



DATA COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS

Safety Center Bulletin DATE: November 2002 SUBJECT: Assembling A Disaster Evacuation Box



A simple “Banker’s Box” could make your life easier after a disaster. That is, if you use it to create a “Disaster Evacuation Box,” which is just what its name implies; a box that contains all the most important documents you’ll need if disaster strikes your house or your neighborhood.

The box should be stored as close to the main exit door as possible & should be the first item removed from the house in an evacuation (alter kids, pets & grandparents).

INSTRUCTIONS & TOOLS: Make copies of the items listed below. Put as many items on a page as you can. You will need a camera & video camera for photos of the house, vehicles & important personal possessions, such as artwork or jewelry. If you are comfortable with high-tech methods, take photos with a digital camera or scan the pictures & paperwork into a computer, copy the pictures & lists to a CD. Make several copies of the CD: one for the evacuation box, one for your safety deposit box, & one for a friend or family member. Here’s what to copy:

THE PAST FOUR YEARS’ TAX RETURNS: The important forms to copy are: the first two pages of each year’s tax return (Form 1040 or 1040A, & any state income tax returns filed), plus additional schedules, such as self-employment, investment or rental property & personal deductions. If you qualify for immediate tax relief, the copies will enable you to file amended or current tax returns quickly. Ask your tax professional which of forms to copy for the emergency box.

HOME INFORMATION: If you own your home, include a copy of the final closing escrow statement for the purchase of the residence & a list of improvements made by you after the purchase.

PERSONAL DOCUMENTS: Copy important papers such as birth certificates, citizenship papers, social security cards green cards, passports, etc.

VEHICLE & DRIVER’S DOCUMENTATION: Copy drivers license(s) for all drivers in the family, the car title (“pink slip”), registration paperwork, auto leases & loan documents for all vehicles. A photo of each vehicle should also be included.

MEDICAL INFORMATION: Make a list of all current prescription medication for each member of the family, Include the name & strength of the medicine, how often it is used, the names & phone numbers of the prescribing doctor & dispensing pharmacy,

FAMILY PHOTOS & NEGATIVES: Keep a notebook with contact sheets or negatives of important family photos. Special holders that fit in a three-ring binder are readily available for negative storage.

FILM OF THE HOUSE: Take photos or a video of the inside & outside of the house. Include landscaping, closets, drawers, crawl space, shed, garage & all nooks & crannies. Film all vehicles owned by the family. Keep an extra copy of the tape in a safe deposit box somewhere outside house. As you film the house, read the serial numbers of all large items such as televisions, VCR’s, stereo equipment, etc. into the camera. If a thief breaks into the house, you will have the information needed by the police & your insurance company.

INSURANCE: Copy all insurance policies, including home, life, auto & health care. Only copy the page showing the type of coverage, policy numbers, name of the company, & the phone number of the local agent or office.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS: Make a list of important phone numbers (*phone fax, cell, e-mail*) including family members, doctors, babysitters, schools, work, & emergency numbers such as fire, police & ambulance. Include the number of an out of town contact, such as a friend or relative, who you agree to call after a local disaster. Your contact then calls the friends & relatives on your list to tell them you’re OK. Out of town fiends & relatives can call the contact person instead of you to keep local emergency lines open. Your local emergency service providers will be grateful.

FINANCES & FAST CASH: Make a list of all investments, bank accounts, credit card numbers & other important account numbers. The list should show the name of the company, name of the broker or other account representative, account number, & telephone numbers including fax, cell & e-mail If the account has a pin” number or password, these should be listed, too.

FAMILY INFORMATION: The box should also include recent photographs, fingerprints & dental records for each member of the household. While this is one item none of us want to think about, it can save emergency personnel hours of time identifying someone who has been seriously injured or killed in a disaster or accident. Fingerprints can be obtained for a minimal fee at police stations & there are many non-profit groups offering free fingerprinting for children.

This evacuation box *was* conceived of & compiled by Carol W. Thompson, EA after speaking with hundreds of disaster victims at disaster sites around the United States.

Be sure to visit the DCP Safety Center Website at www.consultdcp.com/safetycenter.htm