

6 mistakes that leave your home vulnerable to fire, storms and other emergencies

With heat waves, wildfires, droughts, hurricanes and more breaking records seemingly year after year — it's impossible to ignore the impact of severe weather and natural disasters across the United States. Without proper planning and preparation, you may be leaving yourself, your family and your property susceptible to damage or harm.

Consider the massive damage storms can cause to communities. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) [reported](#) more than \$165 billion in damages from weather-related disasters in 2022 alone, a \$20 billion increase from the 2021 estimates.

The National Fire Protection Association also [reported](#) that roughly 343,100 home fires occur per year, resulting in \$7.6 billion in total property damage — most often started by simple everyday activities like cooking.

Knowing homes can be vulnerable to weather incidents and other accidents, it's more important than ever to plan and invest in dependable solutions that can help keep your family and property safe.

In recognition of National Preparedness Month this September, The Master Lock Company, a trusted name in security for over 100 years, is spotlighting common mistakes people make when it comes to home emergency planning to help provide peace of mind and safeguard everything worth protecting.

Mistake #1: Misunderstanding disaster risk in your area

Different types of severe weather require different preparation, making it imperative to identify which disasters your community is most at-risk for and plan accordingly. Some weather patterns have also changed over the years, meaning you may be vulnerable to new climate events you haven't considered in the past. A little research can go a long way when it comes to the safety of you and your home.

Mistake #2: Not having a family fire plan

Be fire smart by verifying your home contains the right number of smoke alarms and make sure to check them annually. Everyone in the household should rehearse your fire escape plan at least once to get familiar with the sound of the alarm, exit routes from each room and the agreed-upon family meeting spot, located outside the home at a safe distance.

Mistake #3: Forgetting to safely store important documents and valuables

When evacuating during a fire or other immediate emergency, every second counts and no time should be wasted grabbing items like passports, birth certificates, jewelry or family mementos. By investing in a dependable, high-quality safe that can withstand fire and water damage, such as the [SentrySafe Next Generation Fire Safe](#), you can leave with peace of mind that your valuables are safe and sound. However, if your community is prone to more gradual disasters like wildfires that are forecasted days in

advance and allow time for evacuation, consider the [SentrySafe Fire Bag for portable fire protection. Designed to hold small items like](#) passports, birth certificates and extra cash, the fire bag provides lightweight, convenient fire-resistant storage so you can easily grab your valuables and go.

Mistake #4: Ignoring storm warnings

If you know a storm is coming, don't make the mistake of ignoring the alert until your area is affected. Store lawn furniture, pots and other loose items in a secure location. Close and lock windows and shutters. For disasters like hurricanes that are monitored in advance, check if nearby trees should be trimmed to prevent property damage and reduce post-storm debris. Storm warnings also present an opportunity to plan whether it's safer to stay home or evacuate, and gather necessary items as needed.

Mistake #5: Not preparing an emergency "go kit" ahead of time

Being proactive is essential when preparing for unexpected emergencies, and the earlier you can prepare, the better. Though taking initiative to gather necessities before storm seasons begin is ideal, there are also situations when local officials provide advance notice in the days leading up to severe weather like hurricanes. Either way, have an emergency "go kit" in case you need to evacuate your home in a hurry. This "go kit" should contain medical supplies, food, water and other essentials to ensure your household's basic needs are met.

Mistake #6: Overlooking physical home security

Some severe weather may require you to evacuate your home at the drop of a hat. Convenient, seamless security solutions like the [Master Lock Bluetooth® Portable Lock Box](#) manages access even if you're not there, allowing you to let in safety personnel and protect your property from unwanted visitors. Simply use your smartphone manage your lock with the Master Lock Vault Home iOS and Android apps.

No matter the crisis, you can depend on The Master Lock Company for durable, reliable solutions to protect the people and the belongings that mean the most to you. For more information, visit insights.masterlock.com.

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