



# DISASTER

## PREPARING YOUR HISTORIC RESOURCES FOR DISASTER

Natural and manmade disasters cause devastating impacts to communities and lives nationwide. These events often destroy and severely damage irreplaceable historic resources. When a community plans for a disaster, part of that preparedness should take into account the best methods for cultural resources to be accounted for, protected, and preserved. This Disaster Planning for Preservation Checklist is designed to help a community, historic preservation nonprofit, or an individual take the necessary steps for readying historic resources.

**Will your community be ready to protect and repair these vulnerable historic resources when a disaster strikes?** Let the enclosed checklist be your guide.

## Contacts for Preservation Disaster Support

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) - [www.ncshpo.org](http://www.ncshpo.org)

Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) - [www.nathpo.org](http://www.nathpo.org)

National Park Service, Disaster Planning - [www.nps.gov/stlpg](http://www.nps.gov/stlpg)

National Trust for Historic Preservation - [www.savingplaces.org](http://www.savingplaces.org)

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation - [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov)

Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation - [www.heritageemergency.org](http://www.heritageemergency.org)

National Center for Preservation Technology & Training - [www.ncptt.nps.gov](http://www.ncptt.nps.gov)

# Steps for Historic Preservation Disaster Preparedness



*A historic Mississippi Gulf Coast beach cottage damaged by Hurricane Katrina. NPS photo.*

## 1. Know Your Partners

The field of disaster planning, response, and recovery has numerous players with varied roles and responsibilities. Learning what they do and making connections with them NOW is critical if you want your voice to be part of the recovery when a disaster strikes. Find out who your Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Coordinator is, and who leads the historic resource role in the Emergency Framework, the structure that organizes federal agencies in a disaster. Make friends for the future, not foes.

## 2. Get into the Hazard Mitigation Plan

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that State, Tribal, and Local governments create and adopt Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plans. These plans are created to identify policies and activities that can be implemented in an effort to reduce risk and losses from a disaster. This multi-hazard mitigation plan is used for funding and land use decisions. It is critical that cultural resources be a part of the process. It must identify, determine risk, assesses replacement costs, and provide recommendations to lessen the impacts to cultural resources. State, Tribal and Local multi-hazard mitigation plans are separate plans and are not required to interconnect. Advocate for your heritage concerns in all plans. Be a part of the conversation or be left out of the disaster recovery long-term decisions.

## 3. Local Level Planning

While there is often a focus on what federal and state government provides a community, the reality is that most critical decisions are made at the local level. When a disaster hits there are numerous competing needs that all require assistance. The more nimble your local government is in responding to cultural issues such as historic district design review, expedited environmental compliance, and supporting local preservation efforts, the more likely historic resources will have successful outcomes post-disaster. Does your community have a local historic preservation commission that incorporates disaster response into its responsibilities? Practice emergency response on your home field. Make it a touchdown not a teardown.

## 4. Property Owner Resources

Every property owner is a curator of a collection of important cultural resources, whether that be family photographs, furnishings, wedding certificates, decorative arts, etc. Knowing how to care for them after a disaster, be it flood or fire, can help save these irreplaceable items. A historic home or commercial building also requires special considerations post-disaster. Do you know who to call to help stabilize and repair these resources? Don't fill the landfill with your family photos. Educate your community about what they can do to prevent the second disaster of cultural resource loss that occurs during disaster cleanup.



# Disaster Planning for Preservation

## CHECKLIST

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK. KNOW YOUR PARTNERS.

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#### **1** Know your partners, such as your State and Tribal Historic Preservation Office, National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and Heritage Emergency National Task Force.

- Understand the role of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in disasters. Who makes decisions in your state? Meet your local EMA coordinator.
- Understand the role of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- Learn more about Silver Jackets, led by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA working with other agencies as needed.
- Find your experts! Look to Museums, Archivists, Collection Managers, Resource Managers, State and Regional Local Historic Societies, Preservation Planners and Architects, and Preservation Trade Network.
- Meet your local Disaster Recovery Manager (often fire/police chief) and local Flood Plain Manager.
- Educate volunteers, church and college groups, etc. regarding preservation treatments.
- Check existing Programmatic Agreements related to disaster recovery and response at the SHPO and THPO offices.

### GET INTO THE HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

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#### **2** Get into the Hazard Mitigation Plan by researching the existing plan, finding out when it will be updated, and if it can be amended now.

- Find your stakeholders and meet to discuss your priorities. You must have cooperation from local government (city council, county, tribal) in order to move forward.
- Complete and update a historic resource inventory. It must be accessible and available to local, state, & federal officials after an event. Use SHPO/THPO inventory forms. This is your benchmark.
- Research previous events and insurance claims. Use existing and historic mapping data to understand past and potential events.
- Determine a way to prioritize where resources should be directed first in a disaster.
- Describe vulnerability and estimate potential dollar losses for each hazard and vulnerable structure, and record the methodology used to prepare the estimate.
- Create specific, measurable objectives with clear actions that will minimize risk to those properties, such as “Minimize loss of historic properties within historic district.”
- Include all risks and an estimate of repetitive loss in hazard areas and develop problem statements. For example: “Smith Point Historic District floods at high tide.”
- Formulate goals based on problem statements, such as “Reduce the damage by flooding in Smith Point Historic District.”
- Create measurable goals that don’t conflict with other plans or policy. “Remove electrical and plumbing from basement levels in Smith Point Historic District.”
- Know the plan and keep it up-to-date. Stay engaged!



# Disaster Planning Checklist

## LOCAL LEVEL PLANNING

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### 3 Have a local level plan. Understand a disaster has many moving parts. Life and Safety always trumps historic preservation in response and recovery.

- Decide who will activate the preservation disaster plan and when.
- Have a triage system for your building and for your collections depending on hazard.
- What documentation exists already? Can you access it? Is it safe from all hazards?
- Have sensitive debris locations been identified? Are agencies informed of selected locations?
- Review National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) rules and code enforcement education/outreach.
- Conduct mock disaster trainings and follow-up. Know what activates the disaster procedures.
- Create a Historic Preservation Response Network. Decide activation and location during event for this group. Designate a point person and teams such as disaster recovery, assessment, and repair.
- For local review boards think of the following: Is expedited review allowed after disaster with agencies and local officials? Can federal reviews be used in lieu of local reviews? Is the staff allowed to act for the commission in some cases? Identify types of stabilization and repair allowed without review after a disaster.
- Establish appropriate moving, demolition and salvage protocols. Are there geographic exemptions?
- Does your ordinance address demo and salvage protocols, temporary housing, improvements to properties to mitigate hazards (storm shutters, safe rooms, elevation, door swing, tie downs).
- How will the identified historic priorities be incorporated into other planning mechanisms such as the comprehensive plan, zoning and building codes, and local permitting?

## PROPERTY OWNER RESOURCES

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### 4 Advocate for your resource by reviewing these property owner resources. Start with asking yourself, “Why do I care about saving this?”

- Advocate for your resource. Why do you care about saving this?
- Craft a site-specific emergency response plan. Do you have an inventory, retrieval, and protection plan for your belongings?
- Identify resilient building materials and appropriate interventions for your collections.
- Post the Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel (available at [www.ncptt.nps.gov](http://www.ncptt.nps.gov)).
- What hazards currently threaten your specific property? Check local zoning and flood mapping, USDA mapping. Look into additional insurances if needed.
- Review current conditions of your property analyzing how it will fare in high winds, flooding, or other storm-related events.
- Do you have radio, batteries, candle/lantern, plywood, screws and nails, tarps, bleach, face masks, personal protective equipment, trash bags, sand bags, sponges, etc. should the disaster happen?
- Do you have the number of your plumber, your electrician, your handyman, your insurance agent somewhere accessible?
- What are your support networks after an event?
- Know the funding rules for insurance, state assistance, and federal homeowner assistance.
- Ask for help from federal, state, and local partners.

