

SAFEGUARDING COURT RECORDS:
Paper, Microfiche and Automated Data

Notes Submitted

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VITAL RECORDS

What are vital Records?

- Essential agency records needed to continue agency operations in the event of a disaster.
- Records needed to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and those affected by Government activities.

Planning:

- What are the critical functions of the agency that must continue during an emergency?
- What records are needed to support those functions?
- What records will be required to protect the legal and financial rights of agencies and individuals?
- What procedures/resources are needed to protect and recover records?

Identification and Protection:

- Perform a record inventory to determine vital records.
- Prepare copies in paper or electronic format.
- Decide on cycling/rotating and dispersal of records.
- Decide on off-site storage location.
- Create an inventory of your vital records.

Vital Records get you back to work!

Vital Records protect government and citizens interest!

Disaster Recovery ... Wet Paper

Rapid response is essential. Wet records stick together; inks run; books swell; mold growth occurs. Wet paper is very fragile, so careful handling is required. No drying method restores collections; records may not look the same or may need to be replaced.

Immediate Steps:

Attend to immediate environment:

- Remove water
- Control temperature and humidity
- Protect dry collections
- Stabilize damaged records

Air Drying:

Most suitable for small numbers of damp or wet documents

- Inexpensive
- Labor intensive
- Required great deal of space
- Mold can develop
- Care must be taken with water soluble inks

Use clean, dry environment - temperature below 70 degrees F and humidity below 50%.

Keep air moving to accelerate drying and discourage mold.

Aim fans away from drying records.

Single sheets can be laid out on table, floors, etc.

Coated papers must be separated from one another to prevent sticking.

Dried records will take up more space than undamaged ones. May be photocopied.

Freeze Drying:

Self-defrosting freezer must be used.

Good for larger volume of materials

Temperature must be below -10 degrees F.

Materials should be placed in freezer as soon as possible after becoming wet.

Documents can be placed in stacks or spread out for faster drying.

Process can take several weeks.

Vacuum Freeze Drying:

Suitable for large volumes of records and for water-soluble inks.

Records placed in vacuum chamber and dried at temperatures below 32 degrees F.

No additional swelling or distortion will occur.

Acceptable for rare and unique materials.

Dehumidification:

Large, commercial dehumidifiers placed in facility and collections left in place.

Temperature and humidity carefully controlled.

Collection can stay in storage containers.

Especially effective with building that have suffered water damage.

Disaster Recovery... Photographs

Basic steps can be taken with all wet photographs:

Wet photographs should be air dried or frozen as quickly as possible.

If photographs are dirty, rinse with gentle stream or by immersion with gentle agitation.

Do not touch with bare hands.

Dry or freeze within 48 hours.

However, there is a wide variety in types of photographic processes, with differing methods used for recovery.

If possible, recovery should be done under the supervision of a conservator.

Air Dry

If personnel, space and time are available, photographs should be air dried.

Allow excess water to drain.

Spread out face up, and do not place photographs on top of one another.

Lay photos flat on absorbent material, such as blotters, paper towel, or clean cloth or dry on clothesline using wooden or non-abrasive plastic clothespins.

Keep air moving - fans will speed up the drying process and minimize risk of mold growth.

Freeze Dry

If immediate air drying is not possible, then freeze dry.

Wrap or interleave individual photographs or groups of photographs with wax paper or non-woven polyester material prior to freezing.

Disaster Recovery... Nontextual Media

Electronic Records:

Magnetic Tapes:

Rinse tapes soaked by dirty water.

Tapes can stay wet for several days.

DO NOT FREEZE.

Do not touch magnetic media with bare hands - handle by hubs or reel.

Keep tapes in plastic bags until they can be dried.

Pack vertically in plastic crate or tub.

Air dry.

Floppy Disks:

Immediately pack.

DO NOT FREEZE.

Do not touch disk surface with bare hands.

Keep wet until they can be air dried.

Pack vertically in plastic bags or tubs of cold water.

Air dry.

Compact Disks:

Immediately dry disks.

Do not scratch surface.

Pack vertically in crate or cartons.

Air dry.

Sound and Vide Tapes:

Rinse off tapes soaked with dirty water.

Do not touch magnetic media with bare hands.

DO NOT FREEZE.

Keep wet tapes in plastic bags until they can be dried.

Pack vertically in plastic crate or tub.

Air dry.

Disaster Recovery...

Mold

- * Active mold can stain or eat through paper. It can be a significant health hazard.
- * Some molds are toxic and many cause severe allergic reactions. People with asthma or known allergies should not work with moldy materials. Protective masks should be considered.
- * There are various kinds of mold: they can be of various colors, and look fuzzy or slimy when active. DO NOT attempt to clean active mold. It will smear and spread.
- * Mold is hard to kill, but can be made dormant by improving environmental conditions.
- * Dormant mold is dry and powdery.

Salvage Principles:

Reduce humidity and temperature:

Humidity should be below 55% and temperature below 68%.

If collections are wet, dry or freeze them:

This will not kill the mold, but will stop its growth.

Isolate affected areas:

Quarantine affected items by moving them to clean area, or by sealing off storage area.

Begin to dry materials:

Wet materials should be dried in cool, dry space with good air circulation.

Collections may be dried outside in sun if humidity is low.

Clean storage areas where mold occurred, using moldicide.

Avoid quick and easy cures:

Some “fast cures”, such as spraying records with Lysol or cleaning with fungicides these can have adverse effects on records and people. Leave chemical “cures” to people with training and proper equipment.

BIOHAZARDS

What should you do if you think your records may be contaminated with biological hazards: bacteria, viruses, toxins?

Segregate the materials:

- ◆ Biological agents are infectious through inhalation, ingestion, penetration of skin through open cuts, or contact with mucus membranes of eye or nose.
- ◆ Affected records should be kept in sealed off rooms or, if in small quantities, in containers such as biohazard bags.
- ◆ Handling of records should be kept to a minimum.
- ◆ Staff working with these records must be provided with protective clothing, such as gloves and masks.

Call the authorities:

- ◆ Biohazard or potential biohazards must not be taken lightly.
- ◆ Experts are needed to test for the biohazard and perform whatever clean-up is necessary.
- ◆ Call "911".
- ◆ Inform your supervisor.

Websites for more information:

- ◆ <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/>
- ◆ <http://web.uvic.ca/ohs/biohazardemerg.html>
- ◆ <http://www.iapps.org/biohazards.html>

Disaster Recovery Websites

<http://www.nyshrab.org/WTC/technical.html>

New York State Historical Records Advisory Board - Technical Assistance

<http://www.archivesnysed.gov/>

New York State Archives

http://www.fema.gov/r-n-r/ers_w1.htm

Emergency Response Action Steps

<http://www.ccaha.org/>

The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA), CCAHA specializes in the treatment of art and historic artifacts on paper.

<http://www.ccaha.org/photobul.html>

Salvaging Photograph Collection

<http://www.nedcc.org>

Northeast Document Conservation Center

<http://www.nedcc.org/palm3/tleaf39.htm>

Emergency salvage of moldy books and paper

<http://www.nedcc.org/palm3/tleaf37.htm>

Emergency salvage of wet books and records

http://www.disaster-resource.com/cgi-bin/template.cgi?content_page=resources.htm

Public-sector assistance for business affected by the tragedy, and private-sector organizations offering advice and assistance, including free software and other products.

<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/waac/wn/wn19/wn19-2/wn19-207.html>

Salvage at a Glance

<http://www.nycosh.org/>

World Trade Center Catastrophe Work-site and Residence Re-occupancy

<http://www.nyshrab.org/WTC/vendors.html>

New York State Historical Records Advisory Board - Vendor of Disaster Recovery Services

<http://www.nara.gov/records/index.html>

Records management information