

IRS Offers Tips for Safeguarding Tax Records

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Hurricane season has started and the IRS encourages individuals and businesses to safeguard their tax records against natural disasters by taking a few simple steps.

Here are four tips from the IRS to help you prepare in case a disaster strikes.

1. Backup records electronically

Taxpayers should keep a set of backup records in a safe place away from the original set. Keeping a backup set of records, bank statements, tax returns, insurance policies, etc is easier now that many financial institutions provide statements and documents electronically. Even if the original record is only available on paper, it can be scanned into an electronic format. With documents in electronic form, taxpayers can download them to a portable backup storage device such as an external hard drive, CD or DVD that you can take with you in the event that you need to evacuate.

2. Document valuables

Taxpayers should photograph or videotape the contents of their home, especially items of higher value. A photographic record can help an individual prove the market value of items for insurance and casualty loss claims. Photos should be stored at an outside location. To document your valuables, the IRS has a disaster loss workbook, Publication 584, Casualty, Disaster and Theft Loss Workbook, which can help taxpayers compile a room-by-room list of belongings.

3. Update Emergency Plans

Emergency plans should be reviewed at least once a year. Personal and business situations change over time as do preparedness needs. When employers hire new employees or when a company changes functions, plans should be updated and employees should be informed.

4. IRS Ready to Help

If a disaster strikes, affected taxpayers can call 1-866-562-5227 to speak with IRS specialists trained to handle disaster-related issues. Taxpayers can request copies of previously-filed tax returns by filing Form 4506, Request for Copy of Tax Return. Taxpayers can also request transcripts showing most line items on a return online at IRS.gov, by calling 1-800-908-9946 or by using Form 4506T-EZ, Short Form Request for Individual Tax Return Transcript or Form 4506-T, Request for Transcript of Return.

More information on preparing for disasters can be found at IRS.gov. Forms and publications can be downloaded at IRS.gov or ordered by calling 1-800-829-3676.

Links:

- Publication 584, Casualty, Disaster and Theft Loss Workbook ([PDF](#))
- Form 4506, Request for Copy of Tax Return ([PDF](#))
- Form 4506T-EZ, Short Form Request for Individual Tax Return Transcript ([PDF](#))
- Form 4506-T, Request for Transcript of Return ([PDF](#))

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