



Document Organizer

How to Store Important Documents

Important documents are most needed after a major emergency, such as a house fire, flood or earthquake. Ironically, however, these very emergencies will likely destroy the very paperwork you need to get your life back in order. You can keep your important documents safe during an emergency by placing them in a safe deposit box, with a lawyer or in a home safe. We have a brief explanation of each for you to decide how you want your important documents stored.

Rent a Safe Deposit Box

1. Visit your local post office to rent a post-office box.
2. Keep your box key on your key ring and a backup set with your accountant, attorney, or trusted friend. During an emergency, you may not be able to find your own keys.
3. Ask a friend or relative to cosign the box account with you. This way, even if your keys and ID are lost, you can still get your box open.
4. Choose a box located at the top of the wall to minimize the risk of flood damage. Put your documents in a waterproof container in case the post office is flooded.
5. Place critical documents, such as birth certificates, marriage licenses, mortgage documents, insurance documents, car titles and photos of your insured personal property in a safe deposit box.
6. Retain copies of all of these documents in your filing cabinet at home for use before an emergency occurs.

Entrust Important Documents to Your Attorney

1. Give your lawyer the originals of vital paperwork, such as your will, a power of attorney, funeral instructions and your living will. Attorneys are required to keep such documents in very safe locations.
2. Supply your lawyer with the location and number of your safe deposit box.
3. Forward copies of these important personal documents to a trusted friend or relative. Choose a person who lives in another state to ensure that the copies survive during a disaster in your state.

Place Other Documents in a Home Safe

1. Choose a fireproof home safe.
2. Store your tax returns, passports and bank-account information in your home safe.
3. Tell at least one other person the combination to your safe in case you are injured.

Tips & Warnings

- Ask your doctor to place copies of your living will in your medical file.
- Don't place your will or funeral wishes in a safe deposit box. Safe deposit boxes are sealed when you die, so your relatives won't have access.

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