



# DISASTER SALVAGE TEAM

Working Towards Saving Cultural Collections

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# NEWS LETTER

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## How to prepare a Disaster Manual.

## Notes from the March Workshop

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## ***The Disaster Plan: its contents and preparation***

Any cultural institution which has had to deal with the salvage of its collections after a disaster for which it was unprepared would hardly need to be convinced of the value of having a good disaster plan.

The existence of a disaster plan helps to clarify the roles of those involved in the salvage, minimising the risk of inappropriate action which could actually cause further damage to collections.

The existence of a plan helps to prevent a sense of panic developing

amongst the salvage team and staff of the institution, and by anticipating them, prevents embarrassing situations occurring over the provision of financial and other resources during the recovery from the event.

To be effective, the disaster plan must be supported by the governing body, director or CEO of the organisation, and be accessible and familiar to all who might need it.

It also needs to be regularly reviewed and updated.

### ***Who is Responsible for the Preparation of a Disaster Plan?***

- ultimately the CEO or director
- disaster team, if one exists
- any or all other staff

- curators - for information about collection priorities and locations
- conservator - a conservator's advice and input is essential to the preparation of a disaster plan (handling, storage, materials, salvage and treatment)

### ***Who is involved?***

- CEO or director's support is essential for resourcing and ultimate approvals
- disaster team - co-ordinating input and directing plan preparation

- registrar - for information about collections and locations
- security personnel - for information about systems and access/evacuation
- maintenance personnel - for information about the building and its systems, access etc

## ***1. Emergency Information***

Start with a one page summary of immediate steps to be taken and individuals to be contacted.

A flow diagram can work well for this section of the plan.

Contact will be needed with:

- emergency services
- security services
- director
- disaster team
- conservator
- custodian(s)
- registrar
- curator(s)
- support services
- storage facilities
- equipment hire
- transportation services

## ***2. Introduction to the Plan***

Briefly state:

- the purpose of the plan
- its author
- its organisation
- the process and timing for review

## ***3. Communication Details***

Include:

- names of those to be contacted
- their work and home phone numbers
- a strategy for contacting them
- identify communication vehicles and equipment

## ***4. Collection Priorities***

List the priorities for salvaging collections by identifying:

- name/type of collection
- location
- name/phone of curator or collection specialist

## ***5. Prevention/Protection Strategy***

Include a list of schedules, procedures and persons responsible for routine testing and inspections and procedures for follow-up to reported vulnerabilities.

Inspection checklists should appear in the appendix to the plan, and completed inspection forms should be retained to allow follow-up on reported problems.

Include:

- fire detection and suppression systems
- roofs
- drains and plumbing
- electrical systems
- heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems

## **6. Pre-disaster Actions**

Include a checklist of procedures to follow in the event that there is some prior warning of the disaster (eg hurricane or flooding).

Consider:

- contacting key people
- mobilising support services (transportation, equipment)
- organising storage facilities
- responsibility for carrying out actions

## **7. Response and Recovery Actions**

Summarise the steps to be taken to salvage collections. Broad guidelines are adequate in this section of the plan - more detailed instructions, such as a list of dos and don'ts, can be included in the appendix to the plan.

Include:

- discussing recovery from the range of disasters that could occur (leaks, floods, fire, earthquake, bomb)
- salvage techniques for the range of material in the collection
- instructions for longer-term rehabilitation of objects (such as repair, re-housing etc)

## **8. De-brief and Review**

- Teams involved in the disaster recovery effort need to be debriefed, and the exercise properly evaluated.
- If procedures are found wanting, the Disaster Plan needs to be reviewed.
- Forms can be used for this if wanted, but at least a formal procedure needs to be established.

## **9. Team Members**

Include at the front of the plan a list of recovery and salvage team members. List their:

- phone numbers (home and work)
- responsibilities
- scope of authority
- reporting lines

## **10. Detailed Building Plans**

Separate sets of building plans should be included, showing:

- |                      |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Building layout      | - | storage areas<br>aisles<br>entrances and exits<br>windows                      |
| Fire Protection      | - | extinguishers<br>fire alarms<br>sprinklers<br>smoke/fire detectors             |
| Shut-offs for        | - | power<br>water<br>gas<br>heating,<br>ventilation and air-conditioning<br>lifts |
| Priority Collections | - | locations  |

## **11. Forms**

Include multiple copies of all forms which might be needed in a disaster, such as:

- disaster assessment forms
- inventory forms
- packing lists
- requisitions and purchase orders
- evaluation forms to assess effectiveness of response

## **12. Supplies and Resources**

Include:

- locations and inventories of in-house supplies
- sources of commercial supplies/equipment
- names of consultants and other specialists
- sources of volunteers

\*Include details of any special arrangements or contracts with suppliers.

## **13. Financial Resources**

Detail the financial resources available in the event of a disaster.

Include:

- description of organisation funds available
- procedures to access funds (during weekends and holidays too)
- authorisations required

## ***14. Insurance Information***

Include details of:

- coverage
- claim procedures
- record-keeping requirements
- restrictions on staff/volunteers entering a disaster area
- information on government disaster relief procedures

## ***15. Security Information***

The salvage/recovery team will need to be able to gain access to locked areas of the building.

Although it is not advisable for security reasons to include information about the location of, and access to, keys to collections and offices in this plan, there should be a contact for an individual who can provide that information.

## ***16. Bibliography***

Include a reading list of relevant and up to date material on disaster salvage, and identify which of these can be found within in the organisation, and where they are kept.

*These notes were prepared for a workshop organised by the Canterbury Disaster Salvage Team, held in Christchurch on 12 March 1997.*