

Disaster Recovery

- I. Do not, under any circumstance, enter an area until it has been declared safe!!
- II. If a disaster strikes when the building is occupied, your first concern is for the safety of the persons inside. Escape routes, alternate routes, and procedures for evacuating the building should be clear to all staff and visitors. Practice drills should be conducted on a regular basis to eliminate panic during actual disasters.
- III. Most disasters occur when the building is unoccupied – during the early morning hours, on weekends, or during holiday closings. In the event of a major disaster, do not enter the building until it has been declared safe to do so by emergency personnel.
- IV. 95% of all disasters will result in water damaged materials. Keep in mind that mold will form within 48 to 72 hours in a warm, humid environment. You must work quickly to salvage damaged materials and to prevent additional damage from occurring.
- V. The following steps are recommended for an effective recovery operation:

- A. Assess the Damage

How much damage has occurred? What kind of damage is it? (fire, smoke, soot, water, etc.) Is it confined to one area or is the entire building damaged? How much of the collection has been affected? What types of materials have been damaged? Are the damaged items easily replaced or are they irreplaceable? Can they be salvaged by the in house recovery team, or will outside help be required? Walk through the entire area and take extensive notes. Photographs should be taken to document the damage. Contact your insurance carrier, sources of supplies and services, and the Illinois State Library Preservation Office.

- B. Stabilize the Environment

The environment must be stabilized to prevent the growth of mold. Ideal conditions for the recovery operation are 65 degrees Fahrenheit and 50% relative humidity. The following should be readily accessible to help stabilize the environment:

- Portable generators, in case a power failure occurs
 - Pumps, to remove large quantities of standing water
 - Fans, to circulate the air
 - Thermometer, Hygrometers, hygrothermographs and/or sling psychrometers, to measure the temperature and humidity.
1. Dehumidifiers can help lower the humidity, but they are only effective in small, closed areas, and tend to increase the temperature in a room. They can also freeze up in the lower temperatures required for salvage and recovery operations. Raising temperature will not lower the humidity – it will only accelerate mold growth. Temperature and humidity should be constantly monitored.
 2. Air should be circulated in the damaged areas. This may be accomplished by running fans constantly. If possible, they should expel the humid air from the area. Any standing water should be pumped from the area. Extreme caution must be taken, as standing water can conceal hazards.

- C. Activate the In-House Disaster Recovery Team

Organize work crews and be sure that their responsibilities are clearly defined. No salvage activity should begin until a plan of action has been determined by the team leader. Disaster and recovery areas should be inaccessible to the public. Frequent rest breaks should be provided for workers.

Food and/or beverages should be available.

D. Restore the Area

After the damaged items have been removed and the environment has been stabilized, they must be thoroughly cleaned. Walls, floors, ceilings, and all furniture and equipment must be scrubbed with soap and water and a fungicide. Carpeting, and especially the padding under it, should be carefully examined, as mold will develop rapidly. Removal of smoke odor and fogging with fungicides or insecticides should be performed only by professionals.