

Only Minutes to Evacuate! A Useful Guide

This year's wildfires in Colorado led us to create a helpful list for our clients. What is most important when you have only minutes to evacuate your home?

Many people think of the three "p's" – People, Pets and Photos

A word about photos – consider having photos scanned and placed on a thumb drive as a "virtual album". Not as good as the original photos, but at least the memories are retained! While talking about photos, consider taking pictures of your household items to facilitate insurance claims.

We will add two other "p's" – Prescriptions and Papers

Keep a list of your critical prescriptions; remember eyeglasses and contact lenses.

Papers include financial documents; deeds; vehicle titles; timeshare documents; adoption papers; birth and death certificates; IRS notices; divorce decrees; property settlement agreements and estate planning documents. Also consider insurance documents including policy numbers; banking and securities information; IRA accounts and diplomas. Consider making copies and keeping them in one location. That will make it easier to obtain "original" replacements of these documents.

What Else?

In addition to the five "p's" of People, Pets, Photos, Prescriptions and Papers – consider the location of other important items:

Laptop (tablet) computers with charging cables and backup (thumb) drives (of course you are creating periodic backup of all your important papers!)

Cash and credit cards

Identification cards – including passports, social security cards, medical insurance cards

Cell Telephone and charging cables

Passwords to accounts

Be Proactive!

Four more "p's" to include – Proactive, Plan, Prepare and Practice

You may only have minutes to gather your important items so be Proactive.

Build a personal checklist of items; their locations and keep several copies.

Place as many items as possible in one location for quick access.

Firearms – are they in a locked area? Where is the key?

Home Safe – how accessible is it? Who has the key or combination?

Vehicles – are all vehicle keys accessible.

Valuables such as coin collections; paintings and family heirlooms – would you be able to take everything that you want? Do you have a container/carton to remove items from the home quickly?

Prepare and Practice

When you have an evacuation plan, it's time to review and practice it from time to time. Will it be feasible to gather what you need in less than 30 minutes?

So, let's review:

We have the Nine "p's" of a successful emergency evacuation:

People – Pets – Prescriptions – Photos – Papers

Proactive – Plan – Prepare – Practice

We all hope never to have to implement the Plan!

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