



Southern California Preparedness Foundation

Suggestions for Organizing Vital Records

It could be "the Big One," a fire, flood, or terrorist attack. But at some point, you are likely to need copies of vital records and other important information that may not be readily accessible in the event of a sudden evacuation, or household disaster. However, if you have already organized this information, and have it safely packed in your 72-Hour Grab-And-Go kit, you'll be far ahead of the game. (By the way—this is a great "first item" to start that kit.)

Purchase a 3-ring binder and a box of clear plastic sheet protectors in which to put copies of important papers. Start gathering today, and every time you find a new piece of information, copy it and put the copy into the book. Originals of important papers should be kept in a fire-proof safe or a safety deposit box. Also, consider sending copies of special documents to a trusted friend or relative, preferably out-of-state.

Following, in no particular order of importance, are examples of the kinds of information you'll want. Check each off as you add it to your binder, or mark through if not applicable to your situation.

Your family's emergency plan
Wills, living wills, and trust documentation
Organ donor information
Retirement and pension information
Automobile titles and other property titles
Marriage licenses/certificates, divorce papers
Social Security/Medicare cards and info
Driver's license
Passport information
Education certificates and diplomas
Income tax records
Insurance policies
Investment papers
Birth certificates and adoption records
Baptismal and other religious records
Genealogy records
Death/birth certificates
Medical histories and records
Medical consent forms
Bank, checking, and savings account information
Organization and membership records
Military records and discharge papers
Real estate deeds (don't forget burial plots)
Mortgage information and loan agreements
Pet records – pedigree/spay-neuter/inoculation
Recent close-up photo of each family member
Recent close-up photo of each pet with you
Recent photos of home exterior, all sides
Recent photos of home interior (each room, various views)
Recent pictures of detached buildings, inside and out

Recent pictures of valuables (jewelry, objets d'art, paintings, collections, silverware, etc. And copies of *recent* appraisals)

You may want to have a small separate address/phone book you can tuck into a pocket, and/or include this info in your 3-ring binder.

Names, addresses (and email), and phone numbers for:

Out-of-state contacts
Close relatives, friends and neighbors
Business, church and school associates
Religious representatives
Doctors, home care-givers
Veterinarian
Pharmacies (and names and numbers of prescriptions taken regularly)
Attorneys
Accountants
Financial advisors
Credit card companies (and card numbers)
Banks, mortgage and loan companies
Insurance agents (home, car, motor home, boat, etc.)
Pool maintenance people and gardeners
Repair companies (electrician, plumber, heating and air conditioning, alarm company, roofer, mason, window glass repair, carpenter, handyman)
Utility companies (phone numbers and account info)

Add a zippered pouch to the binder and tuck in an extra house key and vehicle key(s). Also, add travel/thumb/USB drives (a portable flash drive storage unit for your computer), or a CD/DVD containing copies and/or images of all your important photos, paper documents (see above), computer files, and your email contact list. You can also consider storing/uploading this info to the "cloud." But remember that you'll need hard copies of some of the above in case computer/Internet access is not available.