



News Release

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Homeowners, Renters and Businesses are Urged To Prepare for Disaster Before It Strikes

WASHINGTON – As those living near the Gulf of Mexico and along the Eastern Seaboard prepare for another Atlantic Hurricane season, which began June 1 and runs through November 30, the U.S. Small Business Administration is reminding small businesses, homeowners and renters nationwide to write down their emergency preparedness plan before disaster hits.

Regardless of where you live, it's a good idea to be ready for any kind of crisis.

"Every threat, from wind storms, floods and wildfires, to power outages and computer system failures, reminds us to be proactive when it comes to building strategies to survive a disaster and recover quickly," said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. "The catastrophic events of the last few years demonstrate the need for preparedness at the individual level, to diminish the risk to life and property."

In the aftermath of last year's Midwest Floods, and Hurricanes Gustav and Ike—which pounded parts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas last summer—the SBA approved more than 23,000 disaster loans for a total of \$1.2 billion.

Disaster preparedness for homes and businesses should include:

- **A solid emergency response plan.** Find evacuation routes from your home or business and establish meeting places. Make sure everyone understands the plan beforehand. Keep emergency phone numbers handy. Business owners should designate a contact person to communicate with other employees, customers and vendors. Ask an out-of-state friend or family member to be your "post-disaster" point of contact—a person to call to provide information on your safety and whereabouts.
- **Adequate insurance.** Disaster preparedness begins with having adequate insurance coverage—at least enough to rebuild your home or business. Homeowners and business owners should review their policies to see what is not covered. Businesses should consider "business interruption insurance," which helps cover operating costs during the post-disaster shutdown period. Flood insurance is essential. To find out more about the National Flood Insurance Program, visit the Web site at www.floodsmart.gov.
- **Making copies of important records.** It's a good idea to back up vital records and information saved on computer hard drives, and store those items at a distant offsite location. Computer data should be backed up routinely. Copies of important documents and CDs should be kept in fire-proof safe deposit boxes.

- A **“Disaster Survival Kit.”** The kit should include a flashlight, a portable radio, extra batteries, a first-aid kit, non-perishable packaged and canned food, bottled water, a basic tool kit, plastic bags, cash, and a disposable camera to take pictures of the property damage after the storm.

More preparedness tips for businesses, homeowners and renters are available on the SBA’s Web site at www.sba.gov/disasterassistance. The Institute for Business and Home Safety (www.disastersafety.org) also has information on protecting your home or business. To learn more about developing an emergency plan, visit www.ready.gov or call 1-800-BE-READY to receive free materials.

The SBA makes low-interest loans to homeowners, renters and non-farm businesses of all sizes. Homeowners may borrow up to \$200,000 to repair or replace damaged real estate. Individuals may borrow up to \$40,000 to cover losses to personal property.

Non-farm businesses and non-profit organizations of any size may apply for up to \$2 million to repair or replace disaster damaged business assets and real property. Small businesses and non-profits that suffered economic losses as a direct result of the declared disaster may apply for a working capital loan up to \$2 million, even if the property was not physically damaged.

To learn more about the SBA’s disaster assistance program, visit the Web site at www.sba.gov/disasterassistance.

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