

A Seat at the Table: Working with the Disaster Workforce

Librarians should consider which resources they need to carry out these roles and develop plans to use them in community disaster response efforts.

1. Personal and Family

1. Do library staff members have a preparedness plan in place in the event they are unable to be at home for an extended time?
2. Do library staff members have the characteristics and skills needed to manage during an emergency?
 - Flexible
 - Civic-minded
 - Assertive
 - Able to connect needs of people with appropriate available resources
 - Organized
 - Knowledgeable about information sources
 - Adaptable
 - Knowledgeable about disaster preparation
 - Digitally literate
 - Have completed a basic Incident Command System (ICS) course
 - Calm under pressure
 - Politically savvy
 - Have contacts in the community or local government
 - Able to defuse angry or upset people
 - Good at networking
 - Have initiative
 - Persistent
 - Willing to take risks
 - Know when to engage others
 - Communication skills
 - Respectful of others and their ideas
 - Evaluative
 - Aware
 - Open/Honest
 - Consistent
 - Creative
 - Proactive versus reactive
 - Resourceful
 - Decisive

2. Institutional Capacity

1. Does your library have a disaster plan?
2. Does your library have a plan for immediate security in the event of civil unrest during business hours?
3. Does your library have a plan for sheltering in place?
4. Does your library's leadership team have multiple contact numbers for staff members, including cell numbers for other family members or neighbors?
5. Does your library have generators to use during power outages?
6. Does your library have Internet that will allow access to the general public?
7. Does your library have supplies necessary for staff members to shelter in place for at least 96 hours?
8. Has your library staff taken training in providing information services related to social services, medical information, insurance information, FEMA forms, and disaster response and recovery?
9. Will your library need to supply food, water, shelter, restroom facilities?

3. Business Continuity

1. How would your library staff provide service if the buildings were inaccessible for a long time?
2. What are the three most critical services your library must offer in an emergency?
3. Who would need to know your library was available to offer these services? (e.g., fire, police, media, general public, patients, students, etc.)
4. Do you know how to get the information for services to these groups? Do you have updated contact information for all media, fire, police, government officials, etc.?
5. What are the obstacles the library staff would face if they had to shelter in place for at least 96 hours?
6. What resources and supplies would be needed if the library staff must shelter in place for at least 96 hours?
7. Does your library's leadership team have the authority and ability to hire security guards or engage local law enforcement for help if your buildings were to remain open in the event of civil unrest within your community?
8. Does your library have a social media presence or blogging platform and a person to update followers about your status and the status of other relevant operations?
9. What resources, supplies, collections, staff, etc. would be needed to work remotely?
10. Do you have the authority to allow staff to work remotely? Is a mechanism in place to track staff time and continue to pay staff?
11. If library staff members evacuated to another town and were unable to return to work in a timely manner or if public transportation is unavailable, does your library's leadership team have the authority to hire temporary staff or engage community volunteers?
12. Would you have access to staff from other departments within your local government should you need them?

13. Do you have contact information for and are you able to get in touch with all critical staff to deploy or gather as necessary?
14. Do you have a relationship with and contact information for your top administrators in order to keep them updated on operations, issues and needs for critical replacement of resources?

4. Community capacity

1. What local organizations and agencies are active during disasters? What Federal organizations and agencies are active during disasters?

This activity will help you begin thinking through the relationships you need to build to have a seat at the table of disaster management.

2. List some of the key relationships that you and/or your library need to pursue. Suggestions include community organizers, community leaders, decision makers, and others with whom you can partner and collaborate. For this activity, keep things general. We will make a detailed list with contact information in the next section.
3. Identify some potential barriers to having a seat at the table and a place in the disaster management process.
4. List some potential solutions to overcome these barriers.

Federal

Position / Agency	Key Contact
Senator	[Insert contact information]
Representative	[Insert contact information]
FEMA	[Insert contact information]
Department of Homeland Security	[Insert contact information]

State

Position / Agency	Key Contact
Office of Emergency Preparedness	[Insert contact information]
Department of Homeland Security	[Insert contact information]
State Police	[Insert contact information]
Emergency Broadcasting System	[Insert contact information]

County/Parish

Position / Agency	Key Contact
Leaders	[Insert contact information]
Shelters	[Insert contact information]
Sheriff	[Insert contact information]
County Commissioners	[Insert contact information]

City/Town

Position / Agency	Key Contact
Mayor	[Insert contact information]
Police Department	[Insert contact information]
Fire Department	[Insert contact information]
Hospitals	[Insert contact information]
Shelters	[Insert contact information]
Facilities Management	[Insert contact information]

Institution

Position / Agency	Key Contact
Board	[Insert contact information]
Dean	[Insert contact information]
Director	[Insert contact information]
Staff	[Insert contact information]
Information Technology	[Insert contact information]
Facilities Manager	[Insert contact information]

Instructions: *Customize this letter of introduction as needed. Suggested edit points are denoted in brackets below. Replace the bracketed text with your own information or content as needed. Place the final copy on your institution's letterhead. Delete this text from the final document.*

[Insert date]

[Insert address]

Dear [Insert contact name]:

I am writing to ask for the opportunity to partner with you in community disaster planning. My library specializes in the research, organization, and dissemination of current news and information. The library staff has many capabilities for providing assistance in the acquisition and use of this information. I see many areas of potential cooperation and collaboration that will benefit those we both serve, especially during a disaster.

[Insert statement of your understanding of what this person/organization would need in an emergency.]

[Insert statement explaining how your library can address these needs.]

[Express your desire to collaborate and establish a working relationship. Ask for an opportunity to meet or engage in a phone call.]

[Insert statement of the follow-up you expect to make. Example: I will contact you soon to set a time for us to discuss the needs of our constituents.]

[Insert contact information.]

[Insert a closing statement thanking the individual in advance for her/his time.]

Sincerely,

Instructions: *Customize this follow-up phone call script. The purpose is not to create a word-for-word script of your phone conversation, but instead to guide you so that the conversation accomplishes its purpose.*

Phone Call Element	Things I plan to say or include, or notes I take during the call
1. Introduce yourself and say you were told that they (the administrative assistant) would know how to help you.	
2. State your specific needs and ask who would be the best contact.	
3. Obtain complete contact information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title • Office phone • Cell phone (if possible) • E-mail address 	
4. Find out when might be the best time to contact the person.	
5. Ask for the administrative assistant's mailing address (to send a thank-you card with your business card enclosed).	

Instructions: *Customize this introductory elevator speech as needed for your institution and goals.*

Elevator Speech Fundamentals

- Be succinct and brief.
- Convey only the most important information.

Decide What to Include

1. Identify your goal.
2. Explain what you do and why it is important.
3. Communicate your value.

Put it All Together

4. Combine your answers into a clear, concise elevator speech.

Sample:

“I help emergency responders in my town gain access to reliable, current, and verified information to support them in their decision making.”

Practice

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, the [National Network of Libraries of Medicine, South Central Region](#) reached out to network members to learn how the storm had impacted them on an individual and community level. [Chapter News: Hurricane Harvey: Voices from the Storm](#) provides a summary of what they learned.

For this self-reflection activity, consider how a major storm or event would impact you, your family, your colleagues, your community.

Use this form to document your thoughts.

5. What information do you need?
6. How will you access the information? What format will it be in?
7. Given time to prepare, what more could you do in a similar scenario?