The following is an example Emergency Preparedness Policy. If you decide to follow this template, include only the portions of the Policy that relate to your museum. Make changes as required, and remember that template documents that have not been customized to the organization are often not helpful when they are really needed. Ensure that the document you develop is current, relevant, and comprehensive enough to work for your organization.

An Emergency Preparedness Policy should

* be approved at the appropriate level given the organization’s   
  governance structure;
* align with applicable legislation and regulation, community-wide plans,   
  and the organization’s bylaws;
* define the purpose, goals, and scope of the Emergency and Disaster Plan;
* identify the authority and basic structure of the Emergency Response Team;
* relate to the museum’s mission statement and collections mandate;
* be supported by an Emergency and Disaster Plan.

This template assumes the museum is managed by a staff, has access to trained volunteers, and is governed by a Board of Directors as a not-for-profit organization. If this is not the situation for your museum, ensure the same policy areas are dealt with adequately by your governing authority—either in policy or by incorporating the relevant portions into a plan that is approved by the appropriate authority.

For additional context, tools, case studies, and resources, see *HELP! An Emergency Preparedness Manual for Museums, 2nd Edition,* edited by Crystal Willie (Edmonton: Alberta Museums Association, 2018),available for purchase at [www.museums.ab.ca](http://www.museums.ab.ca).

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# 1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

[*Include a global policy statement establishing the policy’s purpose and affirming life safety as the first priority.*]

The [*Museum*] will take reasonable steps to ensure that the safety of the people, collections, buildings, and other assets in its care are protected in an emergency or disaster. Human safety will be the first priority in emergency or disaster prevention, response, and recovery. Under no circumstances will measures taken to protect collections or other assets in an emergency situation put human life or safety at risk.

[*SCOPE: Include a statement stating which facilities, organizations, or collections this policy directs or impacts.*]

[*LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK: If there are specific pieces of legislation related to your museum’s operations or   
collection, state them here.*[[1]](#footnote-0)]

The [*Museum*] will operate respecting legal and ethical guidelines and in compliance with local, provincial, and federal public health and safety regulations.

# 2 PLANS AND PROCEDURES

2.1 The [*Museum*] will develop, implement, and monitor plans and procedures adequate to direct the actions of staff and volunteers in an emergency or disaster.

2.2 A complete and up to date copy of the [*Emergency Preparedness Framework*], including related documents and appendices, is stored off-site.

# 3 EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

3.1 The [*Museum*] will establish an [*Emergency Response Team (ERT)*] reporting to [*Position / generally the Executive Director*] with the following responsibilities:

3.1.1 Assume authority for the carrying out of emergency plans and procedures in the event of an emergency or disaster. In an emergency evacuation scenario, the authority of the [*ERT*] would yield to the [*Fire Wardens*] as identified in the [*Fire and Evacuation Procedure*] until such time as the building has been safely and completely evacuated.

3.1.2 Ensure that appropriate plans and procedures are in place to prevent, prepare for, and direct the actions of staff and volunteers in case of an emergency or disaster.

3.1.3 Ensure that staff and volunteers are adequately trained for emergency prevention and response. Initial and ongoing training is linked to the duties and responsibilities of each individual’s position.

3.1.4 Ensure that policy, planning, and support documents and tools are up to date and accurate and are [*regularly / annually / at the start of each operating season*] monitored and tested.

3.1.5 Liaise with the [*Health and Safety Committee / Health and Safety Officer / position or group responsible for Health and Safety at the Museum*] to ensure that—where responsibilities overlap or influence the work or authority of either committee—procedures and practices are aligned.

# 4 FIRST RESPONDERS

4.1 In an emergency situation where life, safety, or property are at risk, the [*Museum*] will first contact emergency service authorities such as police, the fire department, or ambulance. Directions provided by first responders will be followed.

4.2 In a disaster scenario where emergency service authorities are present for an extended period of time, a liaison between the [*ERT*] and emergency service authorities will be established to ensure both parties work cooperatively and have the [*building / grounds / other*] access and information they need to fulfill their responsibilities.

4.3 Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that emergency service authorities understand the unique nature of a museum facility and are acquainted with the buildings, collections areas, and emergency plans in advance of an emergency. In particular, emergency service authorities should be notified of the [*Museum’s*] internal lines of authority, building floor plans and maps, and the [*Emergency and Disaster Plan*] should be on file noting collection storage and display areas. Occasional facility tours should be arranged with emergency service authorities.

# 5 COLLECTIONS SAFETY

The [*Museum*] will take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of the collections entrusted to its care. Decisions regarding collections care in an emergency will be made respecting the long-term integrity of the collections and the [*Museum’s*] legal and ethical obligations in maintaining the public trust.

5.1 The day-to-day handling and care of [*Museum’s*] collections will be directed by the [*Collections Policy*] including procedures and practices related to environmental controls respecting light, temperature, relative humidity (RH) and pollutants, integrated pest management (IPM), storage and handling, information management, as well as security as it relates to access to and storage of collections, and deaccessioning with regard to damaged objects.

5.2 Collections care in the case of an emergency or disaster will consider prevention, response and recovery measures respecting damage to the collections due to [*include list of areas covered in the Emergency and Disaster Plan, including fire, water, severe weather, building instability or dissociation, thieves, vandals, or acts of violence*]. Procedures and practices in these circumstances will be directed by the [*Emergency and Disaster Plan*.]

5.3 After human safety has been addressed, the initial focus in an emergency will be on stabilizing the building and collections to prevent further damage to loaned and accessioned objects and documents.[[2]](#footnote-1)  A qualified conservator from the [*Museum’s*] staff or an external agency will be consulted regarding salvage cleaning and treatment as soon as is reasonable. In determining salvage priorities, historic, cultural and local significance [*or scientific, research, etc.—include the criteria that are relevant to your collection],* object value, and the expense and difficulty of conserving collection objects will be considered.

5.4 If objects on loan from other institutions are in danger or damaged in an emergency, ensuring their protection and stabilization will be a topmost priority. The objects’ owners will be notified of the situation as soon as is reasonably possible and in advance of the undertaking of conservation treatment.

5.5 The [*Museum*] will take reasonable measures to ensure the expertise, materials, supplies, and facilities required to stabilize and treat collection objects damaged in an emergency are provided. When possible, these will be arranged through planning activities in advance of an emergency.

# 6 WARNINGS AND ALARMS

6.1 The [*Museum*] will ensure that an alarm system adequate to warn people on-site in an emergency is in place, maintained, and regularly tested. The [*Museum*] will ensure that its staff have an adequate knowledge of alarm system operations and protocols as they relate to their responsibilities in an emergency and will make reasonable efforts to ensure communication protocols are in place between its staff and alarm system service providers.

6.2 The [*Museum*] assigns responsibility to a designated staff member (or members) to monitor weather and climate information for advance warning of a natural disaster.

6.3 When forewarning of an emergency or disaster is obtained, the [*Museum*] will take additional measures to ensure the safety of people, collections, and assets as time allows and the threat requires. This may include the cancelling of on-site or off-site programs or events, evacuation of the building, and the complete or partial evacuation of vital records and the collections as deemed appropriate by the [*ERT*].

6.4 Programming staff will be provided with the authority to make changes to programming activities off-site when an emergent situation requires that a program be cancelled, rescheduled, relocated, or otherwise changed to ensure the safety of participants and staff. Staff and volunteers will be provided training for recognizing and responding to emergencies when conducting programming on- or off-site.

# 7 SECURITY

7.1 The [*Museum*] will undertake reasonable measures to ensure the security of people, the building, and the collections. Procedures and practices respecting human and building security are outlined in the [*Emergency and Disaster Plan / related operations policies*].

7.2 In the case of an emergency that threatens human safety or human life, emergency authorities will be contacted immediately. [*Security or appropriate staff member position*] will provide information and assistance to first responders as required, and directions provided by first responders will be followed.

7.2 In the event of an emergency, increased security measures may be required to adequately control access to the building and collections if normal security measures have been compromised by building damage or system failure. Whenever possible, this support should be considered or arranged in advance of an emergency and accounted for in the museum’s insurance.

# 8 INSURANCE

8.1 The [*Museum*] will ensure that sufficient insurance is maintained to mitigate emergency and disaster related risks with respect to:

[*Criteria for which the museum requires insurance, may include*

* *General Liability (including for visitor accidents);*
* *Workers’ compensation coverage;*
* *Property (including building damage and repair or replacement of assets including but not limited to furniture, equipment, materials and supplies, and commercial materials);*
* *Fine Art Coverage (for damage to collection items; the insurance industry generally covers all collection items—art work or not—under Fine Art policies);*
* *Collection Salvage (this might be included in your Property or Fine Art policies; ensure that coverage is adequate to resource the museum’s salvage plan—it may need to be negotiated as it is not always included); and*
* *Interruption of Service (including relocation spaces for collections and staff and setting up office and communication systems).*]

8.2 The [*Museum*] assigns responsibility to a designated staff member (or members) to regularly monitor that insurance coverage is sufficient to meet the needs of [Museum] and that the terms and scope of the policies are understood and administered appropriately in an emergency.

# 9 EXTERNAL AID AND RESOURCES

9.1 The [*Museum*] will take reasonable steps to establish relationships with organizations—commercial and public or not-for-profit—that could provide assistance in case of an emergency. Whenever possible, these relationships are established in advance of an emergency, and contact information and familiarity with products and services available should be maintained by the [*ERT*] to ensure quick access in case of an emergency.

External aid and resources could include

• space for displaced collections and assets;

• space for an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC);

• funding for stabilization and salvage efforts, including disaster recovery services;

• funding and support for preventive measures;

• specialized services and suppliers such as moving or freezer trucks, movers, drying or cleaning equipment, conservationally sound materials for storage and salvage;

• conservation expertise;

• communications networks; or

• volunteers and staffing for collection evacuation, stabilization, and salvage.

# 10 RESUMPTION OF SERVICES

10.1 In most circumstances, the [*Museum*] will be closed to the public in the case of an emergency or disaster.

10.2 The facilities will be reopened and services resumed only after emergency officials and the [*ERT*] have deemed that it is safe to do so. In determining when facilities will reopen and services resume, the [*ERT*] will consider the stabilization of the building and collections and the safety and capacity of staff.

10.3 Following a disaster, a revised schedule of services may be offered in alignment with increased responsibilities, reduced capacity, and what can safely be offered to the public as immediate salvage and long-term recovery efforts are underway.

10.4 Reasonable measures will be taken to ensure that the documents required to ensure continuity of operations are protected and backed up and stored off-site. Plans for the resumption of vital systems will be included in emergency and disaster preparedness activities and tested regularly.

# 11 MONITORING AND TESTING

11.1 The procedures and practices outlined in the [*Emergency and Disaster Plan*] will be regularly monitored.

11.2 The [*Museum*] will assign responsibility to a designated staff member (or members) to monitor the maintenance of the facilities and collection areas to ensure that potential dangers are prevented from occurring and handled in a timely manner when identified.

11.3 Drills will be conducted regularly as deemed appropriate by the [*ERT*] with respect to fire evacuation, fire extinguisher operation, lockdown or shelter-in-place procedures, and other procedures as required. This schedule will be included in the [*Emergency and Disaster Plan*] and monitored.

11.4 Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that all staff are aware of emergency preparedness plans and familiar with their roles in them and that regular training and occasional drills take place.

# 12 SCHEDULE FOR REVIEW

The [*Emergency Preparedness Policy*] and corresponding plans, procedures, and supporting documents are considered living documents.

12.1 Plans, procedures and supporting documents will be reviewed annually and updated according to the [*Emergency Preparedness Calendar of Review / Health and Safety Review Calendar / other document used to ensure safety documents, equipment and processes are monitored*].

| APPROVED: |  | |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Signature of Authorized Officer | |  | DD / MM / YY |
| REVIEWED: |  | |  |  |
|  | DD / MM / YY | |  |  |
| REVISED: |  | |  |  |
|  | DD / MM / YY | |  |  |
| NEXT SCHEDULED REVIEW: | |  |  |  |
|  | | DD / MM / YY |  |  |

1. See the Standard Practices Handbook for Museums, 3rd ed., edited by Crystal Willie (Edmonton: Alberta Museums Association, 2014), 63 – 65, for a listing of the most common pieces of legislation impacting Alberta museums. Legislation changes often, and it is the responsibility of the Board and management to understand what applies to their museum. Consider federal and international legislation and agreements. Museums   
   in other jurisdictions should familiarize themselves with provincial-level legislation and policy. Generally speaking, Occupational Health and   
   Safety is dealt with at the provincial level in Canada. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Loaned objects take priority over the museum’s own collections. If the museum is often host to loan items, through a regular travelling or community exhibit program or otherwise, collections staff or volunteers should ensure that the terms of loan agreements as they relate to emergency preparedness are well understood. If relevant, there may need to be special consideration made for loaned collections in the Emergency and Disaster Plan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)