



The Elements of A Good Museum Disaster Plan

Every museum must have a disaster plan. But it is not possible for us to provide you with that plan without studying your situation, because the types of possible disasters varies from area to area. Do not assume that just because you don't live in Los Angeles you won't have an earthquake or that because you don't live in Florida you won't have a hurricane. Careful study is essential to your planning process and each museum disaster program must be written for the specific situation of that museum. Here are some tips and elements necessary for a good disaster plan in most museum facilities.

1. Appoint one individual to head a Disaster Planning and Recovery Committee.
 - a. decide in advance who will be in charge when the disaster strikes.
 - b. set up a chain of command in case key people are absent.
2. Appoint Committee members from existing staff personnel.
 - a. who can execute the plan?
 - b. when may the plan be executed?
 - c. notifications required
3. Formally establish the group in writing, and commission their activities.
 - a. statement of purpose
 - b. responsibilities
4. Identify the disasters which are likely to effect the organization:
Do not exclude any possible disaster just because it is not very likely.
Try to predict how serious each might of is likely to be.
 - a. Fire

- b. Explosion
- c. Plane Crash
- d. Flood
- e. Water leak
- f. Weather and storm
- g. Bomb threat
- h. Earthquake
- i. Power failure



- j. Riot or Civil Disturbance

5. Identify those disasters which can be prevented (man caused, for example) and make recommendations for their prevention.
6. Identify those disasters which cannot be prevented (acts of God), but which can be minimized through proper planning.
7. Establish a liaison with local, state, and federal agencies such as police, fire, civil defense who can help.
 - a. police
 - b. fire
 - c. utilities
 - d. governmental officials
 - e. civil defense
 - f. weather service
8. Establish a succession of management, call-up lists, and other means of maintaining communications and order during a disaster. Someone should always be present or available to take control. Someone should be able to get manpower assistance in to help.

- a. internal communications
 - b. external communications
 - c. internal manpower availability
 - d. external manpower availability including contract personnel
9. Identify a command post and an alternate command post to be used in a disaster. Assure that it has proper equipment, sufficient phone lines, etc.
 - a. Place building blueprints and technical/utility data inside
 10. Prepare a media response to any emergency in advance.
 11. Develop a warning system for assisting in the evacuation of people affected by any emergency. Train people on the plan and their role.
 12. Establish a fire protection plan. Fire occurs as a result of many disasters and should be considered our greatest threat.
 13. Plan an emergency shutdown of services such as natural gas, water, or other factors which could cause damage to the collection or building. Be able to restore these services so that humidity, temperature, etc. do not have negative effects on the collection.
 14. Establish a mutual aid network with other museums and agencies capable of assisting. If you can arrange in advance a system of "borrowing" guards, conservators, curators, etc. from other museums, do so.
 15. Be certain that your facility has sufficient equipment on hand to deal with any emergency. Be able to maintain security during the emergency. Stock medical supplies, cots for overnight stays, water, batteries.
 - a. Try to decide in advance how your limited resources will be prioritized.
 - b. Be able to accommodate personnel on-site who must sleep here.
 16. Identify locations on and off site where collection materials can be relocated. Prepare a plan for moving objects and securing them.
 - a. collection storage
 - b. non-collection storage

- c. Do you have a plan for actually handling or moving objects?
17. Test your disaster plan.
 - a. You can't test for every emergency for test for the most likely.
 18. Train ALL of your staff regularly on the Plan and its operation
 - b. Make it realistic: deal with injured, dead; shut down utilities, involve police and fire personnel.

Disaster Equipment

1. Adequate flashlights for power failure situations
2. Extra sets of keys to storage and other controlled areas which can be issued to those searching the building for fires, water leaks, etc.
3. Available carts for movement of collection materials.
4. Rolls of plastic to cover works of art in a fire or water emergency
5. Boxes of cotton towels for clean-up
6. Sandbags for blocking water flow
7. Rolls of tape for taping up sheets of plastic in water emergencies
8. Extra fire extinguishers
9. Extra tools for removal of art from walls and cases
10. Portable bull horns or public address equipment
11. Battery operated lanterns
12. Wet Vacs for water removal
13. Bolt cutters
14. Rope, cord, string
15. Sledgehammer

16. Fire axes
17. Wrecking bar
18. air packs for breathing
19. radio batteries
20. hydrant wrenches
21. complete set of handtools

