

NEWS RELEASE

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Homeowners, Renters and Businesses Are Urged To Prepare Before Hurricane Wilma Hits

WASHINGTON – With a powerful hurricane bearing down on South Florida, the U.S. Small Business Administration is urging homeowners, renters and businesses to take steps to protect their lives and property before the storms hit.

The SBA suggests employing critical disaster preparedness strategies, such as identifying possible hazards to make sure your home or business property is less vulnerable, developing a plan which includes establishing escape routes, keeping emergency phone numbers handy, keeping copies of important business and personal records and insurance papers off-site.

The records businesses should be concerned with include: payroll, tax, accounting, contact lists for customers and suppliers, production records, and back-up tapes of important data stored on computers. Business should be prepared for prolonged power outages, and should contact important customers and suppliers to arrange for appropriate actions after the hurricane has passed.

More preparedness tips for businesses, homeowners and renters are available on the SBA's Web site at www.sba.gov/disaster_recov/prepared/getready.html. The Institute for Business and Home Safety (www.disastersafety.org) also has information on protecting your home or business. The federal government's preparedness Web site www.ready.gov is another helpful resource.

In the aftermath of last summer's hurricanes that caused billions of dollars in losses in Florida and 12 other states, the SBA approved more than \$2 billion in disaster loans to about 63,000 residents and businesses. Many property owners experienced damage from flooding caused by storm surges. Those losses were not covered by most insurance policies.

"While the SBA is always ready to help homeowners and entrepreneurs rebuild after a disaster," said SBA administrator Hector V. Barreto, "it's important for everyone to be prepared for a storm of this magnitude."

To learn more about the SBA's disaster assistance program and links to additional disaster preparedness tips, visit the Web site at www.sba.gov/disaster.

For more information about all of the SBA's programs for small businesses, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at www.sba.gov.