Disaster, Crisis and Response Management

The Library of Congress’ extensive guide, “Emergency Preparedness: An Introduction” serves as an excellent starting point. Their chart, “Level of Collections Emergency Scenarios” helps you assess problems. Of special interest is their section on insurance and valuing the collection.

“Protecting Library and Archive Collections: Disaster Preparedness, Response & Recovery” workshop was designed so attendees would learn how to complete a disaster plan, train staff, set priorities, use decision-making skills and experience salvage procedures for materials. Although this is part of the California Rural Library Initiative, supported by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian, the information is useful for all sizes of public libraries. The presenter, Julie A. Page is Co-Coordinator of both the California Preservation Program, an LSTA-funded initiative of the California State Library, and the Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service, a NEH-funded project. Note her information on working with the media and also insurance guidelines.


The Yale University Library has issued “Guidelines to Respond to Problem Behavior” which provides responses to inappropriate behavior as well as tips for crisis prevention. They were adapted from publications of the Crisis Prevention Institute.

The Crisis Prevention Institute has training resources that can be downloaded. Registration is required. Their handout for a traumatic event can be customized if library staff should encounter a horrific event. See also their chart, “Needs During Unfolding of Catastrophic Events;” although geared to schools, it provides many good points pertinent to public libraries.

The United States Small Business Association offers a podcast with an accompanying script “Disaster Preparedness for Business Owners,” presented by Lori Adamo, President, Code Red Business Continuity Services. The disaster plan which is applicable to public libraries provides a roadmap for quick response.

Blythe, Bruce T. Blindsided: A Manager’s Guide to Catastrophic Incidents in the Workplace. New York: Portfolio, 2002. Available through Access Pennsylvania Database. Although this thoughtful book may not be at your side when a crisis occurs, the “Preparedness Checklist” and “Crisis Response Manual,” may be helpful in
establishing your library’s protocol for any crisis. These can range from floods or other building disasters to patron casualties or staff trauma.

Wayne State University’s *Safety and Security Policies and Procedure Manual* covers topics such as bomb threats, adverse weather, sexual assault and much more. These policies and procedures are transferrable to public libraries.

Florida State University has prepared sophisticated documentation about disaster preparedness for hurricanes and includes a section about the community role of public libraries. This material can be extrapolated for any disaster.


The American Library Association’s Association for Library Collections and Technical Services has established a *Disaster Preparedness Clearinghouse* with links to training, resources, a bibliography, and cooperative alliances.

*Crisis management links* from WebJunction will take you to a variety of resources.

The George Washington University Gellman Library System’s guide “Crisis, Disaster, and Risk Management” provides links to information resources by general topic.

The Rare Books and Manuscript Section of the ALA Association of College and Research Libraries has issued a white paper, “ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections.” Although your library may not have a secure room for your valuable or special collections, you can still garner ideas for avoiding theft.

Stacey Arneson from the Specialized Services Division of the National Library of Medicine presented a program at the Medical Library Association Annual Meeting, May 2008 which is now available through a videocast: “From Environmental Health to Disaster Information Management.”

Amigos designed a template to use for inserting local, pertinent information in case of a disaster, *A Disaster Plan for Libraries and Archives*.
"dPlan, The Online Disaster Planning Tool for Cultural and Civic Institutions," was issued by the Northeast Document Conservation Center and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. You can enter data into the online template to create a customized disaster plan for your library. "This plan will help you:

- prevent or mitigate disasters,
- prepare for the most likely emergencies,
- respond quickly to minimize damage if disaster strikes, and
- recover effectively from disaster while continuing to provide services to your community."

Jarret, Joseph. "Communicating the Plan." Public Management 91, no. 10 (November 2009): 18-21. OmniFile Full Text Mega, WilsonWeb (accessed April 5, 2010). From the Executive Summary: "Managers must avoid the tendency to be non-communicative during uncertain economic times. Employees can become insecure and nonproductive in an unstable communication environment that is fueled by rumor and disinformation. People lose trust and confidence...when they suspect that essential services will be reduced or cut without their input."


The Pottsville, Northeast and Wilkes-Barre District Library Centers sponsored a multidistrict workshop, August 2009, "Disaster Response and Continuous Operations Planning." Funds for this workshop were provided by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA). The description from their brochure provides excellent rationale for the need for a disaster/crisis plan:

"Every library, archive, museum and historical society suffers disasters from water leaks and mold to power and phone outages. Today, our cultural institutions have to consider electronic resources, computers, digital data and office records in print and digital formats. Some are easy to recover after a disaster; some will not exist if you do not plan ahead. It’s what you do to prevent it, the ways you plan for it, and the speed with which you respond that determines the cost of a disaster to your institution, and to the community it serves."

The California Preservation Program has published "The Generic Disaster Plan Workbook" and a "Library Disaster Plan Template" to be used to prepare institutional emergency plans that include collections priorities and disaster response procedures. They also have a listing of disaster resources.

Inland Empire Libraries Disaster Response Network, CA is a cooperative network of public and academic libraries in San Bernardino, Riverside, and Eastern Los Angeles Counties that work together to prepare for and recover from disasters. Their mutual aid
agreements can be used as models for similar agreements. They also prepared a generic disaster prevention, response and recovery plan and a hazard survey. You never know when these suggested sites may be useful for information about library disaster preparedness and library materials conservation.

The Sample Disaster and Emergency Plan for Alabama Public Libraries, Alabama’s template for public libraries, was completed in 2009 and utilizes dPlan™, The Online Disaster-Planning Tool, © Northeast Document Conservation Center.

These slides from an Ohio Library Council presentation use financial records and human resources issues as examples, but also provide a generic outline for disaster preparedness for libraries. Maurer, Bob and Linda Sutherland. “Disaster Recovery Plan,” April 3, 2009.

Disaster Response


The Alliance for Response Pittsburgh and The Alliance for Response Philadelphia both link to resources that hopefully you’ll never need. On the other hand, it is reassuring to know that you can find information on working with emergency responders, assessing damaging and protecting your health. Both organizations link to Heritage Preservation Resources for Response and Recovery.

The National Institutes of Health held a symposium, “Disaster Information Outreach: A Symposium for Information Professionals Meeting Disaster Health Information Needs,” March 29 – 30, 2011 with information on how to provide high quality health information during disaster preparedness and response. The videocast of the presentations and the slides have been archived and are available for viewing.


Emergency Response Planning in College Libraries, compiled by Marcia Thomas and Anke Voss. Chicago: College Library Information Packet Committee, College Libraries Section, Association of College and Research Libraries, 2009. Available through Access Pennsylvania Database. Much can be extrapolated for public libraries especially the documents containing “procedures for coping with a wide range of
potential emergencies, from power failures to armed intruders, and a bibliography points to articles, books and professionally developed Web sites containing extensive documentation on current best practices.”


Lyrasis provides disaster recovery assistance and maintains a [wiki](https://lyrasis.wiki) for libraries undergoing disastrous conditions to post information. Their “Emergency Response Checklist,” “Disaster Recovery Resources,” and “Disaster Recovery and Planning” websites offer first-rate information.

Individual publications published by Lyrasis are in both English and Spanish. A few of note are:

- “Drying Techniques for Water-Damaged Books and Records,”
- “Drying Wet Books and Records,”
- “In-house Supply Stockpile Checklist,” and
- “Invasion of the Giant Mold Spore.”

In addition the Lyrasis Preservation Services and Supplies Database contains a collection of vendors who provide supplies, equipment and services for conservation and preservation activities in libraries and archives. Lyrasis also provides a [toolbox](https://lyrasis.toolbox) with helpful data.

The University of Pittsburgh’s University Library System published a guide in 2007: “*Preservation Experts, Vendors, and Conservation Centers.*”

The Northeast Document Conservation Center has series of excellent leaflets on emergency management. These especially are worth consideration:

- “An Introduction to Fire Detection, Alarm, and Automatic Fire Sprinklers”
- “Disaster Planning”
- “Protection from Loss: Water and Fire Damage, Biological Agents, Theft, and Vandalism” is the title of a set that includes:
  - “An Introduction to Fire Detection, Alarm, and Automatic Fire Sprinklers”
  - “Disaster Planning”
  - “Worksheet for Outlining a Disaster Plan”
  - “Emergency Management Bibliography”
  - “Emergency Salvage of Wet Books and Records”
  - “Emergency Salvage of Wet Photographs”
  - “Emergency Salvage of Moldy Books and Paper”
  - “Protecting Collections During Renovation”
  - “Integrated Pest Management”
“Collections Security: Planning and Prevention for Libraries and Archives”

The Northeast Document Conservation Center also provides links to information, “Resources for Flood Damaged Materials.” This includes mold.

The Library of Michigan’s “Library Preservation Information Resources” is a good starting point for basic information.

**Pandemic**

The American Library Association has compiled considerable information on “Pandemic Planning.”

Although topics are provided for a staff handbook, county health departments, the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Center for Disease Control and the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration have more comprehensive information.

Another source about the H1N1 virus is the Commonwealth’s Department of Health’s consumer site.

For an overview of pandemic information visit the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s site, “Pandemic Planning for Wisconsin Public Libraries.”

**WebJunction Courses**

WebJunction Pennsylvania provides a large selection of free and discounted online workshops and training courses available to library employees, library board members, and trustees in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This service is supported by a grant from the Office of Commonwealth Libraries. Log on to your account for access to courses such as:

- Emergency Disaster Preparedness
- Fire Prevention and Safety
- First Aid--Basic
- First Aid--CPR
- Ladder Safety
- Portable Fire Extinguishers
- Workplace Safety Orientation