



Hi Extension Friend!

Happy SPRING! Enclosed is the monthly EXTENSION newsletter which has upcoming programs, events, and general researched based information for you to learn more! Our newsletter covers ALL programmatic areas of MSU Extension: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Science, Community Resource Development, and 4-H Youth Development. Think of it as a newspaper, where we advertise and share info with you of all the things we offer or that are hot topics right now. We do this to reach ALL our clients by providing an overabundance of information. We are gearing up for SUMMER!



If you see something in here that interests you, PLEASE contact us via phone, email or visit. These are just "snapshots" and are NOT packed with info. Please understand we only include enough info in this newsletter to pique your interest because there isn't enough room to hold all the info we have.

Be on the lookout for our Virtual "Summer of Contests"! We will be mailing out a separate newsletter with information on each of the contests to 4-Hers soon! They will cover different project areas, topics, and categories--there will be something for everyone to compete in! Be on the lookout for more information!

Katrina McCalphia
MSU Extension Agent IV/County Coordinator

From The Ag Agent –

I am so happy to be a part of the Newton County Extension office and I look forward to serving this wonderful, active county. We have so much going on that it is sometimes hard to get all the information out to producers, families, and businesses. I would invite you to come to our office in Decatur and pay us a visit. Now is the time to be making sure that your soil is tested before purchasing expensive fertilizer that you may or may not need! For an \$8 sample, you can find out exactly what you need to do to help your garden, pasture or lawn be at its best. If you need me to come look at your pond – we can do free alkalinity testing, make recommendations on weed control and identification. I am excited to be a part of Newton County and I look forward to serving you in the future.



Shani Hay
MSU Extension Agent

65 7TH STREET, DECATUR, MS 39327; 601-635-7011



**Shooting Sports District Meet -
May 6 and 7, Lumberton**

**Lego Club Meetings - May 12,
June 7**

**Robotics Club Meetings - May 5,
June 2**

**Dairy Posters and Dairy Recipe
Contest entry due - June 1**

**Club Congress - June 2 and 3,
Mississippi State University**

**Southeast District Horse Show -
June 9 and 10, Lauderdale County
Agricenter**

**State Horse Show - June 22-25,
Jackson Coliseum**

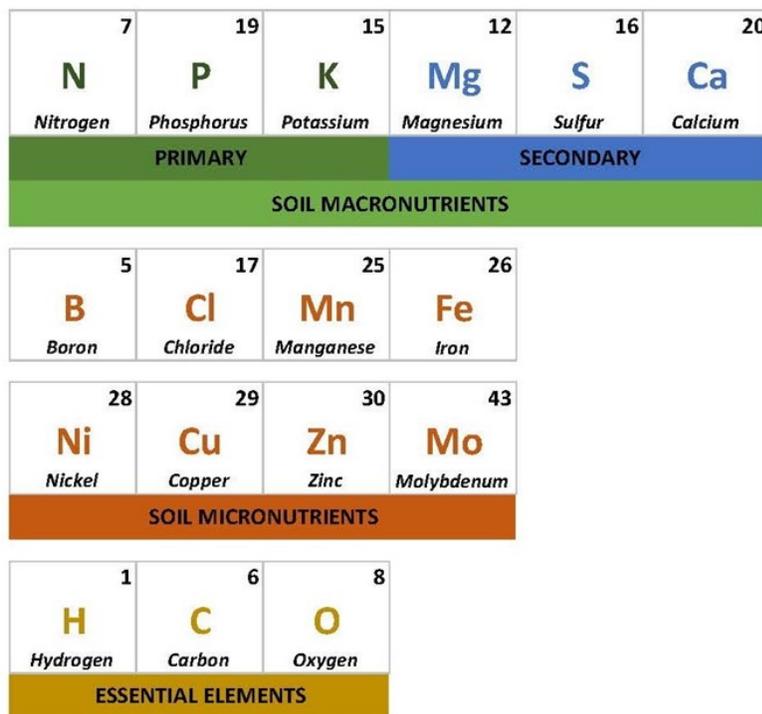
*No joke--There's plenty to do in
your garden and landscape in
April!! Some tasks include:*

1. Prune spring-flowering shrubs after blooming.
2. Plant summer annuals.
3. Lightly shear formal hedges to remove new growth.
4. Divide perennials.
5. Plant summer and fall blooming bulbs.
6. Plant okra, melons, peas, corn, beans, eggplant, cucumbers and tomatoes.

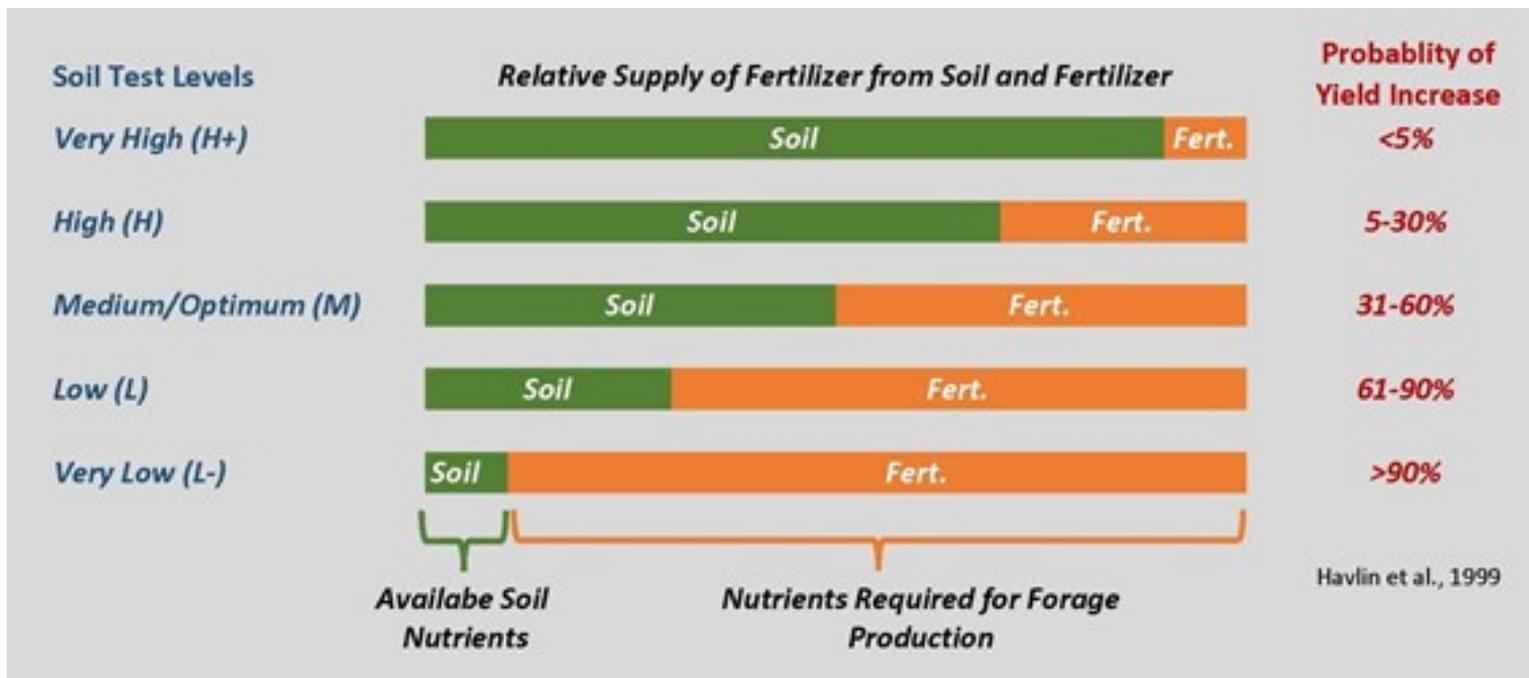
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From Rocky Lemus, Extension Forage Specialist, April Newsletter:

A soil sample is a guide that allows determining the probability or likelihood of response to fertilizer for a specific forage crop. Estimation of soil nutrients in Mississippi in pasture and hay-fields is that 60% of P and 90% of fields are below the critical levels causing yield losses. This indicates that producers are leaving forage yield on the table by not fertilizing adequately. Figure 2 provides an indication of the amount of fertilizer required and the probability of yield increase when the right source, time, and place of fertilization is implemented. When soil tests are very low to low, producers will need to apply fertilizer rates to maintain and build up nutrient reserves. In the medium to high rate, will concentrate on maintenance fertilizer rates. In the high rate, fertilizer application can be eliminated or reduced to starter rates for a short-term depending on the specific nutrient and crop removal rates. It is not recommended to reduce or eliminate fertilization rates below the crop removal rate unless a specific nutrient is in a very high range. A soil sample does not cost money, it pays in the long term!



Plants depend on 17 essential nutrients to ensure health, optimal yields, high nutritive value, and stand persistence and longevity. These nutrients are classified as primary and secondary macronutrients and micronutrients (Figure 1). Macronutrients are required in larger quantities while micronutrients are required in smaller quantities and are generally obtained from the soil.



The bottom line is producers need to have a better understanding of plant nutritional requirements, supply, and removal rates to make more informed decisions on the types and rate of fertilization practices that can reduce losses and reduce economic losses. To make such decisions, they need to know their soil nutrient levels and understand nutrient demand and removal. Lime is probably one of the most important things that you can do for your soil to make nutrients available to the plants. Remember: plants cannot absorb nutrients when the soil pH is too low. All the fertilizer in the world will not help your lawn if your soil pH is acidic. If you need assistance with obtaining a sample, please contact our office at 601-635-7011 or visit the Mississippi State University website at <http://extension.msstate.edu/lawn-and-garden/soil-testing>

Pond Dams and NRCS Assistance

A lot of things have changed since the spring of 2020 when our country was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been a lot of questions and issues with people trying to obtain assistance from the NRCS as of late and the MSU Pond specialist has some answers to help folks with some the problems that have recently been encountered.

From J. Wesley Neal, Extension Professor Fisheries, Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Aquaculture –

For pond dams and levees, Extension directs land owners to NRCS for help with siting, determining capacity, testing soil, and with the permitting process. For years, NRCS has been the go-to agency for new pond and small lake construction, as they wrote the book on engineering levees and small dams and have experts in civil engineering, hydrology, soil science, and other fields to this effect.

Recently, however, some local NRCS offices have been denying requests from Extension and landowners based on the lack of cattle or other agriculture. This may be due to new personnel that are less familiar with NRCS's historical roles and COVID's impact on training new personnel. I have been in contact with several NRCS area biologists regarding this issue, and they have offered the following recommendations to securing NRCS help. Start with #1, and move to the next recommendation if service is still denied.

1. Make sure that the office understands that the landowner is seeking conservation technical assistance (CTA) only. They may assume that the request is for financial assistance like from EQIP, which does require an agricultural connection.
2. Bypass the county service center. Most soils evaluations should be routed to the area soil scientist by the local office, so a landowner can go straight to the area specialists. Area staff (and soil scientists) can be found at Local Service Centers | NRCS Mississippi ([usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov)).
3. Register the property with the local Farm Services Agency (FSA) office (next door to NRCS) and request a farm and tract number. This will require the landowner to have a deed and fill out some other paperwork. If a property is not solely residential or commercial and contains some acreage without buildings or asphalt, the local FSA office should provide a farm and tract number. Once it has a farm and tract number, the NRCS office cannot refuse assistance as it is now agricultural land. "Ranchettes" are very common now in the NRCS system and NRCS personnel have received training on these properties.
4. If a farm and tract number cannot be obtained, another option is to contact the urban conservationist in the area. Their job is to link non-traditional customers with NRCS services.

NRCS does not have a maximum lake size for assistance, but they do like to stay in "pond" range. The real deciding factor is dam hazard rating; most field office personnel only have job approval authority for low hazard dikes/dams. A rating of significant or high hazard must be elevated to the area engineer. At this point, conservation benefits are weighed to determine the need or minimum dam height to meet conservation needs and might not mesh with landowner desires. I hope this helps for those of you that have been experiencing NRCS resistance.



Alkalinity: Let MSU Extension check your farm pond...

Measurable alkalinity in a pond provides a buffer that maintains the pH of the pond or lake. The pH of ponds with low or zero alkalinity may easily change resulting in damage to aquatic life. A healthy pond should have some measurable alkalinity. Ponds with less than 20 mg/L of alkalinity are more prone to stunted or absent fish populations. These ponds may benefit from liming to increase the pH and alkalinity as described above.

Herbs are easy for first-time gardeners

Dr. Gary R. Bachman, MSU Extension Service



During the COVID-19 pandemic, I read that our eating habits changed. This is the perfect opportunity for gardeners of all abilities to grow vegetable gardens. Now, I'm not advocating trying to produce all of your own food, because that would be difficult if starting from scratch. And we do need to support our local restaurants as much as we can. But it is a good opportunity to try growing things at home.

The easiest and best plants to grow are herbs. They're also perfect for growing in containers. Home-grown herbs can brighten up any meal, whether it's home-cooked or takeout.

Today, I want to tell you about some of my favorite herbs. For the beginning gardener, common or sweet Italian basil is most likely the basil of choice. It's versatile in the kitchen and pretty non-threatening for the novice. The large leaves of this Genovese-type basil are aromatic. It is perfect for pesto or tomato sauces. The bright-purple leaves of Amethyst resemble the broad, flat leaves of

Genovese basil and have the same taste, with a touch of licorice spice. This herb is a great ingredient for purple basil mojitos. After muddling the basil with lemon juice, the leaves surrender their purple color and turn the drink a pretty, pink-amethyst color. Basil looks like a delicate garden plant, but it actually is a tough plant for hard times and has been recognized as a Mississippi Medallion winner. Purple Ruffles has deep-purple leaves that are very fragrant. Uses include fresh garnish or color in salads when used as baby greens. And who can resist red basil pesto?

A couple of good heirloom choices are the Thai basil varieties Quenette and Cardinal, which have exotically delicious cinnamon and licorice flavors and aromas. Both have beautiful, bright-green foliage that contrasts with the dark-purple stems. These plants are so similar, I believe they are both common names for the same variety. Basil care is really easy. First, be sure to deadhead the flowers. While they are attractive on their own, flowering halts leaf production. Be sure to keep the containers consistently moist. And for the best flavor, harvest basil sprigs in the morning when the essential oils are at their peak. Place them in a small vase or jar until ready to use for dinner.

Remember, the garden isn't cancelled or closed just because we are practicing social distancing. Support your local garden centers. They are essential to our well-being and have a great selection of vegetable, herb and flowering plants that will make your time spent sheltering in place a lot more tolerable.

Basil Pesto Recipe

Herbs contain Vitamin C, which helps heal cuts and wounds and promotes a strong immune system. They also contain Vitamin K, which helps heal our bodies quickly.

Yield: 8 servings

Ingredients:

- 4 cups fresh basil, gently rubbed under cold running water
- 1/3 cup nuts (walnuts, pine nuts, almonds)
- 3 teaspoons garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
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Directions:

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Pat basil dry with a paper towel after washing. Place the basil and nuts in a food processor or blender. Pulse until combined. Scrape down sides with a spatula or spoon.
3. Add garlic and cheese to basil mixture and pulse until combined. Scrape down sides again with a spatula or spoon.
4. While the food processor is running, slowly add half of the olive oil. Stop the food processor and scrape down sides again. Start the food processor and add remaining oil.
5. Add salt and pepper, if desired.

Store leftovers in a sealed container in the refrigerator, or freeze for up to three months.



NEWTON COUNTY FARMER'S MARKET



Regular physical activity, such as walking, is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Balancing exercise with the right amount of food is a tried and true way to maintain a healthy body. Going to farmers markets is a great way to combine physical activity and healthy eating while enjoying the outdoors and supporting local farmers.

Why shop at the farmers market?

The foods available at the market are often picked less than 24 hours before you buy them. This means the fruits and vegeta-

bles you are buying are at the peak of freshness.

At the farmers market you may come across a new fruit or vegetable you are unfamiliar with. The farmer that grew and harvested this unique food is right there and usually willing to give advice on how to store, prepare, and enjoy their produce. If you are someone who is curious about farming practices, talking to the producer is also a great way to learn about how your food is grown.

The Newton County Farmer's Market will be available June 3, June 18, July 1, July 16, August 5 and August 20 at the ESCO Park in Newton from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

Sun in Your Eyes

We normally think about using sunscreen to protect our skin when outside for an extended length of time, but don't overlook the damage sun can do to your eyes too.

The hazard is from over exposure to the sun's UV radiation, damaging the eye's surface tissues, cornea and lens. Some of this damage may not reveal itself until years later and can cause several eye diseases and problems.

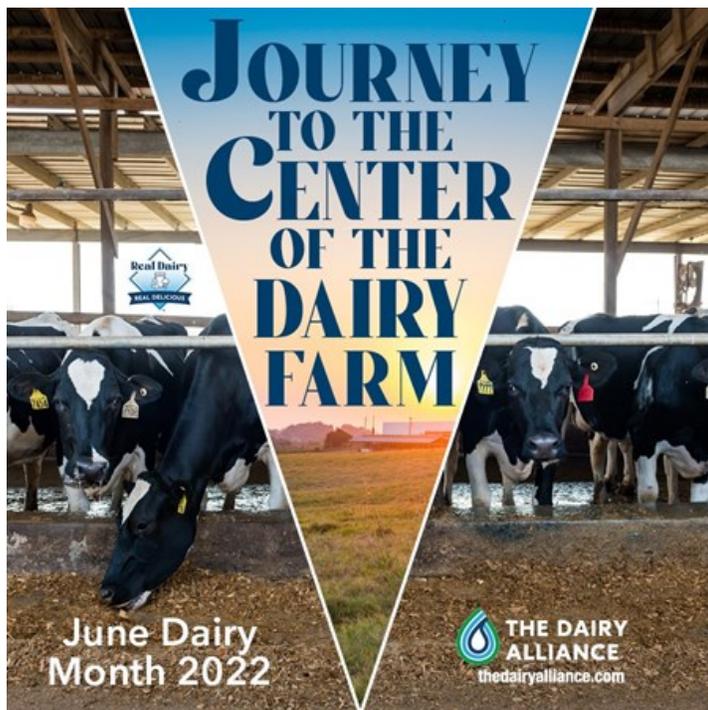
- Cataracts
 - Eye cancers
 - Growths on the eye, such as pterygium
 - A form of photokeratitis, better known as snow blindness, can quickly develop after exposure to UV reflections off of snow, ice, sand or water.
- UV levels are three times greater in summer than winter, but damage to your eyes can occur in any season. Even though it may not be as bright outside, clouds do not block the sun's UV light. So, take precautions no matter what time of the year.
- Choose sunglasses that provide 100% UV or UV400 protection, or block both UV-A and UV-B rays.
 - UV-A can hurt your central vision. It can damage the macula, a part of the retina at the back of your eye.
 - The front part of your eye (the cornea and the lens) absorbs most UV-B rays, but these rays may cause even more damage to your eyes than UV-A rays.
 - Wear a broad-brimmed hat along a with your sunglasses.

Also be aware ...

- Sunlight is strongest midday to early afternoon, at higher altitudes, and when reflected off of water, sand, pavement, ice or snow.
- Never look directly at the sun. Doing so at any time, including during an eclipse, can damage the eye's retina and cause a serious injury known as solar retinopathy.
- Tanning beds pose the same risks to your eyes and body as outdoor UV light.



June Dairy Month 2022



Dairy Poster Contest

Are you a Newton County 4-H member? If so, enter the June Dairy Month Poster Contest! Your poster will help teach others about the dairy industry and the importance of including milk and dairy products in a healthy, well-balanced diet. First-place county winners in each age division advance to statewide competition at Mississippi State University. The contest deadline is June 1, 2022. For rules and more information, give our office a call at 601-635-7011. We look forward to hearing from you!

Dairy Recipe Contest

Please join the Mississippi State University Extension Service staff in honor of all dairy farmers across the county and state to celebrate Dairy Month. Each dish must have a minimum of 1-cup of a dairy

product but more is acceptable. Dairy products are milk, cheese, yogurt, and butter. Please enter 1 dish. Prizes will be given to the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place winners in each division. Photos of the 4-Her cooking with their family must be submitted with the recipe and emailed to k.mccalphia@msstate.edu. Please send us the age of the 4-Her with the submission. The contest deadline is June 1, 2022.

Announcement of winners will be via email and/or social media.

Category: Dessert (cannot contain raw eggs in the final product)

Divisions: Youth (ages 5- 17), Adult (ages 18+)

If you have any questions, please call the MSU Extension Service in Newton County at 601-635-7011.



Cheese has calcium and protein and can fit into most eating plans. Many cheeses are high in saturated fat. Look for "reduced-fat" or "low-fat" on the label. Try different brands or types to find the one that you like.



Tips for Safe Grilling

It's almost time to start the grills and fight the mosquitoes, if you are a fair weather outdoor chef. According to the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association), in 1999, gas and charcoal grills caused 1,500 structure fires and 4,200 outdoor fires in, or on, home properties, resulting in a combined property loss of \$29.8 million dollars.

When cooking with charcoal or propane, always cook outdoors where ventilation is plentiful. Cooking in enclosed spaces leads to possible asphyxiation and fire hazards.

SAFETY TIPS FOR CHARCOAL USE

- Keep the grill away from siding, deck rails and out from under eaves and low hanging branches.
- Keep the grill a safe distance from play areas and walking areas.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill area. A "safe zone" should be at least a three foot circumference around the grill.
- We should use long-handled grill tools so the "chef" has plenty of distance between he or she and the heat, smoke and flames.
- Check and clean grill fat collection trays periodically to avoid igniting the old grease.
- If you have a charcoal grill, use a good quality charcoal lighter and store it in a place not accessible to young kids and away from heat.
- Use only charcoal lighter, refrain from using any other flammable liquids.
- Apply starter fluid directly to the coals, then close the container and move away. Light the coals slowly and carefully, avoiding a flame-up.
- After the cooking is finished, continue to watch the grill as it is cooling. You can cool the coals with water, but be careful that it doesn't spatter or steam up causing a possible burn.

SAFETY TIPS FOR PROPANE USE

Actually, many of the safety tips for charcoal cooking should be practiced for propane grilling as well.

- Check all hoses and connections for leaks each time before starting the grill. A mixture of soap and water applied to the hoses and connections will tell you quickly where and if you have leaks. Obviously, if a leak is present, it should be corrected before you begin cooking.
- After you finish with the grill, check and double check to make sure the valves are off to avoid raw gas escaping.
- Periodically, take out the briquettes and replace. While checking the briquettes, use a fine bristle brush and clean off the burner so that you will continue to get an even flame throughout the burner.

Hopefully, if you review and practice these tips, it will make the season of grilling more enjoyable and reduce the potential for an injury.

Cajun Spice Blend

Making your own spice blends gives you more control of the ingredients and flavor profile of your meals.

This salt-free Cajun Spice Blend will spice up your meals without adding unnecessary sodium. You can easily customize it by adding more or less of any of the ingredients. If you like the flavor, but don't want too much heat, you can eliminate or reduce the amount of cayenne pepper.

By making your own spice blends, you can try new flavors without wasting an entire bottle of spice mix. If you like it and want to use it often, you can also double or triple the recipe to make extra to have on hand.

Try this blend with seafood, ground beef, pork, and chicken.

Cajun Spice Blend

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest

Directions:

1. Wash your hands with soap and water.
2. Put all ingredients in a jar or airtight container.
3. Shake. Seal. Enjoy!



This recipe is part of our own MSU Extension publication P3586, "Salt-Free Spice Blends."

For more great recipes and terrific kitchen tips, be sure to follow The Food Factor on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter! And if you like our recipes and videos, we'd love for you to share them with your friends! It really helps!

Disaster Relief: Preparing Your Evacuation “To-Go” Box



Are you prepared to evacuate quickly with important documents if disaster strikes? Natural disasters can strike suddenly. Taking time now to assemble important papers in a box that is safe and ready to go at a moment's notice can save a lot of time and frustration in the event of a fire, storm, or flood. Prepare now by creating a portable file you can grab to go.

Steps to Create Your Evacuation “To Go” Box Step 1

- Place items in paper folders or envelopes.
- Store these inside sealed, airtight, waterproof plastic bags.
- Place in a durable, sealed box, preferably a locking one. A portable, fireproof, waterproof box/bag is recommended.

Step 2

- Store the box/bag at home in a secure place you can get to easily.

Step 3

- If you must evacuate, grab the box and take it with you.
- Keep the box with you at all times.
- Do not leave the box unattended in your vehicle.

Include in Your “To Go” Box

- Cash for several days' living expenses.
- Rolls of quarters.
- Several blank checks from each checking account.
- Emergency phone numbers, email addresses, or other means of connecting.
 - Family/friends/neighbors
 - Employer
 - Landlord or mortgage company
 - Insurance agent (local and company headquarters)
 - Financial institutions
 - Credit card companies
 - Minister
 - School
 - Lawyer
 - Doctors
 - Pharmacies
 - Repair contractors

- Copies of these:
 - Homeowners, renter's, auto, and flood insurance policies and policy numbers
 - Life insurance policies for household members
 - All medical insurance policies and cards (front/back) for household members
 - Prescriptions for medications and eyeglasses
 - Pet insurance policy
 - Vital records (birth, death, adoption, marriage certificates)
 - Social Security cards for household members
 - Driver's license (color copies) and other wallet cards
 - Passports (color copies) and/or other identity documents
 - Immunization records for household members
 - Immunization records for pets
 - School records for each child
 - Documents for child custody arrangements
 - Deeds and titles
 - Vehicle titles
 - Rental agreements
 - Wills and trust documents (power of attorney, healthcare directives/living will, letters of instruction)
 - All bank and brokerage accounts with account and phone numbers
 - Mortgage documents and other loan documents
 - Copies of all credit cards (front/back) and phone numbers for each company
 - Employee benefit documents
 - Tax returns for a minimum of 3 years
 - Military discharge papers
- Back-up of computerized financial records
- Labeled photos of family members
- Home inventory (printed and digital version if available)
- Location of safe deposit boxes (with key location) and names of authorized signatories
- Proof of pet ownership such as tag numbers, microchip information, or photos of you and family members with the pet(s)
- CD/flash drive of irreplaceable photos; data inventory of valuables
- List of all electronic access user IDs, passwords, and PINs