

Before Disaster Strikes: Ten Things You Need to Know

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Overarching priorities: Human life & safety and Protection of library's assets

#1 Have a communication plan

- Up-to-date work and home numbers, cell phones and pagers
- Phone trees, email/instant messaging, “reverse 911”
- Emergency recordings on phone line, out of state emergency number
- *Have a crisis communication plan*

#2 Prepare a first response action list

- Who to call. What to say. What first actions to take.
- Simple “fact sheets” with step-by-step instructions – gas, water, fire sprinklers, security, HVAC, etc.

#3 Organize emergency contact information for all staff & volunteers

- In event of injury, who should be called? Where do they want medical treatment?
- Keep contact numbers, emergency call lists readily available in case of evacuation
- *Remember, life safety comes first!*

#4 Prepare a disaster plan that covers people & collections

- Have a plan that is coordinated with your city/county/campus plan
- Keep it up-to-date, with multiple copies distributed
- Include procedures to handle the most likely emergencies
- Cover both people *and* collections
calpreservation.org/disasters/index.html

#5 Train staff to respond to the most likely emergencies

- Make sure all staff know their roles in an emergency
- Extend your training beyond evacuation drills
- Encourage staff to have emergency plans for their families
- Conduct a disaster exercise or drill at least annually
- Use every event as a “test” of your preparedness planning

#6 Understand your insurance coverage

- What does it cover – buildings, contents, collections, special collections?
- What type of insurance – commercial, self-insured, both?
- What emergency actions can you take without jeopardizing your coverage?

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#7 Survey your building for risks

- Conduct an internal and external survey of your building.
- Potential water/electrical problems, HVAC issues, asbestos concerns, below grade storage

www.ieldrn.org/survey.htm

- What can you do to protect or lessen damage to collections?
 - Keep boxes off the floor
 - Avoid basement storage when possible
 - Stay alert to construction in or around your building

#8 Establish salvage priorities for collections, files & equipment

- What are the most important collections? Types of materials in those collections?
 - Original artwork, photographs, leather bound books, scrapbooks
- What are their specific needs in a disaster?
 - Effects of water, heat, fire
 - Types of salvage treatment needed
- Are there critical files and equipment?
 - Electronic files not backed up and stored off site

#9 Disaster supplies and services/supplies list as part of plan

- Have immediate response supplies for water emergencies
- Plastic sheeting, tape, buckets, etc. www.ucsd.edu/preservation/drtcan.html
- Store a larger number and types of supplies for people and collections.
- First aid, flashlights, blankets, water, more plastic, boxes, etc.
- Maintain a list of local supplies/services for large scale need.
- Disaster Mitigation Planning Assistance: matrix.msu.edu/~disaster

#10 Establish collaborative relationships

- Establish relationships within your city/county/campus
- Look to the larger community – neighboring libraries & emergency responders
- Help to bring groups together with the common goal of protecting the assets of your library
- Form strategic partnerships in advance – *it's too late when disaster strikes*

California disaster/preservation networks: calpreservation.org/about/networks.html

An ounce of disaster prevention is better than a pound of disaster response!

Questions? Contact: info@CalPreservation.org

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