

# IRS News Release

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## IRS Advises Taxpayers to Prepare for Hurricanes, Floods and Other Natural Disasters

### IRS YouTube Videos

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

IR-2016-128, Oct. 5, 2016

WASHINGTON —The Internal Revenue Service today offered advice to taxpayers who may be affected by storms or other natural disasters. The IRS also reminded taxpayers that the agency is here to help including offering a special toll-free number to taxpayers in federally-declared disaster areas, staffed with IRS specialists trained to handle disaster-related issues.

### Don't Forget to Update Emergency Plans

Because a disaster can strike any time, be sure to review emergency plans annually. Personal and business situations change over time as do preparedness needs. When employers hire new employees or when a company or organization changes functions, plans should be updated accordingly and employees should be informed of the changes. Make plans ahead of time and be sure to practice them.

### Create Electronic Copies of Key Documents

Taxpayers can help themselves by keeping a duplicate set of key documents including bank statements, tax returns, identifications and insurance policies in a safe place such as a waterproof container and away from the original set.

Doing so is easier now that many financial institutions provide statements and documents electronically, and much financial information is available on the Internet. Even if the original documents are only provided on paper, these can be scanned into an electronic format. This way, taxpayers can download them to a storage device such as an external hard drive or USB flash drive, or burn them to a CD or DVD.

### Document Valuables

It's a good idea to photograph or videotape the contents of any home, especially items of higher value. Documenting these items ahead of time will make it easier to quickly claim any available insurance and tax benefits after the disaster strikes. The IRS has a disaster loss workbook, [Publication 584](#), which can help taxpayers compile a room-by-room list of belongings.

Photographs can help an individual prove the fair market value of items for insurance and casualty loss claims. Ideally, photos should be stored with a friend or family member who lives outside the area.

## Check on Fiduciary Bonds

Employers who use payroll service providers should ask the provider if it has a fiduciary bond in place. The bond could protect the employer in the event of default by the payroll service provider.

## IRS Ready to Help

In the case of a federally declared disaster, an affected taxpayer can call 1-866-562-5227 to speak with an IRS specialist trained to handle disaster-related issues.

Back copies of previously-filed tax returns and all attachments, including Forms W-2, can be requested by filing [Form 4506, Request for Copy of Tax Return](#). Alternatively, transcripts showing most line items on these returns can be ordered through the Get Transcript link on 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 Tax Return](#).

## Related Items:

- [Tax Relief in Disaster Situations](#)
- [Publication 583, Starting a Business and Keeping Records](#)
- [Ready.gov](#)