



How To Be Financially Ready for Hurricane Season

Just as we are facing a new school year amid life's current uncertainties, we have been starkly reminded that hurricane season is upon us. And while our neighbors in Louisiana are once again reeling, did you know that Texas actually ranks second only to Florida in the greatest number of hurricanes? Of course, it goes without saying that it is imperative that we all pay close attention to the news and heed warning messages from our local authorities. But in addition to preparing an evacuation plan and putting together an emergency kit, it is just as important to get your financial house in order. The financial impact of a hurricane can be devastating if you are not prepared. Here are some tips to help you batten down your financial hatches.

1. **Build an emergency fund.**

Create a budget for disaster-related expenses such as lodging, transportation, and food, and save toward it. At minimum, the fund should cover an entire week's worth of expenses for your household. An emergency fund is the best buffer you can have from financial crisis in the case of any disaster. Setting just a few dollars aside every week will help you save over time.

2. **Keep some cash handy.**

Although your money is much safer in a federally insured bank, it is a good idea to have some cash on hand in the event you need to evacuate quickly. Most ATMs become inoperable immediately after a storm surge. You will need money for fuel and supplies. It is also wise to set aside a credit card just for emergencies. Making purchases on your credit card will help you keep track of disaster-related expenses that your homeowners' insurance may be able to reimburse.

3. **Flood-proof important papers and documentation.**

Keep critical financial documents safe and protected in a weatherproof, "grab and go" kit. Here is a list of documents you should have ready and keep safe.

- Copy of your driver's license (front and back)
- Birth certificate
- Social security cards
- Child identification cards
- Military ID or discharge papers
- Proof of pet ownership
- Deed to home, property tax information
- Car ownership documents
- Power of attorney

- Will, estate information, living will
- Insurance policies and agent's phone number
- Financial accounts
- Copy of medical insurance/Medicare cards
- Doctor's names and phone numbers
- List of medications and pharmacy number

No matter how prepared you are, hard copy documents are always at risk and may not survive a heavy storm. Take the extra step of making make electronic backup copies of these documents. This will help you collect and secure your financial information as long as it's stored in a password-protected cloud storage site or device.

4. Set-up automatic deposits.

In addition to downed power lines, flooding and other debris, hurricanes are known to disrupt mail delivery for weeks. Set up any payments and benefits electronically using Mobile Deposit, Direct Deposit, or Online Bill Pay. Online and Mobile Banking with eStatements will ensure access to your money.

We can help you in your preparation and are always available before, during and after any emergency situation. The tips I've outlined here are essential for hurricane season and offer great protection to your family's well-being. By taking these precautionary financial measures, you will greatly ease the ravages of any storm. If you have questions, please call or come in now so we can assist you. We want to help you prepare for all that life throws your way and help you weather the storm! Be prepared and stay safe, we always appreciate the confidence you place in us and consider it our privilege to be of service.

