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Risk Evaluation and Planning Program Shares Preparedness Tips



Assessments conducted through the pilot Risk Evaluation and Planning Program (REPP) revealed some simple ways for museums to become more disaster-resistant. Museum staff and program assessors from the 15 pilot museums share these 10 tips for spotting problems and working with local first responders.

Look for Risks:

1. Get on the roof! You'll be amazed at what you see. Are seams well-sealed? Is all equipment bolted down? Does water have a place to go?
2. Look at drainage patterns. Is water diverted away from your building instead of toward it? Is water seeping into your foundation or under roll-up doors?

Put Life Safety First:

1. Walk in your visitors' shoes. If an alarm goes off, do signs point and light the way out? Are fire extinguishers or alarm pulls easy to find? Are alarms audible and visible?
2. How do you alert visitors in gardens or other outdoor sections of your facility?
3. In case of an emergency, where should visitors evacuate? If there is only one way in or out of the grounds, is it clearly marked?

Work with First Responders:

1. Not everyone understands your value to the community. Tell firefighters, police officers, and emergency managers about your unique collections, the school trips you host, the tourists you attract, the history you hold.
2. Invite the fire department for a tour. Fire officials can develop a tailored response plan to minimize damage and increase safety at your institution.
3. Share up-to-date floor plans, including the location of the sprinkler shut-off and evacuation routes.
4. Schedule "face-time." Meet one-on-one with the people who will respond to an emergency at your institution and begin to build a successful relationship.
5. Ask city or county emergency management agencies to provide information on the natural and man-made hazards likely to affect your region.

It's never too early to learn what risks your institution faces and meet the people who will come to your aid in an emergency.

The Risk Evaluation and Planning Program, a pilot project of Heritage Preservation, was supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. REPP provided each participating institution with an evaluation of risks to its collections and is helping staff to create or update an emergency plan.

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