

Talking Points

Suggested Target Audience:
Individuals who have recently experienced a disaster

Communication Objective:
Turn to your local CPA for help.

Disaster Recovery: A Guide to Financial Issues was written and produced by the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and is distributed by participating local chapters of the American Red Cross across the United States. The guide is offered as a public service of the AICPA, AICPA Foundation, American Red Cross and NEFE.

CPAs have made sure the guide is easy to follow and helps the consumer make informed and educated decisions when they are impacted by a disaster. Disaster victims are often required to make important financial decisions during an emotionally stressful period.

The guide is provided free to the public through local Red Cross chapters and is also available on the American Red Cross Web site at www.redcross.org.

The guide is divided into three parts:

PART 1: First few days after disaster – take care of yourself

- Secure your property and collect important documents.
- Seek shelter for you and your family.
- Utilize your local Red Cross Chapter or other disaster relief agencies if you need help in obtaining shelter, food and clothing.

- Secure your finances – file life insurance claims as soon as possible, contact any lenders/credit card companies and see if they can extend credit and your payments (they are often willing to do this in special circumstances), notify your employer as soon as possible to explain why you can't return to work and see if they can help you apply for any available company sponsored benefits.

- Don't make hasty decisions, give yourself some time – If you are not ready to make a decision, don't – turn to your local CPA for help.

PART 2: Next Weeks and Months – What happens now that I suffered a loss – How do I expedite financial recovery?

- Learn where you stand financially and then make a plan to manage your income, expenses and debt to help put you on the road to recovery – turn to your local CPA for help.
- Understand your rights, where and how to file claims and settlements and know what resources are available to you.
- Try not to rush starting repairs, so you can take time to check out contractors before hiring them. Also be aware that in cases where federal or state aid may be available, the agency involved may require that an assessment of the damaged property be completed before any repairs are made.

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PART 3: Moving On

- Use the experience to prepare yourself in the unlikely event of a future disaster by:
- Restoring your savings and emergency funds and try to put more aside for your future.
- If you are unable to return to your previous job, look into job retraining and education opportunities to help you return to the workforce if possible.
- Put your estate affairs in order by updating wills, powers of attorney and other legal documents.
- Look for ways to reduce your risk of financial loss in the event you are faced with another unlikely disaster through insurance and safeguarding – turn to your local CPA for help.

If you have questions or need help, go to your local CPA for assistance.

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