

Documents to bring with you in the event of an emergency

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Emergency officials almost always advise people to make sure to bring your important documents with you. But what do they mean by that?

Keep reading to learn what you need to bring with you during an emergency.

Identification documents

For everyone in your home, including children and pets, make sure you have the following documents, Ready.gov says.

- Vital records, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce paperwork, adoption paperwork and child custody papers.
- Passport, driver's licenses, Social Security cards, green cards, military service cards.
- Pet ownership papers and identification tags.

Financial and legal documents

These documents may be needed to get assistance from your insurance companies and from the government.

- Housing documentation, such as a lease or rental agreement, mortgage paperwork, home equity line of credit documentation, deed.
- Vehicle documents, such as any loan paperwork, registration, title and the VIN.
- Any documents related to finances, such as utility bills, credit cards, student loans, alimony and child support documents, automatic payments.
- Documentation of checking, savings, retirement and investment accounts.
- Insurance policies for your personal property, including appraisals, photos and lists of valuable items.
- Pay stubs, proof of government benefits, alimony and child support.
- Tax statements.
- Estate planning documents, such as wills, trusts and power of attorney.

Medical documents

You should have medical information for everyone in your household, including:

- Health, dental and vision insurance paperwork. Anything related to Medicare, Medicaid and VA health benefits.
- A list of medications, immunizations, allergies, prescriptions, medical equipment and devices, pharmacy information.
- Living wills and medical power of attorney documentation.
- Caregiver agency contact and service agreements.
- Disabilities documentation.
- Contact information for all medical providers, including veterinarians.

Store your documents safely

It may make you nervous to have all this important paperwork in one place, and it should. Keep paper copies of important documents in a fireproof and waterproof box or safe. Ready.gov says, in a bank safe deposit box or with a trusted friend or relative.

Store electronic copies of documents in a password-protected format on a removable flash or external hard drive in your fireproof and waterproof box or safe.

You can also use a secure, cloud-based service.