



Are You Covered?

Make Sure By Doing a Home Inventory

Everyone can benefit from a home inventory. Whether you're an apartment renter, a high-rise condominium dweller or a home owner, everyone is subject to theft, fire or natural disaster. As an exercise, try to take a mental inventory of just one junk drawer, and then imagine having to do that for your entire home after a fire. You might have an elephantine memory, but trying to remember everything after it's gone is a monumental task. Getting started is the hardest part. Use these tips to make the most of your efforts.

Everything Counts

- Include any item of value, not just large appliances and electronics. Don't forget to document toys, the contents of your closets and anything in your kitchen cabinets.

Get Organized

- Taking the time to record serial numbers, collect receipts and take photographs now can save you a lot of time later. Insurance claims are processed more quickly and are more likely to receive full compensation when they are supported with visual evidence of ownership.

Schedule a Photo Shoot

- In addition to making a list of items, take pictures of rooms and large or important items. On the back of each photo, make a note of what is shown, its value, make and any serial numbers or special identifiers.

Round Up the Troops

- Enlist the help of the entire family. Assign a room to each family member, or use a camcorder and have each person take turns describing items for the camera.

Move It!

- Conduct a home inventory when you move. As you pack your items for each room, take photographs and note the serial numbers. This way, you'll also have detailed information in the case that something is lost or damaged during the move.

Keep Duplicates!

- Make a copy of your inventory to keep in a fire-proof safe at home, but most importantly, keep another copy in a safe-deposit box, at your office, or any safe location away from your home.

Consider Extra Coverage

- If you have special items such as expensive jewelry, fine art or rare antique collections, you may wish to purchase extra coverage — called an endorsement — to protect those items.

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MAKE IT DIGITAL

A variety of personal finance software packages now include home inventory features, and a number of free or inexpensive programs are available for download online. Just make sure that you burn a copy of the file to CD for off-site storage. Here are a few of the many programs available for download online:

EVERYTHING I OWN

www.mycroftcomputing.com/eiown.html

MY STUFF DELUXE

www.contactplus.com/products/freestuff/mystuff

HOME MANAGER

www.kzsoftware.com/products/homemanager
(free trial version)

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