Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit

PARBICA
Pacific Regional Branch
Branche Régionale pour le Pacifique

GUIDELINE 21: Developing a Disaster Response Plan

Acknowledgements

The disaster management guidelines of the PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit were kindly supported by the Programme Commission of the International Council on Archives.

ICA
International Council on Archives
Conseil International des Archives

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Thanks to the following people who provided advice on the guidelines, peer-reviewed the guidelines and provided editing support:

- Opeta Alefaio, National Archives of Fiji
- Eric Boamah
- Greg Doolan
- Margaret Inifiri, National Archives Solomon Islands
- Tukul Kaiku
- Emilie Leumas and Gregor Trinkaus-Randall, ICA Expert Group on Emergency Management and Disaster Preparedness
- Linda Macfarlane and Monique Nielsen, National Archives of Australia
- Tess Perez, Yap State Archives
- Noa Petueli Tapumanaia, Tuvalu National Library and Archives
- Ros Russell
- Amela Silipa, National Archives and Records Authority Samoa
- Margaret Terry and Augustine Tevimule, Vanuatu National Library and Archives.

Special thanks to the PARBICA Bureau.

The original version of this guideline was prepared by the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) for use by countries around the Pacific.

We hope that you will use and adapt this guideline to suit your own organisation's needs and arrangements. In your use of this guideline, PARBICA only asks for attribution and for you to please let us know how you have used it – this helps us to measure the impact of the Toolkit.

If you have any questions about, or feedback on, these guidelines, please contact PARBICA at parbica.treasurer@naa.gov.au or via any of the contacts on the website: http://www.parbica.org.

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Introduction

The Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) has developed this guideline on ***Developing a Disaster Response Plan*** as part of the Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit. It was drafted in consultation with the Pacific Island Reference Group made up of representatives from the following countries:

- Australia
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Fiji
- New Zealand
- Papua New Guinea
- Samoa
- Solomon Islands
- Tuvalu
- Vanuatu.

About this guideline

Disaster response covers the initial phase of the organisation's reaction to a collection emergency which, depending on the extent of the disaster, may be a few hours or several days. The response phase is not over until damaged collections have been removed and stabilised, and remaining collections are protected from further damage. Planning can then proceed and decisions made about how recovery actions will be undertaken.

This guideline will take you through the necessary steps to develop a plan to enable your organisation to respond effectively to a disaster.

Who is this guideline for?

This guideline is for staff and volunteers at archives or in records management who wish to understand how best to respond to a disaster of any size and complexity.

This guideline should be read alongside ***Guideline 20: Developing a Disaster Preparedness Plan*** and ***Guideline 22: Developing a Disaster Recovery Plan***. Preparation and planning are the best means of mitigating damage from natural disasters or other forms of destruction.

Preparing a Disaster Response Plan

The aim of the Disaster Response Plan (Response Plan) is to allow staff to respond effectively to an emergency situation, from when it is first detected through to when holdings are removed for salvage actions. The Response Plan is used during, and immediately after, a disaster has occurred. The plan guides an organisation through the critical first steps after a disaster. An effective response also helps staff move efficiently into recovery stage.

The Response Plan will assist the disaster response team to meet their responsibilities, as it is often difficult to think clearly during a disaster. The disaster response team should ensure there is effective communication and sound decisions are made in relation to the emergency

and the affected collections. This guideline covers how to assess damage to the collection, how response is initiated and how to activate plans for services, supplies and experts.

The following sections will need to be included in the Response Plan:

1. Emergency procedures
2. Floor plans
3. Telephone Tree
4. Stabilising the situation
5. Volunteers
6. Disaster bin.

Once the Response Plan is complete, it should be incorporated into the broader Disaster Preparedness Plan (DPP). See ***Guideline 20: Developing a Disaster Preparedness Plan.***

Emergency procedures

In the event of emergency, it is the primary responsibility of staff in the building to ensure the safety of the organisation's visitors, patrons and other staff. The secondary responsibility is to minimise damage to property and collections, but only if this poses no threat to personal safety.

Remember: people first, property and collections second.

Different emergencies require different protective actions to keep people safe. The unpredictable nature of emergency situations requires quick action and clear thinking. Emergency procedures are guidelines for protecting yourself during most emergencies but will not provide an absolute solution for every circumstance.

To determine the best emergency procedures for your organisation, return to the risk assessment that you prepared in ***Guideline 20: Developing a Disaster Preparedness Plan*** and list the disasters that you identified as a risk to your organisation. Each type of disaster will have its own emergency procedure.

Emergency procedures are designed to provide first-response information for staff: what they should do immediately in an emergency. Moving or salvaging records is a specialist activity that requires the disaster response team and will commence when everyone is safe and it is deemed safe to be inside the building. Keep in mind that being able to return to the building could take hours, a few days, weeks or even a month later.

Emergency procedures should be printed in large type and highlighted. It will be the section of the Response Plan that staff turn to first in an emergency. Emergency procedures should be copied and made available to all staff as part of their general procedures documents. Emergency procedures should also be posted on the wall in appropriate parts of the facility, such as near water outlets, fire extinguishers, emergency exits, etc.

Emergency procedures should be extremely simple, short and clear. Staff and visitors should be able to follow the instructions even if they have never seen or heard them before. Regular testing of your emergency procedures should be held, in the form of simulations or drills.

Example - Emergency procedures

Here are some examples of procedures to follow in the first moments after a disaster occurs. It is suggested that you adapt them to your own situation and consult local emergency authorities to check they are appropriate. **Remember:** in all disasters the first priority is to protect human life and safety.

The following procedures have been numbered. In reality, many of them occur simultaneously.

General Evacuation Instructions

1. Remain calm.
2. Turn off all hazardous operations.
3. Assist disabled people.
4. Leave the area in an orderly fashion.
5. Follow the established evacuation route.
6. Move away from the building. Go directly to the assembly area and take a head count.
7. Stay in the assembly area until otherwise instructed.

Power Failure

1. Remain calm.
2. Remain where you are. Open blinds and curtains to let in outside light.
3. If you are in an unlit area, carefully proceed to an area with emergency lighting.
4. If telephones are working, call the power company (Phone:).
5. Wait for further instructions from authorities.
6. If directed to evacuate, go to the assembly area.
7. If you are in an elevator, stay calm. Use the intercom, emergency button and your mobile phone to alert others.

Fire

1. Remain calm.
2. Activate fire alarm and call emergency services.
3. If it can be done quickly and safely, determine the location and source of the fire.
4. Contact the fire department. (Phone:).
5. Give the name and location of your organisation to the fire department.
6. Contact the Disaster Response Coordinator (Phone:).
7. If the fire is small, try to extinguish it with the appropriate extinguisher.
8. Do not allow the fire to come between you and the exit.
9. If it is safe to do so, unplug electrical equipment that is smoking at the power point.
10. Evacuate the building.
11. Do not use elevators and do not open a hot door (before opening a door, touch it - if it is hot or if smoke is visible, do not open).
12. Do not attempt to save possessions.
13. Go directly to assembly area.
14. Do not return to the affected area until permitted to do so by appropriate authorities.

Example - Emergency procedures (cont'd)

Earthquake

The ground movement in an earthquake seldom causes death or injury. Most casualties occur from falling objects such as broken glass or dislodged bricks. An earthquake may knock over shelves, storage units and equipment, and dislodge ceiling tiles and overhead lights. A serious problem may be water damage caused by broken pipes.

1. Move away from shelves, filing cabinets and windows quickly.
2. Take shelter in a doorway, under a sturdy desk or table or in another well-protected area.

After the main shock has occurred, take the following actions:

1. Be prepared for aftershocks.
2. Extinguish all fires with the proper type of fire extinguisher.
3. Contact emergency services (Phone:).
4. Check for broken water pipes, shorted-out electrical circuits or fuel leaks.
5. Turn off all gas and water at main valves or meter boxes.
6. Assist those who have been trapped or injured by falling debris. Do not move anyone who is seriously injured unless they are in immediate danger from fire or structural collapse.
7. Open doors carefully and watch for falling objects.
8. Do not use the elevators.
9. Listen to a battery-operated radio for instructions.
10. Evacuate the building when safe to do so.
11. Do not re-enter until the building has been secured and declared structurally sound.

Cyclone

It is possible that you may have a day or two to prepare for a cyclone.

1. Board up windows or protect them with storm shutters or tape.
2. Limit access to the building to one door and secure the others.
3. Try to seal any areas that would allow water access.
4. Move collections away from windows.
5. Move away from low-lying areas that may be swept by high tides or storm waves.
6. Stay in the building if it is sturdy and on high ground. If not, move to a designated shelter.
7. Evacuate to a local shelter if ordered to do so by authorities.
8. Remain indoors. Do not be fooled by the calmness of the "eye" of the storm.

Example - Emergency procedures (cont'd)

Flood (small scale, inside source)

The following procedures are for water damage from roof leaks, plumbing system malfunctions, minor flooding, etc. Judgment, experience and damage assessment may lead you to apply these instructions in a different order than listed here.

1. Attempt to determine the cause or source of the water. If you cannot determine the source, proceed to step 2.
2. Attempt to turn off water.
3. Switch off all utilities in the affected area, including the water main, if it is safe to do so.
4. Turn off all electrical circuits in the affected area.
5. Check for live wires and wet power outlets. Do not enter the area if these are found.
6. Notify the following people:
   - Water authority (Phone:)
   - Disaster Response Coordinator (Phone:)
   - Plumber (Phone:).
7. Determine if something can be done immediately to stop or contain the leak.
8. Protect the archival records while waiting for assistance. Choose (a), (b) or (c) depending on the situation:
   a. If a few items are in jeopardy and the water flow is minor, move any wet or vulnerable materials to a dry, secure location.
   b. If water is coming from above, cover affected areas, stack ranges, cabinets and shelves with plastic tarpaulins.
   c. If water is coming in on the floor, remove materials from the affected area, beginning with those on lower shelves, and move to a safer location. Take steps to reduce the temperature and humidity and to increase air circulation.
9. If need be, initiate salvage procedures.

Flood (large scale, outside source)

1. If there is a flood warning, listen to the local radio station for updates.
2. Prepare to evacuate upon direction.
3. Follow the instructions of the local emergency authorities.
4. Notify the Disaster Response Coordinator (Phone:).
5. Check battery powered equipment and back-up power sources.
6. If possible, move priority collection items to upper floors or higher shelves.
7. If possible, move recovery equipment to upper floors or higher shelves.
8. If records and equipment have to be moved, record the new location.
9. Disconnect electrical equipment that is not essential.
10. Do not re-enter the affected area until permitted to do so by emergency services.

Example – Emergency procedures (cont'd)

Mould and other Contaminants

Although a mould outbreak may occur whenever temperature and humidity controls are inadequate, mould is also the most common contaminant in water-based emergencies. When the temperature reaches 21 degrees celsius (70 Fahrenheit) and the relative humidity is >60%, conditions are optimal for growth and reproduction of most types of mould. After a water-based disaster, any rise in these levels will create an environment conducive to mould, which may blossom within 48 - 72 hours.

Spores of mould and mildew are found almost everywhere and can cause irremediable damage to archival materials. Spores require the proper conditions such as moisture, temperature, nutrients and often darkness or dim light to proliferate. The combination of temperature and humidity is the most critical factor. General cleanliness and the removal of dust and dirt reduce the risk of infestation. Good air circulation is helpful in avoiding a mould outbreak.

Moulds, bacteria and other water contaminants can have adverse effects on people, particularly individuals with allergies, asthmas or other respiratory problems. When working with mouldy records, wear a respirator, disposable rubber or plastic gloves and eye protection. If possible, it is recommended to check with an expert or specialist when dealing with mould.

In the event of a mould outbreak, take the following action:

1. If mould is on a few isolated items or discovered in a whole stack range, contact the Disaster Response Coordinator. Obtain appropriate supplies from the emergency supply kit. Wear appropriate protective gear such as gloves and respirators.
2. When dealing with a moderate or large-scale mould problem, keep air movement to a minimum as air currents spread mould spores to other unaffected records.
3. If possible, move affected records to an isolated table or room where the mould will be able to dry. Affected materials may be treated outdoors. Sunlight for short periods of time can make the mould dormant.
4. Determine whether the affected item must be retained. If not, consider discarding. If so, consider photocopying or scanning.
5. Once mould is dry, it will become loose or powdery. Then it may be gently brushed from the records - brush away from you with a soft bristle brush. A HEPA-filtered vacuum cleaner may also be used to clean mould.
6. A prepared solution of isopropyl alcohol and water can be applied to a cloth and used to wipe away dried mould.
7. Check materials periodically for evidence of new or recurrent growth.

Floor plans

The Response Plan should include the floor plans of the building. Of particular importance is information about the location of fire extinguishers and sources of water and power so that these may be turned off if required. Floor plans should also identify emergency storage locations within the building where collection items might be transferred in anticipation of salvage and repair.

Simple floor plans should be drawn up to show:

- all entrances, exits and main evacuation points
- fire extinguishers
- main utilities and services and their shut-off points - water, gas, electricity, air conditioning
- elevator operating systems
- vital and significant records and collections
- temporary or emergency storage areas
- disaster bin location(s).

Telephone Tree

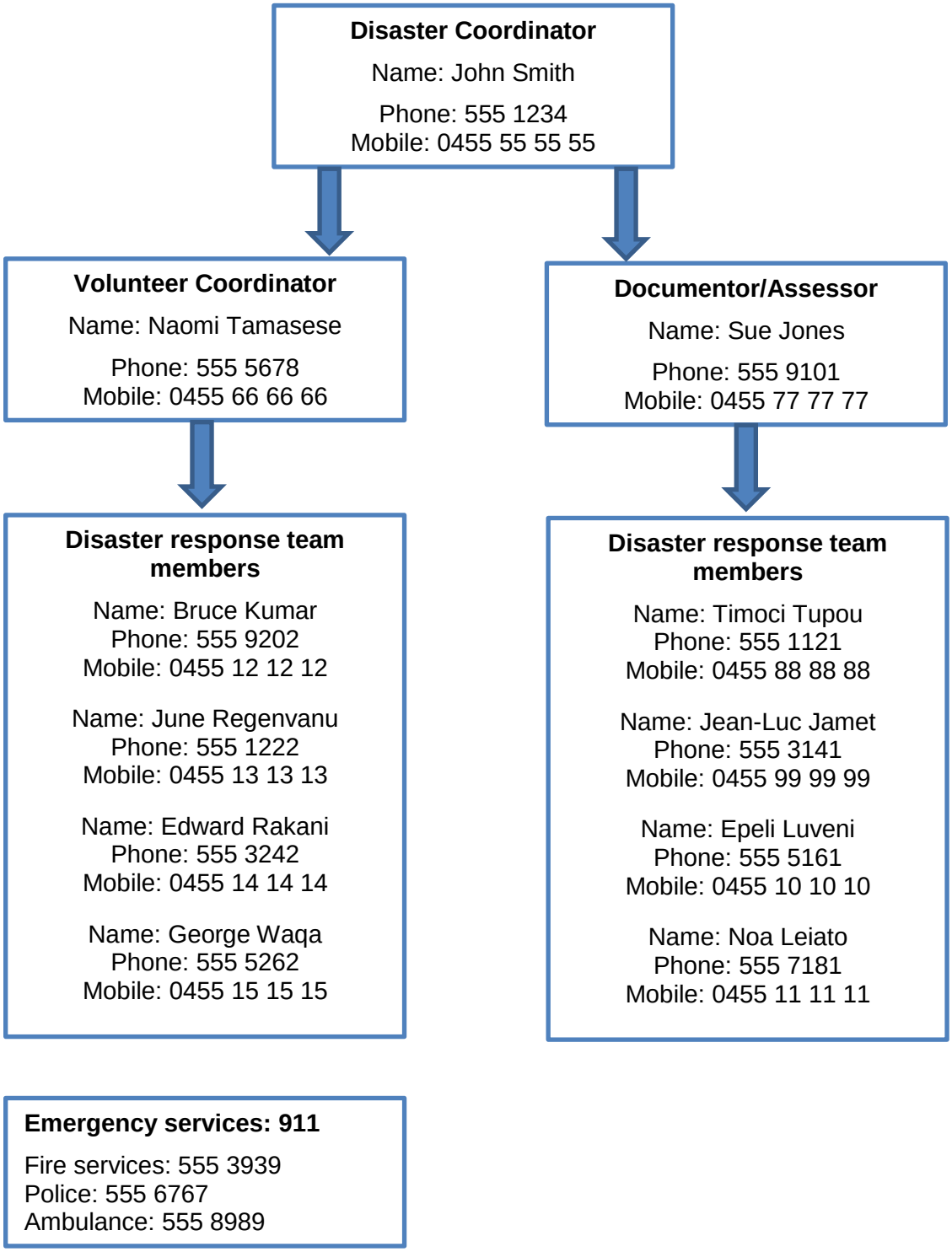
As soon as it is known that a disaster has or is about to hit, the disaster response team should be notified. One way to do this is by using a Telephone Tree.

A Telephone Tree is a prioritised list of the order in which people should be contacted and who is responsible for contacting them in the event of a disaster. For example, first call X, X calls Y, Y calls Z and A, and so forth. This procedure is used so that when someone cannot be reached, the next person on the list is contacted.

This list should include the phone numbers of the disaster response team as well as emergency services such as police, ambulance and fire. The list may also contain some of the same contacts listed on the emergency contact list that was developed in the DPP.

Keep in mind that you may not be at your organisation's premises when the disaster strikes. The Telephone Tree should be updated regularly and all members of the disaster response team should have copies at both home and work. All emergency services in your area should have the critical contact details from your organisation.

Example – Telephone Tree



Stabilising the situation

Once the affected area is safe, the situation can be assessed to decide on the next steps:

- Is this a minor disaster that can be dealt with by using the disaster bin and a few members of the disaster response team?
- Is this a major disaster that requires the emergency services to be called and the full disaster response team?

It is important to stabilise the situation to prevent further damage. This may involve stopping the flow of water, regaining electricity, setting up fans, covering shelves and collection boxes, opening windows to allow moisture to escape - anything which prevents further damage from occurring. If there has been water damage, you need to consider how to stabilise the environment and prevent mould growth.

The disaster response team should not to handle the collection at this stage unless it is to prevent it from being damaged further; they should wait until recovery begins to initiate any additional salvage operations.

The security of the building and collection should also be considered at this time. A building and collections security plan should be coordinated by the disaster response team. Preventive measures initiated should include:

- ensuring that the collection storage and recovery areas are secure
- establishing visitor regulations
- establishing staff regulations.

It is recommended that you develop a checklist to guide you through the decision-making process in stabilising the situation.

Example – Stabilising the situation checklist

Work through the following questions to develop an accurate picture of the situation.

1. Is the cause of the disaster still ongoing?
2. Is the site safe?
3. What is the extent of damage to the collection?
4. What is the main type of damage? (water, fire, etc.)
5. Are any other records or collections in immediate danger?
6. Does the disaster response team need to be called? (See Telephone Tree)
7. Does the situation need to be documented?
8. Does outside expertise need to be called in? (See emergency contact list)
9. Does the environment need to be further stabilised?
10. Have any records been damaged?
11. Is it time to activate the Recovery Plan?
12. What needs to be done to allow the recovery to begin?

Volunteers

Coordinating volunteers can be a crucial part of response and recovery after a disaster strikes.

Apart from the disaster response team, there may be other people volunteering after a disaster. Some will be existing volunteers and will be familiar with the organisation, the DPP, and may have attended the training workshops. Other volunteers will come forward from the community and know very little about your organisation.

Develop a volunteer register with name, contact numbers and their area of work or expertise. Be sure this register is kept up to date and that all members of the disaster response team have copies of the volunteer list at work and home.

Let your community know that you have a DPP and would like to develop a register of volunteers willing to be called on if a disaster occurs. In some places, it is likely that many volunteers will be family members and friends of the orgnisation's staff. It is recommended that volunteers be aware of the DPP and take advantage of any disaster training and workshops held at the organisation.

The disaster response team should be aware that the coordination of volunteers and ensuring their safety may take away valuable time, resources and efforts, especially if those volunteers do not know the organisation or collections and have not been trained. As a result, it is recommended that the organisation provide regular training opportunities for all volunteers and encourage them to attend.

Example – Disaster recovery volunteer register

Name	Contact Details	Area of Expertise	Trained
Joe Smith	Ph 555 1234 Mob 555 7896 Email joe.smith@gmail.com	Handling paper records, maps and plans	Yes, 1 January 2018 in emergency procedures

Disaster Bin

It is useful to have a supply of materials on hand to deal with disasters, as this means the disaster response team will not have to look for supplies during a crisis situation.

Although the contents of a well-stocked disaster bin are not extensive, costs can still add up. Some equipment is highly specialised and expensive but could be shared with other organisations. For some small organisations, these costs may prove too great. In these situations, it may be useful to look at alternative methods to procure supplies and to seek assistance and donations from the community, international sources and other organisations.

A rubbish bin, especially one with wheels, is recommended for use to store your disaster response and recovery supplies. These bins are easy to move and protect the contents from mud, water, etc. If possible, it is best to have more than one bin, but this will depend on the size, resources and funding of your organisation. The bin should not be used for anything other than disasters, and be clearly marked as containing disaster response materials so it is not used as a rubbish bin. Staff should be discouraged from using the materials in the bin for anything other than disaster response and recovery.

The bins should be kept in strategic locations of the building and in areas that are accessible at all times - even in the case of a major disaster. If you keep your supplies in a locked storage cupboard, it is important to know who holds the keys and that the disaster response team can gain access to the cupboard if necessary.

For a national archives dealing with government departments, it is recommended that a disaster bin be kept at each government department with the understanding that each department is responsible for stocking the bin with the necessary recovery supplies to protect the records in their custody. The national archives could be responsible for inspecting and monitoring the bins annually.

Example – Disaster bin contents

Item	Use	Quantity
Aprons, Protective	Personal protection	2
Baggage Labels	Labeling crates	50
Bin Liners (74 litre)	Containing rubbish	20
Blotting Paper	Interleaving, drying fragile items	1 pack
Buckets (10 litre)	Initial clean-up	2
Clipboards	Recording information	2
Clothes line cord	Hanging items to dry	2
Coloured chalk (box)	Delineating areas	1
Disaster Response & Recovery Plan		
Disposable Camera	Recording disaster and recovery progress	2
Dust Masks	Protection against dust and mould	20
First Aid Kit	Personal safety	1

Example – Disaster bin contents (cont'd)

Item	Use	Quantity
Freezer Bags	For items intended for freezing	100
Gauze Bandage	Protecting fragile items	5 rolls
Gloves, box of disposable	Personal safety/protection of object	1 box
Gloves, Cotton	Handling dry objects	15 pairs
Gloves, Latex	Personal safety	25
Goggles, Safety	Personal protection	2
Knife, Stanley	Cutting various materials	2
Mop (squeeze style with handle)	Initial cleanup	2
Newsprint (butchers paper)	Interleaving, table covers, etc.	500 sheets
Nylon Net	Padding out 3 dimensional objects	1 length
Overalls, Disposable	Personal protection	2
Packing Tape	Attaching plastic sheeting, securing lines, etc.	5 rolls
Paintbrushes	Cleaning mud/dust/soot	6 of various sizes
Paper Towel (perforated on a roll)	Interleaving	4 rolls
Pencils	Documentation	5
Pens, Waterproof	Writing labels	5
Plastic Containers with Lids	Containing small items	10
Plastic Pegs	Hanging items to dry	1 packet
Polyethylene Sheeting	Channeling water, covering objects, covering tables	1 length
Salvage Procedures Action		
Scissors	Cutting cord, polyethylene sheeting, paper, etc.	2 pairs
Sponges, Large	Mopping up spills	3
String		1 roll
Torches (with batteries)	In case of diminished light	2
Whistles	Calling everyone back together	1
Writing Pads	Documentation	5
Zip Lock Bags	Holding small items or broken pieces	100 in various sizes
Dust Pan and Broom	Clean-up	2

Additional resources

Books:

Candee, M.E. & Casagrande 1993, *Planning for Response and Emergency Preparedness*, Texas Association of Museums, USA.

Heritage Preservation 2006, *Field Guide to Emergency Response*, Endowment for the Humanities, USA.

Kahn, M 2012, *Disaster Response and Planning for Libraries*, 3rd edn, American Library Association (ALA), USA.

Van Beck, S 1995, *Before Disaster Strikes' A Primer on preparing a Museum Collections Emergency Operations Plan,* Gulf Coast Support Office, National Parks Service, USA.

Online Resources:

American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, *Working with Emergency Responders*, http://www.conservation-us.org/emergencies/national-heritage-responders#.WeDSJUyZORs

American Library Association, *Disaster Preparedness & Response: Disaster Response,* http://libguides.ala.org/disaster/response

Conservation OnLine (CoOL), *Disaster Preparedness and Response*, http://cool.conservation-us.org/bytopic/disasters/

National Archives (USA), *Response and Recovery*, https://www.archives.gov/preservation/disaster-response

Other Resources:

Heritage Emergency National Task Force, *Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel*.

The *Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel* offers information on the steps to take during the first 48 hours after a disaster. Guidelines include the supplies needed, stabilising the environment and collection, retrieval and salvaging, and damage assessment. The reverse side offers preservation steps for government records media, including electronic records, books, paper, and photographs. Copies may be ordered by calling toll-free: 1-888-388-6789 (USA).