

**Survey Report - Sample Observations and Recommendations - Emergency Preparedness****Observations**

The building's roof is pitched, with asphalt shingles. Drainage is by gutters and downspouts. There have been some isolated problems with leakage from the roof, but these have been addressed. Staff reports that there has been occasional seepage of water into the basement storage room, and two small boxes of historical materials were damaged by water on the floor a few months ago. Otherwise there do not appear to be any serious water hazards that affect the local history collection. There are no water detectors installed in the building. The exterior of the building appears to be in generally good repair, although there is some peeling paint inside and out. There is no written building maintenance schedule or log of building maintenance and problems.

The building is equipped with a partial system for smoke and fire detection. The system is monitored 24 hours a day by a security company. There appears to be only one smoke detector in the local history room, which is fairly large. There appears to be one heat detector (which has been painted over) in the basement storage room. The security company inspects its systems monthly, and the detection system is inspected annually. There is no fire suppression system in the building, although the fire marshal has recommended one. There is an annual inspection of the building by the fire department. Fire drills are not held. Portable fire extinguishers are available throughout the building and they are inspected yearly. Staff members have been trained in their use. The library has one book drop, which does not open into the building. This is excellent, since some libraries have been damaged as a result of incendiary devices placed into book drops.

The library has a written disaster plan that was prepared several years ago, using a template. The local history librarian is responsible for updating it. She has recently attended a workshop on disaster planning.

**Recommendations**

- **Establish a written building maintenance schedule and begin to keep a log of building problems and the actions taken to solve them.** A written schedule will help to make inspections and maintenance routine, and a written log of problems eliminates the need to rely on staff memory of past problems with the building.
- **Have the fire detection system for the building inspected by a professional, to ensure that all areas, particularly those that house local history materials, are up to code.** All of these areas should have a combination of heat and smoke sensors that are connected to the monitoring company 24 hours a day.
- **Test the fire detectors quarterly, to ensure that the system would work properly if it were needed.** This is crucial, as the detection system is the building's primary protection against fire. It is excellent that the security company tests its monitoring equipment monthly.
- **Hold periodic fire drills to ensure that everyone knows how to exit the building safely.** There is a written fire drill plan in the existing disaster plan.
- **If collections must be stored in the basement storage area, insure that they are stored at least four inches off the floor and install one or more water detectors (available from conservation suppliers).** The water detector(s) should be connected into the fire detection system so that they can be monitored 24 hours a day. As noted elsewhere in this report, historical materials should be removed from the basement if possible.
- **As a precaution, map out the locations of water sources in the building (including water pipes, HVAC equipment, restrooms, etc.) and note their proximity to collections, particularly the local history collection.** This information should be included in the disaster plan, and steps should be taken to relocate or otherwise protect any important collections that might be vulnerable.

- **Update the library's disaster plan.** See the Emergency Management section of PLAM, 3rd ed. (at [www.nedcc.org](http://www.nedcc.org)) for salvage guidelines and Conservation OnLine (<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu>) for sample plans. Specific changes to suggest include:
  - **Place the plan into a tabbed notebook to make it easier to locate important information in the event of an emergency.** At a minimum, each chapter should have its own tabbed divider.
  - **Update resources, phone numbers, and contact people.** If possible, this should be done on an ongoing basis, as some types of information change frequently. Certainly all information should be checked once a year. I noticed at least one resource that is no longer available.
  - **Provide information on how to access the local history room and the locked cabinets inside the room.** If there is an emergency and the local history librarian is not available, someone else should be able to retrieve the collections.
  - **Provide detailed collection priorities for the local history collection so that other staff members could rescue materials if the local history librarian were not available.** Which materials are the most important to rescue in case of disaster and where are they? It will be helpful to include a floor plan indicating the location of important collections, but for security reasons, this might be included only in one or two copies of the plan.
  - **Provide a listing of volunteers** who might assist in a large disaster.
  - **Provide a list of local freezer storage space that would be available in the event of a large water disaster.** A local university food service or a local grocery store might be able to help, but they need to be contacted ahead of time. Vacuum freeze drying services are helpful once conditions have been stabilized and decisions can be made about how to treat damaged collections, but wet collections need to be frozen locally as quickly as possible (to minimize damage and prevent mold growth).
- **Other actions that should be taken to improve emergency preparedness include:**
  - **Keep copies of the disaster plan offsite, in case the building is inaccessible in an emergency.** Some institutions have senior staff members keep copies at home or in their cars, so that the plan will always be available.
  - **Hold a yearly training session for staff members to familiarize them with the disaster plan and with the recovery measures recommended therein.** The purpose of such a session is to ensure that staff members are not reading the plan for the first time during an emergency; instead, they will have a basic understanding of response and recovery procedures beforehand. They should be familiar with general salvage procedures for collections and use the plan for reference to confirm instructions or provide additional details such as phone numbers or procedures for specific media.
- **Over the long term, install a wet-pipe sprinkler system throughout the library.** Preservation professionals currently consider this the best protection for library and archival collections.