

Practical Tips From The National Archives



**C. Preston Huff, CRM, CA,
Regional Administrator
National Archives at Fort Worth**
Alliance for Response Meeting – Houston, Texas July 29, 2011

FIRES

Tornados

Terrorism

Tsunamis

Neglect

FLOODS

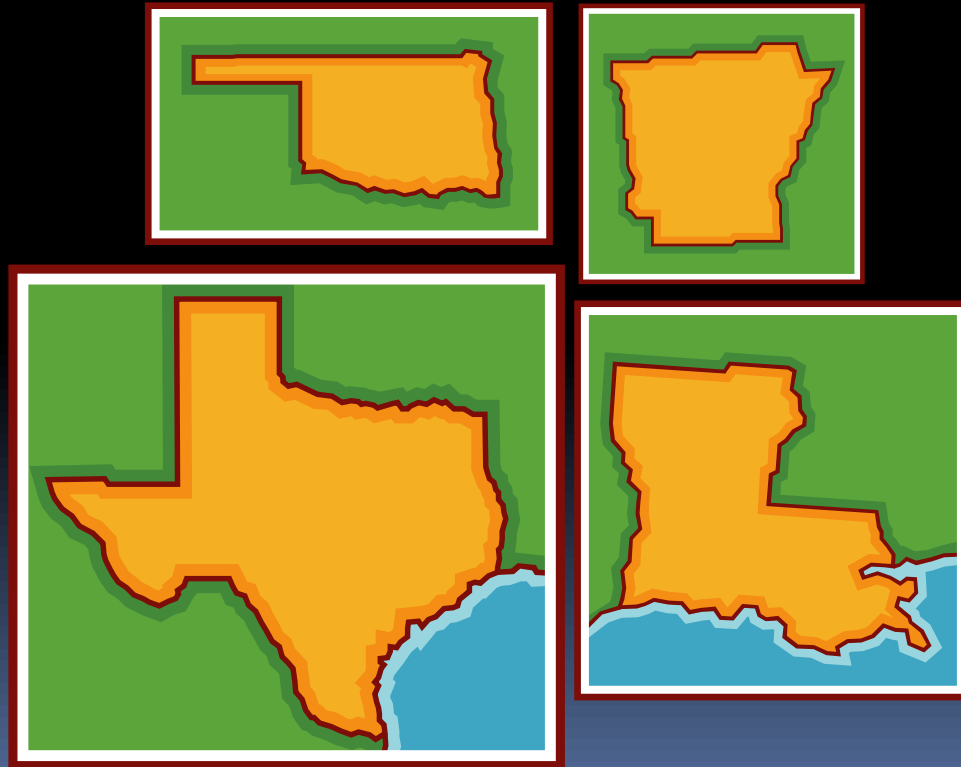
Vermin

Earthquakes

HURRICANES

Seems that we are experiencing all kinds of disasters these days. Often these kill many people and cause horrific amounts of damage – and sometimes our documentary heritage (records and information) are also damaged or lost.

**In My Region (Southwest Region – Texas,
Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana) – We
Have Seen More Than Our Fair Share Of
Disasters...**



Galveston, Texas - 1900



Photo – Texas State Library

- Largest natural disaster in US history
- 6,000 to 12,000 deaths

In My Region – Man-Caused & Natural...

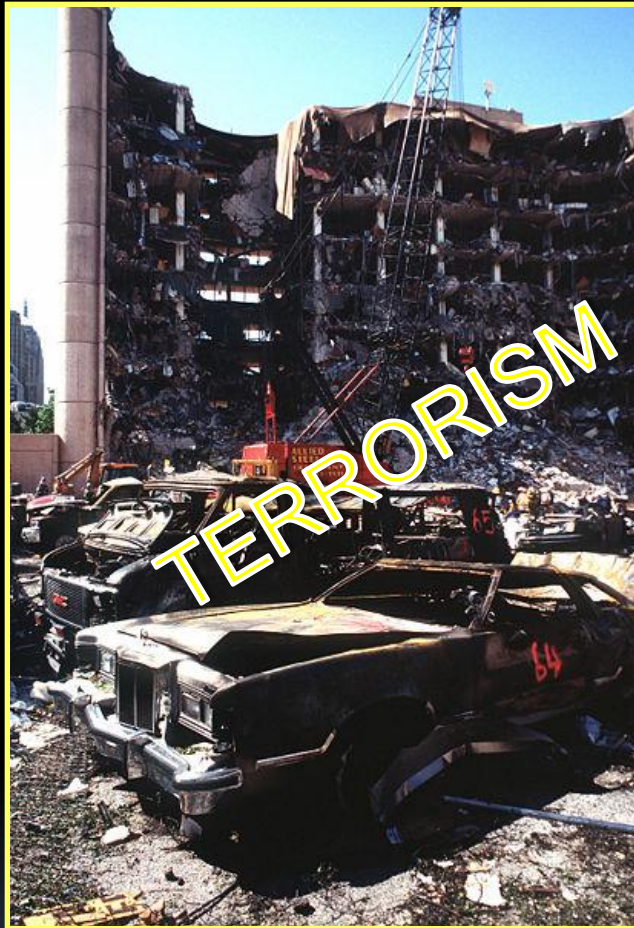


Photo - DOD

**Murrah Building in Oklahoma
City - 1995**

Bombing - 168 killed / 800 injured



*Photo – USA
Today*

Fort Worth - 2000

F2 Tornado - 5 killed / 100 injured

AUSTIN, TEXAS



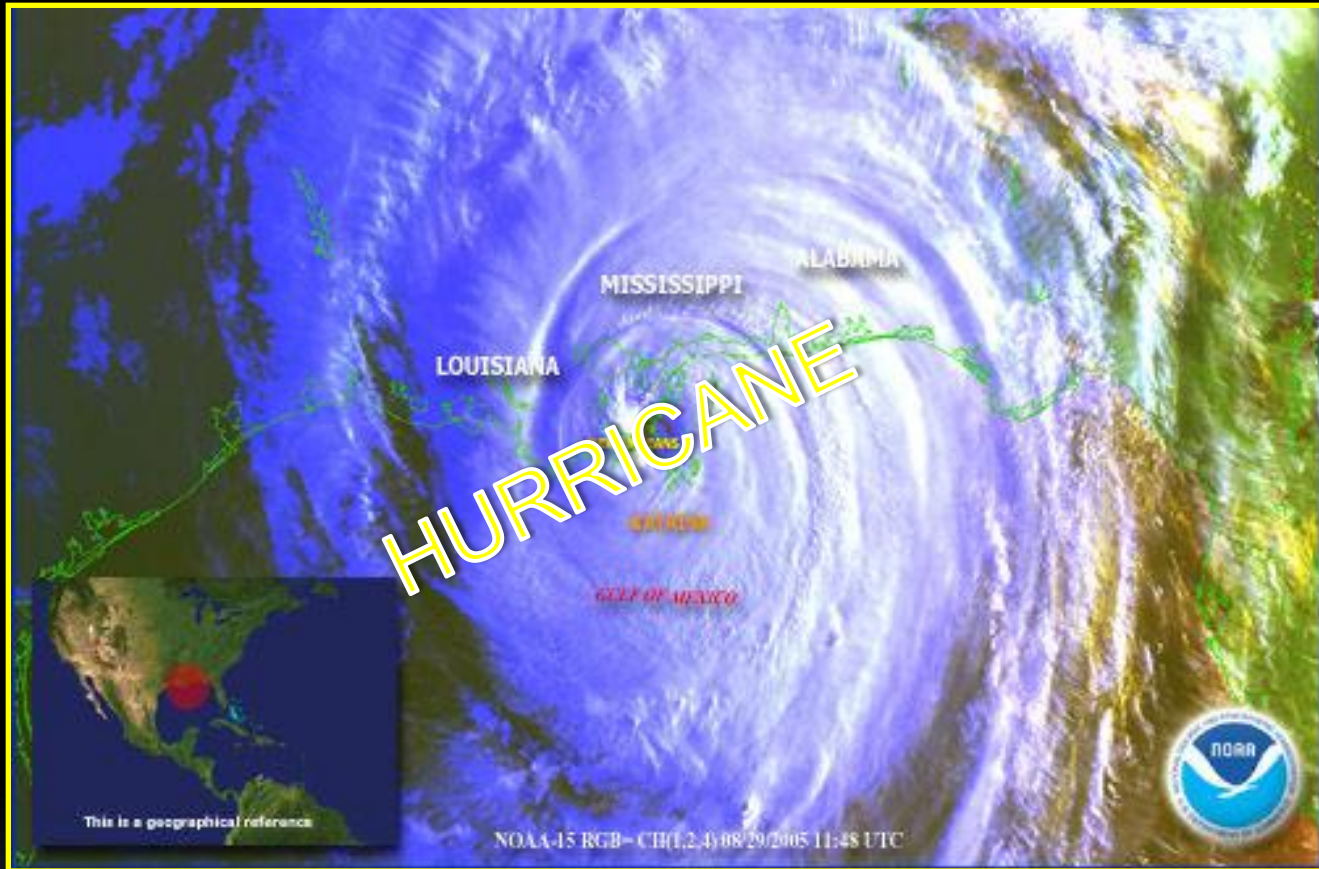
IRS Building

Photo – CBS News

February 2010

2 killed / 4 injured

Katrina - 2005



- **2ND Largest Hurricane Ever Recorded – sustained winds of 150 mph and gusts to 184 mph**
 - Largest natural disaster in recent US history
 - Over 1,800 deaths

How Did NARA Get Involved With Hurricane Katrina Recovery for Records and Information of Non- Federal Agencies?

- **NARA Agreed to Help New Orleans** at their request -
(Orleans Parish Coroner's Office, District Attorney, and Clerk of the Criminal Court). "Localities NOT Federal Government". Unprecedented – may also be only time that NARA does this. NARA facilities untouched by storm – so staff was available to help.
- **NARA Managed a FEMA Mission Assignment** that permitted us to assist with the pack-out of 5 truck loads of wet / moldy records for vacuum freeze drying. Also included 20 computer hard drives (approx. 1/4 recovered).

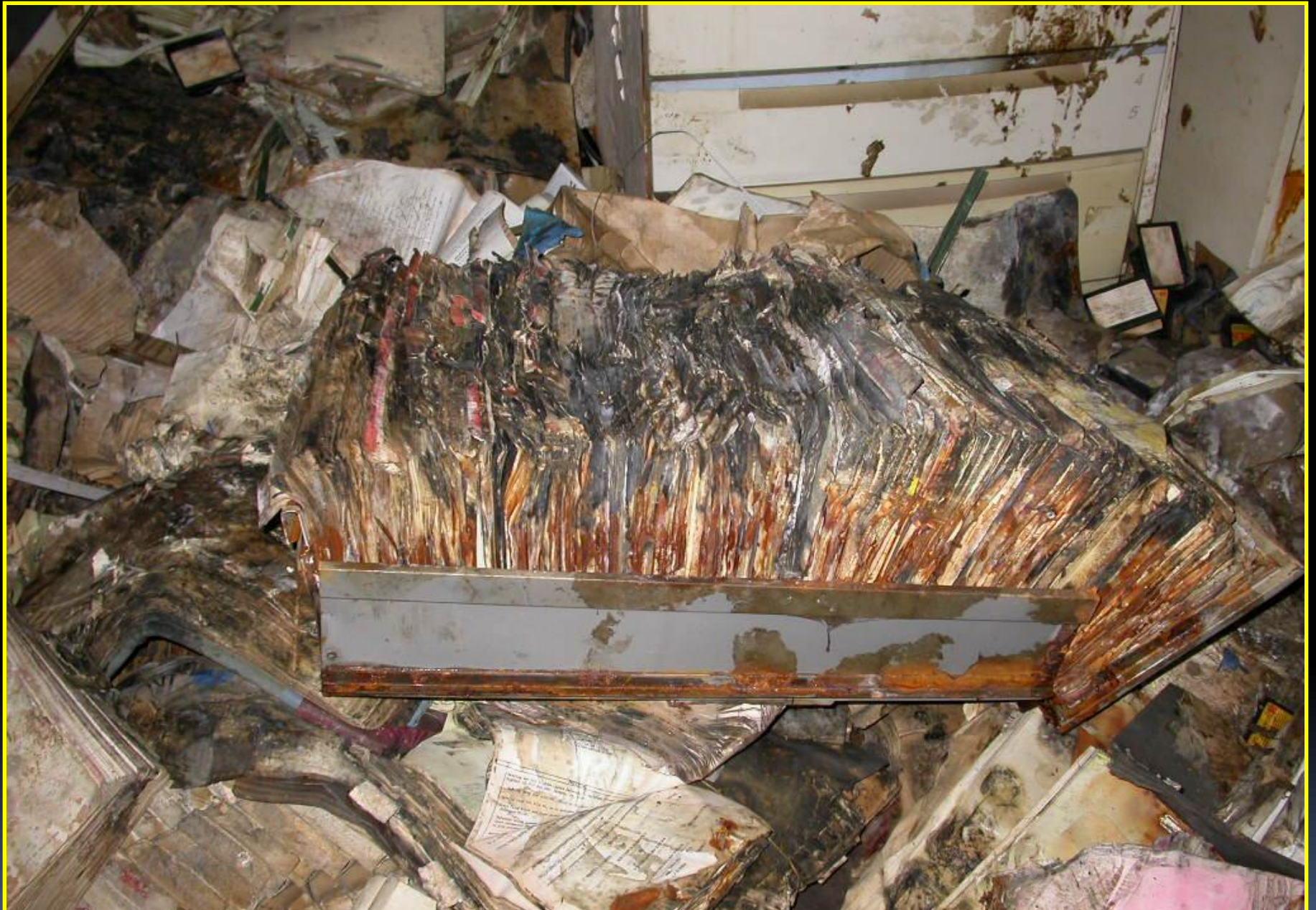
- **NARA committed some 18 staff days** for the 4 main staff that were on the ground in New Orleans – and countless hours of NARA staff managing the recovery contract, providing technical advice, visiting recovery firm's location (New York) and follow-up visit to New Orleans.





**Because of wet, moldy
records on the floor -
paths had to be cleared
to start work.**

*(New Orleans – Coroner's
Office; Clerk of the
Criminal Court and District
Attorney's Office)*



Records were often found in heaps

A photograph of a storage room in poor condition. The room is filled with shelves of records, many of which appear wet, moldy, and disorganized. A black metal ladder is positioned in the center. A red fire extinguisher is mounted on the wall to the right. The floor is covered in debris and trash. The walls are peeling and stained. A window is visible in the background on the left.

Water Line

Wet or damp and very moldy records everywhere



Contractor pulls records from Courthouse for triage



**Barbara Rust, Archivist,
NARA-Southwest Region,
removes hard drives (above)**



Some Simple and Practical Tips From NARA for Disaster Preparedness for Your Records...

Practical Tips From NARA...

- **Develop** – a Records Emergency Plan for your facility – assess risks, develop response plans, have up-to-date information for staff and resources needed in an emergency (update plan annually and train staff to carry it out). In assessing risks within institution and building as well as potential community and regional level emergencies.
- **Examine** - storage areas for potential sources of water such as water and HVAC pipes, drains, and building cracks
- **Elevate** – all holdings at least 3 inches off the floor
- **Drape** – plastic over holdings in locations prone to roof or pipe leaks

Practical Tips From NARA...

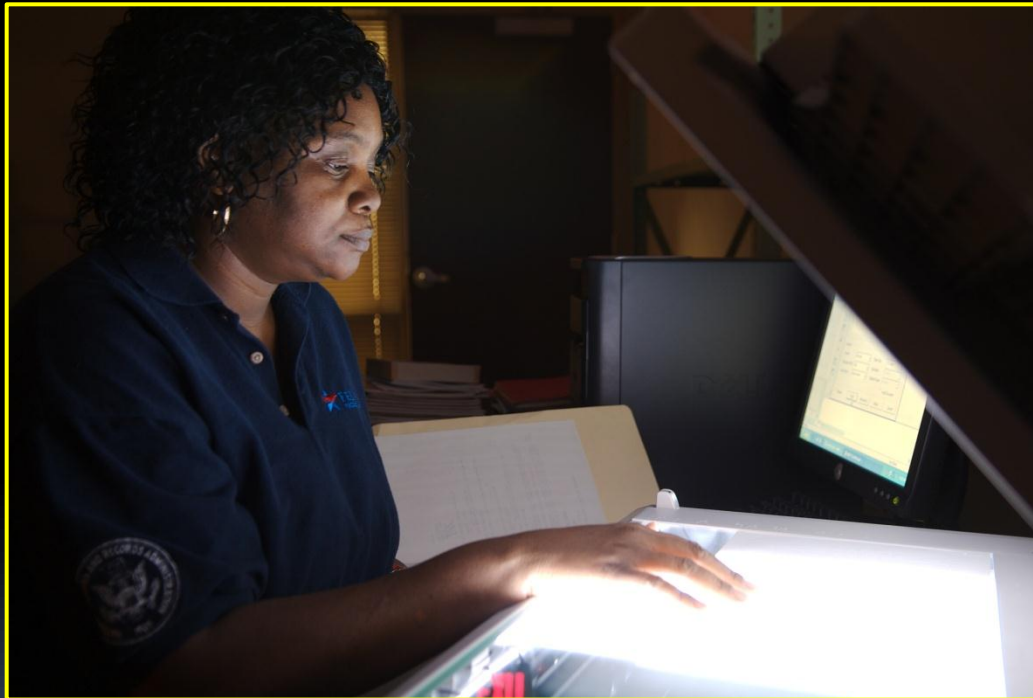
- **Inspect** – the sprinkler system regularly
- **Monitor** – areas prone to leaks with water alarms
- **React** – quickly to any leak or other water event
- **Don't** – locate records in basement or top floor (roofs can peel off during hurricane or tornado)

- **Keep Indexes / Finding Aids** – separate from the holdings
- **Backup Vital Records** – offsite (out of region) – not with company a few blocks away (Katrina example)



Electronic Records Vault (ERV) – NARA-Southwest Region (Fort Worth, Texas) – built, in part, in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

- **Scanning Original Records** – and distribute the electronic version widely can protect the “informational value” of what is contained in the record.



Digital Imaging Lab (DIL) – NARA-Southwest Region (Fort Worth, Texas) – Federal agencies across the U.S. have their records scanned here.

Heritage Preservation

• **Heritage Preservation** – another group that is doing a lot of good work in this area. (<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/>)
– not-for-profit agency based in Washington, D.C.

- Conservation (provide professional advice)
- Education
- Preparation (Alliance for Response) – co-sponsored with FEMA the Heritage Emergency National Task Force – brings cultural institutions and emergency workers together to learn about issues.
- FYI – Their Heritage Health Index results indicated that 70% of Archives do NOT have an Emergency Plan with trained staff to implement it.

Parlez-Vous REPAR-E?

NARA's Effort to Help in Disasters...

- **REPAR-E** (NARA's Records Emergency Preparation and Response – External) Initiative (Committee headed by Jane Long, in College Park, Maryland). Contact Jane at jane.long@nara.gov ; 301-837-1994 (office)
- **NARA Program to coordinate emergency preparedness and response under Exec. Order 12656 & National Response Framework (NRF)**
- **REPAR-E's focus is on records held OUTSIDE of NARA** (priority is Federal first - then State and then Local Government records)
- **We are a supporting partner for the Natural-Cultural-Historical component of Emergency Support Function #11 of the NRF that the Department of Interior leads. Heritage Preservation Alliance for Response is too.**

- **We also address records issues relating to continuity of operations in an emergency situation in partnership with:**
 - **Federal agencies**
 - **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)**
 - **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
 - **Federal Executive Boards (FEBs)**
 - **Other entities of the Federal community**
 - **Through REPAR-E - NARA also partners with the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) and FEMA to support FEMA's continuity of government vital records program for tribal, state and local governments.**

- **So in NARA - our approach is basically to provide:**
 - **Training and education**
 - **Website (<http://www.archives.gov/preservation/records-emergency/>) – lots of good information from our Preservation Department – “getting prepared; response and recovery”**
 - **Advice / Consultation (before, during and after disasters) – Doris Hamburg, head of our Preservation Department – 301-837-1785 (doris.hamburg@nara.gov)**

Questions? Please contact me: preston.huff@nara.gov or 817-551-2001

