

PREPARE A HOME INVENTORY

If you were the victim of a major natural disaster and suddenly found yourself with nothing left, would you remember everything you lost? When is the last time you counted the number of CDs you own or took stock of the current value of your TV and video equipment, not to mention your clothing, jewelry and other personal belongings? Too often, we forget about personal valuables that are stored in closets or drawers. An inventory will help you remember what you have so you can accurately document your losses to your insurance company. For example, your insurance company will be less likely to dispute the value of your antique teapot collection if you have photographs, sales receipts and other documentation to prove it.

- Make a detailed written or videotaped inventory of your property and house-hold possessions. Take a video camera and go through every room, taping and describing what you see. For valuable items, note when and where you purchased them and how much you paid for them. Include the serial numbers of major appliances.
- Don't forget to inventory the garage, attic, basement and the exterior of your house, including landscaping and fencing.
- Update the inventory yearly.
- Keep your inventory, insurance policies and other important documents in a safe-deposit box and keep a duplicate set in a fire- and water-proof container at home. Include important documents such as wills, deeds, titles, stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit, passports, bank account numbers, credit card numbers, income tax returns, birth certificates and so on.