

Keep a blackbox of your finances

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Here's how to create a backup of important documents.

Disaster often strikes unannounced. Amit Deshpande's death had left his wife and two kids distraught. From a comfortable middle class life, the bereaved family suddenly faced financial difficulties. Not that, Deshpande was careless with his investments. He had simply never informed his wife about the ones he made, nor were all his papers in order. If only, Deshpande had his financial papers in order, it would have been easier for his wife to pick up the threads of life.

The first step is to draw up a list of personal and financial details and e-mail it in encrypted form to yourself and your immediate family. Secondly, keep aside extra copies of basic data and original certificates. Some of these might need to be attested to be admissible in the absence of originals.

The following details need to be maintained in the form of a table or a list:

Bank Details: Bank name, branch name, type of account (savings and current, cash credit, and so on), account number. Also list your locker numbers, with their key numbers. Also mention credit cards numbers and ATM pin numbers.

INVESTMENT DETAILS:

Stocks: Demat account number, depository participant name and branch. Brokers name, address, contact number and broking account number.

Mutual Funds: You need to list your folio numbers. If you have opted for e-mail statements, all details will be available to you on the mail sent by the registrar on your registered e-mail ID.

INSURANCE DETAILS:

Policy numbers with the contact numbers of your agent and the insurer need to be maintained. In case of health insurance, the hospital will need your policy details to confirm the availability of health cover to you. Especially, if your cashless card has been lost. For life insurance, in case of natural calamities or things like a terrorist attack, the normal claim formalities are waived or reduced, so they may not call for the original policy document if it has been lost in a disaster. Home insurers may ask for a detailed inventory of your possessions. This can be maintained in the form of pictures, with appropriate receipts of purchase. These copies have to be maintained at a separate location.

DOCUMENTS

Retrieval of documents in case of emergency is important so apart from keeping a set at home, one set can be kept in your bank locker. This should take care of emergencies limited to your residence or immediate area, like theft or a fire. Another set can be kept with a trusted person at a location away from your city. This can be used in case the city is struck by natural disasters. Sensitive documents like a will or a power of attorney can be kept with your lawyer.

You need to keep copies of birth certificate, school leaving certificate, college certificate, domicile certificate, marriage certificate, death certificate, divorce papers, adoption papers, vehicle registration papers, property papers, loan

papers, power of attorney and will. Personal identity papers like passport, PAN card, driving licence, voter identity card, ration card. Copies of all insurance policies. Photographs of valuables (jewellery/electronic goods etc) for insurance claim and also for taxation.

You could also keep soft copies in encrypted format, but these need to be updated at least once a year. This will help you save new documents besides save you from loss of data due to technology becoming obsolete.

The writer is a certified financial planner