

Report on Emergency Response Planning workshop: Red Deer, Alberta

On September 13-14, 2010, I attended a Canadian Conservation Institute workshop on disaster and emergency response planning for heritage institutions. (CCI description can be found at <http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/lo-od/workshops-ateliers/emerg-urg-eng.aspx>) The session was broken into two major themes, preparing for and responding to emergencies/disasters. CCI staff led the majority of discussions and delivered Powerpoint presentations over the two days. There was also a presentation by City of Red Deer and Province of Alberta employees to discuss their emergency planning & response procedures. Large parts of the session were also spent working with fellow participants on brainstorming and hands-on salvage exercises.

Preparing for disaster

- Define – remember that an emergency is a sudden, unexpected event resulting in damage/loss/injury, requires immediate attention, can be handled in-house. A disaster is the same except that consequences are more serious and requires outside assistance and resources.
- **VERY** important part of ERPs, your first step: you need buy-in from management and all staff/volunteers. Do this through discussion, education, mock disasters.
- Preparing for disaster:
 - o ID/assess/reduce risks – specific to your institution
 - o Meet with officials (fire, police, insurance, city/town)
 - o Gather critical documents (personnel, legal, financial, collections, inventories, bldg)
 - Gather develop/info (contact lists: staff/volunteers/suppliers/resources/contractors); Response & salvage procedures; Instructions, team duties, equipment
 - o Establish emergency funding
 - o Acquire supplies/equipment (more detail on CCI website)
 - o Develop response plan – there are example plans available from CCI. Also highly recommended is “Help! A Survivor’s Guide to Emergency Preparedness” (available <http://www.museums.ab.ca/bookstore.aspx>)
 - o Train staff
 - o Test plan (Mock disasters)
 - o Review/Update plan

Responding to disaster

- Expect: high stress, chaos/confusion, rapidly changing situations, conflicting information, potential/actual danger, the media
- First steps in response: declare an emergency; assemble/brief response team; secure the site; gain access to the site; protect people; assess damage to collection; limit collection damage; stabilize environment; deal with media.
- Contact the CCI **24/7/365** at **1-866-998-3721** and state that you have an emergency. You will be walked through what to do no matter your situation. Depending on severity, CCI staff may come to your aid.
- Common salvage includes water damage and soot damage, both can occur from fire, water also from floods. High value/vulnerability items are to be salvaged first.
- Salvage exercises (on either collections objects, paper-based items: how to handle water-damaged and/or soot-damaged collections) are very helpful to practice before

actual disaster occurs. Conservators can help you with this; also consult CCI technical bulletins.

- Goal of emergency response: To resume normal activities *as soon as possible*.

Take home materials

- Provided: Mock emergency plan; CCI guide for Emergency and Disaster Preparedness for Cultural Institutions
- CCI notes, technical bulletins, publications are available via <https://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/bookstore/index-e.cfm>

Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have regarding any of this material for elaboration or clarification. This is but a brief overview.

Many thanks,

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