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LEGAL CORNER

**HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST
WHAT IS TRULY IMPORTANT TO YOU?**

By: Edward E. Wollman

If you were told that you had one hour to prepare your home for a hurricane and leave the area, what would you do? What would you take with you? What is irreplaceable? Is your home hurricane-ready and do you have an exit strategy?

This article is the first of a three-part series on preparing for an emergency. The second article will cover financial documents that are essential to secure in case of an emergency, and the third article will address your Health Care Emergency Plan.

The President of the United States has a "satchel" or briefcase referred to as "The Football." It carries the nuclear war plan. While our important papers and memorabilia may not be quite as important as the secrets held inside the president's briefcase, we do have certain essential and irreplaceable items.

So, the exercise laid out here will walk you through the steps you should take to prepare for an emergency. This checklist deals with Hurricane preparedness. Enjoy and be prepared!

1. Make a list of all the steps that you will have to take to secure your home. There are two distinct plans: One is to be prepared to ride out a milder storm, and the other is to plan for the worst. Here we are talking about a true evacuation. The physical steps to secure your home are readily available. Check out the Florida Emergency evacuation plan at www.colliergov.net and prepare your home. Some of the more obvious steps can be located at www.ready.gov/hurricanes

2. Make a list of all of your important financial papers. While we suggest you have a backup in the "cloud," this is not common at this time. So, using old-school technology, make a copy of all your important legal and personal papers (which we will expand on in Part II) and keep those copies in one place (your "football"). These items include deeds, insurance policies of every nature, will and trust, pictures of jewelry and artwork, etc.). A checklist can be found on www.pinellascounty.org and www.myfloridacfo.com

3. Make a list of the most important items that you would take with you if you had to leave in an emergency. Example: Family photos (do you have a back-up copy on your computer that is backed up in the "cloud?"). Obviously, you are not going to grab your 50-inch Plasma TV and your oriental rug, however grandma's broche or grandpa's cufflinks may be on your very short list. Other items might include your child's first art project. At least store a copy on your computer and back up your computer to a hard drive.

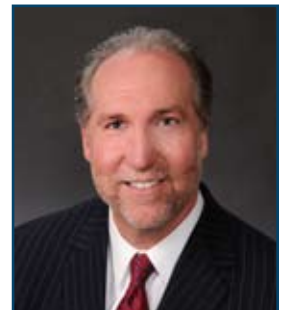
4. Make sure you have a backup to your computer and that you take the backup with you. External hard drives are readily available or, as an alternative, backup you data on a large thumb drive. There are several helpful websites such as www.sugarsync.com available to assist you in this endeavor.

5. Make a list: Important action steps in physically preparing for a hurricane can be located at www.floridadisaster.org/documents/EmergencyKit-FDEM.pdf and www.floridadisaster.org .

Make a plan in advance to ensure you, and your family, are protected during and after the storm.

Go to www.probate-florida.com to read more about this subject. Learn how you can have your cake and eat it too.

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