

Plan ahead to avert financial disaster

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AUSTIN, Texas — Every disaster is different and brings unique challenges, but one thing you know it may bring is a need for money. Whether you have to pay for food, a few nights away from home, or a complete home rebuild, you'll feel better if you've planned ahead.

During the final week of National Preparedness month, make sure your transition from disaster to recovery is as smooth as possible by following the steps below.

Put some money — and some cash — aside: Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that can be used in any crisis. Also keep a small amount of cash in a safe place at home, because ATMs and credit cards may not work following a disaster. For tips on saving, visit www.mymoney.gov/save-invest.

Get insured: Check your policies and make sure you have enough homeowners or renters, flood and wind insurance. Homeowners and renters insurance typically do not cover damage caused by floods, which are the most common and costly natural disasters in the U.S. One inch of water in an average home can cost more than \$26,000 in damage, and the average flood insurance policy costs about \$700 annually. Go to www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program to learn more about flood insurance.

Keep documents in a safe place: Store your important papers in a safe deposit box or a fireproof and waterproof box or safe in your home. You also may want to keep electronic copies on an external drive in the same box, or on a storage



website. Papers you may need after a disaster include insurance policies, social security card and tax statements. It is also a good idea to take photos of the rooms in your home and any valuable items. Having these items readily available can be crucial to getting the recovery process started quickly and efficiently.

Sign up for direct deposit: A disaster can disrupt mail service for days or weeks. Consider switching paychecks and federal benefits like Social Security to direct deposit. Federal benefit recipients can sign up at www.godirect.gov/gpw/ or 800-333-1795.

Read FEMA's Emergency Financial First Aid Kit: The kit, found at <https://go.usa.gov/xQ7pC>, provides all the checklists, forms and information you'll need to prepare financially for disaster.

To learn more about preparing your finances for the unexpected, visit www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness. For more on National Preparedness Month, see www.ready.gov/september.

For additional information on Hurricane Harvey and Texas recovery, visit the Hurricane Harvey disaster web page at www.fema.gov/disaster/4332, Facebook at www.facebook.com/FEMAHarvey, the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at www.twitter.com/FEMARegion6 or the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at <https://www.dps.texas.gov/dem/>.



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