



GUIDE TO PRESERVE VITAL & CRITICAL RECORDS DURING AN EMERGENCY OR DISASTER

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THIS GUIDE INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

1. PREVENTION PLAN

- steps to reduce possibility of loss or damage to vital paper records or electronic files
 - must be prepared and implemented before an emergency or disaster
 - given to everyone in office or organization

2. ACTION PLAN

- steps to take during an emergency or disaster

3. TOOL KIT

- to house all supplies needed to preserve records

PREPARE TODAY

This **GUIDE** is to assist you in preparing an

EMERGENCY OR DISASTER KIT

to preserve paper and electronic records in **Emergency or DISASTER** situations such as

FIRE or FLOODS

This Guide allows you to develop a prevention plan, action plan, and tool kit specifically tailored to your organization



PREVENTION PLAN

HAVE A PLAN TO SAVE RECORDS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

- IDENTIFY one or more PERSON(S) to be EMERGENCY CONTACT
 - (*Manager of Operations, Records Manager, Building supervisor, etc.*)
 - INSERT NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION IN

ACTION PLAN

 (*on Page 3 of this Guide*)
 - ENSURE THAT ALL STAFF KNOWS WHO TO CONTACT IN AN EMERGENCY or DISASTER SITUATION
- MAKE AN INVENTORY LIST OF ALL VITAL RECORDS
 - IDENTIFY WHICH RECORDS ONLY EXIST IN PAPER FORMAT and must be moved immediately during an emergency.
 - Consider whether you could have an (electronic) back-up for any of those records.
 - IDENTIFY WHICH RECORDS ARE KEPT WHERE
 - ENSURE THAT STAFF KNOWS which records have been identified during this process.
- ENSURE THAT STAFF KNOWS TO TRACK WHICH RECORDS WERE MOVED, NOT MOVED, OR LOST DURING EMERGENCY
- IDENTIFY BACK-UP SYSTEM OF YOUR ORGANIZATION
 - Is information AUTOMATICALLY BACKED-UP onto a server that is in a SECURE LOCATION?
 - If no, can a backup in a secondary, secure location be set up?
 - DOES BACK-UP HAVE TO BE DONE MANUALLY? If yes, ensure that a records management person is assigned and a schedule for the regular backing-up has been developed.

Helpful Tips:

DO NOT USE bottom drawers or shelves of cabinets when storing vital records or data files.

DO NOT STORE vital records in basements or other damp areas, or locations prone to water damage or flooding.

BECOME familiar with the location of water pipes, plumbing fixtures in the walls/ceilings of office or building.

AVOID positioning file cabinets or records storage units against walls or directly under ceilings where water pipes are located.

STORE A BACKUP of vital records in a secondary, secure location.



ACTION PLAN

SET UP AN ACTION PLAN TO BE USED IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

1. **Immediately CONTACT:** _____
(indicate name and phone # of person(s) to be contacted in case of emergency or disaster)

2. **ASSESS the situation**
 - What records have been identified as vital records or are most vulnerable (per their location) and must be moved immediately?
 - Can most vulnerable records be transferred to a safe area right away?
 - If records cannot be moved, can cabinets be covered with plastic sheets, garbage bags, etc.?
 - Is a camera available to take photos of affected areas?

3. **TRACK WHICH RECORDS are moved, not moved, or lost**

4. **IN CASE OF FLOOD OR WATER DAMAGE:**
 - Reduce temperature and humidity and increase air circulation

Use de-humidifiers and fans to create a temperature below 20° C and 50% relative humidity

5. **IN CASE OF FIRE:**
 - Handle fire damaged records with cotton gloves

(Cotton gloves prevent soot from being permanently absorbed by the damaged materials)

6. **Contact preservation specialist**
(indicate contact information of preservation specialist)

90% of all disasters result in water damage

Mold will begin to grow within 48-72 hours of contact with water or moisture

Preventing or minimizing mold growth is done by controlling environment as much as possible (see point 4 of this page)

Air Dry Records

- Use fans to provide maximum air circulation (avoid aiming fans directly at records)
- Absorb excess moisture using a clean sponge or paper towel (do not blot on handwritten ink or fragile surfaces, avoid using printed newsprint for blotting)
- Do not attempt to separate individual papers while very wet. You may leave them in stacks no higher than ¼" to dry
- Hang drying lines and attach documents that have minor water damage to the lines (use paperclips, clothespins, etc.)
- Arrange documents in an orderly fashion so that labeling and re-filing can be done effectively
- If papers can be separated safely they can be interleaved using absorbent or separating materials, such as waxed paper
- Change interleaving materials often, until item is dry

TOOL KIT***PREPARE TOOL KIT WITH SUGGESTED ITEMS LISTED BELOW***

Adjust both the items and the quantity based on your organization's needs and depending on the size of your organization, it may be helpful to have multiple KITS readily available.

Staff should be made aware of where these KITS are located.

Item	Suggested Quantity	Notes
Gloves – cotton	2 pairs	Handling dry objects
Gloves – rubber/plastic	2 pairs	Protection
Clipboard with paper and pens	2 clipboards 1 pkg of waterproof pens 4 pads of paper	Documenting
Plastic sheeting	2-4	Covering cabinets, records, etc.
Scissors	1 pair	Cut sheeting
Blue garbage bags (transparent)	1 box of 30	For collecting objects
Black garbage bags	1 box of 30	For wet rubbish
Dust masks	4	Protection from mold and mildew
Foam sponges	12	To absorb excess moisture
Masking Tape	4 rolls	Labeling
String	1 roll	Hanging records to dry
Clothes Pins	200	Hanging records to dry
Perforated paper toweling	12 rolls	Interleaving between wet paper records
Fan	1 Desktop Approx. 12" size	Keep air circulating – helps to control mold and mildew growth
Plastic bin or tote	1	To store all of the above