

*Special Reports Brought to You By:*

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# Appraising The Value In Your Home

Could you – from memory – list all the items in your hall closet?

Do you know how many small appliances you own, complete with the model and manufacturer's name, the date you bought each one and the price you paid?

How much would you guess it would take to replace your family's clothing?

If you had a burglary or fire in your home tomorrow, you don't want to rely on just your memory when filing a claim. When you buy insurance you hope you'll never have to use it, but if you are not prepared for a loss, you may not get the full benefit of your coverage.

An inventory – in words and pictures – of your household goods is essential to help your memory under the stress that comes with a personal tragedy like fire or theft. The items you use everyday may come to mind quickly – but what about the pearl-handled carving set used only on special occasions? Compiling a list of possessions may also provide a clue as to whether your coverage is sufficient.

In case of any loss to personal property, a written inventory will help you itemize your loss, but it won't document ownership or value. For that, you will need a photo inventory and written records such as sales receipts or a professional appraisal. Your best protection will come from a combination of all three.

## **Photographs and Videotapes**

You don't have to be a professional photographer or cameraperson to do an inventory of your possessions, although there are a small number of small businesses that offer to either photograph or videotape your possessions. For evaluation purposes, color photos are better than black and white. Photograph or videotape each room, wall by wall and floor to ceiling. Then take close-up shots of the valuables in each room (silverware, statues, paintings, etc). When you have finished each room, go on to the closets, basement, attic, garage and storage sheds. When you are finished, write basic information on the back of the photos or include this information with the videotape and any sales receipts with this booklet. Review your photo/video inventory every two or three years. Note changes in your possessions such as the new TV set or the couch you have had reupholstered. Delete items you no longer own.

## Written Documentation

Like a photo/video inventory, sales receipts help prove ownership, and in the case of more recent purchases, they also establish the value of an article. Your insurance company doesn't expect customers to keep receipts for everything, but major purchases should be documented.

## Appraisals

In addition to jewelry or precious metals, other items that should be evaluated by an appraiser include art, antiques, furs, collections of any kind or valuables for which you have no bill of sale. You should receive a written statement of the appraiser's judgment that includes the appraisal date along with any descriptive material that will back up the appraiser's value.

**Do not keep your inventory records at home. The inventory list itself could be destroyed in case of fire or other household damage. Consider such locations as a safe-deposit box or the home of a relative.**

**Safeguarding the value of your home and its contents may require investing a little time and money, but should you ever suffer a loss, you'll have all the documentation you need to file and back up your claim quickly and easily.**