



Establishing Collection Priorities

Establishing collection priorities prior to an emergency can improve the efficiency in responding to collection emergencies.

1. Determine the criteria for establishing priorities:

- Understand your mission and what it will take for the institution to be operational again following an emergency/disaster.
 - a. Collections
 - b. Building and historic structures
 - c. Accession files
 - d. Equipment
 - e. Vital/operational records
- Objects on loan from other institutions or private individuals are high priority; lenders should be notified immediately and consulted before treatment measures are undertaken.
- Salvage priority should be established before the emergency occurs. Consult your Collection's Management Policy for guidance, but consider the criteria:
 - Historic
 - Aesthetic
 - Scientific/technical
 - Research
 - Monetary
 - Vulnerability

2. Write a Priority List for the Collection

- Publish the list, ranking the objects by highest level of priority.
- Lists should be usable for evacuations and salvage.
- Do NOT include every object in your collection
- The list should include objects on exhibition as well as in storage.
- Update the list regularly, especially after an emergency and a large acquisition.

3. Agreement of All Involved

- All stakeholders should be consulted when developing the list.
- All disagreements should be resolved during planning stage and NOT during stress of an emergency.
- All parties should confirm priority list, either by all signing priority list or delegating that responsibility to the Director.
- Distribution of the document should be agreed upon in advance.

Criteria – Brainstorming

Objects	Building	Accession Files	Equipment	Vital/Operation Records
Ex: Lincoln’s hat Ex: Pre-Columbian artifacts	Ex: formal dining Ex: master bedroom	Ex: loan files Ex: accessions pre-1995	Ex: microscopes	Ex: Insurance forms

Priority List – by object

Object	Location	Security
Ex: Lincoln’s Hat	Exhibit hall 7.5	Locked case, key in collection office
Ex: Smithson Painting	Storage Room B, Painting Rack 2	On hooks

Priority List – by location

Location	Object	Security
Ex: Exhibit hall 7.5	Lincoln’s hat	Locked Case, key in collection office
	Washington’s Uniform	Locked case, key in security office
	Jackson’s Sword	Plexi vitrine, security screws