

# Prepare for a Disaster Plan to Keep Your Tax Records Safe

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To mark the start of the hurricane season, the IRS urges you to make a plan to keep your tax records safe. Plans made before a disaster strikes can help you recover from the destruction left in its wake. The following tips can help you make that plan:

- **Use Electronic Records.** You may have access to bank and other financial statements online. If so, your statements are already securely stored there. You can also keep an additional set of records electronically. One way is to scan tax records and insurance policies onto an electronic format. You may want to download important records to an external hard drive, USB flash drive or burn them onto CD or DVD. Be sure you keep duplicates of your records in a safe place. For example store them in a waterproof container away from the originals. If a disaster strikes your home, it may also affect a wide area. If that happens you may not be able to retrieve the records that are stored in that area.
- **Document Valuables.** Take photos or videos of the contents of your home or business. These visual records can help you prove the value of your lost items. They may help with insurance claims or casualty loss deductions on your tax return. You should also store these in a safe place. For example, you might store them with a friend or relative who lives out of the area.
- **Count on the IRS for Help.** If you fall victim to a disaster, know that the IRS stands ready to help. You can call the IRS disaster hotline at 866-562-5227 for special help with disaster-related tax issues.
- **Get Copies of Prior Year Tax Records.** If you need a copy of your tax return you should file [Form 4506](#), Request for Copy of Tax Return. The usual fee per copy is \$50. However, the IRS will waive this fee if you are a victim of a federally declared disaster. If you just need information that shows most line items from your tax return, you can call 1-800-908-9946 to request a free transcript. You can also get it if you file Form [4506T-EZ](#), Short Form Request for Individual Tax Return Transcript, or [Form 4506-T](#), Request for Transcript of Tax Return.

**Visit [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) for more information about disaster assistance.** Click on the "[Disaster Relief](#)" link in the lower left section of the home page. You can also type "disaster" in the search box. Get IRS tax forms and publications on [IRS.gov/forms](http://IRS.gov/forms) at any time.

## Additional IRS Resources:

- [Preparing for a Disaster](#)  
(<http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2IkPTlwMTUwNjA0LjQ1NjEyMDcxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTCoYmDE1MDYwNC40NTYxMjA3MSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTlEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDEyMDQzJmVtYWlsaWQ9Z2FyeUB0YXhidWxsZG9nLmNvbSZ1c2VyaWQ9Z2FyeUB0YXhidWxsZG9nLmNvbSZmbD0mZXh0cmE9TXVsdGI2YXJpYXRISWQ9JiYm&&&135&&&http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Preparing-for-a-Disaster-Taxpayers-and-Businesses>)
- [Publication 584](#), Casualty, Disaster, and Theft Loss Workbook (Personal-Use Property)  
(<http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2IkPTlwMTUwNjA0LjQ1NjEyMDcxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTCoYmDE1MDYwNC40NTYxMjA3MSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTlEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDEyMDQzJmVtYWlsaWQ9Z2FyeUB0YXhidWxsZG9nLmNvbSZ1c2VyaWQ9Z2FyeUB0YXhidWxsZG9nLmNvbSZmbD0mZXh0cmE9TXVsdGI2YXJpYXRISWQ9JiYm&&&136&&&http://www.irs.gov/uac/About-Publication-584>)
- [Publication 584-B](#), Business Casualty, Disaster, and Theft Loss Workbook
- [Publication 547](#), Casualties, Disasters, and Thefts
- [Publication 583](#), Starting a Business and Keeping Records
- [Reconstructing Your Records](#)  
(<http://links.govdelivery.com/track?type=click&enid=ZWFzPTEmbWFpbGluZ2IkPTlwMTUwNjA0LjQ1NjEyMDcxJm1lc3NhZ2VpZD1NREItUFJELUJVTCoYmDE1MDYwNC40NTYxMjA3MSZkYXRhYmFzZWlkPTlEwMDEmc2VyaWFsPTE3MDEyMDQzJmVtYWlsaWQ9Z2FyeUB0YXhidWxsZG9nLmNvbSZ1c2VyaWQ9Z2FyeUB0YXhidWxsZG9nLmNvbSZmbD0mZXh0cmE9TXVsdGI2YXJpYXRISWQ9JiYm&&&140&&&http://www.irs.gov/uac/Reconstructing-Your-Records>)

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*Gary W Lundgren, EA*

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