



REPLACING DOCUMENTS AND MANAGING PAPER AFTER THE FLOOD

It's unfortunate but true that it often takes a disaster, like a flood, to force us to reorganize our lives. As a professional organizer I see this all the time. People carry on as long as they can, living cluttered lives, refusing to "let go" of the stuff that piles up, which only hampers their ability to see themselves and their lives clearly. Then something happens, forcing them to face the disarray, and they begin anew.

I often help people clear out spaces like basements and garages, work that moves quickly because, on some level, people have already "let go" of the objects that make it to the far reaches of the home. The problem usually lies in the main areas of the house, where people find themselves clinging to items that mysteriously carry a far heavier weight. When they finally part with things they really don't need, they experience an epiphany of sorts. Suddenly a space emerges in their lives, enabling them to connect with what is useful and makes them happy. It takes time and effort to manage many things. People who successfully clear their home of the debris find clarity in their lives that frees them to focus on what's important.

When it comes to recovering from a disaster, organization is key. Replacing important documents takes time and planning. The best way to go about it is in an orderly fashion. Make a list of all the documents that were lost and obtain the information necessary to replace them. One way to make this as easy as possible is to compose a general form letter that explains the loss. Each time you request a new replacement document, fill in the blanks, making sure to include your contact information. Enclose a copy of an appropriate form of identification and send the required fee. Some of this may be done online or by fax.

Once you have gone to the trouble of replacing these documents, make copies and store them safely. Emergency service representatives recommend storing these in a fire/water proof lock box in your home. When disaster strikes, it is often difficult to access documents in safe deposit boxes because of banking hours.

Don't think of paper management as a "filing system," think of it as a "retrieval system." Statistics show that we only access 20 percent of what we file. Keep only what you will need and schedule time to clean out your files. If a paper is worth keeping, store it properly.

This process takes time but it is a worthwhile endeavor. Many people who struggle with organization hit a major life transition or crisis and become paralyzed. Do a little bit everyday and rely on the help of family, friends and professionals to see you through.

Leslie McKee of McKee Organizing Services Inc. has compiled a complete list of 25 important documents and information on how to replace them on her website at www.mckeeos.com.

Birth Certificate	City-County Building 414 Grant Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219-2417 412-350-4180	www.county.allegheny.pa.us/regwills/bd3.asp
Credit Cards		
Drivers License	Pennsylvania Department Of Transportation 1101 South Front Street Harrisburg, PA 17104	www.dmv.state.pa.us/contact_us/index.shtml
Medicare Cards	Department of Public Welfare of Pennsylvania Health and Welfare Bldg, Rm. 515 P.O.Box 2675 Harrisburg, PA 17105 Local: 717-787-1870 or 800-692-7462	https://s044a90.ssa.gov/apps6/IMRC/main.html
Social Security	Local Social Security office 601 Grant Street #500 Pittsburgh, PA 15219 412-644-2751 or call 1-800-772-1213	www.socialsecurity.gov It takes up 30 days to receive the card by mail
Voters Registration	Mark Wolosik, Division Manager 604 County Office Building, 542 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15219 Phone: (412)350-4500	www.county.allegheny.pa.us/elect/links.asp
Will (original)	Contact your Attorney or Eileen Wagner, Register of Wills 1st Floor, City-County Bldg. Pittsburgh, PA 15219 Phone: (412) 350-4180 webmaster.regwills@county.allegheny.pa.us (an original will is required for probate at time of death)	www.county.allegheny.pa.us/regwills/index.asp

Once you have gone to the trouble of replacing these documents make copies and store them safely. The emergency service representatives recommend storing these in a fire/water proof lock box in your home. Many people could not access documents in their safety deposit because banks were closed over the weekend.



Moving forward with paper management, don't think of it as a "filing system", think of it as a "retrieval system". Only keep what you will need to access later and schedule time to clean out your files. If a paper is worth hanging on to, store it properly.

This process takes a little time but it is important to begin. Many people who struggle with being organized hit a major life transition or crisis and become paralyzed. Do a little bit everyday and rely on the help of family, friends and professionals to see you through.

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