

Defeat Debt

Credit Advisors Foundation

Volume 51, Issue 9

Preparing for Disaster—The Bottom Line

When disaster strikes how much warning will you need? How much warning do you think you'll get? Warning time could be anywhere between a couple of days to minutes. Will you be prepared?

Experts recommend preparing to be 'on your own' for a minimum of 72 hours when disaster strikes. Do we truly understand what that may mean? Imagine...no electricity, no gas, no water, no telephone, no MTV. Businesses are closed.

If you had to evacuate in the next 15 minutes, as in the case of a wildfire, could you do it?

In a disaster situation every little bit of planning or preparation you've made will pay off big dividends in getting you through.



If you had to evacuate in the next 15 minutes, could you do it?

In the case of evacuation you and each member of your family will need a 'go bag'. Even your pets will need a go bag. A go bag is just a 21st century name for an evacuation kit. There are many websites available with lists of what you will want to include in your go bag, plus questions to get you thinking about special go bag needs for the members of your household.

Think ahead. Plan your escape. Know your evacuation plan ahead of time. If members of your household are away from home during an emergency, do you have a meeting place or methods of contact? Remember that local telephone service and cell phone networks can become overwhelmed in an emergency (like 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina) – while long distance communications may still function. Have you gone completely cellular or web based in your communications or have you kept a land line (telephone that does not depend on electricity or batteries to work) available?

Who may be able to help? Do you have friends or family out of the danger zone

that may be able to take you in or assist you in other ways? If you have family in other locales, make a list for each household member. An additional idea from relatives of Katrina victims is to be sure that you have contact information for the neighbors of your relatives, including their next of kin.

Most experts also recommend accumulating an emergency fund in preparation for disaster situations – whether natural or man made. But how much would you need? Again, preparation is the key. Start early.

Determine in advance a reasonable amount for your area (situations you may face – if there is a power outage in your area is it likely to be isolated to neighborhoods or city-wide?) and family circumstances (special needs – electronic nebulizer, medications) With a power outage the needs for your family may be different than your neighbor, especially if a family member makes use of refrigerated medication or electronic medical equipment such as a nebulizer.

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Preparing for Disaster

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Since many of us already live on a tight budget – possibly paycheck to paycheck you may have to make a conscious decision to prepare for a crisis situation.

Once you determine the amount you will need to have on hand, make a practical plan to collect the funds. If you find you need to make substantial budgetary changes to gather the funds, it may make it more manageable if you set a time line – a one month push to come up with \$200, for example.

Here are some ideas you may find useful:

- Take your lunch – save \$5 a day or more
- Make your coffee at home – save \$1 a day or more
- Make a change jar – each day when you return home empty your loose

Debt-Related Stress

It is common knowledge that the financial world with which we are currently confronted has become far more complex than the one faced by our parents 30 years ago. Gone are the days of going to work for a company and staying until receiving the gold watch and a retirement supported by the company pension. Today we must make decisions that are dependant upon our understanding of diverse and ever-changing company offered benefits, retirement planning, money management skills, and all the while protecting our identity from thieves.

The average consumer today is faced with increasing credit card payments, higher costs for basic utilities, rising fuel and food prices, increasing property taxes, and a rising cost of living that pay increases are not able to match. In addition, they face decisions and challenges in financing home ownership, questions about funding their retirement through various savings options and the future availability of social security income. Add to all of these pressures the

change into the jar – less predictable than some methods but collecting change can add up more quickly than you might think

While designing your method to come up with the funds you will also want to establish a secure location – secure from others and you (you know what I mean – missing a sale at your favorite store is not the kind of disaster these funds are for). For cash or traveler's checks you will want to keep your emergency funds on hand in a location where you *know* if you access it you are dipping into your family's emergency funds. Inside a fire/flood resistant canister kept inside your go bag or emergency kit may be one idea.

Research any cards you use, making



Keep emergency cash on hand in a safe location—like inside your go bag

sure to avoid those with fees or non-use charges. Some useful examples might be gas cards from a national chain to use as you are evacuating; gift certificates, for example from Target or Wal-Mart (once you are evacuated you can use the gift certificates to purchase food, medicines, clothing and so on), or a secured credit card from a national financial institution.

A less sophisticated method of safe storage for these cards – keep the cards you have accumulated in a plastic bag in the freezer.

Remember it's your plan, being creative is ok.

Finally, the point is preparation. No one ever complained after a disaster of being too prepared.

unstated, widely accepted assumption that each decision made and method utilized will most likely impact us and our families for some time to come and that less than successful outcomes could conceivably severely limit our future.

The effect of the pressures and stress these circumstances cause is well documented and produces a variety of additional difficulties for us to overcome, such as: accidents, depression and other mental health issues, substance abuse, stress related and other physical health issues, divorce, loss of confidence and bankruptcy. Although considered to be of a personal nature, rare is the individual who does not carry some effect of dealing with such issues into the workplace.

In fact, the costs to employers due to employee financial distress and dissatisfaction are easily recognized, having been studied in depth over the past decade, yet the results from these studies are often ignored or misinterpreted. For employees at work, financial distress and dissatisfaction

is demonstrated in a variety of ways. Reduced pay satisfaction and lower feelings of loyalty to the employer can impact an organization when skilled, normally effective workers change jobs looking for pay increases, leaving the original organization with the costs of hiring and training replacement personnel. Other consequences at work can include lower productivity resulting in lower performance ratings, poorer health and more absences from work, more conflicts between work and money matters with more work time used to deal with money issues, more conflicts with co-workers, lost customers due to errors or service problems and potential lawsuits. Even the Department of Defense has acknowledged a cost of \$1 billion annually due to employee money problems.



Although many of us are able to maintain our financial lives at an

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***Word Search ***

Word Search Challenge— words from the articles in this edition of Defeat Debt, are hidden in our puzzle. Test your skill to find all twenty-three words. Good Luck!

- BAG
- BUDGET
- CREDIT
- CRISIS
- DECADE
- FAMILY
- FEE
- FUNDS
- GAS
- HEALTH
- HOPE
- IMPACT
- INCOME
- KIT
- PAY
- PLAN
- RELIEF
- SAVE
- STRESS
- STRUGGLING
- TAXES
- WATER
- WAY

Stress

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acceptable level of satisfaction, it has been suggested by researchers that one in four American workers is seriously distressed with their financial situation. In the past, it has been assumed that financial distress was an issue for only low income workers and that is simply not the case, as income levels overall are not indicative of financial dissatisfaction. Comparisons of all income groups combined, from less than \$14,999 to \$100,000 and higher, reflect a range of financial distress anywhere from 25 percent to 60 percent. Yes, all income levels.

All of this seems to paint a rather gloomy picture for American consumers and workers. Even so, opportunities for financial education are on the rise and it has been shown that those who participate in such education have received assistance by alleviating much of the fallout created from financial distress, both at home and in the work-place.

So there is hope for relief. As participants in Credit Advisors credit counseling and debt management programs, everyone of you has the

S T R U G G L I N G
 T E V A S S D N U F
 R G E E F A M I L Y
 E D A C E D G U R H
 S U C R I S I S E I
 S B A G L R E A M M
 P T A X E S L I O P
 L W E T R T I K C A
 A Y A P H O P E N C
 N W T Y C R E D I T

opportunity to take advantage of educational offerings on a regular basis, including newsletters, our website, seminars (like the Predatory Lending seminar scheduled for September 12th), and conversations with our Client Care certified credit counselors. By taking advantage of these offerings you improve the likelihood of beating credit and debt distress and making use of

more productive, personal financial behaviors today, for a more satisfying financial future. You also have the chance to share these opportunities with others that you know are struggling. Imagine if someone had given you a hand during hard times. Remember, one in four of us are having problems. You can show them the way to become credit smart.

Sponsored by:



**Seminar Location:
 1850 South 72nd St.
 Omaha, NE**



**Protect Yourself from
 Predatory Lending**
Friday, September 12, 2008

11:00am & 12:00pm central time

Please ***RSVP***

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Get Out of Debt with No Regret !!



The Kitchen on a Dime

Grilled Chicken with Blueberry, Watermelon and Walnut Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 cup California walnuts, chopped
- ¼ cup lime juice
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- 2 cups seedless watermelon, cubed
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut in bite-size pieces
- 6 cups mixed baby greens
- 4 grilled chicken breasts

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spread walnuts in one layer on baking sheet. Bake until just toasted and aromatic about 8 minutes; remove and let cool.

To prepare vinaigrette, using a small bowl whisk together lime juice, oil, honey, salt and pepper until well blended.

For the salad, in a medium bowl combine watermelon, blueberries, walnuts and bell pepper; add half of the vinaigrette; toss to coat. In a large bowl, toss greens with remaining vinaigrette. Divide greens among 4 plates; top with fruit and walnut mixture. Slice each chicken breast diagonally and serve with salad.

Tip: make a double recipe of the vinaigrette, and use half of it for



Grilled Chicken with Blueberry, Watermelon and Walnut Salad

marinating the chicken before grilling. Discard any vinaigrette used for marinating. OR we used 2 packages of grilled chicken strips from the refrigerated lunch meat section of the grocery.

Makes 4 servings at \$1.88 each.