



## Disaster Preparedness: Basics of Preparing for Disasters

**Purpose: Provide high level guidance to state and local government agencies on the basics of preparing for disasters.**

Records are critical to the operations of your agency, but they are secondary to the safety of you and your colleagues. Agency infrastructure is replaceable, but not the people or records they rely on to serve their community. Prevention will always be the best insurance policy against loss. In case of emergency, you'll want to prepare in the following ways:

Create & maintain offsite backups of your **ESSENTIAL** records.

Develop a Disaster Recovery Plan. It should include preventative measures, outline recovery efforts, and address post-incident analysis.

Keep a list of contacts, equipment, and supplies necessary for records recovery.

Store physical records off the floor, in boxes, and on shelves.

Secure and restrict access to confidential records.

Delete what you can, retain what you must, and transfer what you are able.

Routinely inspect your records storage for safety, security, and organization.

Train staff to manage records and respond to emergency situations.

Evaluate your Disaster Recovery Plan on an annual basis.

The Washington State Archives helps agencies prepare for disasters by designating **ESSENTIAL** records, providing digital imaging/microfilm backup services, and storing/preserving access to **ARCHIVAL** records.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from Washington State Archives:**

[www.sos.wa.gov/archives](http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives)  
[recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov](mailto:recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov)