

Building Safety in a Disaster

MAY 2019 MONTHLY TRAINING TOPIC

Disasters come in many forms. In California we have earthquakes, wildfires, high winds, floods, landslides and a variety of potential manmade problems. Some come and leave quickly without warning, some are predictable and linger. The priority in any disaster is the safety and security of yourself and those in your care. Secondary, but also very important, is the preservation of your home, place of business, church and other important physical assets. With this comes the protection of essential records, historic and other irreplaceable artifacts, and financial assets. Basic precautions and the formation of a disaster plan will help prevent unnecessary loss of property and minimize injury in the instance of a disaster.

PREVENTION

- Know shutoff locations for utilities
- Know location of fire extinguishers and how to use them.
- Inspect wiring regularly.
- Inspect roofs and drains regularly.
- Follow local and state fire codes.
- Check your insurance coverage before a disaster occurs. Buy earthquake, flood and other specialty insurance as needed.
- Determine how you will have access to emergency funds.
- Train staff in salvage techniques.
- Label vital and historical records, and create an inventory or locator map that will allow you quick access to these records when needed.

PLAN

- Create a written disaster preparedness plan or policy, which includes disaster recovery, damage assessment, and post disaster evaluation procedures.
- Establish responses to all potential geographic and climatic hazards which could jeopardize your employees, building, and valuable items.
- Identify sources of assistance, and develop contacts with appropriate consultants, suppliers, and vendors beforehand.
- Contact local officials to understand their disaster response procedures.
- Create a telephone tree of staff and volunteers.
- Establish a chain of command among staff members.
- Know what your insurance carrier will require as evidence of damage.

RECOVERY

- Always place human safety first.
- Prevent staff and volunteers from entering the building until city officials (fire or police department), or a building inspector determines the building is safe to enter.
- Allow only authorized staff and volunteers into the damaged area.
- Contact your insurance carrier.
- Locate and establish a recovery site.
- Establish a designated storage area for removed material.
- Retrieve vital records.
- Maintain building security.
- Set up systems necessary to continue operations.
- Plan for building repair, and the replacement of equipment and furnishings.