

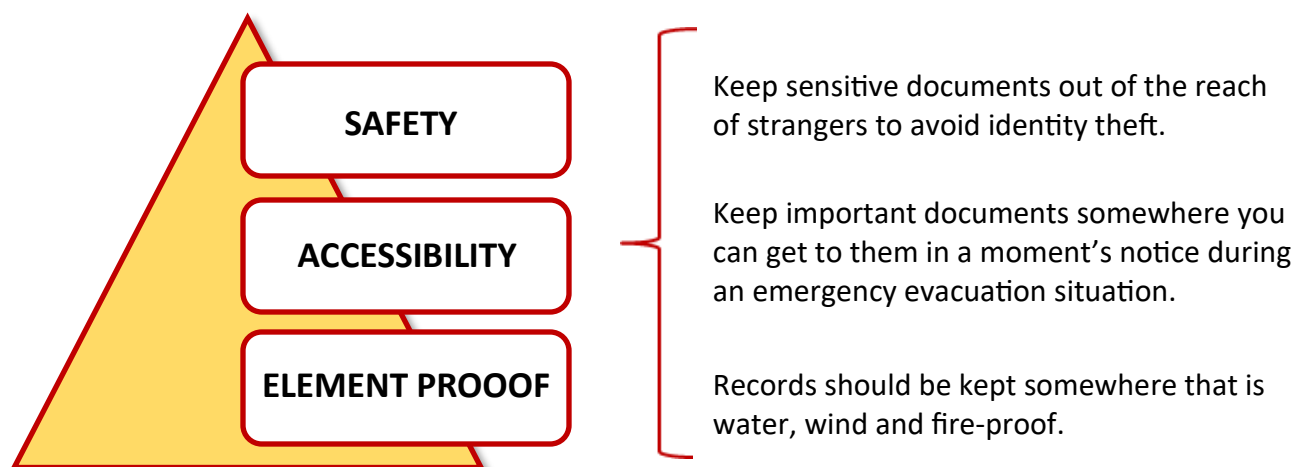
## STORING RECORDS SAFELY

Having your records easily accessible can be helpful when you need to:

- Prove that a bill has been paid.
- Save time and stress by not having to search for certain papers.
- Show legal proof of events (e.g., birth, death, marriage, divorce).
- Prove ownership of property.
- Document tax deductions.
- Dispute errors in bank, investment, credit card, or other financial statements.
- Document claims for benefits such as life insurance and Social Security.

If you are like most people, you have a collection of financial “stuff” that you don’t know whether to keep or toss. Having an efficient and easy-to-use record keeping system is an important piece of your financial puzzle. It is critical that you are able to locate important papers when you need them, whether it is to prove that a bill was paid, show legal proof of events such as marriage, divorce or adoption, or to seize records quickly in an emergency situation. Where you store your important paperwork depends on the type of document it is, how often you need to refer to it, and how difficult it would be to replace.

Generally, records are usually stored in four ways: **electronically, in safe deposit boxes at financial institutions, in home filing cabinet systems, and in fireproof lockboxes** that can be grabbed at a moment’s notice in case of an emergency. When you are choosing your method(s) of record keeping, keep these things in mind:



You may choose to store the same documents in more than one place. It is common to scan all items onto your computer while keeping the originals in another safe location. Whatever you choose, make sure you remember where everything is and notify someone that you trust of the location as well.



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### Electronic Storage

Scanning and storing documents electronically can provide convenient access, while cutting down on the amount of paper to rifle through. However, it is important to note that electronic copies of certain documents, such as a birth certificate or the title to your home or car, are not acceptable and the original certified copies should be stored in a safe place. If you choose to store your information electronically, you can do it in a variety of ways: on your computer's external hard drive, a flash drive (USB), or in web-based storage (the cloud).

### Home Filing Cabinet

Items stored in your home filing cabinet are those that need to be more readily available for review and purging. This could be copies of items in your safe deposit box, receipts, bank statements, insurance policies, etc. It is always advisable to have a lock on your cabinet for added safety precaution.

### Safe Deposit Box

Records that you don't need to refer to very often, and are often difficult to replace, may be kept in a safe deposit box. A safe deposit box is a locked storage bin, usually in a vault or secure area, that a financial institution will rent to you for an annual fee. The key to your safe deposit box should be kept in a fireproof lockbox that can be easily accessed. Items that fall in this category include official certificates (birth, adoption, marriage, citizenship, death), real estate deeds, important contracts, and wills and trusts.

### Fire-Proof/ Water-Proof Lock Box

Your fireproof lock box should be located in a place in your home that is easily accessible if you need to evacuate quickly and be small enough that you can grab it and go. It should contain all the information that you might need in the event of an emergency. This includes a detailed list of advisors (doctors, lawyers, clergy), bank account information, list of investments, insurance policy information, vehicle and real estate information and an up-to-date household inventory.