

Financial Preparedness Periscope Transcript

Hello everyone. My name is Matt. I work for FEMA in the Individual and Community Preparedness Division. Thanks for joining our Scope today to discuss financial preparedness ahead of disasters. I've got two great guests with me here today. I have Rod from Experian. Thanks for joining Rod.

Thanks for having me.

Yeah, and thank you Jessica from Property Casualty Insurers for joining us as well.

Thanks, Matt.

Great. I really would like to encourage you to share this scope so others can participate in this fantastic event here. And, I also want to note the views expressed today are not necessarily the views of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But first, let's go to Rod, and ask Rod, "Why is this so important to you? Why is financial preparedness key?"

Well, when a disaster happens, the first thing you're going to need access to quite often are your financial records and your financial resources. I live in Texas, so when hurricane Katrina happened, people evacuated from Louisiana, and the first thing they needed to do was find a place to live. They needed access to their credit cards. They needed access to their banking systems. So, if you don't have your records available, your passwords and cards available, you can find yourself without access to finances and financial resources that will help you get through that disaster.

No, that's a great point. But, what about you Jessica? Why is this so important to you?

Well, I work for the Property Casualty Insurers Association of America. We represent a thousand insurance companies, who obviously are dedicated to helping you rebuild your life after a natural disaster. But, what we often times forget is just how much you can do in advance, like Rod said. And, then also I'd like to throw out there that I'm a native Floridian, so I personally in my life have a passion for this idea of natural disaster preparedness and response and have seen it firsthand what can happen if they lose and how quickly everything can be ruined.

Right, Yeah, and like you said, it's really important we bake that into our everyday culture. Make sure our families are prepared. Rob mentioned quite a bit about certain documents and passwords and the like. And, I'm curious to know which documents are most important in your mind in terms of keeping on track.

I would say one of the most important things you can do right now is go through your home and do a home inventory. A personal home inventory. You can talk to your insurance agent or insurance company for individual recommendations, but you'd be amazed how much you actually forget. And these things make it so easy. You can videotape your home you can take pictures of your home, but I will go back to something that Rod said, imagine what happens after the disaster, after the hurricane, after the fire. Let's say you lose your phone. Let's say you don't have power. Let's also say you don't have cell phone

service. So, think about how much you keep in this phone, and what happens if you don't have it for let's say a week after a disaster. Let this be a tool to help you, but don't be held hostage to the phone.

Right, and let's not forget the dreaded cracked screen that can always happen. We don't want to see one of those. Rod, so, in terms of the credit perspective, what are some of those other important documents to keep on hand?

It's an excellent point, that even though we're so reliant on technology today, and we're on Periscope, when a disaster happens, paper can be king. You have to have paper documents, copies of things, one of the things we talk about is getting your credit report, knowing what's in it so when disaster happens, you're already ready. You know your credits in good shape so that if you need it, you can access it. You want to make sure your credit score's in good shape. One of things that I do, is I keep a small safe. A fireproof, waterproof safe that I can grab and go if I need to, with my passwords, with my extra credit cards, with whatever I need. Insurance documents, so I can contact my insurers. All of that information at hand so that you can leave immediately with it, know you have the information you need to continue on and recover.

So you're saying, that even in today's world of putting stuff into the cloud, it's still best to keep it underneath a mattress or in a closet as well?

I don't know about in the closet or under the mattress, but maybe the bank or a safe deposit box, or in a safe you can get to easily. But, don't make it too accessible because you still want to protect it.

Well, that's a good point. I want to point out something we got on the [ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare) website. This is 'Be Smart. Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables'. And, it's a checklist of some of things we talked about right here. I like to use this to take those extra copies, stick them right here in the middle, and put it in that family safe or on my uncle's farm, or another safe location away from our home, which might be affected by a incident. And, if you want to get to this, again, it's [ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare). Click on the hazards tab, choose the hazard that most affects you, and you'll see it under featured resources. Great. So, a couple of other things: Where do we get started? I mean, we talked about some of these big documents and many of us do have them at home already, but let's say this is the first time folks that are participating are hearing the term financial preparedness. Where do we get started, Jessica?

So let's talk about insurance for a minute. If you are buying a home, there's a high likelihood that you already know about insurance coverage. You're already talking to an insurance agent because, presumably, you already have a mortgage. But, let's not forget about renters. Oftentimes renters are some of the biggest victims of horrible financial tragedies, because they don't realize they can actually buy insurance—renter's insurance that will protect their home and their valuables. And, I also say, for renters out there, talk to an insurance agent, talk to whoemver carries your auto insurance, because they might have some really great tips. Even if you don't want to buy renters insurance from them. So, with that I say an annual insurance inventory.

Great.

Talk about your coverages, talk about your deductibles. Things can change in a heartbeat. Often times, too, where we have a child, when, let's say, we get married. That's a natural transition when you talk about your insurance coverage, but you'd be surprised how much your life is changing every year and your financial needs that you don't even think about.

Wow, that's great. So, annual insurance inventory is something that we should all get on top of.

Talk to an insurance agent, talk to a company, even talk to your bank.

Great, and what do you think? What are some easy ways to get started?

Well, you know so stick on annual. So if you go to annualcreditreport.com, you can get your credit report. Know what's there. That'll give you a complete listing of an inventory of your credit accounts. Things people often forget about. I've talked to people who have forgotten that they have an account. That they put their credit card in their drawer somewhere and forgot it was there. Make sure you know what your accounts are, where your financial agreements are, so that you can use them or deal with them in advance, because we're talking about preparedness, not action after the fact. So, get the credit report. Make a list. If we go back, whether it's on the phone, or the computer, and set inventory. Make a list of your financial agreements, your financial documents, your insurance documents, your passports. Think of all of those things that you need to have access to in an emergency, so that you don't have to go search for them in the middle of the tornado, which would not be a good thing.

Yeah, you make a great point. I can't tell you how many of the department store credit cards we have hiding in the drawer in our office, you know, to get that 25% off one day only kind of thing, so keeping track of all those is great. Back to you Jessica, you mentioned insuring, getting started on that insurance, and we've got another checklist at ready.gov/prepare that does the same. I'd really like to encourage you to check out ready.gov/prepare or mymoney.gov, which is another fantastic website for financial information and financial preparedness. We're especially fond of the part that talks about unseen incidences on that website to tell you how to get started. Also, if you're following us on this Periscope please be sure to follow us on other social media platforms and then share this particular scope with your friends and neighbors. So, let's go back to it, Rod. We've talked about where to get started, how to keep track of these documents. What's the big take away you want to folks to take with them when they leave our Scope?

Know what your financial obligations are before the disaster happens. I think that's the most important thing you can do. We're in financial literacy month in April right now, so it's a great time to talk about understanding your financial obligations and having them in order, so that when something happens you're not surprised and not caught off guard. So, know what your obligations are, keep track of them, use the tools available so when that something happens, you can respond without any delay, and not have to panic about them.

Great. So, get that game plan in order today.

Absolutely.

What do you think, Jessica?

I'd say the best offense is a good defense.

There you go.

There are so many small ways you can protect every aspect of your life with insurance. And, don't be afraid of insurance. It's not that scary, and in a lot of ways, it's not that expensive. And you can find different ways to get discounts with talking to your insurance agent or your insurance company that would absolutely surprise you, amaze you, and make you feel very safe and protected.

Great. You know, working at FEMA, we get a lot of emails that come through of different incidences across the country. The hazards that certain people face— some call them perils in the insurance industry. I'm curious to know if you either have some hazard specific advice. You're a native Floridian. You live in Texas, currently I understand. So, tell us what's it like where you live, and how do you prepare for those specific hazards.

Well, I'd say it all comes back to flood insurance. And, ultimately, flood damage is not covered under a standard property insurance policy. So, again, talk to your agent, talk to your company about if you're at risk for flood damage, because that's probably one of the biggest challenges we face as renters, as homeowners, as even motorists.

Great. And, how about you, Rod?

With us and where I live, its tornados, not so much floods, you know? Although they tend to go together sometimes, and just a couple of months ago a tornado hit about five miles from my home. And, one of things we saw was that personal documents end up in the wind, literally, and expose you to potential identity theft and fraud. So, keeping them locked away, in something that's not going to break open and blow away is important. But, also having services available, like at Experian we offer protectmyid.com, but there are other sources that can help protect you if your information becomes accessed from frauds, which can be incredibly important thing to do in the event of a disaster. Make sure you're protected if you lose those documents and need to recover them.

Great. Yeah, we'd love to hear from those of you around the world that are participating please leave us a note about what hazards you face in your community and how you're beginning to prepare. The Ready.gov website, [Ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare), contains hazard specific which is really great for folks who know that potentially a wildfire is the thing that they face most in their community, or, in your case, a tornado. We've got six actual hazards there. We'd love for you to go take a look and learn what the first steps are to get prepared in your area. A lot of great community organizations, as well. We've talked about insurers and bankers, and maybe you all can tell me who you turn to in your community to ensure that we're taking those first steps towards preparedness.

I'm trying to think of all the organizations that we've worked with.

Yeah.

The United Way is always important. There are great, in just our area, you know, great foodbanks. The churches are tremendous, so there are great community support groups available to everybody.

Right, yeah. You mentioned faith communities, you mentioned community based organizations, like United Way or other service organizations. Fantastic resources for this kind of information. What about you, Jessica? Who's important in your community in terms of preparedness?

Well, FEMA's very important in my community.

Good answer.

I'd also like to just add that, as you mentioned, there are so many different perils out there. No one is exempt from a natural disaster. It doesn't matter where you live in the country— you are risk— and that's why we have to take these steps very seriously. And, let's say, even if you live in what you consider to be a low risk area, you never know when you're going to be on vacation, when you're going to be on a work trip. Disasters can strike anywhere.

No, you're right and when you are at your home and even when you aren't, who are you going to count on to help you, should there be an emergency, or who do you need to check on in your community, right? It might be your neighbors. It might be your friends down the road. It could be your daycare provider. So, really, checking in with your faith community, with your local civic association, perhaps, your homeowners association, or just the person that walks your dog when you get stuck at work late. All of those things can really help build resilience.

I am so glad you brought up the dog. I am a new puppy owner, and in the property casualty insurance industry, as a puppy owner, I think a lot about pet safety. I think that's another really important aspect today to think about your pet's safety or pet safety plan. What happens if you can't get home at night after a work trip, and what are your plans, let's say, if your animal is in danger. So think about that as part of your natural preparedness as well. We did just have National Puppy Day on Twitter.

Did we really? We missed it. We'll have to wait until next year. That's a great point, and maybe if you'd like to see that as another PrepareAthon! Periscope on this mobile platform, please let us know and perhaps are next one we can focus on pet preparedness. That's a great point.

Can I bring my giant schnoodle?

Yes.

Only if I can bring my Miniature Chihuahua Shih Tzus.

I would love to see that. Great. Well, hey, Jessica from Property Casualty Insurers, thank you so much for joining us.

Thank you.

Yeah. Rod from Experian, I appreciate your time of the day. Thank you for coming out and providing this information. My name again is Matt from FEMA. We encourage you to go to [Ready.gov/prepare](https://www.ready.gov/prepare) and take your first steps towards preparedness. Thanks very much.