

## **Some thoughts about emergency response during a period of lockdown**

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Now that most of us are working from home, and unable to access our collections, this might be a good time to take a look at your emergency plan: can it still be enacted, if necessary, during this period of lockdown? There are some important staffing issues that you may need to consider:

- ❖ Are the members of staff listed in your plan still available for call out?
- ❖ Are these members of staff at risk, or living with someone in the at-risk category? This may mean that they would not be able to respond to an emergency situation and may need to temporarily come off your call-out list
- ❖ How will staff be able to travel to site? Are they reliant on public transport and is this still available? Can they attend on foot? Do they have their own transport, and would there be somewhere for them to park that would not affect emergency vehicle access? If access to site will be difficult for some members of staff, then they too may need to come off your call-out list temporarily
- ❖ Are there other members of staff that could be temporarily drafted in for emergency call outs? The above issues will still need to be considered, as will ensuring a varied coverage of skills and seniority so that the emergency plan can be enacted safely and effectively
- ❖ Are there members of staff that can be involved in emergency response remotely? Perhaps there are calls and other tasks that can be coordinated remotely? Perhaps key staff, like conservators, can be available for video calls in order to assist with the incident assessment and give guidance for staff on the ground in terms of identifying priority tasks?
- ❖ The lockdown is likely to be a changing situation, with some staff showing symptoms and becoming unavailable through self-isolation. Is there a way that you can be in touch with your emergency response volunteers regularly to check their status so that you have up-to-date information? What's App, Doodle Polls or Survey Monkey might be useful tools to help you with this
- ❖ Do you need to plan a procedure for isolating volunteers after an incident? Should volunteers self-isolate after responding due to the nature of salvage work and the challenges it poses to social distancing?

There are a number of other issues to consider during this lockdown period. If thought is given to these in advance it will make any emergency response more efficient:

- ❖ Will staff need a letter and ID to demonstrate that they are considered essential staff if they are called out in an emergency situation? Who in your organisation can write and sign this letter and how can it be distributed? Can this be actioned now so that it is ready if required?
- ❖ If you are drafting new recruits into your emergency response call-out list, do they know what would be expected of them in an emergency situation? Give some thought to an emergency volunteer role description that could be shared with recruits (and those that are more experienced) detailing the key responsibilities and tasks they would be asked to undertake. This will be useful for training purposes in the future too.

- ❖ Are there any training resources that can be shared with new recruits? These could also be a useful refresher for more experienced staff who may currently have more time for training than usual. It is worthwhile remembering that different organisations will have different salvage approaches but some good general online resources include:
  - Salvage videos available at PreservationAust:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPB0FMgURCZlduSEvaf9tQQ>
  - Salvage videos available at AIC:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/aiconservation/videos>
  - Videos on how to deal with wet books at SUL Preservation:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/SULPreservation>
  - Videos covering emergency planning, response, salvage and recovery from US North East Museum Services Centre:  
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLFB5E3A6B21EBA8BE>
- ❖ Will you be able to access emergency response materials and equipment as usual? Have you been asked to donate PPE to the NHS? It is clearly essential that we support our health workers but consider that you may need some supplies in an emergency situation and there will be no possibility of purchasing additional PPE
- ❖ This could be a good opportunity to consider the distribution of disaster equipment across sites (if you have multiple sites) or even where they are located within buildings. It would be a good time to clearly communicate this information to volunteers so that they can easily find what they need.
- ❖ Are there local emergency response networks that you can hook into? Are there other local heritage organisations in the area that are in a similar position? Perhaps you can make contact and offer to share support and resources in an emergency situation? This might be particularly important when it comes to PPE. There are active groups in Edinburgh and Glasgow but perhaps now is the time to build local resilience networks across the country?

We all hope that the worst will not happen but we need to be ready in case it does. If thought is given to the above questions then you will be in a better position to respond, or help others to respond, should an emergency occur. Good luck and stay safe.