

Virginia Military Institute  
Preston Library, VMI Archives, and Institute Records  
**Disaster Plan**

Updated September 2011 by Diane Jacob

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## Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to provide a basic guide for response to and recovery from disasters affecting library holdings, the VMI Archives, and other Institute Records. It is designed to assist library and archives staff, as well as other Institute personnel who are responsible for maintaining public records.

This plan is in fulfillment of the Code of Virginia mandate that each agency shall maintain a disaster preparedness plan for the protection and recovery of public records. This Disaster Plan complements the Contingency Management Plan (CMP) maintained by the Information Technology (IT) Department. The CMP specifically addresses response to and recovery from computer systems emergencies.

This disaster plan is available on the VMI website. Printed copies of the plan are located at the

Circulation Desk; in the VMI Archives; and at the homes of the Library Director, Head of Archives & Records Management, and Head of Access Services.

This disaster plan will be revised and reviewed and updated annually by the Head of Archives and Records Management. (currently Diane Jacob).

## Response to Emergencies-Overview

**Response to emergencies is based upon the following priorities:**

1. **Most importantly, safeguard human life.** Evacuate the building promptly, and call for help.
2. Assess and contain the damage to collections if it is possible to do so safely.
3. Salvage as many library materials as possible, beginning with the rare materials in Archives and Special Collections.
4. Staff of departments other than the library should focus on saving vital operational records first; then prioritize salvage of remaining items.

### Emergency Telephone Numbers

<b>Fire-Ambulance-Police</b>	<b>911</b>
<b>VMI Post Police</b>	<b>9-463-9177</b>
<b>VMI Guard Room</b>	<b>7294</b>
<b>VMI Physical Plant</b>	<b>7357</b>

### Preston Library Personnel

Name	Office (prefix 464 from off-Post)	Emergency
Brickler, Michael	7655	540-521-4141
Flanagan, Accacia	7250	540-817-9398
Hastings, Susan	7607 or 7129	464-5174; 460-4534 (C)
Holly, Janet	7296	291-4281
Jacob, Diane	7566	817-9157 (C)
Kirby, Nancy	7565	463-9284; 817-9368 (C)
Kludy, Mary Laura	7516	264-0136
Moore, Tonya	7129 or 7248	997-1224, 874-4769 (C)
Panko, Tom	7574	463-1860
Samdahl, Don	7573	319-2388
Shafer, Erica	7228	
Sichol, Gwen	7757	348-1617
Smith, Patsy	7572	463-9280
Tombarge, Brittany	7568	570-3034
Wells, Cathy	7567	463-9365

## Evacuation Procedures and Accountability Teams

The Building Coordinator for Preston Library is Don Samdahl. Susie Hastings is the alternate. The responsibility of the Building Coordinator is to insure the safe evacuation of all personnel from the building in the event of an emergency. If the Building Coordinator is absent the Alternate will assume this responsibility.

In the event of an emergency we will do the following:

- Insure each floor of the Library is clear of personnel
- Insure handicapped persons are evacuated or moved to Areas of Rescue Assistance
- Insure accountability of all Library personnel

### Floor Evacuation Responsibilities of Library Personnel (team leader in red)

Floor	Evacuation Teams
700, 650, 600	Janet Holly, Brianna Page, Gwen Sichol, Megan Newman
500, 550	Susie Hastings, Accacia Flanagan, Tonya Moore
400	Michael Brickler, Cathy Wells
300	Diane Jacob, Mary Laura Kludy, Nancy Kirby
200	Tom Panko, Patsy Smith, Brittany Tombarge

When there is an emergency (most likely the alarms will be going off) the Evacuation Teams will go to their assigned floors to facilitate evacuation of personnel and to determine if there are any handicapped patrons who cannot exit the building using the stairs or who need assistance in some manner. If you find anyone in this condition move them to the appropriate Area of Rescue Assistance.

When the floors are cleared we will assemble outside the Library on the Parade Ground and conduct a final accountability. The Evacuation Team leaders will report to the Building Coordinator regarding any people who have been moved to an Area of Rescue Assistance. The Building Coordinator will then give the status of the Library up the chain of command.

The Areas of Rescue Assistance are located on 650 and 550 on the NE external stairs. On the 200 level they are located at the Library's loading dock and outside of the custodians' office. Non-designated Areas of Rescue Assistance may be considered to be the SE and SW stairwells. On the 300 level someone could be evacuated out the double doors that face Mallory. These doors are normally locked and would require the OUT key to open them.

## Fire

If the fire alarm is activated, it may be the real thing. **Do not** assume that it is a false alarm. When the alarm sounds, do the following:

- Identify location of activated alarm from the fire alarm panel near the front door of the library. Either go yourself or send someone to investigate the area to see if there really is a fire.  
**DO NOT USE THE ELEVATORS.**

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## IF THERE IS A FIRE

- Your first priority is to ensure the safety of people in the building.
- If a fire cannot be easily and safely extinguished, call 911 & VMI Post Police (463-9177) and proceed to evacuate the building. Err on the side of safety—if in doubt, evacuate!
- Use common sense and don't panic. A minor, contained fire (trash can fire, for example) can be extinguished with the fire extinguishers located on each floor.

## Evacuation Procedures – Fire

- Evacuation of the building should begin immediately after the fire has been positively identified and cannot be safely extinguished by a staff member using a fire extinguisher.
- **DO NOT USE THE ELEVATOR:** use stairs only
- Available staff members should proceed to a designated control center (in Preston Library, the Circulation Desk) to review assignments for clearing the building. Check in before and after going to your area of responsibility.
- If you are on duty by yourself, begin to systematically clear each floor until help has arrived.
- Designated staff will be responsible for assisting handicapped persons. Be sure that the evacuation teams check every floor.
- Copies of floor plans are located at the Circulation Desk and are wall-mounted on each level.

## FALSE ALARM- No Fire

If it is a false alarm, open the alarm panel with the key tagged **FIRE SYSTEM**, which is kept in the key box located on the shelf in the Reserve Section. You will find a second key on the ledge inside the alarm box. Insert this other key in the **ENABLE /DISABLE** slot. Turn to **DISABLE** and press the **ALARM SILENCING** button and then the button marked **NEXT/ACK** till the date and time reappear. Lock the panel and replace the key in the box on the shelf.

## Floods/Water Emergencies

- If there is a serious leak, broken pipe, or a flooded area in building, call Buildings & Grounds at 464-7357 and state that you are reporting an emergency water problem. After hours, notify the Post Police and request that they contact the designated B&G staff.
- If water is leaking from the ceiling, cover the area with plastic sheeting (in supply closet on 5th floor of Preston Library). Place buckets under leaks. Buckets are located in janitor's closets.
- If there is water on the floor, remove books or records from lower shelves/file drawers onto higher shelves or tables well away from standing water. Do not place any material on the floor, even in a seemingly dry area, as the leak may spread.
- If possible, turn off electrical circuits to the flooded area, and unplug electrical equipment in the area if you can safely do so. If electricity in the building needs to be turned off, call Buildings & Grounds
- The building needs to be evacuated only in case of major water damage and when structural damage can be expected. The decision to evacuate should be made by the department head, who will organize a team to assist in evacuation.

## Tornadoes

Tornadoes can occur in Virginia from March to October. They are not as likely to occur in mountainous regions as in more flat terrain. Tornadoes move rapidly. Most likely, there will be little warning if there is a tornado; consequently, there will be little time to seek shelter.

- **When a tornado occurs, the building should not be evacuated.**
- If possible, persons in the building should move to the lowest level, staying away from windows; or to an inner hallway or small inner room away from windows.
- **DO NOT USE THE ELEVATORS.** In the library, stay away from book stacks, since they may collapse.
- If there is time, staff should go to the 300 level computer lab, which has been equipped with a rechargeable flashlight plugged into an electrical outlet to the left of the door, as well as a whistle that can be used to alert rescuers.

### **After the event:**

In addition to water damage, walls, ceilings, and shelves may collapse. When structural damage occurs, the person in charge of the over-all building maintenance needs to assess the structural damage and determine when it is safe to enter the building to assess damage and begin salvage efforts.

## Hurricanes

Hurricanes may occur on the Atlantic Coast of Virginia between June and November. Damage from heavy rain and flooding as well as high winds may occur. Hurricanes are slow moving so precautions can be taken before the storm actually strikes.

### Evacuation

Because sufficient warning can be given in a hurricane emergency, the building can be evacuated and closed before the hurricane strikes. The following precautions should be made: rare and valuable materials can be moved to a safe place; the power can be turned off; windows should be taped to reduce the danger of flying glass; and doors should be closed. If there are people in the building when the hurricane strikes, they should move to the lowest levels of the building, such as the basement level or the lower stacks and not leave until the storm is over. A battery-powered radio should be available so that weather reports can be monitored.

### Damage

Most damage from a hurricane will be water damage, although there is a possibility of structural damage, broken windows, and collapsed shelving. If there is structural damage, the person in charge of the over-all building maintenance needs to assess the damage and determine when it is safe to enter the building. Then, damage to affected materials needs to be assessed. The recovery operation for library materials may include surveying water damage to books and other library materials, reshelving, and deciding upon repair of broken windows.

## Earthquakes

Earthquakes may occur in Virginia. The danger from earthquakes is caused by what they do to man-made structures-debris falling from damaged buildings, flying glass from broken windows, fires caused by broken gas lines, and flooding due to broken water mains. There is no warning before an earthquake occurs.

- If an earthquake occurs, do not attempt to evacuate the building. Persons in the building should stay in the inner core of the building away from windows. Shelter should be taken in a doorway, in a narrow corridor, or under a heavy table, desk, or bench. Exits which lead into stairways should not be used because they may have collapsed. Also, be aware that after-shocks may follow for several hours or days after the earthquake. A battery-powered radio should be available so that instructions concerning the earthquake can be monitored.
- Damage from an earthquake may include structural damage to the building, collapsed shelving, damage to equipment and furniture, water damage from broken pipes, and fire and/or smoke damage caused by broken gas lines. All damage will need to be assessed by person in charge of building maintenance before re-entering to begin recovery operations.

**Bomb & Other Threats**

- If a bomb threat is received by telephone, evacuate the building and notify the Post Police, 463-9177. If a suspicious object or package is found, notify the VMI Post Police.
- The VMI printed directory contains a “threat checklist and telephone procedure” inside the front cover

## RECOVERY AND SALVAGE—EXTENSIVE DAMAGE

FOR 24 HOUR EMERGENCY CONSULTATION, CALL THE  
NORTHEAST DOCUMENT CONSERVATION CENTER

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

**24/7 EMERGENCY PHONE ASSISTANCE**

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**Disaster Assistance Hotline:**

**978-470-1010**

As part of its Preservation Services program, NEDCC offers an emergency assistance program for institutions and individuals with damaged paper-based collections.

### Review Damage & Establish Priorities

- Rapid response is essential for an effective recovery effort. Paper-based collections begin to distort physically immediately after becoming wet. Books swell and distort; paper cockles; inks and pigments run; coated papers begin to adhere.
- The Librarian, Archivist/Records Manager, and appropriate department heads or library subject specialists should evaluate damage and establish salvage priorities. Consult Yolanda Merrill, (Washington & Lee University, Leyburn Library) who is the only locally available conservation expert.
- Archival records, rare books, records vital to the operation of the Institute, and any other irreplaceable items should receive the first attention.
- Determine the kind and degree of damage that materials in each location have sustained. Depending on the extent of the disaster, this may be as broad as a room-by-room designation or as narrow as an item-by-item review.
- Determine whether the salvage operation can be handled by staff or whether a disaster recovery specialist is required. Consult experts as needed.
- After reviewing the extent of the damage, the Librarian (in other offices, the appropriate administrator), should set up a disaster recovery team and assign personnel as needed.

### Handling and Removal of Material

The most common emergencies (fire, flood) involve water damage. If possible, loosely sort materials according to degree of wetness (soaked, damp, dry). Pack like materials together, e.g. damp records in one box, soaked in another etc. See also specific instructions below relating to water damage and fire damage.

- Materials must be removed from affected areas, either to a salvage/drying area within the building, or to another area on Post. Likely locations are a classroom or gymnasium.
- Files: Place folders in boxes or milk crates. Place the folders vertically in boxes (standing as they would in a file drawer.) Fill boxes only about 75% full to allow for swelling.
- Bound Volumes: Load onto metal book trucks, or into boxes or plastic milk crates for transport. Place normal-size volumes in a spine down position. Pack large volumes flat in boxes. If time allows, loosely place sheets of freezer paper or waxed paper around every volume. Boxes should be packed only about 75% full to allow for swelling.
- To ensure inventory control and for insurance purposes, it is necessary to know the condition and disposition of materials. As materials are removed, a staff member should be assigned to label each container with a brief designation of its contents (by call number range; cabinet/drawer, record group etc.); damage type (wet, dry, smoke etc), and salvage priority; and destination.
- Assign a photographer to document the damage and salvage operations.

### **Water Damage**

Evaluate the situation and decide whether the materials can be air-dried on-site or if they must be removed to a freezer facility. Refer to list of consultants for outside assistance in evaluating the disaster. If the damaged materials are not too numerous or too thoroughly soaked, air-drying will be a viable option and a drying area will be required. For detailed instructions on procedures to follow see the Northeast Document Conservation Center's Technical Leaflet "Emergency Salvage of Wet Books and Records" (appendix in printed copy of this plan). A summary of key steps is listed below. Consult the complete document for details.

- **Secure a clean, dry environment** where the temperature and humidity are as low as possible. The temperature must be below 70 degrees F. and the humidity below 50%, or mold will probably develop and distortion will be extreme. Keep the air moving at all times using fans in the drying area. This will accelerate the drying process and discourage the growth of mold.

### **Books**

- Thoroughly soaked books, and books with coated paper should be frozen as soon as possible. Wrap them loosely in freezer paper or wax paper and pack them flat in boxes, preferably plastic mail crates, for transport to a freezing facility. If they cannot be frozen before they dry, interleave the pages with unprinted newsprint or paper towels. Keep an inventory of books packed and removed to freezer facilities.
- Wet books with covers intact can be air dried.

- Interleave every few pages, starting from the back of the book, turning pages carefully. For interleaving, use paper towels or clean, unprinted newsprint. Be careful to avoid interleaving too much or the spine will become concave and the volume distorted.
- When books are dry but still cool to the touch, they should be closed and laid flat on a table or other horizontal surface, gently formed into the normal shape, with convex spine and concave front edge (if that was their original shape) and held in place with a light weight. Do not stack drying books on top of each other. In no case should books be returned to the shelves until thoroughly dry; otherwise mold may develop, particularly along the gutter margin

### Manuscripts and Archival Records

- Air drying is most suitable for small numbers of records that are damp or water damaged only around the edges. If there are hundreds of single pages, or if the water damage is severe, other methods of drying will be more satisfactory and cost-effective.
- Single leaves can be laid out on tables, floors, and other flat surfaces, protected if necessary by paper towels or clean, unprinted newsprint, or clotheslines may be strung close together and records laid across them for drying.
- If records are printed on coated paper, they must be separated from one another to prevent them from sticking. This is a tedious process that requires skill and patience. Place a piece of polyester film on the stack of records. Rub it gently down on the top sheet. Then slowly lift the film while at the same time peeling off the top sheet. Hang the polyester film up to dry on a clothesline using clothespins. As the document dries, it will separate from the surface of the film, so it must be monitored carefully. Before it falls, remove it and allow it to finish drying on a flat surface.
- Once dry, records may be re-housed in clean folders and boxes, or they may be photocopied or reformatted in other ways. Dried records will always occupy more space than ones that have never been water damaged.

### Microforms and Photographs

- **Microforms** subject to water damage should be professionally cleaned and dried within 48-60 hours. It will need to be sent to a processing laboratory. In most cases, the film should not be used again, but a duplicate copy should be made and the damaged one discarded. If the film is dirty/muddy, put in a bucket filled with clean cold water and agitate lightly to removed major dirt deposits. Pack for shipping. If film cannot be salvaged within about 60 hours, it can be frozen.
- **Photographs.** Photographs in water will quickly deteriorate: images can separate from mounts, emulsions can dissolve or stick together, and staining can occur. Mold can grow within 48 hours at 60% RH and 70 degrees F, and it often causes permanent staining and other damage to photographs. For these reasons photographs need to be dried as quickly as possible. If photographs cannot be dried they should be frozen.

### Fire Damage

If there is a fire, materials will suffer fire and smoke damage in addition to water damage. It is necessary to consult conservators and other experts listed in this plan. In the absence of professional help, handling of charred items should be avoided if possible, since handling will result in further damage. Rare, archival, or special collections materials must be evaluated by a conservator. For quick local assistance, contact Yolanda Merrill at Leyburn Library, Washington & Lee University.

### **Basic Emergency Supplies**

Essential supplies should be maintained in the department. Other emergency supplies are located at Physical Plant. Obtain additional items as needed.

### **Located in Preston Library in the 5th floor supply closet and/or janitor's closets:**

Book trucks and boxes; camera, film and batteries; extension cords; small fans; flashlights; plastic garbage bags; paper towels; plastic sheeting; tables (for drying materials); waxed paper.

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### **Located at or obtained by Physical Plant:**

dehumidifiers; fans; generator, portable.

## **Experts/Consultants/Equipment**

This is a basic list. A comprehensive list of disaster recovery vendors and consultants is available as an appendix to the printed version of this document.

- Library of Virginia (Richmond)

Contact the State Archivist or Librarian as soon as possible after the disaster occurs. The LVA will provide expert advice, assistance and support, as mandated by the Code of Virginia, Sec. 42.1-91, in coordination with the state Department of Emergency Services.

(804) 692-3500 (Main Number)

- Yolanda Merrill

Conservator, Washington & Lee University Library

If available, can provide immediate expert assistance.

Office: 463-8662 Home: 463-6995

- Northeast Document Conservation Center

Emergency telephone consultation

(978) 470-1010, day or night, seven days a week.

Fax: (978) 475-6021

- SOLINET Preservation Department

1-800-999-8558

404-892-7879 fax

1438 West Peachtree Street N.W.

Suite 200

Atlanta, Georgia 30309-2955

- Preservation Dept. Alderman Library, University of Virginia

Alderman Library, (804) 924-3836 telephone

(804) 924-3143 fax