

Emergency Management

What cultural institutions have to offer in an emergency:

- City and town halls, archives, and other repositories have records that are vital to the continued functioning and economic viability of a community.
- Libraries and museums have resources that might be used following an emergency, such as meeting space, a professional staff used to dealing with the public, and Internet access.
- Reporting assessed damage at cultural institutions may help your community qualify for a disaster declaration.
- In the wake of a disaster, reopening museums, performing arts centers, and other cultural organizations brings a sense of normalcy back to a community and brings tourism back to an area.
- Emergency planning by individual cultural institutions focuses on the protection of historical and cultural resources prior to a disaster and on a coordinated response after a disaster. This institutional disaster planning can assist an EMD's response in the community.

CULTURAL HERITAGE ORGANIZATIONS include libraries, archives, museums, historic properties, historical societies, public records repositories, city or town halls, and performing arts organizations. These institutions collect and care for individual objects and collections with artistic, educational, historic, scientific, social, or economic importance to a community. They include documents, recordings, furniture, textiles, archaeological specimens, works of art, books, significant landscapes, and much more.



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COSTEP MA

Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness

AN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES



Massachusetts Historical Society/Jennifer Fauxsmith



Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site/Jennifer Fauxsmith

Cultural Heritage and Emergency Management PARTNERS IN PREPAREDNESS



Detail, 1629 Charter of Massachusetts Bay/ Julie Martin



Hingham's Old Ship Meeting House/Jennifer Fauxsmith



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Cultural Heritage

Storms and floods can and do happen in Massachusetts.

Because Massachusetts is a relatively small state, it is important to understand that storms are not just “coastal events.” In fact, a major storm can wreak havoc across the entire Commonwealth. Massachusetts can experience coastal inundation from a storm surge, widespread inland-river flooding, and extensive wind damage. When these events occur, the state’s historic sites, municipal records, and cultural resources are in danger.

- 105 state-registered historic places—significant buildings, structures, objects, and sites—are located in FEMA-designated flood zones (2006 data).
- 7 city or town halls are located in FEMA-designated flood zones.
- At least one quarter of Massachusetts communities have identified cultural resources that are located in FEMA-designated flood zones.

Other disasters, such as fires, also put our cultural heritage at risk.

The combination of high temperatures, low humidity, and warm breezes creates a recipe for the increased risk of brush and forest fires. Wildfires often begin unnoticed but spread quickly, igniting vegetation and structures. Arson is responsible for more than three-quarters of all fires. How secure are your facilities?

How will your organization fare during an emergency?

Emergency responders will protect lives and property first. Who will protect your organization’s unique documents, photos, recordings, artifacts, and other valuable cultural resources? How can you ensure that your organization can continue to operate following an emergency?

Identify the risks and vulnerabilities facing your organization.

Develop your institutional disaster plan to identify risks, set priorities, and establish procedures to follow in an emergency. Take advantage of free tools such as dPlan™: The Online Disaster-Planning Tool at dplan.org, the Preservation Leaflet “Worksheet for Outlining a Disaster Plan” at nedcc.org, and the Pocket Response Plan (PReP)™ at statearchivists.org/prepare/framework/prep.htm.

Complete a Cultural Resources Disaster Information Form for your organization, available at mass.gov/costep. Make sure your Emergency Management Director (EMD) has one from your organization, and share a copy with your community’s cultural spokesperson.

It can be days before outside emergency assistance is available. Does your organization have the tools in place to manage on its own for at least the first 72 hours following a disaster? **Don’t wait: Take the first steps to create a resilient organization.**

Connect with other cultural heritage organizations in your community.

What resources can you offer each other? Based on your emergency planning process you will be able to identify your potential needs. You will also know what resources you can offer to help others in your community.

Introduce yourself to your local EMD.

Contact your local city or town hall to identify your community’s EMD, or check out mass.gov/mema for a full list of EMDs in Massachusetts. Get your organization involved in your community’s emergency management program. Underscore the resources your cultural institution has to offer as opposed to emphasizing your needs. For example, your organization might be able to offer meeting space, wireless access, vehicles, volunteer labor, and/or expertise.

Become a part of COSTEP MA: Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness.

Who will be the spokesperson for cultural heritage resources in your community in the event of an emergency when the EMD may well be inundated with reports and requests? COSTEP MA can help you set up a structure in your community to improve and streamline communication by designating a spokesperson (and backups) who will receive reports from all community cultural organizations, relay them to the Emergency Management Director directly, and provide assistance in determining the response and recovery needs of each organization.



For more information,
visit the COSTEP MA Web site at
www.mass.gov/costep

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