



National Preparedness Month

Week 3 September 12-18: Prepare for Disasters

Financial Preparedness Tips

Americans at all income levels have experienced the challenges of rebuilding their lives after a disaster or other emergency. In these stressful times, having access to personal financial, insurance, medical and other records is crucial for starting the recovery process quickly and efficiently.

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. Keep a small amount of cash at home in a safe place. It is important to have small bills on hand because ATMs and credit cards may not work during a disaster when you need to purchase necessary supplies, fuel, or food.



If a disaster strikes, having insurance for your home is the best way to ensure that you will have the necessary financial resources to help you repair, rebuild, or replace whatever is damaged. Before a disaster strikes, take the time to understand your options for coverage, ensure that you have the appropriate insurance for the hazards in your area, and document your property.

Homeowners' Insurance

If you own a home, homeowners' insurance is a necessity. Virtually all mortgage companies require borrowers to have insurance coverage for the full or fair value of a property (usually the purchase price) and won't make a loan or finance a residential real estate transaction without proof of it.

Policy rates are largely determined by the insurer's risk that you'll file a claim; they assess this risk based on past claim history associated with the home, the neighborhood, and the home's condition. Homeowners' insurance policies generally cover destruction and damage to a residence's interior and exterior, the loss or theft of possessions, and personal liability for harm to others.

There are three basic levels of coverage:

- Actual cash value- covers the cost of the house plus the value of your belongings after deducting depreciation (i.e., how much the items are currently worth, not what you paid).
- Replacement cost- covers the actual cash value of your home and possessions without the deduction for depreciation, so you can repair or rebuild your home up to the original value.
- Extended replacement cost/value- the most comprehensive, this inflation-buffer policy pays for whatever it costs to repair or rebuild your home—even if it's more than your policy limit.

Renters' Insurance

Even though you may not own where you live, you still have personal property as well as possible liability exposures that need to be protected. Your landlord's insurance coverage protects their property from loss, but it does not cover your property. In the event of a loss, could you afford to replace your personal property? This is where renters' insurance comes in.

Who should get renters' insurance?

1. Anyone who rents an apartment, condominium or even a home.
2. Former homeowners' who may be downsizing to an apartment.
3. College students not covered by parent's homeowners' policy.



Renters' insurance also includes *loss of use coverage*. If a fire, water damage, or any covered loss renders your home or apartment uninhabitable, *loss of use coverage* pays for additional living expenses you might incur so you can continue your normal standard of living.

What would NOT be covered by renters' insurance? A few examples are flooding, sewer back-up, power failures, earthquakes, intentional acts, etc.

Common misperceptions about renters' insurance include:

1. "Renters' insurance is too expensive, and I already have enough bills to pay." The average renter's insurance policy is \$15 and \$30 per month. Replacing all your possessions will cost much more.
2. "I don't have that many valuables." The cost to replace your belongings is much higher than you think.
3. "My landlord has insurance, so I'm already protected." The landlord's insurance does not extend to your personal property, nor does it protect you from being liable for damage you might cause to the building (e.g., a kitchen fire or a plumbing mishap). Your landlord has insurance for damage to the building and protection for lawsuits filed against the landlord, but that insurance does not cover renters'.

5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness

We never think a disaster will strike our neighborhood; however, it is not a question of if one will happen, but when. The 5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness Guide and Toolkit can help you build a disaster plan for your neighborhood.

1. Define your area: Identify a manageable area, your apartment building, one city block, a few small surrounding streets, etc., that you can organize with relative ease.
2. Recruit leaders: Develop a team of leaders who can help build the plan and carry out emergency support activities when the time comes.
3. Scout your area: Get to know the lay of the land: what resources you have, what the landscape is, and disasters or other emergencies common to your area.
4. Build your team: Find out who lives in your area, how they can help in a disaster, and who many need extra help.
5. Plan your approach: Create a plan that outlines what your neighborhood will do before, during, and after a disaster.



For more information on the 5 Steps to Neighborhood Preparedness, visit: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cerg.

Northern Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan Survey



Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is partnering with other Northern Virginia jurisdictions to update the 2017 Northern Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Your participation can make our community more resilient to a disaster. This survey will remain open until September 20, 2021. We truly appreciate your help in completing this vital project to help sustain our collective resilience in the face of disaster.

Survey Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NorthernVirginiaHazardMitigationSurvey>