



See Tip Sheet *“The First 48 Hours”* for information on how to get started in a range of emergencies.

## **COLLECTIONS PRIORITIES FOR SALVAGE**

### **Overview**

Identifying priorities in collections for salvage and recovery is unique to every institution. Priorities can be based on collection types, historical importance, rarity, existing policies, professional training, judgment, teamwork, common sense, and the type, extent, and urgency of damages. Do not make assumptions about recoverability or the value of any item to a collection.

### **Personal Safety**

Following an all-clear from first responders, always utilize Personalized Protective Equipment (PPE) when entering a disaster space. The severity of the event will also dictate the level of protection required by recovery staff. PPE determinations should include:

- Safety footwear (waterproof, safety toe, slip/oil resistant, puncture resistant)
- Cover for hair and clothing, or Tyvek suit
- Gloves (latex or nitrile)
- Safety goggles (non-vented, anti-fog)
- Face covering (N95 mask or fit-tested respirator, NIOSH approved)

### **General Considerations**

Assess the situation before working at a site, determining:

- If the area has been cleared for re-entry by first responders
- Safety of re-entering the disaster area
- The type, extent, and locations of damaged collections, rooms, buildings, or regions
- Resources needed, including people, equipment, supplies, facilities, utilities, and funds

### **Pre-Disaster Priority**

Before a disaster strikes, the priority recovery order is determined by:

- Existing disaster response plans, institutional mission, and collections stewardship policies.
- Curatorial parameters, including historic, artistic, cultural, and/or sentimental significance. Rarity or replaceability of the collection or item may influence recovery

order.

- Administrative parameters, including the status of collection or items (ex., acquisition, on loan) and/or financial value.
- Institutional records and archives are considered a high priority.

### **Disaster and Post-Disaster Priority Order**

Following a disaster, the priority recovery order is based on:

- Incident Command, or Collections staff
- Judgment, employing the best possible understanding of the curatorial and financial values of collections
- Type and severity of damages to collections (ex., minimal, moderate, and/or severe condition problems resulting from water, mud, mold, pest damages, etc.)
- Composition and media sensitivities of the collection materials, dictating their immediate or delayed salvage needs.

### **Collection Type Recovery Tips**

- The least vulnerable types of materials include most glass, ceramics, non-porous stone, and metals (other than iron, unstable archaeological metals, alkali, or alkaline metals)
- The most vulnerable types of materials include
  - Cellulose materials: paper, books, wood, some photographs
  - Natural history and science collections (ex., taxidermy, specimens)
  - Paintings
  - Water-soluble, fugitive, or friable colors
  - Composite materials (ex., ethnographic objects, taxidermy, textiles with attachments)
  - Veneers, inlays, lacquer, or gilding
  - Low-fired ceramics
  - Iron or unstable archaeological metals
  - Anything with, or susceptible to, mold growth
  - Electronic media (ex., desktops, laptops, external hard drives, digitized media)

### **Additional Considerations**

- Quantity of materials (ex., total volume of damaged items, duplications of damaged items)
- Accessibility and ability to safely relocate (ex., available equipment, supplies, secure work and storage, space, staff)