

Western States and Territories  
**WESTPAS**  
Preservation Assistance Service

**DISASTER VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT**

(Based on: Sara Wolf, ed., *The Conservation Assessment: A Tool for Planning, Implementing, and Fund-raising*.  
Washington, D.C.: Heritage Preservation, 1998)

**Introduction.** While the self-assessment you are about to undertake cannot substitute for an assessment from a surveyor trained to systematically discover and evaluate the wide range of threats that can leave institutions vulnerable to loss of collections, the following questions are designed to alert you to major hazards and gaps in preparedness from which heritage institutions commonly suffer.

For the upcoming WESTPAS "ARE YOU READY?" workshop, focus your attention on the main building (if you have more than one building) where collections are stored. Questions that leave you uncertain about "what," "when," or "who" should be explored before arriving at the workshop. You may discover your workshop colleagues have answers to share and perhaps problems in common that can be worked on collaboratively following the workshop.

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability and bring a second copy of your completed questionnaire to the workshop for the WESTPAS trainer. If the trainers find trends among the needs of participating institutions, future WESTPAS workshops can be designed to help address them.

**1.0 INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION**

- 1.1 Your institution: \_\_\_\_\_  
1.2 Your institution's address: \_\_\_\_\_  
1.3 Your name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**2.0 REGIONAL VULNERABILITY**

- 2.1 What potential natural hazards threaten your collections? [Please check all that apply]  
 Earthquake                       Tsunami                       Wind (high or gale force)  
 Hurricane / typhoon               Tornado / cyclone               Mud slides  
 Lightning strikes                   Wild fires                       Volcanic activity  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2.2 What potential manmade hazards threaten your collections? [Please check all that apply]  
 Arson (fire)                       Military installation (accident/threat)  
 Dam (flood)                       Power plant/oil refinery (industrial disaster)  
 Nearby railroad/trucking line (pollution and vibration)  
 Terrorist/criminal activity (that threaten collections)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2.3 Is the building in which your collections are housed located on a floodplain? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, 100 year floodplain? \_\_\_\_\_ 500 year floodplain? \_\_\_\_\_  
Source of information: \_\_\_\_\_

**3.0 BUILDING VULNERABILITY** (i.e., the major building in which your collections are housed)

- 3.1 Is there a history of recurring problems in the building? [please check all that apply]  
 Basement flooding                       Damp/wet basement  
 Plumbing leaks/failures                   Roof/window leaks

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Window condensation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Wall condensation            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mold/mildew             | <input type="checkbox"/> Cold water pipe condensation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical shorts/fires | <input type="checkbox"/> Structural defects           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pests (insects/rodents) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                 |

- 3.2 Is there a regular program of building maintenance? \_\_\_\_\_  
Who is responsible (name, title)? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.3 Does your building have regular fire safety inspections by official personnel? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.4 Are the collections protected by an automatic fire **suppression** system? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.5 Are the collections protected by an automatic fire **detection** (smoke or heat) system? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is it monitored 24/7? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.6 Are your fire detection and/or suppression systems tested on a schedule? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.7 Do the collection storage areas have portable "ABC" fire extinguishers? \_\_\_\_\_  
Are the inspection dates current? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.8 Are the collection storage areas protected by an automatic water detection system? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is it monitored 24/7? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.9 Do the collection storage areas have an automatic intrusion detection system? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is it monitored 24/7? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.10 Do the collection storage areas have perimeter security during open hours? \_\_\_\_\_  
After hours? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.11 Does the building have an emergency lighting system? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have access to an emergency generator? \_\_\_\_ Inspected on a regular schedule? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.12 Are emergency exits blocked or automatic fire doors non-functioning? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.13 Are collection storage units and shelving braced (e.g., top/ cross bracing within sections, welded frames, bolted to floor or wall)? \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4.0 COLLECTION VULNERABILITY

- 4.1 Have collection materials been damaged by any of the above-named hazards in the past ten years?  
\_\_\_\_\_ [List the events and causes on a separate sheet]
- 4.2 Are ALL collection materials stored at least 4" above the floor? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.3 Are valuable collections stored below grade/basements? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.4 Are valuable items stored in individual protective enclosures/boxes? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.5 Other than fire suppression pipes, are there water pipes (e.g., heating, cooling, drinking water, waste water, labs) located above collection storage? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.6 Has the collection suffered unexplained lost materials (e.g., theft)? \_\_\_\_\_

- 4.7 Is there a current "inventory" of the collection? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Has the inventory been used to check for losses? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What percentage of collections not included in the inventory \_\_\_\_\_%
- 4.8 If the inventory is in electronic form, is a copy of the back up stored off site? \_\_\_\_\_

**5.0 ORGANIZATIONAL VULNERABILITY**

- 5.1 Does the director have the authority to initiate and authorize expenditures for a disaster response and salvage operation for the collection? \_\_\_\_\_  
 In the director's absence, does someone else have the needed authority? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.2 Has the institution identified and pre-approved a preferred emergency recovery company? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.3 Does the institution carry insurance coverage for:  
 Buildings? \_\_\_\_\_ Contents/equipment? \_\_\_\_\_ Collections? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.4 Has the institution's emergency plan for collections been reviewed within the last year? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.5 Have collection salvage priorities been established? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Are these salvage priorities mapped on floor plans? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.6 Have the records essential to operations (e.g., payroll records, administrative records, collection inventory records) been prioritized for salvage? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.7 If the institution borrows objects from other institutions, are they prioritized for salvage? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.8 Do you maintain emergency supplies for protection and salvage of the collections? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you know what the supplies are? \_\_\_\_\_ Where they are stored? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.9 Have regional freezer services been identified (if collections get wet)? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Can the services be contacted 7 days/week to arrange receipt of shipments? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.10 Have local and regional sources for transport boxes and rental trucks been identified? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.11 Have preservation/conservation experts been identified who could consult on recovery issues following a disaster? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.12 Are staff trained in emergency response for collections? [Refer to the hazards listed in section 2. Regional Vulnerability] \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.13 Are recyclable materials and trash removed in a timely manner? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.14 Are extension cords, multi-socket adaptors, hot plates, coffee makers, space heaters, or other appliances with potential to cause fires in evidence? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.15 Are custodial supplies, painting supplies, fuel (for equipment) or household cleaners stored inside the building? \_\_\_\_\_ Are flammable supplies stored in fire proof cabinets? \_\_\_\_\_