

# Copy that: Keep your documents safe and accessible

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AUSTIN, Texas — If a natural disaster strikes, you may have your hands full making sure you and your loved ones are safe and have the essential items you need to survive. You won't have time to gather the items you may need later to start your recovery process.

Having important financial documents, medical records and contact numbers at your fingertips will help minimize stress during the difficult days following a disaster. It will also help get your recovery process started quickly and efficiently.

Make sure your vital documents are secure and accessible by following these suggestions:

1. Keep a binder of important papers in a fireproof and waterproof box or safe in your home. Keep the binder next to your emergency kit, so you can grab them both quickly in a crisis. For information on building an emergency kit, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xEsEJ>.
2. Also store copies of your documents in an external location, like a safe deposit box, your place of business or a trusted friend's home.
3. Make electronic copies and keep them on a flash drive or CD in the same binder with your documents.
4. Also place electronic copies on a digital-storage website, or simply email copies to yourself.

When gathering documents to keep in your binder, be sure to include these types of papers:



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- Vital records like birth and marriage certificates, adoption papers, passports, Social Security cards, etc.
- List of medications, allergies and medical equipment
- Deed, mortgage, lease and loan papers
- Insurance policies
- Photos of valuable belongings and furnishings you may want to include in an insurance claim
- Pet ownership papers, vaccination records and ID tags
- Vehicle registration and title
- Contact information for doctors, relatives, creditors and utilities
- Bank, retirement, investment and credit card account information and contact numbers
- Will and estate planning documents
- Cash (ATMs and credit card machines may be out-of-service)

For more on safeguarding your documents, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xEsPt>.

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

