

Records Management After Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

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Overview

- Review elements of a Records Management Program that can help in case of a disaster.
- Overview of 2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- Highlight lessons learned that can be applied to the workplace.
- Highlight lessons learned that can be applied to the home and personal records management.
- How to prepare for the next disaster.
- Questions/Discussion.

Records Management Elements that Can Help in a Disaster

- Retention Schedule
- Vital Records Program
- Disaster Contingency/Recovery Plan
- File Plan Documentation
- Records Storage Inventories/Index
- Records Management Officer/Liaison
- Surveys (Microfilm/image production, storage)
- Disposal Procedures

Records Retention Schedule

- Indicates the records of the agency.
- Assists in appraisal of what has to be kept and for how long.
- Provides information on vital records protection measures that need to be taken. After storm, LA formally added column to schedule to indicate record status.
- Denotes information that is or may be confidential.

Vital Records Program

- Ensures that steps are routinely taken to protect important records to ensure continued operations and accessibility.
- Usually cheaper than trying to recover records after the fact.
- Helps to minimize impact of disasters and damage to agency's records.

Disaster Contingency Plan

- Saves time and effort by outlining what needs to be done in the event of a declared emergency.
- Works hand in hand with Vital Records Program.
- Helps conserve your agency's most vital resources: Information, Money, Manpower and TIME.
- Does your office have a relationship with your County Emergency Management Office? If not, reach out to them **BEFORE** the next disaster strikes.

File Plan Documentation

- Provides the information needed to accurately access your agency's information.
- Especially important for older agencies with different caveats to their file plans.
- Ensures that institutional knowledge is maintained by the agency and available in the event of a disaster.
- Improves decisions by providing more complete information.
- It is NOT a path to job security, make sure it is documented and people know how to find your records.

Records Storage Inventories/Index

- Provides information on what records are located where.
- Speed up identification and retrieval of records.
- Identifies what records might exist in other formats.

Records Management Liaison

- In-house person with knowledge of what needs to be done in terms of records through training and contact with State Archives staff and other records agencies.
- Can help agency leaders focus their time on other aspects of the disaster.

Imaging/Microfilm Surveys

- Provides written information about what records may be available in other formats.
- Documents back up routine, media, software used and location of backups.
- Can help reduce recovery costs and conserve valuable time.

Disposal Procedures

- Helps identify process if records won't/can't be recovered.
- Documents losses for governmental agencies, the public and possible legal issues that may arise.
- Protects people's privacy and prevents identity theft.
- Reduces volume of records that could be impacted by future disasters.
- Saves space, money and manpower.

You See What Happened Was...



Aspects of Life Impacted in Surrounding Area (Baton Rouge)

- Baton Rouge population appeared to almost double overnight.
- Transportation – Gridlock everywhere.
- Housing – no rentals left; people buying houses with cash.
- Communications – texting was best bet
- Law Enforcement – stretched thin & supplemented by out of town units

Aspects of Life Impacted in Surrounding Area (Baton Rouge)

- Manpower/Resources – Out of State help had to be quartered 3+ hours from disaster area; Resources had to be sent in from across the country.
- Supplies – think of everything you need to live day to day and then picture 3X as many people making the same demand on the system.
- Information – TV and Radio stations in South Louisiana went to 24-7 broadcasting; platooning staff from sister stations that were displaced providing commentary on pictures/reports. Local stations had the towers and equipment that still worked.

Lack of Access

- Hard to reach impacted areas:
 - Civil unrest
 - Non-receding flood waters
 - Concerns over what was in the water
 - Infrastructure damage preventing some access.
 - Risk Management and Facilities Management company rules and regulations.

The 48-hour Rule

- Most disaster recovery literature encourages action within 48 hours. It was often believed that actions started after that were not going to be that successful.
- Some businesses and agencies were unable to access their offices and records upwards of two to four months.

Getting to the Records

- Some agencies used media pressure to get authorities to let them into the city to access their facilities.
- Some agencies had to use vendors to do inspections due to hazard concerns.
- Many agencies and businesses could not go in and did not have a plan in place to inspect their damage.

How do you Prove Who You Are?

- Many people evacuated with very few vital records.
- People who had records in safety deposit boxes could not gain access to them before evacuating.
- Most common call received dealt with vital records for individuals.
- This lack of information put more of a burden on agencies trying to respond to or recover from the storms.

What to do with the Wet Records?

- Many moved them to allow for structures to be gutted.
- More than a few threw records away believing that they could not be salvaged due to mold and water damage.
- Some did the right thing and got records to refrigerated or freezer trucks.

Lessons Learned Questions to Ask

- Does your agency know where all of your records are located?
- Does your agency have a plan for contacting employees after hours, after an evacuation has been ordered, etc.?
- Do enough people in your agency understand your records keeping processes or know where to find out what the processes are quickly?
- Who has the back ups if they are taken home with IT personnel?

Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- Your workload increases.
- You typically end up with more absences/fewer workers to do the response work.
- The media does not go away.
- Original assessments are not enough to determine what has to be kept and what should go.
- Other disasters and situations will continue to occur. Keep an eye out for them.

Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- Human lives come first.
- Make sure your agency understands and takes into account first responder requirements and emergency response plans when developing your contingency and recovery plans.
- Make sure if staff re-enter buildings that it is safe to do so and that they have and wear the appropriate protective gear for the given situation.



Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- Document any issues your records systems have (retrieval methods, filing or arrangement changes etc.)
- Employee issues at home have to be dealt with otherwise productivity suffers. It helps to be flexible.
- Decision processes change and you may have to drastically change how you operate to accommodate these changes.
- Patience is really a virtue.

Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- You may have to create new types of records in mediums you normally don't store records in. You have to figure out how to deal with them.
- Learn now how to import text and messaging records into your email system.
- Initiate hold orders if litigation or investigations are likely.
- Take pictures, video footage of damage and recovery processes for documentation for insurance, government and possible litigation.

Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- Assessment of what is considered "vital" can change.
- You can never have too many refrigerators or freezers in a flood.
- People need to be better trained about what to do with wet records.
- Vendors can be very helpful. Remember that they are businesses not relief agencies.
- Cross training is critical in a disaster. The people who know may not be available in the event of a disaster.
- Consider where you store your records. Put less valuable records on lower shelves, in lower drawers etc.

Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- If you lease office space, make sure you know what your rights are and how your property may be handled in case of a disaster.
- Money will be tight, budgets may be cut. Do the best you can with what you have.
- Become more familiar with how FEMA is set up and how it operates (go to www.FEMA.gov).
- Know what your government's disaster plans include. You will be competing for resources, manpower and access.

Lessons Learned In the Workplace

- Determining what to save and what can go may take time. Consider refrigerating (or better yet freezing) your records until the decisions can be made and implemented.
- Consider having key staff take emergency responder training if possible. It could speed up access to your facilities.

Lessons Learned Personal Records Management

- In a disaster, personal records management is critical too.
- If you have only a few hours to evacuate, do you know where to go or what you need to take?
- Can you get to it all in time to leave?
- Will you be able to prove who you are and what you own?



Personal Records Management What to Consider Taking

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Birth and Death Certificates | • Diplomas, transcripts and professional certification documents |
| • Marriage/Divorce Records | • Family address book |
| • Insurance Policies | • Medical/prescription information |
| • Bills of Sale for Home and Cars | • Mortgage/Loan records |
| • Personal creditors and service provider contact information | • Passports, Drivers Licenses, & other IDs |
| • Household Inventories | • Resumes |

Personal Records Management What to Consider Taking

- Legal files (including any pending issues)
- Contact information of neighbors
- Key Employer contact information/phone lists
- Kids school records
- Baby books
- Family Bibles
- Genealogy files
- Log books for Boats, Planes etc.



Lessons Learned for the Home

- Make sure you have supplies beyond five days and that you take evacuees and other pets into consideration.
- If you have to evacuate, pack for more than four days.
- Reflect on what items you have that are most important to you and know where they are if you have to leave quickly.

Lessons Learned for the Home

- Determine and test how to do things you typically do without electricity.
- Make sure you know what is in your insurance policies and what is or is not covered.
- Make sure you understand what resources are available to you from relief agencies, governmental agencies and your employer.
- Create and keep current a home inventory.
- Consider having family in other states store a set of your vital records.

Disaster Recovery Procedures

- Do you need recovery services or moving company and storage vendors?
- Make sure you have vendors with appropriately outfitted staff.
- Make sure you are specific in your requests for price and work orders.
- Freezing records does not remove mold, just puts the spores into dormancy. Spores have to be removed to prevent further contamination to your facilities and staff.

Disaster Recovery Procedures

Just because records are wet, or have "black" mold on them does not necessarily mean that they cannot be salvaged.



Disaster Recovery Procedures

- In the event your records are damaged:
- Contact the State Archives as soon as possible.
- Assess and document the type and extent of damage to your records.
- In consultation with the State Archives, review your schedule and determine what should and can be salvaged and determine how that will happen.
- Note: Primary sources for some records may no longer be available after a disaster. Your agency may have the best set of records for some records series.

Damaged Records

- Document those records that are beyond salvage or are no longer needed.
- Get approval to destroy records from proper authorities.
- Document the destruction process.
- Make sure records that contain confidential information are destroyed in an appropriate manner.

Lessons Learned Personal Observation

- E-mail and text messaging can become problematic in disasters. People under stress, forget they are creating records and may exercise poor judgment in what they are creating and saying.
- Accurate subject headings are important.
- Remember: if you wouldn't want to read what you are writing on the front page of The Advocate, The Times Picayune or the LA Times, think twice before sending any e-mail.

Risk Probability and Impact

Risk Probability and Impact of loss or damage to records			
Impact	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect VR • Recovery Procedures in plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect VR • Reduce Risks • Recovery Procedure in plan
	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery procedures in plan for important Records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce Risks where possible • Recovery procedures in plan for important records
	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept and monitor risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect useful and important records through management procedures
	Low		High
Probability			

Source: ANSI/ARMA 5-2003 Page 5, Table 1

California State Archives

- If you need advice or further information on what State resources are available to your agency, contact :

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Questions



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