Introduction

If you work for a university or college museum, you have an advantage in disaster planning – emergency management specialists, right on campus.

In this poster, we use the University of Michigan’s Kelsey Museum of Archaeology as an example to illustrate how academic museums can utilize campus resources to develop emergency response plans and training programs.

1. Connect

Start by contacting your school’s police department or department of safety and security.

• In an emergency, your school’s police or security department will manage the response on campus. If you connect in advance, they can assist you in planning, training, and evaluating disaster response for your museum.

• Your school’s plan is already focused on human safety, while some or all of your museum’s plans will need information on collections salvage.

• Work with your emergency management specialists to customize existing plans and training modules for your museum.

• The Kelsey Museum of Archaeology worked closely with Mike Kennedy, Senior Emergency Management Specialist with UM’s Division of Public Safety and Security (DPSS), and with Lisa Reither, the Museum’s facilities manager in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts (LSA).

2. Create

Define your target audiences to determine the kinds of plans and training products you should create.

• Different groups need different levels of information. Students, teaching faculty, and docents might only need training to ensure personal safety, while some or all of your museum staff will need information on collections salvage.

• The Kelsey Museum was able to build on the College of LSA’s existing emergency response plan, and the UM’s Building Incident Response Team PowerPoint training module.

• The Kelsey created two plans: Emergency Response, focused on immediate response and human safety; and Emergency Recovery, focused on collection salvage. You can download the Kelsey’s plans here: https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B9smbyqtAXeeOGVsWVRrME5rdHc

• Write a collections salvage plan. To get started, reference publicly available plans: http://www.conservation-us.org/publications/disaster-response-recovery#WYJNgFumX. Scroll to the “Guides and Information” section in the middle of the page. https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview

3. Share

Post plans so they are easily accessible:

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• Update your plans. Schedule this on your calendar! Plans should be reviewed and updated annually. The Kelsey updates its plans and phone trees every August, prior to the start of the fall term and the arrival of new students, faculty, and volunteers.

• Keep your salvage plan relevant to your collection (you don’t need guidelines for material you don’t own!) and keep it simple – this is salvage, not conservation treatment.

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4. Train

Schedule annual training/review of the plans for all museum personnel.

• Hold a drill to exercise your plan and evaluate your response.

• The Kelsey holds a PowerPoint training session, led by the Museum’s Chief of Security, each fall at the first student meeting of the new term. Resident graduate students receive training at the first student meeting of the new term; the same is true for the museum’s docents at their first meeting.

• A drill or exercise should be conducted once every two to three years to evaluate response and keep people familiar with the plan.

• Get someone from outside your museum, such as campus emergency management, to assist or bring in an outside consultant. It is very difficult for a unit to run these exercises themselves while keeping the process objective to identify areas of improvement.

• Emergency management staff will be able to work with your museum staff to determine an exercise of appropriate scope and complexity.

• The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a recommended exercise template, which most emergency managers will be familiar with and utilize.