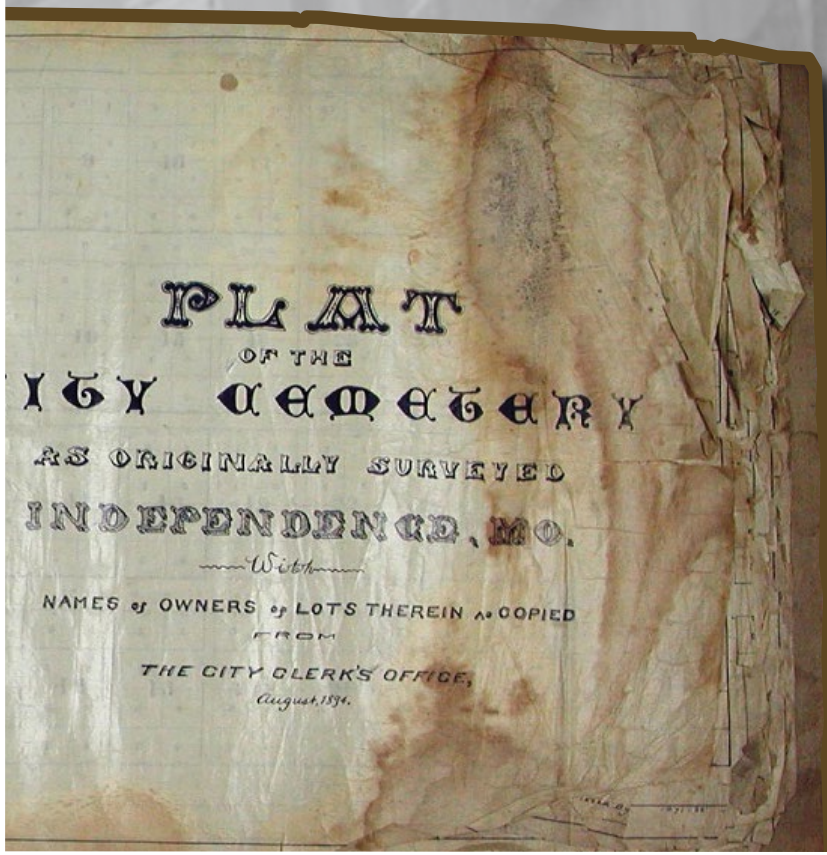
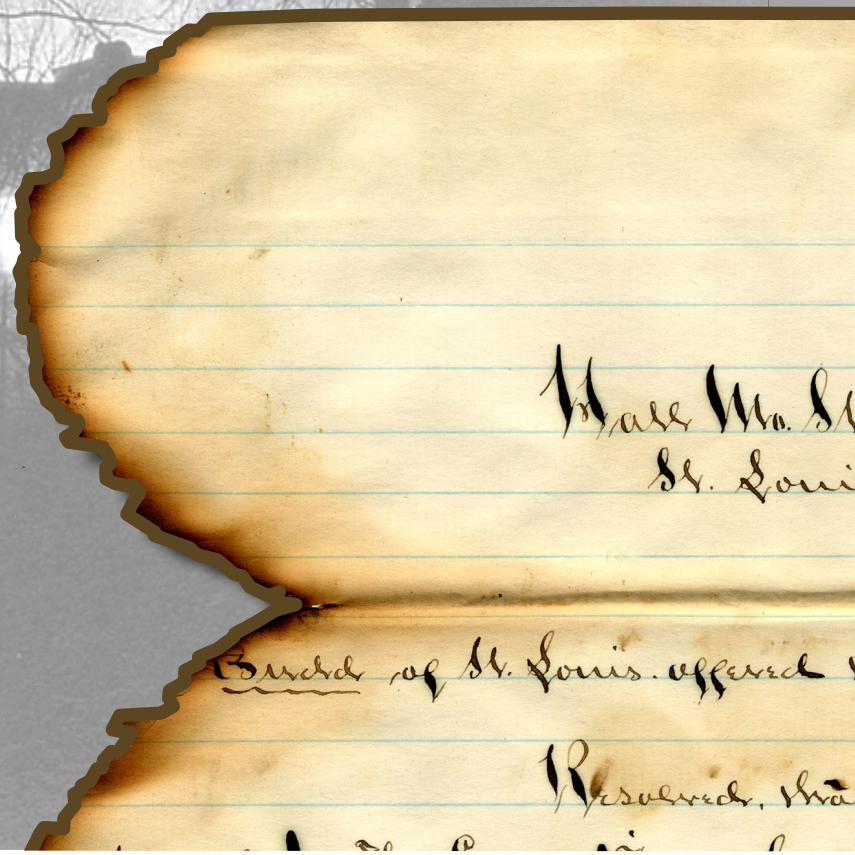


# DISASTER

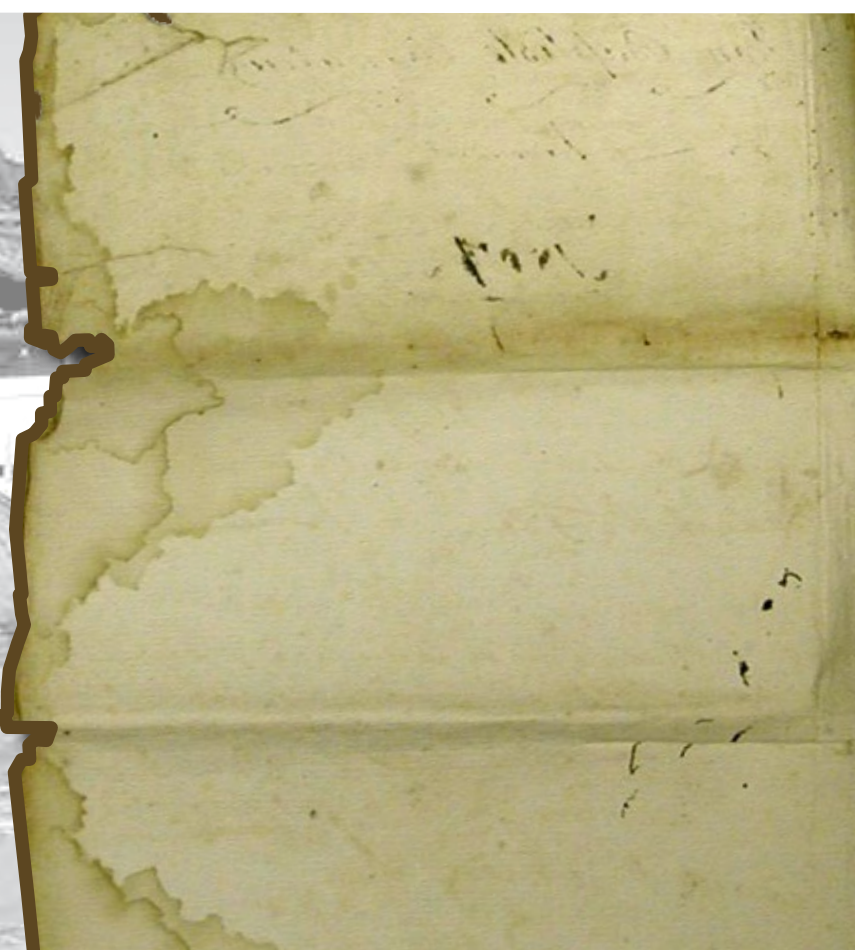
**FIRE**



**WATER**



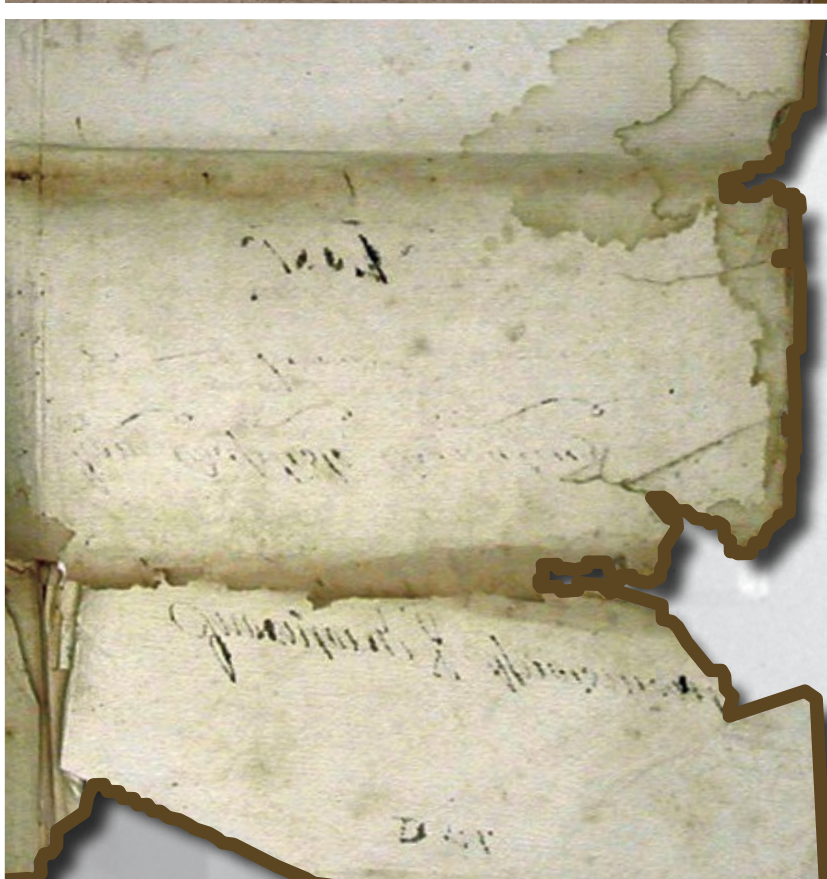
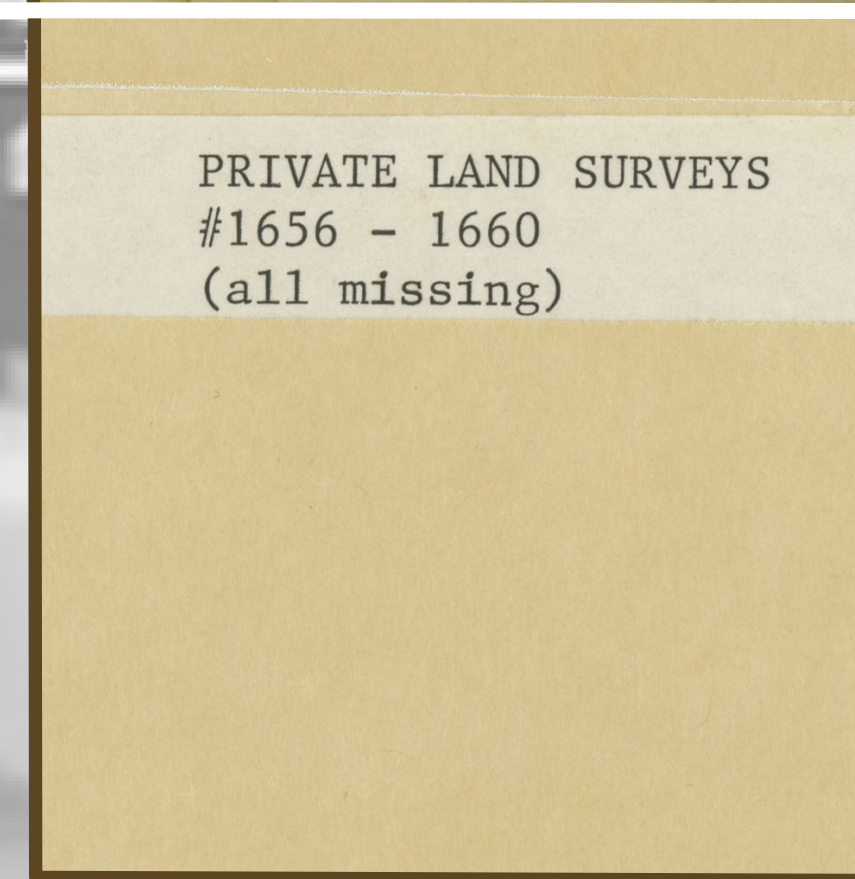
**TORNADO**



**PESTS**



**SECURITY**



**EARTHQUAKE**



# PREPAREDNESS

# DISASTER PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS TIPS

Let's face it, the only good disaster is the one that doesn't happen. Because threats, including fire and water damage, theft, earthquakes and pest infestations, all pose serious threats to records, disaster prevention should be a high priority for all records custodians. Below are some helpful tips to consider with these disasters in mind.

## DISASTER PREVENTION

### Fire

Fire prevention is the single most important factor in safeguarding records and should be approached by (1) minimizing the chance of occurrence and (2) maximizing the likelihood of extinguishment if one were to occur. To protect records from fire:

- Prevent open flames and smoking in records storage areas.
- Store records in fire resistant structures.
- Maintain compliance with local fire, electrical and other building codes.
- Make sure all lighting, wiring, plugs and cords are in good condition.
- Perform regular safety inspections.
- Familiarize local fire authorities with building floor plans and high priority areas.
- Install a centrally monitored fire detection system. Basic smoke detectors and manually operated fire alarms are not sufficient (88 percent of fires occur between 5 p.m. and 9 a.m.).
- Place monitors in concealed spaces, including drop ceilings.
- Install and annually test automatic sprinklers and fire suppression systems.
- Place fire extinguishers throughout records storage areas; have extra extinguishers available and train staff in their use.
- Clearly label and know the location of all gas shut-off valves and breaker panel switches.
- Conduct fire drills twice a year.
- Do not store records by furnaces, radiators or other heat sources.
- Inspect boilers/furnaces each fall.
- Keep records storage areas neat.
- Store chemicals and other highly combustible materials outside record storage areas in OSHA approved cabinets.
- Do not rely on fireproof cabinets. They may survive a fire, but the records inside can still burn.
- Place folders in boxes perpendicular to shelves, thus limiting the chance contents will fall out during a fire.



Mississippi County Courthouse, destroyed by arson, 1997. Missouri State Archives.

### Water

Most records disasters involve water and occur when storage areas flood, sewers back-up, overhead water pipes break or sprinkler systems and/or hoses are used to extinguish fires. To limit water related disasters:

- Periodically inspect roofs for signs of damage.
- Remove any trees or branches overhanging the facility.
- Properly anchor rooftop mechanical equipment.
- Keep gutters, downspouts and drains clear of debris.
- Divert rainwater away from building footings, entrances and window wells.
- Seal windows, doors and frames to eliminate the exchange of air and moisture.
- Periodically check for cracks and seepage on both interior and exterior walls.
- Do not store records under water pipes, in basements or in areas known to have leaks.
- Connect sump pumps and water detectors to monitoring systems in leak prone areas.
- Annually inspect air conditioners and check for leaks, mold/algae and proper drainage of condensation pans and lines during periods of extended use.
- Closely monitor any humidifiers or dehumidifiers.
- Clearly label and know the locations of internal water shutoff and external water meter valves as well as any tools required to close them.
- Keep records at least four inches off the floor.
- Store records in protective archival boxes.

### Security

Not all disasters are accidental. To reduce manmade disasters such as theft and vandalism:

- Secure all doors and windows with locks.
- Use solid entry doors and jambs (glass can easily be broken).
- Install a security system with remote monitoring, motion detectors and glass breakage alarms.
- Lock records storage areas and limit access to staff only.
- Limit the number of master keys and change locks and vault combinations as necessary.
- Collect keys when staff leave or volunteers are no longer active.
- Make sure the facility is empty before locking.
- Illuminate the facility's exterior at night.

### Pests

Insects and rodents can pose serious threats to records. To lessen the likelihood of an infestation:

- Monitor records storage areas for signs of animal activity.
- Enforce food and drink prohibitions.
- Remove all trash from the facility daily.
- Do not store cardboard for long periods.
- Keep kitchens and bathrooms dry. Even small amounts of water allow bugs to thrive.

### Earthquakes

Earthquakes can be a records custodian's worst nightmare, not only shuffling records, but causing additional structural, fire and water damage. To minimize the impact of an earthquake:

- Ensure shelving is of sufficient strength and properly braced.
- Maintain compliance with local building codes.
- Use museum wax to secure objects on display in seismic prone areas.

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Disasters still occur no matter the precautions taken, so it is important to plan ahead. In preparing for the unexpected:

- Produce a current records inventory and know the location of each record series.
- Decide which records should be prioritized as "vital" or "essential" to continuing operations.

*Record repositories should create essential records plans that fit their individual needs and functions. Backup copies (microfilm, paper, computer files, etc.) should be stored off-site. Arrangements can often be made to store records in local bank vaults, with storage vendors or, in the case of security copies of microfilmed local and state government records, with the Missouri State Archives.*

- Create a disaster plan: know whom to contact for emergency help and/or supplies to restore operation of normal services. The Missouri Local Records Program can provide advice, especially if contacted early in the event—i.e., don't wait until mold grows to seek help. For assistance, call 573-751-9047 or 573-526-3866, or consult their list of disaster planning and recovery vendors at <http://tinyurl.com/LR-VendorList>.
- Develop a staff contact list including work, home and cell phone numbers and assign responsibilities for various disaster situations.
- Provide staff with keys to mechanical rooms and janitor closets.
- Assemble a kit with supplies for various disasters.

*A helpful template for designing disaster plans is available from the Northeast Document Conservation Center at <http://tinyurl.com/NEDCC-DisasterWorksheet>.*

Digital records require special considerations. When working with digital records:

- Place antivirus and anti-hacking security measures on all internal/external devices and systems.
- Set up duplicate backups both on-site and in a secure off-site location to ensure recovery after a disaster.
- Create a "hot site" where operations can be reestablished remotely in case of a disaster.