

# Disaster Prevention and Planning

## Planning and Preparedness: the Disaster Planning Process

### 1. Assign responsibility

Form a disaster committee. Think in terms of tasks instead of people, and cross-train staff.

### 2. Educate the committee and others as appropriate

[Look at other institutional disaster plans online](#)

[Disaster Preparedness and Recovery: Selected Bibliography](#)

[LYRASIS Publications](#)

[LYRASIS Disaster Publications in Spanish](#)

### 3. Work with emergency agencies

Establish relationships with your local and state emergency management officials. Develop resource lists with contact information for emergency agencies. Have the local fire marshal conduct a tour of the collections; point out priority collections. Discuss security concerns with local police departments.

Fill-in-the-blank emergency contact list

[State offices and agencies of Emergency Management](#)

Learn more about the federal government's Continuity of Operations plan and how your institution may or may not fall under it. FEMA provides a free web-based course titled "[Introduction to Continuity of Operations](#)."

[Community Emergency Response Teams](#)

### 4. Define the scope of the planning project

Decide on the level of detail within the plan. It is OK to start small and then build on the plan over time. Tailor plans to staff based on their roles.

- [Pocket response plan](#). Although this template was designed for state archives, it is easily adaptable to other institutions.
- For examples of detailed plans, please see [institutional disaster plans](#).

### 5. Establish goals and timetable

Set deadlines for all planning steps. Make them realistic.

### 6. Develop reporting schedule and lines

Assign tasks to committee members. Decide who the main contact/leader is: the disaster team leader? the library director? Make sure that you identify a back-up contact/leader.

## **7. Create a communications plan**

A good communications plan will cover a wide range of scenarios, including disasters that affect a single building or part of a town, as well as a disaster that requires a wide area evacuation. Establish a means to communicate with your staff if traditional means of communications are not working. In the event of a localized disaster, consider using the following:

- cell phones
- walkie-talkies
- runners to carry messages door-to-door
- posting messages in a central location

If staff has to evacuate in the event of a more serious regional disaster, more extreme measures should be in place to facilitate communication. Do you have emergency contact information for your staff if they had to leave town? Who could you contact to find out where they are located? How will you reassemble your staff if they are scattered across the country? How will you let them know when it is safe to return? In the event of a wide-area evacuation, consider using:

- a nationwide email group
- analog or satellite phones
- another institution to serve as a clearinghouse for communications with your staff

## **8. Assess the collections and set salvage priorities**

Identify the most important collections and records. Factors to consider include

- composition of the materials
- availability of recovery services
- importance to users, research, curriculum
- uniqueness
- vital or permanent records
- ease of salvage
- level of possible contamination
- number of workers
- costs of salvage/replacement

## **9. Determine and rank potential hazards**

Know your vulnerabilities. Inspect the building and systems maintenance schedules. Consider location. Identify past disasters and their likelihood of recurrence.

### Disaster Prevention and Protection

Checklist <http://www.lyrasis.org/Preservation/Resources-and-Publications/Disaster->

Prevention-Checklist.aspx

[Fire Risk Analysis Questionnaire for Cultural Properties](#)

[Fire Safety 101: A Fire Safety Self-Inspection Checklist](#)

### **10. Assess prevention and protection needs**

Make lists of Disaster Supplies and Services. [Know where to get them or who to call.](#)

Decide which supplies will be stored onsite. Establish relationships with disaster recovery vendors. Consider creating a pre-disaster contract for recovery and/or debris removal.

Questions to ask a vendor

[InHouse Supply Checklist](http://www.lyrasis.org/Preservation/Disaster-Resources/~//media/Files/LYRASIS/Preservation%20Files/InhouseSup.aspx) <http://www.lyrasis.org/Preservation/Disaster-Resources/~//media/Files/LYRASIS/Preservation%20Files/InhouseSup.aspx>

### **11. Identify collection recovery procedures**

Damage to your collection can be reduced by quick action. Locate salvage and cleaning procedures to support your assessment findings, keeping in mind your unique physical space and resources.

[Disaster Mitigation and Recovery Resources](#)

[Disaster Preparedness and Recovery](#)

[Northeast Document Conservation Center – Preservation Leaflets](#)

[Heritage Preservation – Field Guide to Emergency Response & Disaster Wheel](#)

[National Park Service – Conserve O Grams](#)

[CoOL Conservation Online](#)

### **12. Consider financial implication**

Know how much money is available and who can access it

[Before and After Disasters: Federal Funding for Cultural Institutions](#)

### **13. Write the plan**

[Contents of a disaster plan](#)

[D-Plan](#): a free web-based fill-in-the-blank program for writing disaster plans for libraries and cultural institutions. A copy of your institution's plan will be stored on a secure server.

[Other resources](#)

### **14. Distribute the plan and train staff**

Every department should have a copy. Keep a copy of the plan at home or somewhere off-site. Mock disaster drills can demonstrate salvage techniques and emulate the chaotic nature of a real disaster.

[Disaster preparedness and recovery classes](#)

Developing a Disaster Plan classes

[Disaster plan exercise](#)

### **15. Test the plan and revise as needed**

What worked? What did not work? Update on a regular basis (at least once a year) and after a disaster.

### **16. Document and assess the process**

#### ***Planning for Hurricanes***

[Before the Storm: The Countdown](#) (excerpt from *Hurricane! Surviving the Big One! A Primer for Libraries, Museums, and Archives* by Michael Trinkley, Chicora Foundation)

[Federal Emergency Management Agency Hurricane](#)

[NOAA Hurricane Preparednes](#)

[National Hurricane Center](#)