

Chapter 8

Planning for a Disaster: Effective Emergency Management in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

In this paper the authors discuss what a disaster plan entails and the steps that need to be taken for an institution to create such a plan, including taking advantage of all the new opportunities to provide a more comprehensive disaster plan through new technologies such as mobile applications, cloud storage and online reference tools. A disaster is a sudden change of situation, because of this, the planning for such an event needs to be done well ahead of time so that adequate training can be implemented and the response to the disaster can be quick and effective. As much as apathy, avoidance and lack of resources can be excuses as to why we have not created an institutional disaster plan, being prepared and trained to handle the different types of emergency disasters that can befall a library or archive is the best way to ensure that the materials will remain protected and the damage done to them in the case of an actual disaster is minimized. The steps outlined in this chapter will help any library or archive in the creation of a successful disaster plan and help them understand why some disaster plans fail.

INTRODUCTION

A disaster can be defined as a sudden change of situation and because of this nature, the planning for such an event needs to be done well ahead of time so that adequate training can be implemented and the response to the disaster can be quick and effective. As much as apathy, avoidance and a lack of resources can be excuses as to why an institutional disaster plan has not been created, being prepared and trained to handle the different types of emergency disasters that can befall an institution is the best way to ensure that collection materials will remain protected and the damage done to them in the case of an

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actual disaster is minimized. Indeed, being prepared is one of the best ways to limit damage and one of the first steps toward being prepared is to establish a planning team. The reason a team is necessary is because disaster planning is a huge undertaking. In order for a disaster plan to succeed multiple people should know the disaster procedures, several departments should be a part of the team, and there should be backups for each team member. Another step is to assess risks to both the building and geographic location. After this, a disaster plan will need to be written for the institution. This includes gathering information, developing community liaisons, determining salvage priorities, and developing emergency procedures. And finally, implement the plan by sharing with others, educating the staff, and then regularly practicing the plan that has been created. This chapter will go through the steps of creating and implementing a disaster plan from beginning to end, including newly developed tips and techniques to be better prepared.

MITIGATION PHASE

Disaster Team

Before beginning to attempt to tackle the task of planning for an emergency or disaster, one needs to create a team of people willing to undertake this matter. As stated earlier, the reason a team is needed as opposed to an individual is because this is an enormous task, a task that would be impossible for one person to complete. The disaster team will be comprised of all the library staff in one form or another. The disaster team leader is a position with the most responsibility for managing the disaster team and ensuring all disaster sub-team coordinators and the members of their sub-teams are prepared for any emergency that is likely to strike the facility. Also, it is the responsibility of the disaster team leader to inform the sub-team coordinators of any changes or amendments to the plan so they may in turn inform their team members. Another responsibility of the disaster team leader is to ensure that all procedures in the disaster plan are followed according to what is written in the disaster preparedness plan. This would include teaching proper techniques to be used, and scheduling drills to practice the techniques decided upon. Once this position has been appointed, it is necessary to fill the positions of the disaster sub-team coordinators. Each of the sub-teams are in charge of different aspects of the library, both the preparedness portion prior to anything happening and the response and recovery portion after a disaster or emergency. There should be eight sub-teams as follows: health and safety, security and facilities, administration and finance, supplies and equipment, communications, assessment, documentation, and salvage responsibilities. Each sub-team needs to have a coordinator that will be in charge of that particular team. The rest of the library staff will be assigned to one, or in some cases two of these teams. Teamwork is a major part of preparing the library for a disaster and in the library being able to recover in a timely fashion in order to get back to its mission of serving its community.

Risk Assessment and Management

Now that a team is in place, the focus can be turned to the four phases in the cycle of managing an emergency: Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (FEMA, 2013). The mitigation phase is about attempting to prevent the effects of a disaster. This can also be thought of as the risk assessment phase. This part of the mitigation phase is probably the most important part of starting a disaster plan

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