors, including the type of occupancy such as single family or nonresidential, the amount of coverage, the location, design, and age of the building.

If you have a mortgage on your home, it is likely that your lender required a flood hazard search on your property at the time you obtained your mortgage in order to comply with federal standards. If your home turns out to be in a flood hazard area, you will be required to purchase flood insurance. However, even if you own your home outright or do not live in an area that lies in a flood plain, consider purchasing flood insurance to protect your property. Flooding does not happen only along the banks of rivers, lakes, or other bodies of water. Flooding can also occur in other low-lying areas or in areas where drainage is poor, or it can result from heavy rains, melting snow, and backed-up sewers, among other things.

If your insurance company does not sell flood insurance, visit floodsmart.gov for a list of insurers in your area that do sell flood insurance policies.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP): Homeowners can purchase flood insurance from the federal government. The government's National Flood Insurance Program provides up to $250,000 of dwelling coverage and up to $100,000 of contents coverage. The policy may have two separate deductibles, one for the dwelling and one for contents, that you must pay before coverage kicks in. Deductibles start at $1,000 but can go as high as $10,000 for single-family homes. If you think this coverage is too low, you can try the private insurance route, which typically has higher coverage limits and will reimburse you for the full replacement cost of your home's contents. NFIP only covers the items' actual cash value, which includes depreciation.

Private flood insurance: Homeowners should also consider purchasing flood insurance from a private insurer. Private flood insurance can offer higher limits of protection and additional coverage not offered under the NFIP plan. This includes payments for temporary living expenses such as hotel stays, restaurant meals and coverage for personal belongings in your basement. These policy enhancements and coverage for replacing personal property will help to limit your out-of-pocket expenses after a flood loss.

Separate wind damage deductibles: If you live in a hurricane-prone area, floodwater may not be your only concern. While damages from wind and wind-driven rains are covered by the standard homeowner's policy, many charge separate wind deductibles, which means higher out-of-pocket costs for you. The deductibles are usually based on a percentage of your coverage rather than a flat dollar amount.

Earthquake insurance: Homeowners and renters' policies do not cover earthquake damage, so if you want to insure your property against this type of natural disaster, you will need to purchase earthquake insurance. Unfortunately, earthquake insurance is expensive. Premiums vary widely from state to state and depend on several factors such as the type and age of the structure, the proximity to fault lines, and usually have to satisfy a high deductible before the policy will pay for damage. The deductible for earthquake insurance is usually 10% to 20% of your coverage limit, according to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. Most earthquake policies cover only the actual structure, so contents may have to be insured separately. However, if you live in an area where earthquakes are common, you should consider purchasing this insurance despite the expense.

Wildfires: Wildfires are covered by standard homeowners' insurance, but insurers have been canceling policies in some high-risk areas. Unfortunately, insurance carriers have been leaving or declining to provide coverage for homes in brush fire areas or wildfire zones. Premiums and deductibles for such policies are expensive. Even if you have a current policy, at renewal, the insurer could choose not to renew, or premiums could be much more than the original premium.

Tip: Do not wait to buy specialized types of insurance until hurricane season or until you hear on the news that flooding is imminent in your area. The insurance carrier may refuse to underwrite the policy until the waiting period is over.

Umbrella policy: Do not underestimate umbrella liability coverage. It protects against financial loss if someone is injured on your property or sues you. Homeowners policies provide limited personal liability coverage. If you think you need more coverage, consider purchasing an umbrella or excess liability policy. Consider an umbrella policy of at least $1 million to $5 million. The cost of this insurance is generally reasonably priced.

Renter's insurance: Even though renters do not have a house to rebuild, they still need to protect belongings that could be destroyed by fire or other disasters. In general, a renter's policy covers three basics: your liability in the event of lawsuits, replacement of personal possessions, and living expenses in the event your apartment becomes uninhabitable. If you are concerned about disasters destroying your belongings, you should consider buying a renter's insurance policy with a high personal property limit. If you have expensive electronics or jewelry, you may want to add an insurance rider because the standard personal property coverage may not be enough to replace these items.

The policies typically cover losses from burglary, vandalism, windstorms, and certain types of water damage. Water damage caused by hurricanes or other weather-related flooding issues are not covered by most rental insurance policies.

Mitigation — through health insurance

Protecting your health: Have adequate health insurance coverage in place and understand what the policy covers and does not cover.

Health Insurance: Health insurance is protection against medical costs. Injuries resulting from a disaster can be expensive. Health care coverage helps you get the care you need and protects you financially.

Ensure you have proper health insurance coverage:

- If you are unemployed or your employer does not offer coverage, investigate the costs of an individual plan at healthcare.gov.
- Do not forget coverage for adult children.
- Keep coverage in force. Never go without health insurance for more than 62 days or two full months. Otherwise, you may have to wait up to a year for coverage for a pre-existing medical condition. If you leave a job, COBRA generally allows you to continue coverage under the previous employer's medical plan for up to 18, 29, or 36 months, depending on the circumstances and the state where you live. In general, COBRA applies to group health plans maintained by employers with 20 or more employees. You must pay the full cost of coverage at the group rate plus up to 2% to cover administrative costs.
- Some states have mini-COBRA laws if your employer has fewer than 20 employees.

Know what the insurance policy covers:

- Know what is covered and what is out-of-pocket, such as co-pays and deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums.
- Know your deductibles, which is the amount the policy holder must pay before the insurance coverage begins.
- Learn about the plans coverage for catastrophic or long-term injuries, including coverage for rehabilitation and the maximum lifetime the policy will pay.
- Identify your network hospital. Find out from your provider what coverage your plan provides if you are displaced and need medical care outside of your area.

Health insurance checklist

☐	Read the summary of benefits for your health plan.
☐	Determine if your providers are in-network or out-of-network.
☐	Know your co-pays, deductible, and out-of-pocket maximums.
☐	Obtain at least minimum health insurance to cover catastrophic emergencies.
☐	Search your state's Marketplace for additional health coverage options.
☐	If you cannot afford health insurance, you may qualify for some form of discounted insurance or government assistance.
☐	Keep health insurance coverage in force when changing jobs.

Mitigation — for you and your loved ones

Protecting you: Have up-to-date estate planning and legal documents in place including Wills, Trusts, Durable Financial and Health Care Powers of Attorney, and Living Wills.

Protecting your loved ones: Have adequate life insurance coverage in place and understand what the policy pays if something should happen to you and who will receive the policy proceeds.

Life insurance: Would your loved ones be able to manage financially if something tragically happened to you? Having life insurance could mean the difference between their financial security and a financial catastrophe. If you are married or have children, you should make sure you have adequate life insurance coverage that will provide for your family.

There are different types of life insurance policies, and each one meets a different need. Generally, term policies are the most affordable but only last for a set time frame. Permanent policies, like whole life or universal life, last your entire lifetime and can accumulate cash value. Life policies are more expensive than term policies.

Term insurance:

- Level premiums for 10, 15, 20, or 30 years
- The option to continue coverage at the end of the level term period
- A built-in conversion guarantee
- A choice of riders or add-on benefits to customize coverage
- Temporary coverage without a lengthy application process or medical exam

Whole Life insurance:

- Guaranteed income-tax free death benefit
- Guaranteed level premium
- Guaranteed cash value grows at a fixed rate that can grow tax-deferred
- A choice of riders or add-on benefits to customize the coverage
- Permanent coverage without a lengthy application process or medical exam
- Minimum guaranteed return

Universal Life insurance:

- Guaranteed income-tax free death benefit
- Flexible premiums
- Guaranteed cash value grows at a market rate that can grow tax-deferred
- Minimum guaranteed return
- More complicated than term or whole life, so it is best suited for those who have changing financial needs over time and want to be able to adjust their coverage and premiums.

Life insurance checklist

- ☐ **Periodically review your needs:** Consider factors such as how many dependents you have, their ages and needs, your debts, and the ability of your spouse to earn a living.
- ☐ **Review beneficiary designations:** Make sure that the individuals you named as beneficiaries are still the ones you want to receive the proceeds of your life insurance.
- ☐ **Periodically evaluate coverage:** Review your coverage when there is a change in your life, such as a marriage, divorce, or birth of a child.

Mitigation — for your income

Protecting your income: This includes managing debts and understanding any employer- and government-provided benefits after a disaster. Most people focus on the need for insurance to cover property loss or medical costs. But do not forget to consider protecting yourself from the financial consequences of loss of earnings from illness or injury.

Disability insurance: Disability insurance can be split into two types: private disability insurance through an individual or group policy, and government disability insurance through social insurance provided through the state or federal government. Many clients have group coverage. But that may not always be the best coverage. Consider buying an individual disability policy.

Review the coverage:

- Get a policy description and read the clauses, as they will define how much and how long you get paid for a number of benefits, including a partial disability.
- Group coverage is not always the best coverage. If your employer offers disability insurance, review the plan so you know what it provides. Your employer may pay the cost of such a plan. However, the benefits will be taxable income to you. Also, remember that coverage will terminate when you leave the job.
- If the policy premiums are paid with pre-tax dollars, the benefits may be taxable when received.

Buy an individual disability policy:

- Look for an "own occupation" definition of disability, which means you will receive benefits if you are disabled and cannot work in your original job, even if you can work doing something else.
- Shop for a plan that provides a benefit for a partial or residual disability, meaning that you can work but not at full capacity.
- Look for a non-cancelable, guaranteed renewable policy with a cost-of-living adjustment.
- In general, if you pay the premiums for a disability policy with after-tax dollars, the benefits are tax free.

Other available disability benefits:

- If you are totally disabled by a disaster or any other cause, you might qualify for Social Security benefits. (To learn more, go to socialsecurity.gov.)
- If you are injured on the job during a disaster, workers' compensation might apply.
- If you are a civil service worker, a military service member, or other federal, state, or local government employee, there are disability programs available.

Disability insurance checklist

☐	Know what the elimination period is for your policy.
☐	Determine how long the policy will pay benefits: up to age 65, lifetime coverage, etc.
☐	Check with your employer or professional association to see if you are eligible to participate in a group plan. If not, contact your insurance broker to investigate individual coverage.
☐	Find out of you have disability insurance through your employer. This may be short-term coverage, long-term coverage, or both.
☐	Consider purchasing additional disability insurance.

☐	How much income will you need? Make sure you have enough to cover things such as living expenses, medical expenses (for deductible and out-of-pocket costs), and unforeseen additional expenses like additional care for you or other family members if you are disabled.
☐	Review if you may be eligible for disability benefits under any government insurance program.

Mitigation — for your important documents

Protecting your records: Have proper storage with readily available access to your important documents.

Document valuables: Maintain a detailed inventory of the contents in your property and business. Taxpayers can take photos or videos to record their possessions and should also write down descriptions that include year and make and model numbers where appropriate. The IRS has a disaster loss workbook[1] that can help compile a list of belongings. After a disaster hits, this kind of documentation can help support claims for insurance or tax benefits.

Protecting property checklist

☐	Take inventory of your assets and possessions. Document with photos and videos and keep track of changing market values.
☐	Make sure you have adequate homeowners or renters' insurance.
☐	Investigate whether you should invest in additional insurance, including coverage for likely weather disasters in your area.
☐	Consider adding an umbrella/excess liability policy.
☐	Determine if you need flood insurance.
☐	Prepare yourself for a potential insurance claim. Keep all paperwork in a safe location and make copies of relevant receipts.

1 Publication 584 Casualty, Disaster and Theft Loss Workbook (Personal Property) (Rev. December 2025) (irs.gov)

Preparedness

Being prepared for a disaster: The best way to deal with a natural disaster is to prepare for it ahead of time. Here are a few tips to get you started.

Research what disasters are likely to strike your community. Residential fires occur frequently in the United States. Although your risk of experiencing a natural disaster depends on where you live, every state has experienced various forms of natural disaster. Floods and flash floods are the most common that occur in all 50 states. Although hurricanes primarily damage islands and coastal areas, they can move inland, spawn dangerous thunderstorms and tornadoes, and produce rain that can cause massive flooding. Tornadoes occur most commonly in the Southeast and Midwest, but they can strike every state. Earthquakes may be more common in the West; however, earthquakes have occurred in all 50 states. (Source: Insurance Information Institute) To find out what disasters are most likely to strike your community, contact your local emergency management office or the local American Red Cross chapter.

Other ideas to consider to be prepared:

- Post emergency phone numbers near the telephone.
- Listen to or watch the news for weather forecasts, especially if storms are predicted in the area.
- Know how to turn off utilities such as gas, electricity, and water.
- Have an emergency escape plan. Familiarize yourself with escape routes, plan a way for your family to communicate or meet after the disaster passes, and educate yourself on safe places to go during a disaster.
- Know the risks of a natural disaster occurring in your area. Contact your police or fire department to get information on whether you live in an area that is susceptible to earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and/or wildfires.
- Ask your police or fire department if there are warning signals such as sirens that notify residents that a disaster is approaching.
- Ask your police or fire department about fire laws, building codes, and suggestions for safety measures.
- Make sure your home is structurally safe such as a secure foundation, roof, and chimney. If you live in a mobile home, ensure your home is properly anchored and secured to the ground.
- Secure water heaters and heavy appliances to the floor and bolt tall or heavy furniture to floors and walls.
- Display heavy objects on low shelves.
- If you have a boat, make sure to store it safely during a disaster.
- Have an inventory of your possessions along with receipts and serial numbers and store them in a safe place somewhere other than your home such as at your office, a friend's house, or safe deposit box. Update your inventory annually.
- Store important documents somewhere other than your home such as in a safe deposit box.
- Review your homeowner's policy periodically to ensure proper coverage is in place and that you understand what is not covered by the policy.
- Consider purchasing specific insurance coverage for earthquakes and floods.
- Keep important documents and valuables in a safe-deposit box or a waterproof and fire-proof safe.
- Have cash on hand as well as an emergency cash fund. Suggest having three to six months' worth of living expenses in an emergency cash reserve account that is accessible quickly and easily.

Prepare a disaster plan

Developing a family disaster plan: Creating a disaster supplies kit with evacuation and communication plans.

Assemble a disaster supply kit: Assemble a disaster kit with basic necessities for your home. Include nonperishable food, bottled water, first-aid supplies, flashlights, an emergency radio, extra batteries, a saw, hammer, wrench, or pliers to turn off utilities, and a whistle to signal for help.

Have a list of items to take with you:

- Start with your home disaster kit and critical documents.
- Gather important documents that may be difficult or impossible to replace. Examples of Important documents to take:
  - Insurance policies, banking and financial account information, and account numbers
  - Identification such as driver's licenses, passports, birth and marriage certificates, and Social Security and Medicare cards
  - Contracts, wills, deeds, and recent tax returns
  - An inventory of your household possessions
- Remember to take prescription medications; clothing and bedding for each household member; computer hard drives, laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and chargers; eyeglasses; photos; and special food or other items for children, disabled or elderly family members, and pets.

Disaster checklist

Earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and wildfires can strike without warning. If there is a natural disaster, you will want to be prepared. Use this checklist to ensure you are ready.

Emergency supplies to keep on hand

☐	First-aid supplies (e.g., bandages, antiseptic)
☐	Prescription medication
☐	Canned goods, can opener
☐	Have a few gallons of fresh water readily available
☐	Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
☐	Extra cell phone batteries or portable cell phone power banks
☐	Flashlight and extra batteries
☐	Matches in a waterproof container, candles
☐	Toiletries and personal hygiene items
☐	Special items for infants such as formula and diapers
☐	Protective clothing
☐	Extra bedding or sleeping bags
☐	Entertainment items such as games, deck of cards or books
☐	Small amount of cash

Other items you may want to have readily available

☐	Plywood
☐	Rolls of plastic sheeting
☐	Sandbags
☐	Shovels

Keep the following items in a safe place off-site or in a water/fireproof container

☐	Important documents such as wills, birth and marriage certificates, and insurance policies
☐	Passports
☐	Bank account and credit card information
☐	Home inventory checklist

Prepare an evacuation plan: Develop a plan where you will go if you must evacuate. Will you stay with friends or family in another town, or head to a hotel or a community shelter? Map out a route to your destination as well as an alternate route if roads are blocked or impassable. Identify a safe place to meet if family members become separated. Choose a family member who lives elsewhere to serve as an alternate point of contact. Check the settings on your mobile phones to make sure emergency alerts and warnings are enabled. Practice packing and preparing to leave your home in 10 minutes or less.

Prepare an emergency communication plan: Before a disaster strikes, make sure you have communicated the plan with family members. Ensure that every family member knows how to reach relatives and family friends in case of emergency. Identify responsibilities of each family member: Who will contact whom in the family to share important information? Who do the children contact if the parents are unreachable? Where will a family regroup? Who will be responsible for retrieving the emergency supplies? Who will retrieve important documents? Who will secure a family pet?

Prepare by protecting and keeping records safe: Coping with the aftereffects of a disaster is difficult under any circumstance, but the trauma compounds when vital records are lost. Taking steps in advance can help you recover faster from a disaster.

Make copies and keep originals in a water-tight container, fire safe or safety deposit box. A home safe is a convenient place to store important papers, but could it withstand a fire, flood, or tornado? At the very least, buy a safe that can withstand temperatures up to 1,700 degrees. If possible, place the safe in the basement to decrease the risk of it falling through the floor in the event of a fire. Be sure to always keep the safe locked and tell someone you trust where you keep the key or combination to the safe — this may be a good option if you use these documents frequently and prefer to keep them in your home (as opposed to a safety deposit box). You may also want to put a list of important phone numbers and addresses in the box, a list of your bank accounts etc.

Prepare computer or digital files: If you keep your financial records on a computer, consider backing the information up regularly to a secure cloud storage service regularly. A severe disaster could make it impossible to access records for an extended period of time. Consider storing records in the cloud. This virtual storage method can be accessed anywhere, on any device, with a secure username and password and provides an easy way to store your vital documents in a secure environment, while allowing you to access them from anywhere in the world.

Personal records to keep:

- Driver's licenses
- Passports
- Social Security cards
- Birth certificates
- Marriage and divorce papers
- Military records
- Home titles or deeds
- Car, boat, or RV registrations and title
- Stock and bond certificates
- Insurance policies
- Wills, living wills, trusts, financial and medical powers of attorney

Protecting your records checklist

☐	Organize important papers and put them in a box that you can grab in the event of an emergency.
☐	Store original documents, property deeds, and birth certificates in a bank safe deposit box.
☐	Keep important records, account numbers, access codes and contact information in your disaster supplies kit.
☐	Do not store your original will in a bank deposit box because it may be temporarily sealed upon your death. Store it with a trusted person instead.
☐	Consider storing records in the cloud with a provider that uses encryption and is secure.
☐	Consider keeping a list of all account numbers, access codes, and important contact information in your disaster supply kit.

Recovery

Recovering from a disaster: The aftermath of a natural disaster may not only affect you financially, but there are also emotional and physical aspects that may appear in time. Here are some tips that may help immediately:

- If you are in immediate danger or need emergency help, Call 911.
- If you are in your home, ensure that your loved ones are safe and unharmed. Check for injured people, giving first aid when necessary. If you are not trained properly, be aware that moving someone who is seriously injured could cause further injury. Be sure everyone in your household is accounted for, especially children, elderly people, or anyone with disabilities.
- Proceed with caution. While the disaster may have passed, health and safety hazards still exist. Be aware that any building you are in, including your home, may not be structurally safe, so move around carefully and look for any apparent damage.
- Report contamination from spills of oil, gas, chemicals, or any hazardous substance. Call the National Response Center at 1-800-424-8802 or go to the website: EPA National Response Center
- Streets littered with debris can be dangerous, so if you do venture out, walk or drive with extreme caution. Try to avoid walking under trees, as many injuries and deaths result from tree limbs falling on cars and pedestrians.
- Do not light a match or open flame, as there may be gas that has leaked into the structure. Instead, use a battery-operated flashlight or similar device for light. Turn off any outside gas lines and open doors and windows to remove any gas that has escaped into the structure.
- The exhaust from generators is toxic. Never run a generator inside your home or structure — always put generators outside well away from doors, windows, and vents.
- Electrical hazards may also be present. Look for loose or dangling power lines and report them to the proper authorities as soon as possible. Be sure to stay clear of such lines, even while in your motor vehicle. If entering a building for the first time, shut off the electrical power if possible until you are sure that there is no leaking gas that could ignite, and that there are no obvious electrical hazards.
- Remember to take pictures of the entire structure, especially those areas with damage, for insurance claim purposes. Make temporary repairs to secure the structure and prevent the elements from entering.
- Make sure your water is safe to use and drink. Presume it is contaminated until you are sure it is not. Purify all water for drinking, cooking, cleaning dinnerware, and washing.
- Check refrigerated foods and dispose of anything that appears spoiled. For specific recommendations for refrigerated food, go to website: FoodSafety.gov
- Be aware of unwanted guests. Depending on where you live, wild animals, reptiles, and insects may be more aggressive because of a natural disaster. Also, animals may take refuge on your property if it is dry and their habitat is flooded.
- Assess your property for damage and loss of trees, landscaping, and yard structures such as sheds. Take pictures of damaged areas for insurance claim purposes.
- Most standard homeowners' insurance does not cover damage caused by flooding, but it may provide some protection from loss due to natural disasters like a hurricane. Document as much damage as you can and prepare a written description along with pictures or video if possible. Call your insurance company as soon as possible. If you cannot stay in your home, most policies provide reimbursement for alternative accommodations.

- Surviving a natural disaster such as a hurricane can be a very stressful situation. Do not hesitate to ask for help from family and friends. If you have young children, they may not understand the impact of the events that just took place, and they may be upset about damage to their home and belongings. Be patient and try to explain what has happened and how you are going to try to get back to normal as soon as possible.
- For more information on tips to help in the aftermath of a natural disaster, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at website: EPA Preparing and Responding Natural Disasters

Recovery through insurance claim: Contact your insurance company. After a catastrophe strikes your property, call your insurance agent or company as soon as possible and ask if an adjuster could be sent. You will need to have your policy number handy. Ask for advice about making emergency repairs, but do not hire any contractors until you clear it with your insurance company. Find out if you are entitled to any money for living expenses under your insurance policy.

While waiting for an insurance adjuster, take photos of damage to your property and gather records that you have, including your household inventory and receipts for expensive items that you might own. If you do not have a household inventory, you will have to rely on your memory and old photos of your home to make a list of the belongings destroyed. Look on your mobile phones for pictures of property that was damaged.

Ask friends if they have pictures taken from inside your home that may contain any damaged property that you can use. Do not throw away anything that you plan to claim without discussing it with the adjustor first.

Recovering by keeping receipts of all associated expenses: If you incur additional expenses for lodging, repairs, or other supplies keep the receipts. Providing as much detailed information as possible about losses will help ensure that your insurance claim is settled quickly and fairly. You should also keep careful notes of your conversations with the adjusters and check over all paperwork and supporting records to make sure the settlement is fair. If you believe the insurance settlement is not, you can appeal the settlement offer to your insurance company or try to settle your claim through arbitration. After you receive your settlement, keep it in a liquid account, because you will need the money soon to replace, repair, or rebuild your property.

Recovering with resources that provide disaster assistance: After you are struck by a catastrophe, you should seek information and/or financial assistance from one or more of the government agencies, private programs, or nonprofit organizations that help victims of natural and other disasters. Research available government, private, and nonprofit assistance to help deal with the catastrophe.

If you have lost property in a fire, contact your local fire department or American Red Cross chapter for information on what assistance is available in your community. If you are the victim of a natural disaster, numerous other sources of help may be available. For instance, you may be able to apply for help from state and local government disaster relief programs, and you can also seek assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

FEMA can provide emergency housing or assistance to cover the cost-of-living expenses and hotel accommodation. You may receive a low-interest loan or a cash grant. If you do not have insurance, or your insurance is inadequate, you may be eligible to receive a low-interest loan from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) or the Small Business Administration (SBA). You can also apply for a cash grant from FEMA if you do not qualify for a loan. For more information on disaster relief programs, contact the American Red Cross at website: Red Cross Disaster Relief or FEMA at website: FEMA

Recovering through rebuilding records: Reconstructing records after a disaster may be required for insurance reimbursement, getting federal assistance or for tax purposes. Most financial institutions can provide statements and documents electronically, an option that can aid in the reconstruction process. There are some simple steps you can take after a disaster to reconstruct your records.

Recovering and replacing vital documents

Document(s)	Contact or resource
Driver's license	Department of Motor Vehicles
Government-issued ID	Contact the issuing authority
Insurance policies	Your insurance agent or company
Passports	State Department – Passport Services, 1-877-487-2778 or TDD/TTY 1-888-874-7793
Birth, death and marriage certificates	Bureau of Records in the appropriate state
Social Security or Medicare cards	Local Social Security office, 1-800-772-1213 or TDD/TTY 1-800-325-0778 Website: SSA.Gov
Credit cards	MasterCard, Visa or other — Contact the issuing financial institution as soon as possible.
Titles to deeds	Records department of the area in which the property is located
Stocks and bonds	Issuing company or your broker
Wills	Your attorney
Income tax records	The IRS center where filed, your accountant or 1-800-829-1040 or Website: IRS.Gov
Mortgage papers	Lending institution

Tips for reconstructing tax records:

- Get free return transcripts by visiting the Get Transcript tool on IRS.gov. You can view your tax records in your Individual Online Account.
- To get transcripts of previous years returns by mail, file a Form 4506-T, Request for Transcript of a Tax Return.
- To request copies of past returns by mail, file Form 4506, Request for Copy of Tax Return.
- Write the appropriate disaster designation, such as "HURRICANE HARVEY," in red letters across the top of Forms 4506-T and 4506 to expedite processing and to waive the normal user fee.

The IRS identifies taxpayers located in the covered disaster area and automatically applies filing and payment relief. This means taxpayers whose IRS address of record is located in the disaster area do not need to contact the IRS to get disaster tax relief.

In addition, a special rule allows both individuals and businesses to choose to deduct uninsured or unreimbursed disaster losses on either the tax return for the year the disaster occurred or the return for the previous year.

Emotional recovery

Although we tend to focus first on financial matters when faced with a disaster-related setback, it is also especially important not to overlook your emotional well-being. To cope emotionally, lean on your support system. Reach out to your family, friends, neighbors, church or other community-based organizations, and/or mental health professionals, if you feel the need. Dealing with an extreme weather disaster is stressful. Do not ignore how a natural disaster can impact your emotional and psychological health.

Emotional recovery checklist

☐	Limit exposure to constant disaster news and social media updates.
☐	Accept that strong emotions are normal (shock, fear, sadness, anger, numbness, guilt, confusion)
☐	Focus only on immediate next steps rather than solving everything at once
☐	Reach out to at least one trusted person to let them know how you are doing
☐	Re-establish basic daily routines (waking, meals, exercise, sleep).
☐	Prioritize adequate rest, hydration, and nutrition.
☐	Spend time with supportive family members, friends, neighbors, or faith communities.
☐	Allow children and older family members to express their fears and concerns.
☐	Practice simple stress-management techniques such as deep breathing, short walks, stretching, prayer or meditation, and journaling
☐	Celebrate small victories and progress.
☐	Continue participating in community recovery efforts if possible.
☐	Attend memorials, community events, or support gatherings if meaningful to you.
☐	Recognize that emotional recovery often takes longer than physical recovery.

Additional resources:

Federal Emergency Management Agency

IRS.GOV Disaster Tax Relief Information

Disasterassistance.gov

Ready.gov

The Key Wealth Institute is a team of highly experienced professionals representing various disciplines within wealth management who are dedicated to delivering timely insights and practical advice. From strategies designed to better manage your wealth, to guidance to help you better understand the world impacting your wealth, Key Wealth Institute provides proactive insights needed to navigate your financial journey.

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