

PREPARE: Actions to take **before** a disaster strikes

When it comes to disaster preparedness, even a draft or preliminary plan is better than no plan. Any actions you take to prepare today will help your library respond and recover more effectively in the face of future disasters. Whether you have a few hours to start planning or several months, consider these steps identified by preparedness experts and NLS libraries who have first-hand disaster experience:



Assemble your team

- Identify an emergency coordinator who will help lead disaster planning efforts
- Gather a disaster response team of diverse library staff and volunteers, including a mix of senior and junior staff



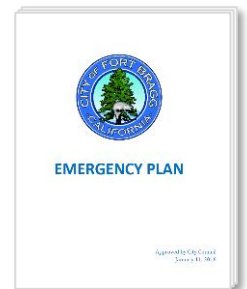
Identify your library's risk

- Learn more about your community's disaster history; talk to veteran staff members and volunteers about their experiences during past disasters
- Identify the most likely disaster scenarios that the library will encounter, such as wildfires, earthquakes, floods, etc.
- For each scenario, determine the most common risks, as well as the locations and groups that are most at risk



Review existing disaster response plans

- Familiarize yourself with disaster plans in place for your city or county
- Talk with city or county emergency staff about the library's role in existing plans
- If your library already has a disaster response plan, review it – identifying areas that need to be updated and content that may be missing



Engage the library community

- Bring a broader range of staff, volunteers and community members into the conversation
- Have the library's emergency coordinator or emergency team present what they have learned in assessing past disasters and upcoming risks
- Use a Recovering Together conversation guide to encourage discussion during staff and volunteer meetings



Invest in a library culture of mutual care and support

- Recognize the ways staff and volunteers support each other and community members on a daily basis and how that can serve more effective response to a disaster
- Regularly engage staff and volunteers in conversations about personal and organizational values
- Invite staff and volunteers to reflect on how the library's core values should be put into action during a disaster
- Schedule mental health or disaster psychology training for staff and volunteers; coordinate with city and county health departments to see if training is available locally



...an order-based system can be really hard when you're in a crisis where there aren't always easy answers...**Instead, we need to cultivate and teach empathy.** – NLS Library Director





Cultivate community partnerships

- Identify existing and potential community partners, such as the groups you work with on summer reading, after-school programming, family literacy or library-based health services
- Consider the full range of partners that might work with the library during and after a disaster
 - City or county departments
 - Friends of the library
 - Public agencies
 - Schools and colleges
 - Nonprofit organizations
 - Faith-based institutions
 - Neighborhood associations
 - Individual community leaders
- Use a Recovering Together [conversation guide](#) to discuss potential roles with a community partner



Develop a disaster response plan

While disaster plans should be based on a library's unique needs, all plans should address the following topics:

1

Immediate emergency response

- Create accessible library-wide and branch specific [emergency action plans](#) (EAPs)
- Coordinate with city and county emergency plans
- Identify and train those who will lead emergency response efforts and identify staff roles and responsibilities for different scenarios (e.g., evacuation, shelter-in-place or lockdown)
- Consider how the library's utility, maintenance and facility needs will be impacted by a disaster

2

Continuity of library operations during a disaster

- Identify roles and responsibilities for staff and volunteers, including how decisions will be made if library leaders are unavailable
- Determine how services and programming will be adjusted, given possible disaster scenarios
- Coordinate with city or county emergency officials to clarify what is expected of library staff during a disaster (i.e. working at an emergency operations center or with another department)

3

Communications

- Develop a communications plan with input from city or county public information officers (PIOs)
- Determine how the library will communicate with key audiences (*see list to the right*)
- Plan for how critical information will be shared accurately and consistently across channels

Key Library Audiences

- Staff
- Volunteers
- City or county leadership
- Community partners
- Patrons and the broader public, including non-English speakers

4

Dissemination and training

- Share the library's [disaster response plan](#) in both full and summarized, [pocket-size](#) formats
- Hold regular trainings and preparedness drills, including practice evacuations
- Engage the entire library community in preparedness planning; invite additional feedback
- Encourage members of the [disaster response team](#) to share their findings with staff and volunteers directly – messages are more likely to be heard when they come from trusted peers

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