

## How Organized Are You In Case of An Emergency?

by Sherry Borsheim

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What do you need in case of an emergency? How prepared are you? I know from experience when you are organized and time is of the essence, you can **quickly find what you need and get it out of there!**

On the first day of our summer vacation in 2009, we drove into West Kelowna, British Columbia, to discover a raging fire out of control, with 70-100 mile an hour winds and witness a house go up in flames in seconds. News crews were just arriving on the scene and the air bombers hadn't even arrived. Thousands of homes and a sawmill that were threatened. As my husband and I stood there in shock and horror, we felt helpless. It brought back memories of another fire in the Kelowna area three years earlier where the loss of homes was devastating.

I immediately called my parents because their home was close by as were the houses of my brother and several friends. I remember my last words as we got into our car to drive to our time-share "that fire couldn't possibly jump the highway and make its way to my parents' home." That was at 3:30pm. At 6:00pm, sitting at our time-share: glued to the TV and radio, my brother called saying the fire had jumped the highway and we better come home and pack what my parents needed. We are all in shock, but at the same time, knew that time was of the essence and fires can spread very fast. At first panic set in, but then the logical organizer side of me took over. I was telling everyone to grab an extra change of clothes, runners, water and house keys.

### What Do You Really Need?

In the longest 35 minute car ride of my life, we were all quiet. You may not know this about me, but I get my strong organizing abilities mostly from my father and I knew he was already planning out his strategy and what he needed. Within minutes of being in the car, **I asked my dad the big question "Dad, if you had to start from nothing tomorrow, what would you need for your business? What vital documents and personal things do you and mom need?"**

### A Simply Checklist

I pulled out a piece of paper from my purse that had my grocery list on it and my pen and began writing down everything we needed to get out of the house and who was responsible for getting it. My husband was responsible for getting the computer backup hard drive (which thankfully had just been done that week when my dad's bookkeeper had come). Dad was telling me what files to pull out of his file cabinets which were all organized, **clearly labelled and easy to retrieve**. Banking and insurance information, projects dad was working on (all in one binder), safety deposit key, valuables, a few sentimental items and of course all those pictures on the walls and photos. Thankfully my mom is also very organized and everything is in photo albums or in a picture frame on the wall.

When we got to the house, we were one of the lucky ones who had time to go through the house, room-by-room and pack the essentials. Just a few months ago, I was at a client's office and they too had been visiting the area and barely had 5 minutes to evacuate their home. So, we considered ourselves very fortunate.

### **Sentimental Items**

The thoughts and feelings you experience are very emotional and it really brings things into perspective when it comes to sentimental value. I am the type of person who has less sentimental attachment to my stuff than say, my mom. But that's ok...as long as your sentimental attachment to things doesn't crowd out your space and affect your relationships. You can only imagine all the comments I've heard over the years as to the reasons people need to keep certain things. I never judge a person, because ultimately only you can decide what to keep and what not to keep. I believe **it's important to not let your things control you, but you control how many things you have.** When you think about it, "**do your things need you?**" The answer is always no.

### **Easy to Retrieve**

As I retrieved the needed files and packed the valuables, you realize how unimportant all your stuff really is. At the end of the day, what really matters is those close to you, not all your stuff. Yes, it hurts to lose your stuff, but it can be replaced.

### **Pictures**

If you had to pack only a few things, what would you take with you? I'm sure pictures are high on your list. They are for most people. Yet, "getting organized" is typically the last thing on people's To Do List. I've thought about this over the years as I've worked with 1000's of clients and rarely do I see pictures organized in albums: they tend to be in piles around the house or stored in boxes in a damp basement. And there are **millions of unprinted digital photos** sitting on people's computers. Which brings me back to what I was packing - photos and picture frames.

### **An Emergency Checklist**

That night, I made myself a promise that I would create an [Emergency Checklist](#) that I would make available, for free, on my website. Over the next month I will be creating this **Emergency Checklist** that I believe everyone needs to have.

I recently prepared a similar checklist for an elderly client of mine who lives on her own and has been streamlining everything in her apartment because she didn't want her loved ones to have to deal with her stuff. It gives her great **peace of mind** that she can find what she needs now and when she needs to downsize one day, all her papers and things are organized and the clutter and excess has been donated or recycled. In case of emergency, her contact list is hand by the phone and key people have been notified as to the location of the checklist. Trust me when I

say, get organized today not someday. Your loved ones really don't want to have to deal with all your stuff.

### **Peace of Mind**

What areas of your life do you need to get organized so you have peace of mind and can sleep at night? Don't put it off to do someday. [Take action today](#) and get your life in order! If you're **not sure where to begin** or **want a huge jumpstart on getting organized this month**, check out our [Organizing Bootcamps](#) at <http://www.simplyproductive.com/services>

### **Lesson Learned**

I'm happy to report that the fire damage was minimal to homes and the sawmill was saved, which was a miracle, and my family and friends were able to return to their homes. But the lesson I learned was: **being organized saved us time and gave us peace of mind that we could easily retrieve what we needed very quickly.**

To **receive a copy of the Emergency Checklist**, [click here](#) to send us an email with the subject line: **Emergency Checklist** and I'll be sure to forward that to you this month.

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