WASHINGTON
Secretary of State
Washington State Archives

Records Management Advice
Issued: June 2023
(Originally Issued: June 2021)

Disaster Preparedness:
Benefits of Preparing for Disasters

Purpose: Provide guidance to state agencies and local government entities on the benefits of preparing for an event that could damage or destroy agency records.

Preparing for a disaster allows agencies to:

1. **Save records/data**

   The more quickly and appropriately you can respond after a disaster, the better chance you have of saving and restoring records/data by getting backups up and running and salvaging damaged collections before they have time to deteriorate further.

2. **Save time and money**

   Being prepared for a disaster can save time, money, and assets. Information is one of your agency's most important and hard to replace assets. By creating backups of Essential-designated records and storing them offsite, your agency is able to continue its core business functions with minimal interruptions while also responding to the disaster. Having backups saves the times and money that would otherwise be spent trying to recreate the lost records/data.

3. **Be in compliance**

   Chapter 40.10 RCW requires that agencies create backups of Essential-designated records.

4. **Request help and notify staff**

   When you have taken the time to prepare staff phone trees and contact lists for different emergency related vendors/contractors, you can respond as soon as you learn of the disaster. In an emergency situation, time is often a significant determiner of how well your records will survive, be it a flood or a cyber attack.

5. **Mitigate potential health risks to staff**

   If the emergency creates a hazardous environment and you are prepared for those hazards you will be able to supply staff with safety equipment/PPE if they have to salvage records. If you have already done a practice run with staff for each potential hazard, then they will be better prepared to handle the situation.

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

www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov