

Sample article for organizations to use to reach customers/taxpayers (395 word count)

Customize and provide the following article on your website to help individuals and businesses prepare for hurricanes and natural disasters by safeguarding their tax records.

Prepare for natural disasters by safeguarding tax records

With the start of hurricane season, the Internal Revenue Service encourages individuals and businesses to safeguard themselves against natural disasters by taking a few simple steps.

Create a backup set of records

You should keep a backup set of records in a safe place. The backup should be stored away from the original set.

Keeping a backup set of records — for example, bank statements, tax returns, insurance policies, etc. — is easier now that many financial institutions provide statements and documents electronically, and more financial information is available on the Internet. Even if the original records are provided only on paper, they can be scanned into an electronic format. With documents in electronic form, you can download them to a backup storage device, like an external hard drive or burn them to a CD or DVD.

Inventory your valuables

Another step you can take to prepare for disaster is photograph or videotape the contents of your home, especially items of higher value. The IRS has a disaster loss workbook, [Publication 584](#) that can help you compile a room-by-room list of belongings.

A photographic record can help prove the market value of your items for insurance and casualty loss claims. You should store photos with a friend or family member who lives outside the area.

Update emergency plans for personal and business situations

You should review emergency plans annually. Personal and business situations change over time as do preparedness needs.

If you own your own business, be sure to update your plans whenever you hire new employees or make changes to your business. Also be sure to inform your employees about these changes.

If you use payroll service providers, ask the provider if it has a fiduciary bond in place. The bond could protect you in the event of default by the payroll service provider.

The IRS is ready to help

If disaster strikes, you should call the IRS at 1-866-562-5227 to speak with a specialist trained to handle disaster-related issues.

You can request copies of previously-filed tax returns and all attachments, including Forms W-2, Wage and Tax Statement, by filing [Form 4506](#), Request for Copy of Tax Return. Alternatively, transcripts showing most line items on these returns can be [ordered on-line](#), 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 Tax Return.

Note to Editor, below are additional items you can use to educate your customers about disaster-related tax issues:

- [Tax Relief in Disaster Situations](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions for Disaster Victims](#)
- [Publication 583, Starting a Business and Keeping Records](#)

IRS YouTube Videos

Preparing for Disasters: [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [ASL](#)

How to Request a Copy of Your Tax Return: [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [ASL](#)

Podcast

Disaster Assistance: [English](#) | [Spanish](#)

On Twitter? Send these Tweets:

- Tax laws that can help taxpayers and businesses recover financially from a disaster. #IRS <http://go.usa.gov/Bca> #taxes
- Taxes: another area where you can be prepared if disaster strikes. #IRS information helps you be ready <http://go.usa.gov/rvF9>