

HERA meeting, September 30, 2008, Georgia Tech
(Unofficial minutes)

I. Zoomerang survey:

Many interested in CERT training—fall sounded like a good time, but too late for this year—Kara McClurken will continue to look into this opportunity: CERT stands for Community Emergency Response Teams—basically, this training helps citizens prepare for emergencies—to meet basic needs until first responders get to the scene. By training as a group, we both network with the first responders, and learn what we can do to assist first responders protect our collections.

Many willing to pay nominal fee to help fund future HERA activities; about 2/3 of respondents would be willing to pay a couple hundred to have access to centralized disaster supply caches

II. Logo—as someone pointed out on the list-serv, there are trademark/copyright problems with using a red plus sign for anything but the Red Cross in the U.S. (unless it was created before 1905). Since blue is the color used for the UNESCO Shield for Cultural Institutions (a way to designate cultural institutions on maps) and the AIC-CERT folks have also adopted blue as their color, we will use BLUE for HERA's new logo.

III. Panel: The First Responders have Left...Now What?!?

Kevin Kuharic, Oakland Cemetery

F2 tornado with 130 mile/hr winds

Oakland Cemetery is not the same place it was before

No best practice guide for active cemeteries—hopes to write one

Initially stayed open, but concerns about hazards and objects “walking” off

Had great experience with FEMA—provided structure to deal with recovery

Several categories of recovery:

Category B: 1st 72 hours

Category A: General Cleanup

FEMA gave them

6 months for debris removal

18 months for repair (500 monuments still in need of repair)

Must fight impulse to try and fix everything at once—take time to do it right

Started picking up debris a few days later—anything that could be carried out of the cemetery---placed objects in box lids with geographic location information (still remain in storage today)

Tree assessment: needed to remove 70 trees plus many, many limbs

Rootballs need to be cleaned first to check for artifacts/bones; can't use chainsaw with dirt attached; will be trying air spade

Some disagreement with city on how to proceed with some areas (ex: remains in the root balls)

Because Cemetery is historic, zoning laws say monuments should be repaired rather than replaced but many are proving quite challenging—Chris Phillips from Savannah, a master mason, will be working on four granite/marble monuments

Good intentions of public go bad: several instances where folks have tried to stand things back up themselves and done further damage, but can't stay closed forever (re-opened June 1st)

John Barnes, Belfor Restoration

Belfor= turnkey company—that means that they take care of buildings as well as contents inside:

Different responses depending upon type of disaster/severity/timelines:

Local disaster—may be able to call on friends, still have electricity, etc.

Regional disaster: no power and everyone's in the same boat—problems with their own houses, families, etc.—need to know in advance who to call

John gave several examples of types of projects that he's worked on:

Recovery x-ray room at Emory, football stadium at Ga Tech, 84 buildings at Tulane after Katrina (283 millions dollars)—even if the person assigned to work with your institution is not an expert in the recovery needed for a certain type of material, someone else within Belfor will assist

Key points:

Belfor can do anything from drying out the building to providing power equipment and chillers to freeze drying documents

Moisture mapping lets you know the size dehumidifier you need

Coming up with a plan to respond quickly is essential—want to avoid mold, etc. If you can minimize damage early, you will save money

***Need to document—you can't take enough photos and you are probably first on the scene—documentation needed for insurance and for the vendor to respond

Why call restoration contractor vs. general contractor? General contractor's mindset is to destroy/knock it down; restoration contractor's mindset is to salvage as much as possible. Sometimes this requires thinking outside of the box (ex: bringing in cruise ship to feed/house contractors dealing with Galveston post Ike)

Several groups have relationships with vendors (ex: Board Of Regents)—good to know in advance

Ann Frellsen, Lessons learned from recent leak at Woodruff Library at Emory

On August 31st (Labor Day Weekend), a sprinkler failure led to water spraying at 150 psi for 15 mins. Because the building is an older, concrete building, the water went down in cracks and under compact shelving and eventually leaked through three floors. 2300 books were wet; the conservation staff knew that they couldn't handle more than 500 in-house.

Some lessons learned:

1. Know what your limits are—for the conservation staff at Emory, they knew from previous experience that 500 books was their limit
2. Who do you call? Who has the authority to make the call? Do you have the authority to call in a real specialist or must you use who the larger institution has a contract with? Ann had the numbers of vendors like Belfor and Munters, but she lacked the authority to call them—the university sent a recovery vendor who didn't understand the special needs of collections or about restoring the building—didn't want to have to do construction to

fix the building because of the leak because a good portion of the building already closed because of another construction project (plus additional time, expense, and risk to collections due to construction-related disasters). Ann's education of administration folks and her monitoring of the initial contractor's activities demonstrated that they weren't qualified to handle the special needs of buildings with collections and eventually was given permission to call Munters.

3. Because construction was occurring at the library, university responders tended to ignore alarms from the site because often false alarms or related to construction. Also, water alarms generally treated with less urgency than fire alarms; (fire alarms had been overridden because of construction and it was the water alarms that alerted campus to the problem.) Library needs a special designation for dealing with water alarms and alarms of any kind, even with construction.

4. Cell phones didn't work in the stacks—walkie talkies would have been very helpful, especially when dealing with multi-floor disaster.

5. Document asap. Folks want to return things to normal asap and sometimes that hides damage/areas that need to be dealt with (ex: people went into stacks and moved compact shelving and so they didn't get all the wet ranges initially. If they had documented which ones were wet, would have been sure to make sure that the carpets in those areas got vacuumed)

6. Gather important folk asap—may not need to gather all of your volunteers but budget, communications and facilities folks needed to respond asap before problem got worse—this was a holiday weekend—would have been good to have cell phone numbers or alternate contact for emergencies so response wouldn't be delayed

7. Train staff to override sprinkler system—could have minimized damage if staff had known exactly which button to press. Knowing the general location of the water main not the same as knowing how to turn off specific water sources.

Kate Singley, recovery of three dimensional objects:

Common sense responses—Many things can be rinsed with clean water (tap water's ok, but must be clean) and let to air dry

Do not need to use archival materials—this is temporary, emergency response

Triage: Organics should be dealt with before inorganics

Ceramics/metals you can probably just air dry—metals will probably have lacquer or wax coating to buy you time—don't shock them dry—gentle air drying (i.e. do not direct fan directly at object)

General rule of thumb—place things on grids or anything that will allow ventilation to flow through underneath to speed drying

Rawhide/vellum/parchment may need special attention that you can't give

Framed items—remove from housing (document as necessary)

Textiles and flags are heavy when wet—will need supports (chloroplast or plexiglass with taped edges to prevent slicing object)

Look for potential materials at Home Depot/Lowes BEFORE a disaster strikes and look for possible solutions in the building section

Ex: ½ inch insulation, foam meant to be placed under sophets can be stapled together and work as a tray; fluorescent grid supports

Egg crates can be stapled together to create a drying platform

Look into getting off-cuts from display/exhibition vendors for free

Duct tape small pieces together (note: if sticking stuff in freezer, packing tape does not work!) Duct tape works in freezer, when wet, etc.

Black sharpies the best markers to use—

Nalgene paper has a waterproof substrate. Can cut to make tags, etc.

Surveyor's tape can be written on

Ethafoam can be wrapped around wet textiles

Bread bags with wholes in it can be used to contain objects during the drying process

Photograph labels and their accompanying objects before discarding labels/boxes, etc.

Baby diapers can be used in a pinch

Glass plate negatives should not be frozen—dry face up

Modern media should not be frozen—air dry vertically

If VHS tapes get wet—chemicals or dirt or whatever could damage players—let air dry then reformat on a cheap player that you can dispose of when finished

Zorbix works really well to soak up wetness—sheets of very thin blotter filled with diaper-like polymer inside—can't cut up because polymer will come out but Ann also said they have used it/ Can be reused—must order in advance because it's a small company that makes it.