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When Disaster Strikes, Are You Financially Prepared? ClearPoint Financial Solutions Offers Tips on How to Safeguard Your Finances in the Event of an Emergency

[Richmond, Va., October 3, 2005] – Due to recent disasters in the Gulf Coast region of the United States and the prediction for continued active hurricane seasons, consumers are urged to make financial preparations in the event of an emergency, and to know the right steps to take afterwards. ClearPoint Financial Solutions offers tips for disaster preparation and recovery efforts to reduce the burden of the event.

“It is so important for families and individuals to know that there are things they can do to protect their finances in the event of an emergency,” said Amida Mehta, director of marketing for ClearPoint Financial Solutions. “By having a plan in place, and knowing what to do in case an evacuation is necessary, consumers can make an agonizing time a little less difficult.”

If an evacuation is necessary, as in the instance of a hurricane or other weather-related event, there are steps you can take to minimize the stress.

- Store important documents in a portable, durable, and preferably fireproof file box to minimize searching and the chance of forgetting critical information. Make sure these items are on the list: driver’s license, Social Security card, proof of residence, insurance policies, wills, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, and tax records. In the event of an evacuation, bring those important documents with you.
- If you are in a positive financial situation, set aside money for an emergency fund to help you through difficult times. By building a savings plan into your budget, you will have some financial reserves to help you get back on your feet.

When the focus progresses from disaster relief to recovery, there are measures you can take to regain and maintain your financial stability.

- Never give out your Social Security number unless you are certain it is to a verified agency that can provide you with assistance.
- Regularly monitor your credit report and creditor statements to safeguard yourself against identify theft.
- Check with local branches of your bank to ensure accurate bank account activity, to update your information, and to get a supply of checks.
- Once you are current with the USPS, contact each creditor and have them forward current statements to your new or temporary address.
- Ask your employers if there is an employee assistance program in place.
- Notify your state’s employment commission of your employment status and find out about special job considerations for disaster victims.
- Register with the Social Security Administration for current and future benefits for victims.

- Advise your creditors of displacement due to emergency situation. Creditors will sometimes make concessions for victims who are forced to relocate, and include a disaster victim statement on your credit file.
- If your circumstances do not improve before creditor concessions end, contact the creditors to help manage independent hardships.
- Seek assistance from local churches, Salvation Army, United Way, Social Services, FEMA and the American Red Cross.
- Avoid opening new credit; try all other forms of assistance first.

Remember that ClearPoint Financial Solutions can be a long-term source for sound financial advice if you have been displaced due to a natural disaster or other emergency situation. Don't delay handling your financial situation. The longer you wait, the more time and energy you will have to devote to resolving your financial concerns. Contact ClearPoint as soon as you can to learn about their services and receive one-on-one advice on how to start the recovery process.

About ClearPoint Financial Solutions, Inc.

ClearPoint Financial Solutions, Inc.TM (formerly Consumer Credit Counseling Services of America, Inc.) is a national non-profit organization dedicated to helping consumers achieve financial wellness through counseling and education. Established in 1980, ClearPoint has helped over one million individuals achieve financial security. ClearPoint is currently the only non-profit System-wide member of the Better Business Bureau (BBB), and one of the largest members of the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC). Headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, ClearPoint manages branches across the country. Personalized and confidential consultations are available in person, by phone or online. Visit ClearPoint Financial Solutions at www.ClearPointFinancialSolutions.org or call 877-877-1995. Credit Counselors, CDC Consumer Debt Counseling, and Solutions, Inc. are all trade names of ClearPoint.

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