



Conserve O Gram

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Salvage Of Water-Damaged Collections: Salvage At A Glance

Salvage is often necessary after water emergencies, but salvage is only part of the disaster planning process. Preparation, prevention, and response are crucial elements of disaster planning. Because water, after fire, is the greatest threat to archival and museum collections, staff should be trained for flood response. See Table 1 for some possible flood emergency scenarios and responses. If flooding occurs, the following steps should be taken.

- Evaluate hazards (see *Conserve O Gram* 21/1 for more information on flood hazards).
- Evaluate the scale of emergency and contact appropriate personnel (see table below)
- Control or eliminate the source of the problem. Assess damage to collections.

- Begin salvage of collections using proper handling, packing, and drying procedures outlined in the “Salvage at a Glance” *Conserve O Gram* series.

Curatorial and archives staff members need to familiarize themselves with the procedures used in the recovery of museum and archive collections objects and make sure they are included in the park’s disaster recovery team. There is extensive literature available on disaster planning. Consult *Museum Handbook*, Part I, Chapter 10: Emergency Planning, to get started. The bibliography in that chapter provides useful additional resources. The references at the end of this *Conserve O Gram* also can be used to develop your disaster planning and recovery library.

Potential Emergencies

Scale of Disaster	Utilities Affected	Materials Affected	Staff Required	Resources Needed
Minor (roof and plumbing leaks)	Power operational.	Small quantity. Can be easily air dried or frozen.	Curatorial/archives staff; conservator on-site or by phone.	In-house supplies plus a few extra services (cold storage).
Moderate (burst pipes, sewer backup)	Power may be out of order or disconnected for safety.	Moderate to large quantities that need freezing. Complex materials need air drying.	Extra staff needed. Activate Disaster Response Team. Have conservator on-site if possible.	In-house supplies plus additional supplies acquired; cold storage needed.
Major/ Catastrophic (fire-fighting water damage; earthquake resulting in multiple broken pipes)	Power may be out of order, or all utilities out of order.	Large quantities that need freezing. Complex materials need air drying.	Activate Disaster Response Team. Begin salvage after safety needs are met. Include conservator in recovery effort.	In-house supplies plus additional supplies acquired. Cooperation with neighboring institutions.

The “Salvage at a Glance” *Conserve O Gram* series is designed to provide a shorthand reference for use at the time of an emergency. In order to be prepared, keep a copy of these salvage procedures in your water damage emergency cart. See *Conserve O Gram 21/2* for information on creating emergency carts.

References on Disaster Planning:

Darge, Valerie and Sharon Jones. *Building an Emergency Plan: A Guide for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. Malibu, CA: Getty Conservation Institute, 1999.

Heritage Collections Council. *Be Prepared: Guidelines for Small Museums for Writing a Disaster Preparedness Plan*. Canberra, Australia: Heritage Collections Council, 2000.

National Park Service. “Chapter 10: Emergency Planning”. *Museum Handbook*, Part I: Museum Collections. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 2000.

World Wide Web Resources:

Conservation OnLine (CoOL)
<<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/>>.

Environmental Protection Agency
<<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/flood.html>>.

Federal Emergency Response Management Agency (FEMA)
<<http://www.fema.gov>>.

Heritage Preservation
<<http://www.heritagepreservation.org>>.

This *Conserve O Gram* series was adapted from “Salvage Operations for Water Damaged Archival Collections: A Second Glance” and “Salvage at a Glance” in *WAAC Newsletter*, Vol. 19, No. 2, May 1997, by permission of the author, Betty Walsh. <<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/waac/wn/wn19/wn19-2/wn19-206.html>>.

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The series is distributed to all NPS units and is available to non-NPS institutions and interested individuals on line at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/publications/conserveogram/cons_toc.html>. For further information and guidance concerning any of the topics or procedures addressed in the series, contact NPS Museum Management Program, 1849 C Street NW (NC 230), Washington, DC 20240; (202) 343-8142.