



Disaster Planning: Why we cannot be Ostriches with our heads in the sand



Why can't we ignore this issue? Because it is not a matter of IF something may happen at your institution, it is a matter of WHEN and you need to be prepared. An emergency is an incident that happens in your institution that is handled well with policies, procedures and practiced plans. A disaster is an emergency that is not handled well. How do we prevent an emergency from becoming a disaster?

First and foremost, have a plan. Not one that sits on the shelf in a huge binder that never gets looked at, but one that has been read and practiced by everyone in your facility--more than once! What should this plan include?

Incident Command Structure: What is this? The incident command structure is a way for the institution to identify who is in charge during an emergency, in addition to other vital roles that need to be filled with at least a three deep backup for each. These roles include the Incident Commander--the person in charge of coordinating with first responders and staff; a Public Information Officer--the ONLY person that is permitted to talk with the press; Operations--those in charge of developing and executing the response; Planning and Logistics--what do you need and where and how do you get it; Financial/Administrative--the person or persons who have control over the money for needed supplies, services and salaries.

Phone tree with current numbers: Make a list of current contact information for staff, volunteers, contractors, suppliers and board members. Include the best method for getting a hold of family members of staff and volunteers to let them know what is happening--if they are kept in the loop, they are less likely to tie up the phone lines needed for vital communications. Contractor and supplier contracts for recovery should be set up in advance with clear cut response and pricing built in.

Emergency/Disaster Plan: What are your possible threats and how will/can they be prevented or managed? What are your assets--skill set questionnaires for staff, volunteers, and board members; the administrator may not be the one in charge during an emergency if he/she panics in such situations. What are the institutional responses to the identified threats--ex. what happens when someone slips and falls or when a fire starts or when someone calls in a bomb threat?

Clear instructions for staff and visitors: What are the responsibilities of staff in evacuations or if you need to shelter in place. Do you have posted exit routes? Make sure staff understands the need for performing sweeps for stay behinds or injured persons. Do you have a plan for disabled persons assistance and/or safe areas where they can be taken to wait for assistance?

Develop relationships with first responders: Invite the fire department and police/sheriff department to your facility to take a tour. Talk about their expectations in an emergency. Talk about your expectations in an emergency. Remember that life safety is everyone's priority--both the first responders and YOURS!

Train, Train, Train: Practice the plan! Involve the first responders in your training. Run actual scenarios so that everyone knows how to respond to each. Evaluate the response--it will not go as planned. Use the failures to improve your plan. Run table top exercises as well as actual exercises.

Identify your most valuable collection assets: Once the emergency has been addressed and all persons are accounted for, first responders may (but are not required to) be able to assist with retrieval and protection of your priority collections.

Business Continuity Planning: Plan for how you will get your institution up and running again--how will you pay the recovery bills and payroll? Identify and protect your vital documents with copies offsite in a safe, yet accessible, location.

Collection Documentation: Keep copies of your ownership records and your collection documentation offsite in a safe, yet accessible, location. Be sure you have a current inventory of your collection and that the collection is insured. Both these will make it easier for the institution to qualify for FEMA assistance in regional disaster.

Develop a relationship with your local Emergency Management Team: Make sure that your institution is 'on their radar' so you receive the help you need in a regional/local emergency.

Develop relationships with other institutions in your area and create a mutual aid agreement so that you can help in their recovery or house their collections if something happens to them and they can do the same for you.

Plan for the possibility that you may be on your own for as many as 72 hours during a widespread disaster. With the proper planning and training you can prevent emergencies from becoming disasters and can survive widespread emergencies so that you can get back to doing what you do best--serving your constituency and protecting your collections.

There is training available to help you put your plan together. Find a workshop or training course and take it.



You do not have to keep your head in the sand but can stand tall and be prepared!

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COLLECTIONS RESEARCH
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2013-2014 TRAINING SCHEDULES

ONLINE TRAINING

2013

MS007: The Mission Statement: Is It Really That Important?
November 11 to 15, 2013

MS218: Collection Inventories
November 4 to 29, 2013

2014

MS103: Basics of Museum Registration
January 6 to 31, 2014

MS207: Collections Management: Cataloging Your Collection
July 7 to August 1, 2014

!NEW!

SECURITY WORKSHOPS FOR TINY MUSEUMS

Collections Research for Museums now offering a half-day workshop titled "*Security for the Small Museum: Practical Low and No Cost Solutions*".

This workshop is designed for small museums with 10 or fewer staff (paid or unpaid) who are looking to improve or learn about museum security. It will present practical tips that anyone can implement with little or no cost focusing on non-technical solutions.

We are currently looking for institutions who would like to host one of these workshops

Check our website or call us for details:
<http://museumcollectionmgmt.com>

2013 Workshop

September 19, 2013
Fort Caspar Museum, Casper, WY

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Training is available for our database and in general FileMaker Pro techniques.

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We also offer a variety of **other services** to museums, large and small. These **range from simple inventories to complete and thorough cataloging of collections**. Feel free to contact us for more information. We provide a **free initial consultation**.

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