

### Salvaging Cultural Materials with Water Damage

1. **Personal Safety First!** Consider all flood water to be contaminated and protect yourself from the water and residues from the flooding. Be certain that electricity is not an issue before entering a water-damaged building. Turn off all utilities in the building before entering. Never enter a building until it has been deemed safe to do so. Wear protective gloves and footwear.
2. **Assess and document the damage.** Identify the types of damage and extent. What types of materials have been affected? Take photographs and video of the damage. Start creating a priority list of items for salvage. Trained conservators can provide advice on determining the most vulnerable items and how to stabilize them.
3. **Stabilize the environment.** Water-damaged collections and buildings must be dried out as quickly as possible to minimize the chance of mold outbreaks. Open windows to increase air circulation. Once it is safe to use electricity, install fans and dehumidifiers. Remove any “disposable” water-logged materials such as carpets, rugs, and draperies. The objective is to dry out the area as quickly as possible.
4. **Organize and start the salvage process.** Designate an emergency response coordinator and communicate with any volunteers. Inform your insurance company about the event ASAP and keep clear records of the damage (written and photographic). Deal with the high-priority items first –these may be items that are the most valuable or significant, heavily used, or vulnerable to irreparable damage. Remember that wet materials are usually much weaker when wet so use extra care when lifting or moving a wet object – it may require additional support to be moved safely. If water damage is extensive, consider freeze-drying materials if appropriate. Consult a professional conservator for specific advice.

### Disaster Response Assistance and Additional Information

#### AIC-CERT Hotline and Website

24-hour assistance from trained volunteers is available through the American Institute of Conservation’s CERT hotline for cultural institutions on 202.661.8068. Additional information can also be found on their website, including what to do if you are first on the scene and tips for the care of water-damaged family heirlooms.

<http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pagelId=593#guides>

#### AIC Find A Conservator Service <http://www.conservation-us.org/>

AIC can help you find a conservator in your area by calling their office on 202.452-9545. They also offer an online directory on their main webpage under the Find a Conservator heading

#### Heritage Preservation Website <http://www.heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/TFRespRecover.html>

This page contains resources for dealing with disasters and managing recovery efforts, including getting professional help, assessing damage, finding funding, and salvaging collections and family treasures.

You can also watch a video with step-by-step guidance on dealing with water damage at museums, libraries, and archives. Practical tips on safety, simple equipment, and salvage priorities also make the video a useful guide for homeowners who want to rescue treasured family heirlooms.

<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/WaterSegmentFG.HTM>

#### Works on Paper Conservation <http://www.worksonpaperconservation.com/>

Private paper conservation studio located in Bellows Falls, Vermont. Carolyn Frisa is experienced with salvaging water-damaged paper materials such as prints, documents, photographs, maps, and drawings. She is also part of the AIC Cultural Emergency Response Team and can provide advice on disaster salvage. She can be reached by phone at 802.460.1149 (studio) or 802.289.4309 (cellphone) or by email [carolyn@works-on-paper.net](mailto:carolyn@works-on-paper.net).

#### NEDCC <http://nedcc.org>

The Northeast Document Conservation Center is a regional conservation center located north of Boston, Mass. They offer a free 24-hour Disaster Assistance Hotline for cultural institutions and homeowners. Trained professionals can be reached on 978.470.1010. Additional information can also be found in their online Preservation Leaflets.