

# Protocol for assessors for disasters at NSW Government organisations which involve records (both paper and digital records)

## Who to contact at NSW State Archives and Records

Government Recordkeeping staff	govrec@records.nsw.gov.au	Tel. 02 9714 3080
Conservation staff	transfer@records.nsw.gov.au	tel. 02 9673 1788

### 1. Information that NSW State Archives and Records needs to know about the disaster

- 1.1 Which organisation has had a disaster?
- 1.2 Where is the location/site of the disaster?
- 1.3 What has happened? Nature of disaster - is it water damage, leaking pipes, fire etc?
- 1.4 Estimate type and quantity of records affected?

### 2. Assessment of records (paper and digital) and damage

- 2.1 Has the organisation activated its **counter disaster plan for records and recordkeeping systems**?
- 2.2 What records are affected by the disaster?
- 2.3 What **type** of records are affected (are they paper-based or digital)?
- 2.4 What **quantity** of records are affected? Are vital or critical records affected?
- 2.5 What **physical format** are the records (eg paper, photographs, maps and plans, video, tape etc)?
- 2.6 Has the Records Manager of the organisation determined the extent of the damage to the paper-based records?
  - Are the records stored in boxes?
  - Are the boxes wet, but the contents dry?
  - Are records wet, damp, only a little wet, or soaked?
- 2.7 Have photos been taken of the disaster and damage to the paper-based records? If so, we may request that these be emailed to NSW State Archives and Records so we can see the disaster and advise
- 2.8 Have the Records Manager and IT Manager of the organisation determined the extent of damage to digital records (eg records stored on tapes or other storage media or on network servers)?

- 2.9 Are back up tapes of the network affected by the disaster?
- 2.10 Have you advised the NSW Government organisation experiencing the disaster that they need to contact NSW State Archives and Records?

### **3. What to do with wet records and immediate treatments that must be undertaken in the first 48 hours**

Water damage is the most common result of disasters, and mould growth is always a high risk in disasters involving water.

#### **Flooded areas and wet records must be dried out quickly.**

- Dry out the space – or if this is not possible, remove the wet records to a dry area quickly.
- Where the quantity of records permits, air-dry the records by fanning them out and interleaving pages with blotting paper/butcher paper/grease proof paper.
- Use portable dehumidifiers where the records are drying to speed the drying process and provide good air circulation.
- Use pedestal fans to increase air circulation and aid in drying.

### **4. Processes that should NEVER be used on State archives during disaster salvage**

- Decontamination with any chemical fumigant. Fumigants include ethylene oxide, hydrogen peroxide, methyl bromide, or any proprietary fumigant.
- Decontamination using gamma irradiation.
- Freeze drying of photographic or film collections.

### **5. Processes that pose risks to State archives**

- All processes except air drying pose some risk to records and archives and should be undertaken by highly trained staff and reputable companies
- **Freeze drying** can cause damage to some formats, e.g. photographic materials, and should only be used where the size of the disaster precludes air drying
- **Freezing** is only recommended for some formats and is only recommended where the quantity of records would mean they cannot be dried within 48 hours.

### **6. Appointment of disaster recovery team**

It is important that the disaster recovery company appointed has the right expertise for records salvage and restoration.

Remember, you should liaise with NSW State Archives and Records about the appointment of a disaster recovery team and the recovery processes to be used on the records.

## **7. What procedures do you and the disaster recovery/salvage company have in place to determine whether the records have been adequately and appropriately treated?**

- Moisture content readings should be taken of records following salvage and treatment to establish whether records have been dried adequately – they should fall into the normal range for dry paper
- Where mould growth has been observed or is suspected, records should be tested to establish whether mould growth is abnormal compared with the baseline levels at the affected site

### **Definitions**

#### **Digital records**

Digital records are digital information, captured at a specific point in time that is kept as evidence of business activity. Digital records include emails, web pages, digital photographs, digital audio files, GIS files or database records, as well as scanned versions of paper records that have been digitised in business processes.

#### **State records**

Any record, made and kept, or received and kept, by any person in the course of the exercise of official functions in a public office, or for any purpose of a public office, or for the use of a public office.

#### **State archives**

Those records that are appraised as having continuing value to the Government and people of New South Wales. Archives are also part of an organisation's corporate memory. State archives can be in paper or digital form.

#### **Critical records**

Those records that are essential or critical for the ongoing business of an organisation, and without which the organisation could not continue to function effectively. The identification and protection of such records is a primary object of records management and disaster planning.