

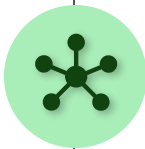
RECOVER: Actions to take **after** a disaster strikes

Depending on the severity of a disaster, the recovery process may last for a period of days, weeks, months or years. In the case of extreme disasters, life may not “return to normal.” No matter how serious the challenge, the library’s unique role as a trusted convener and source of information can help the community to recover. The following disaster recovery steps have been identified by preparedness experts and NLS libraries who have first-hand disaster experience:



Reopen library facilities

- ❑ Coordinate with city or county officials, as well as facilities, building and maintenance staff to ensure that library buildings are safe for reopening
- ❑ Develop checklists and a plan to guide reopening efforts



Connect patrons with recovery tools, resources and supports

Following a disaster, community members need help from sources they trust. Patrons may come to the library for information on a wide range of recovery-related topics, including local resources, financial assistance, and insurance claims. They may need help navigating complex applications and may spend more time than usual at computer workstations.

- ❑ Offer printed and digital copies of resources to meet the needs of those who may be without internet service; set up a “recovery resource table” where patrons can go for information
- ❑ Connect patrons with local recovery centers and nonprofit groups that can help
- ❑ Consider the needs of non-English speakers; offer help from bilingual staff or volunteers; provide resources that are bilingual or written in a patrons’ native language, when possible
- ❑ Create dedicated “recovery workstations” where patrons can fill out online applications, print forms or make copies; provide a space for patrons to charge their cell phones or laptops
- ❑ Promote local, state and federal disaster recovery resources, including grants from federal agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Small Business Administration (SBA)
- ❑ Consider hosting speakers or workshops on recovery topics, such as:
 - Mental health supports
 - Navigating the insurance claim process
 - Applying for financial assistance



Hold the space for recovery

The library’s role as a meeting place and community space may take on additional importance in the aftermath of a disaster.

- ❑ Reach out to the members of local groups who may need a place to gather
- ❑ Provide learning spaces for students, parents and teachers who may be displaced
- ❑ Offer library meeting rooms for disaster recovery purposes, such as city or county business, disaster assistance or counseling



As a library staff we became a part of the front line of recovery...The library itself offered refuge and peace for Camp Fire survivors – *Library Assistant with Butte County Library*





Help the community heal

Remember that disasters affect every person differently. During the recovery phase, community members may be eager to share their stories or may exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress. Promote activities that bring the community together and encourage collective healing.

- ❑ Invite the community to celebrate the reopening of library facilities
- ❑ Create opportunities for expressions of grief, celebration and thanks:
 - Collect “thank you” messages for first responders
 - Ask community members to share something they are thankful for or to add messages to a community “gratitude tree”
 - Encourage community members to tell their own stories of recovery; gather stories and artifacts for a future exhibit or special collection
- ❑ Integrate healing reflection activities into existing library programs, such as storytimes, conversation clubs or library literacy services
- ❑ Promote mental health supports through flyers, special programs and passive activities
- ❑ Encourage staff and volunteers to provide mental health resources to those who may be struggling; provide calming passive activities, such as coloring, painting, puzzles or games



Help the library heal

Members of the library team may also be affected by a disaster. And while it may be cathartic for community members to share their disaster experiences, it can be hard for staff and volunteers to hear these stories on a daily basis. Create opportunities for the library team to talk internally about how they are doing and align specific assignments to match staff member’s own healing needs.

- ❑ Hold daily check-ins for staff and volunteers; encourage people to share how they are feeling across multiple domains (physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually)
- ❑ Promote a buddy system, where staff and volunteers help recognize when another team member needs additional support
- ❑ Host guest speakers or counselors who can help staff manage the emotional toll of recovery



Coordinate with community partners

- ❑ Align library recovery efforts with city and county staff, local nonprofits and community organizations; invite representatives from these groups to set up a table in the library
- ❑ Work with local groups to co-promote recovery resources and activities
- ❑ Promote actions that community members can take to support recovery, such as volunteering, fundraising/donating money, or assisting with community education efforts



Recognize that needs will change

- ❑ Plan for how the library can support recovery in the short, medium and long-term
- ❑ As the broader community “returns to normal,” continue to offer assistance to patrons in need
- ❑ Stay connected with local agencies and community groups that will provide long-term assistance
- ❑ Consider creating standing disaster recovery collections that patrons can access at any time

* This project was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the State Librarian.* The information above has been assembled based on guidance from NLS member libraries and recommendations from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, and British Columbia Provincial Emergencies Program.