

Hello, Friends!

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October 2018 - Organizing your Fireproof Home Box or Safety Deposit Box

Several years ago, I bought a fireproof box for our home. It will hold hanging and manila folders, so our paperwork stays organized. I purchased it at Walmart for about \$40. It can also hold a small amount of items such as photos and computer backups or perhaps small figurines.

While it claims to be fireproof and may be waterproof, we should realize an extended major fire will likely damage or destroy the contents. Plus, since it is portable, the entire box could be stolen or even misplaced. This can be solved by buying a home box that can be bolted to the floor or a wall, usually hidden in a closet or other out-of-the-way place.

A fireproof home box is a very good start in organizing your important papers, although valuable and irreplaceable items should be stored in a bank or post office safe deposit box. Those rented safe deposit boxes usually cost about \$60 per year and aren't guaranteed to be fireproof or waterproof. Plus safe deposit box content is not insured by the bank, credit union or savings bank — only deposited funds are.

Some people store basic files in a home box plus keep irreplaceable items in safe deposit boxes at their bank. Here are some of the items which can be filed and stored in your fireproof home box:

- Living Trust / Will copy (your attorney or court should have the original)
- Passports, birth certificates and Social Security cards
- Power of Attorney forms, if a medical or financial need arises
- Religious documents such as marriage licenses or membership certificates
- Jewelry receipts
- Life insurance policies
- Backup of your pictures on a thumb drive
- Backup of your home computer files, if necessary
- Deed to house, quit-claim deeds and vehicles titles
- Divorce or Adoption papers

Some people make a video of each room in their home and place a copy of it in their safe. If you do this, be sure to concentrate on important, irreplaceable items, for insurance purposes. This can be very useful if there is a fire in your home, and you need to document your special items. But call your insurance company to see what is acceptable.

Think of any paperwork you have that might be difficult or impossible to replace or recreate — that's the type of item which should be located in your fireproof home box.

Regarding safe deposit boxes in banks, these are used to store valuable possessions, such as gemstones, precious metals, currency and important documents. Just remember — contents of safe deposit boxes aren't insured. To learn more about safe deposit boxes, inquire at your financial institution.

Many hotels, resorts and cruise ships also offer safe deposit boxes for customers to use during their stay. Sometimes, these are behind the main desk or can be located in your room. They can be opened with a combination, key, keypad or swipe card. In some foreign places, the post office provides safe deposit boxes for rent.

Whatever you choose to do, taking action to protect important and valuable items is a smart first step. However, I hope you never need to possibly suffer a loss this way!

Your local professional organizer,

Betty Huotari

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