

NYSE Informed Investor

Hurricane Season Is A Reminder for Investors to Be Prepared In Case Disaster Strikes

Even if you don't live in the path of a potential hurricane, the start of the 2006 hurricane season is a good time to consider how prepared you are in case disaster strikes. Naturally, plans to secure the safety of you and your family are most important and deserve immediate attention. But with the benefit of lead time, there are also things you can do to protect your financial assets and ensure access to them in the event of an emergency. The experiences of those affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and other emergencies suggest measures that you take now can significantly reduce problems later.

These actions, discussed below, include gathering and protecting financial records, having an adequate short-term supply of cash and liquid assets, and familiarizing yourself with your financial institutions' business continuity and contingency plans (BCPs). BCPs are written documents addressing a financial institution's procedures for an emergency or significant business interruption.

Investing time and effort now on the following actions may yield big returns in the event that a hurricane – or other disaster – strikes near you.

Access To Your Financial Records and Information

In the event of a local emergency that causes you to leave your home or your local financial institutions to close, you will need certain information and financial records to identify where your assets are and to access the funds you need. For example, to manage your money, you may have to visit a distant branch office of your financial institution where no one knows you or to go on the Internet. These possibilities may require you to have photo identification and to know account numbers and passwords.

Every investor should keep certain financial records and information in a portable, waterproof storage container that he or she can carry in the event of evacuation. In addition, every investor should store copies of those financial records and information in another secure location, such as in a safe deposit box in a secure area. Key financial records and items of information for yourself and your dependents include:

- Social Security cards and numbers
- passports, passport numbers, government-issued photo identifications, and identification numbers
- a list of all your financial institutions, including the names of your registered representatives, financial advisors, or account representatives, and their contact information
- a list of your account numbers for your securities accounts (including brokerage, mutual fund, and retirement accounts), bank accounts, and credit cards
- a list of your personal identification (PIN) numbers and passwords needed to access your securities, bank, and credit card accounts
- your current securities account statements, as well as bank and credit card account statements
- other financial and property records such as: savings bonds, stock certificates, property deeds, proofs of title, proofs of insurance coverage, photographic or written inventories of possessions (your insurance agent can suggest good measures to record insured possessions in ways that will make payment in the event of a loss faster and more certain), wills, trusts, health care proxies, recent tax returns, outstanding loan agreements, as well as birth and marriage certificates.



If you do not now have online access to your securities accounts and other financial accounts, you may want to consider setting up online access at this time. That would permit you to manage your accounts and to access your funds over the Internet in the event that you cannot easily travel to an open branch office of your financial institution. If you access your accounts online be sure to use a secure Internet connection. Installing virus protection and firewalls on your computer will increase the security of your online transactions.

In addition, if you live in an area that is affected by an emergency, your mail service may be interrupted or you may be displaced. This may mean that you will not receive account statements or transaction confirmations for some length of time. Many financial institutions offer electronic delivery of account statements and transaction confirmations to customers' personal e-mail accounts. You may want to explore that option with your financial institution.

During and after an emergency, it is important to monitor activity in your securities accounts and other financial accounts. This is particularly important if your local financial institutions are closed and a distant branch office of your financial institution temporarily becomes responsible for the maintenance and servicing of your accounts. Early detection of erroneous or fraudulent transactions is important to protect your assets.

Access To Cash

During and after an emergency, area businesses may lose electricity or suffer significant damage. Your local financial institutions may not be able to stay open. ATMs may not work. Local businesses that are open may not be able to process credit or debit card transactions. You may not have Internet access. For these reasons, every investor should have a supply of cash on hand. You ought to have sufficient cash to provide for your and your dependents' basic needs for at least several days.

In addition, if you are displaced or injured by an emergency or become unemployed as a result of an emergency, you may develop short-term financial needs that are greater or more burdensome than your usual expenses. You may have to liquidate some of your securities, even if you had planned to hold those positions for a longer term. For that reason, every investor should evaluate his or her current asset allocation. You may want to ask yourself, or to discuss with your registered representative or financial advisor, whether you would be able to liquidate sufficient assets to cover several months of living expenses without incurring significant fees or penalties.

Access To Information About Your Financial Institution's Business Continuity and Contingency Plan

If your registered representative or financial advisor is employed by a member organization of the New York Stock Exchange LLC (the Exchange), the member organization is required to have a Business Continuity and Contingency Plan. BCPs must focus on how the financial institution will meet its existing obligations to its customers, among other things.

Member organizations of the Exchange will make available to you certain information about their BCPs. That information must be provided to you when you open your account, and at any time upon your request. In addition, it must be posted on your financial institution's Internet web site.

If you have questions about how you would access your securities accounts or manage your funds in the event of an emergency, you should talk to your registered representative or financial advisor now... before a disaster strikes.