

## Prepare for a Catastrophe....They Do Happen!



Joe Legel, Director  
DMLO

No one expects to be the victim of a disaster, but every year people find themselves in the midst of fires, floods, earthquakes and other catastrophic events with little time to prepare. In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary to locate personal and financial records.

We suggest you consider the small annual cost of a safety deposit box for safekeeping of valuable papers and data. Most banks have these available for a nominal annual cost, and depending upon your status with your bank, there may be no charge at all. Keep one of your keys offsite in a safe place. In the event of a fire, you'll know where to go to find the key to your lockbox.

What records should you secure in the box? We suggest you consider the following list as a starting point:

- Birth certificates for you and your family
- Adoption papers
- Social Security cards
- Marriage certificate, divorce decree or separation agreement
- Passports
- Health care directives, health insurance identification cards
- Car titles
- Auto, life and homeowners' insurance policies
- Wills, trusts and other estate related documents
- Mortgages or other significant loan agreements
- Military discharge records

Clearly, if you use any of these documents on a regular basis, you may not want to include them in the safety deposit box, but you may want to put copies of them in the box. You should also keep copies of documents that you do decide to put in the box and let this serve as an inventory of the box's contents.

Having a list of what personal property you own can help you with insurance claims in the event of a loss. Consider videotaping your home's contents, going from room to room, opening drawers and closets, so that nothing escapes the camera. Needless to say, once the videotaping has been completed, store it offsite in your safety deposit box also.

If you have collections of jewelry, coins or other collectibles, or valuable art, you should discuss this with your insurance agent to make sure your coverage is adequate. You should also know that there are limitations in most insurance policies for computers and related equipment.

Should a catastrophe strike, it never hurts to be like the Boy Scouts...Be Prepared! You'll be glad you did.