

# THE COSTEP STARTER KIT

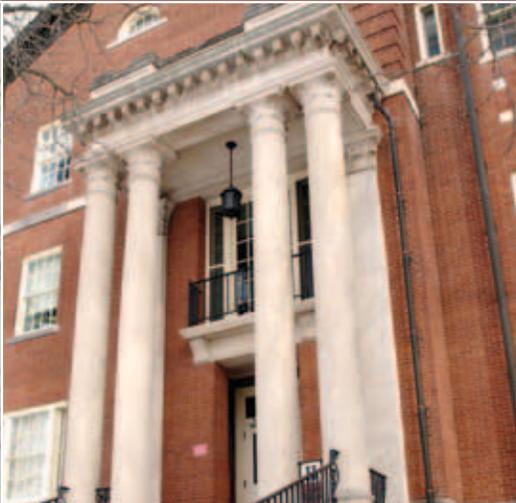


# COSTEP

Coordinated Statewide  
Emergency Preparedness

AN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

# A Handbook for the Cultural Community



NEDCC/Julie Martin

FEMA/Jocelyn Augustino

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[www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php](http://www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php)

**COSTEP was developed in cooperation with:**

- The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)
- The Massachusetts Archives
- The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)
- The Society of American Archivists (SAA)
- Heritage Preservation
- Lyrasis (formerly SOLINET)

COSTEP tools are available free of charge and are adaptable for non-commercial purposes.

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## NORTHEAST DOCUMENT CONSERVATION CENTER

COSTEP was developed by the Northeast Document Conservation Center. Founded in 1973, the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) is a nonprofit, regional conservation center specializing in the preservation of paper-based materials for libraries, archives, museums, and other collections-holding institutions, as well as private collections.

**For more information:**

Northeast Document Conservation Center  
100 Brickstone Square  
Andover, MA 01810  
978.470.1010  
[www.nedcc.org](http://www.nedcc.org)  
[costep@nedcc.org](mailto:costep@nedcc.org)



This project was made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Institute is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Its mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.



September 11, 2009

Many partners are needed to protect the cultural collections and historic sites that represent our heritage. Collaborative planning and coordinated response will lessen the damaging effects of disasters and help speed recovery. But the partnerships essential to protecting cultural heritage need to be in place before disaster strikes, and that is what makes the Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness framework a brilliant tool.

Beyond its obvious benefits to cultural heritage institutions and organizations, COSTEP provides a model that will serve to strengthen the state emergency planning process. It offers state agencies manageable and effective strategies for strengthening communication and planning.

Including historic and cultural resources in state and local emergency plans is a major goal of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. COSTEP represents significant progress toward achieving that end. Congratulations to the Northeast Document Conservation Center and its partners.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane S. Long".

Jane S. Long  
Vice President, Emergency Programs, Heritage Preservation  
Director, Heritage Emergency National Task Force

## Rethinking Disasters: Saving What Matters

In a disaster, what's worth saving? The most important—people and property. But then what? On a personal level, we are driven to save our history: photographs, children's artwork, our grandmother's wedding ring. On the community level, saving our natural, cultural, and historic resources is just as important; they document who we are and what we have done, and they provide inspiration for what we will become.

Our natural, cultural, and historic resources include irreplaceable documents, books, photographs, buildings, significant landscapes, recordings, artwork, furniture, and much more. They are found in a wide range of community locations, from libraries, museums, and archives to parks, historical sites, municipal offices, performing arts organizations, and businesses. In the aftermath of a disaster, these resources can help restore a sense of identity and normalcy, provide an economic anchor during the long-term recovery, and sustain and heal distressed communities.

Our cultural resources document who we are and what we have done, and they provide inspiration for what we will become.

Disasters require an "all hands on deck" response. For decades, emergency management agencies and first responders have been involved in emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. In recent years, following a series of large-scale disasters, stewards of cultural heritage have begun to broaden their thinking about disaster preparedness. Although institution-level preparedness is essential, it may be insufficient for area-wide disasters. Cultural organizations can respond more rapidly and com-

prehensively to prevent damage to collections by fostering regional networks and establishing relationships with emergency managers at the state and local levels.

COSTEP (Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness) is a free framework that can help the emergency management and cultural communities work together to preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources that matter to us all. This Starter Kit aims to familiarize users with the COSTEP process and suggest ways to get started. Notice the unique layout of this booklet: one side is designed for cultural heritage staff, and the other, for emergency managers. By meeting in the middle, these two communities can achieve success in protecting our nation's cultural heritage.

COSTEP is an initiative funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Developed by the Northeast Document Conservation Center in partnership with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Massachusetts Archives, it is available free of charge and may be adapted for non-commercial purposes.



FEMA/Jennifer Smits



NEDCC/Julie Martin

## Cultural Institutions and Emergency Management

Emergency managers work daily on mitigation, response, and recovery for life and property. Emergency management agencies in each state have identified hazards, conducted risk assessments, and have plans in place that can incorporate cultural collections. It's critical that the cultural community create relationships with state and local emergency management agencies and work to integrate cultural resources into existing emergency management processes. This will enable cultural institutions not only to help themselves and one another, but also to use their own resources and capabilities to benefit the community as a whole. For example, during an emergency, cultural institutions benefit from knowing how the Incident Command System (or ICS) works. Should a disaster strike, familiarity with ICS can help institutions navigate the system and gain access to their collections in a timely manner.

State and federal response plans have not typically recognized cultural collections as a priority during disaster response. The Talking Points section of this booklet suggests ways in which you might introduce the idea to emergency management personnel in your state.



Courtesy of Hopkinton NH Historical Society



Massachusetts Archives/ Jennifer Fausmith

Cultural organizations can respond more rapidly and comprehensively to prevent damage to collections by fostering regional networks and establishing relationships with emergency managers at the state and local levels.



Georgia Archives/Christine Wiseman

The COSTEP framework is available online and as a downloadable PDF at [www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php](http://www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php). For more information, please email [costep@nedcc.org](mailto:costep@nedcc.org).

## COSTEP Outcomes

When cultural organizations and emergency management agencies form partnerships, successful planning for emergency preparedness is more likely to occur. Outcomes can include:

- Identifying libraries and/or museums as potential Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)
- Incorporating cultural resource data into existing Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs)
- Familiarizing cultural institutions with standard emergency management structures and terminology
- Presenting workshops that encourage individual institutions to create emergency plans
- Launching a GIS initiative to create data layers that show the location and basic attributes of cultural resource institutions
- Developing training modules on cultural resources for local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)

## COSTEP in a Nutshell

The work of coordinating statewide disaster response can seem daunting, but the COSTEP program can be built in stages and worked around busy schedules. It should be viewed as a process that will continue over time, rather than a project that begins and ends. To help make the process more manageable, COSTEP is organized around four components.

### COSTEP's Four Basic Components

- **Building Relationships** – Establishing relationships with personnel in key organizations in your state is one of the most important steps. This component encourages discussion and interaction about similarities and differences among agencies/institutions, and building relationships among them.
- **Mitigating Hazards** – Emergency management agencies in each state have conducted hazard and risk assessments, and have plans and processes in place that can easily incorporate cultural institutions.
- **Preparing for Response** – Focusing on preparation for the response and recovery phases of an emergency, this section is at the heart of the project. A timely and organized response will ensure human safety as well as proper salvage of collections.
- **Sustaining COSTEP** – Because emergency management is a process rather than a project that begins and ends, sustainability must be considered. Training, outreach, and relationships are emphasized in this component.



Each state will be starting from a different level of “preparedness.” To help you determine how prepared your state is, the COSTEP framework provides checklists for the *Essential*, *Enhanced*, and *Excellent* outcomes and products for each component. *Essential* is the basic level of preparedness; *Enhanced* and *Excellent* are more developed stages.

**For example, the *Essential* outcomes for the Building Relationships component include:**

- A list of agencies, institutions, and organizations participating in statewide planning efforts to date
- A mission statement for the COSTEP initiative, approved by the participants
- A prioritized list of initial COSTEP goals and next steps
- Dates for meetings of the leadership team and the larger group to address the next phases of COSTEP

***Enhanced* outcomes for the Building Relationships component include the *Essential* outcomes, plus:**

- A detailed, written plan for proceeding with statewide emergency planning for cultural resources (e.g., prioritized issues to address, structure for the planning effort, future meeting schedules, and participants for such meetings)
- A Web site or wiki to communicate information about COSTEP activities to participants and other interested institutions and organizations within the state

It is important to remember that COSTEP is not a “fill-in-the-blank” template but an action plan designed to help you create a process that will work in your state. It is freely adaptable and works well with other emergency preparedness initiatives underway in both the cultural and emergency management communities.



FEMA/George Armstrong

The work of coordinating statewide disaster response can seem daunting, but the COSTEP program can be built in stages and worked around busy schedules. When cultural organizations and emergency management agencies form partnerships, successful planning for emergency preparedness is more likely to occur.

## Building Your COSTEP Team

### Who Will Lead?

Forming a leadership team for your COSTEP initiative is an excellent first step. This team can lead the direction of the process, maintain the momentum of the group, and bring in members. It's wise to recruit members with a variety of professional perspectives and to include representatives from your state's libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies, as well as state emergency management agency personnel. A diverse team will bring fresh viewpoints to the discussion and open new lines of communication. The team should be kept relatively small in order to facilitate discussion and speedy decision making.

### Bringing in Other Team Members

The more committed your leadership team members, the more successful your COSTEP program will be. The team will likely face the challenges of explaining COSTEP to other potential members, spreading enthusiasm for the initiative, and convincing emergency managers of the importance of natural, cultural, and historic collections. Thanks to national efforts such as Heritage Preservation's Alliance for Response Forums and the Council of State Archivists' IPER (Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records) program, emergency managers are becoming more aware of the importance of cultural resources. The leadership team can use this to their advantage as they build their COSTEP planning group. For example, an Alliance for Response Forum might already have laid the groundwork in your state for communication between the cultural and emergency management communities. Or, your state may have been involved with the Council of State Archivists' (CoSA's) IPER or Emergency Preparedness Initiative (EPI) projects, and these teams can get involved with COSTEP, sharing the information they have and the relationships they've established. If your state hasn't made headway in the past with emergency managers, use the Talking Points and Ideas for Making Contact sections of this booklet for inspiration on ways to get the ball rolling.

## Funding

Though lack of funding is often a concern for cultural institutions, it should not be an obstacle in emergency preparedness efforts. The costs associated with a COSTEP project are minimal, although they may vary with respective circumstances in each state. Face-to-face meetings represent the greatest potential expense because they typically require some travel, as well as donations of staff time, meeting space, and perhaps refreshments. But it's important to remember the payoff—every dollar spent on mitigation saves an average of four dollars on recovery!

The geographical size of your state will likely have an impact on both the meeting process and financial considerations. Larger states might find it too expensive to meet face-to-face and might instead utilize conference calls and/or email listservs to communicate. Regional professional association meetings provide good opportunities to meet with other participants, talk about the project, and bring in new members. There are also new and exciting ways to use technology to connect people over long distances at little to no cost; see the Technology section of this booklet for more information.

## Talking Points

You may find it necessary to make a pitch to potential team members or to emergency management professionals. Here are a few talking points that might help you bring people on board.

- **Present yourself as a partner, not as a consumer.** Just as members of an emergency management team have capabilities and access to resources during a disaster, cultural institutions bring capabilities and resources of their own to the table. Emphasize what cultural institutions have to offer rather than what they require.
- **Affirm the importance of saving cultural resources.** Salvaging cultural collections is an important part of recovery following a disaster. Documents stored in a town hall prove land ownership, births, deaths, and marriages. Collections in a library, museum, or historical society contain books, manuscripts, art, and photographs that document local history. These are often the only copies in existence and have powerful meaning to residents of the community as it recovers.
- **Timely response is important.** Though ensuring life safety is paramount in the aftermath of a disaster, designated staff members at cultural institutions need to be granted access to their collections as soon as possible. For example, many items are fragile and highly susceptible to mold damage, but mold growth can be prevented if an appropriate response occurs within approximately 48 hours after a water emergency.
- **All response is local, but management can be statewide.** Response to disasters begins at the local level. Yet emergency management is a statewide effort. COSTEP can help shape a preparedness and response plan for natural, cultural, and historical resources that can be incorporated into the existing state Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and/or other state-level plans.
- **Why use COSTEP?** Often, making contact and establishing communication are the most difficult parts of emergency preparedness and response. COSTEP can serve as a platform for initial and ongoing dialogue between stewards of cultural resources and emergency managers.



FEMA/Joelynn Augustino

Though lack of funding is often a concern for cultural institutions, it should not be an obstacle in emergency preparedness. Remember: every dollar spent on mitigation saves an average of four dollars on recovery.

## Bring Something to the Table!

Cultural institutions have important resources to contribute. In Massachusetts and Florida, working in conjunction with state and federal emergency managers, public libraries are being prepared to serve as Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)—sites to which individuals go for assistance after a disaster. This use is a natural extension of what libraries do best: serve the public. America's public libraries have long been a centralized information resource, providing reference assistance, family programs, and Internet access. Library staff members support their patrons on a personal as well as community level. In the event of a disaster, these services become even more valuable to recovering communities. Libraries can help in many ways, from providing assistance in filling out FEMA forms to providing Internet access to supplying electricity for charging cell phones and laptops. Libraries can help restore a sense of normalcy by providing library materials, children's programs, and meeting spaces. To learn how Florida's public libraries are engaging in hurricane preparedness and response activities, see <http://hurricanes.ii.fsu.edu/>.

Museums can be useful emergency planning and response sites as well. They often have auditorium and meeting rooms where, for example, hurricane preparation training can be offered. These spaces can be offered to relief workers, can serve as shelters for evacuees, or can be staffed for phone banks. Museum professionals, accustomed to dealing with large crowds, can organize their institution to serve as a point of distribution (POD) of aid, a venue for a live performance to lift the spirit, or simply a place for residents to gather.



## Ideas for Making Contact

- Identify someone at your state emergency management agency who might be sympathetic to your cause. Ask colleagues for contacts they may have; perhaps someone has heard a speaker on the topic during a conference or has otherwise crossed paths with an emergency manager. Sometimes all you need to initiate contact is a name.
- Familiarize yourself with existing plans and information that the agency has already established.
- Take the free ICS training online so that you more fully understand the system within which emergency managers operate—and within which cultural institutions must operate—during an emergency. See <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100a.asp>.
- Get involved with a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program in your community. See [www.citizencorps.gov/cert/](http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/).
- Find out if an Alliance for Response Forum has taken place in your state; if so, emergency managers will already know a fair amount about the importance of cultural collections. More information may be found at the Forum Web site, [www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/index.html](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/index.html).
- Find out if your state emergency management agency was involved with CoSA's IPER initiative. More information may be found at the CoSA Web site, [www.statearchivists.org/iper/index.htm](http://www.statearchivists.org/iper/index.htm).



FEMA/Jocelyn Augustino



FEMA/Jocelyn Augustino

## Using Technology

There are many new and exciting ways to use technology to start and support your COSTEP program. Using online tools is a low- or no-cost way to bring people together, especially when travel costs are an issue.

- **Email listserv**—This is the most basic way to keep people connected. Nearly everyone uses email, and listservs can be set up easily through Yahoo!, Google, or other free online services. You need invest very little time in setting up listservs, and even people who shy away from technology find them easy to use.
- **Web site**—A Web site is an easy way for one person to post information about COSTEP. The page can be an extension of a participating institution's Web site.
- **Blog**—There are several free blogging platforms out there, including WordPress and Blogger. They are easy to use and can be updated by one or many people.
- **Online videos**—Training videos, presentations, or meetings can be uploaded to sites such as YouTube and shared with team members unable to attend live events. Also, videos can be produced by the team and shared with people across the state as outreach or training tools.
- **Wiki**—Requiring a bit more technological expertise, wikis enable everyone who can access the site to edit that site. They can upload files, leave comments, create pages, and so on. Administrators still retain control of the majority of the site, but enable users to update certain parts of the site.
- **Social networking**—Setting up a social networking site is great for a team that is widely dispersed. If there is enough involvement, members can benefit from discussion boards, forums, or just day-to-day updates. Sites such as Facebook and Ning are examples.

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FEMA/Andrea Booher

FEMA/Jocelyn Augustino

FEMA/David Saville

FEMA News Photo



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September 11, 2009

The *National Preparedness Guidelines* were published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in September 2007. Its vision states preparedness is the responsibility of every level of government, every nongovernmental organization, and every business and individual. The *Guidelines* are a call to action, and COSTEP—Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness: An Emergency Management Framework for Cultural Resources—answers that call for cultural resource entities.

Developed by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) and the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC), COSTEP is a vehicle for states to engage the cultural resource community as part of the emergency response community. Now states can use lessons learned in major disasters like hurricanes Katrina and Ike to ensure their historic, cultural, and archival institutions are better prepared for and better able to respond to disaster events.

This is not a “cookie cutter” plan. COSTEP is the premiere vehicle for leadership teams of each state to develop a plan to fit their unique circumstances. Well constructed, COSTEP will also provide the cultural resource community entrée to emergency management during the recovery phase of a disaster.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jack Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jack Sullivan  
FEMA Region I  
Environmental and Historic Preservation Officer



FEMA/Andrea Booher; background photo/NOAA

## Rethinking Disasters: Including Cultural Resources

**A**lthough emergency managers face enormous challenges when disaster strikes, you are highly effective because well-considered plans are in place ahead of time. In the wake of disasters such as hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Ike, cultural institutions around the country have begun to broaden their thinking about disaster preparedness in order to save irreplaceable natural, cultural, and historic resources. Although institution-level preparedness is essential, it may be insufficient for area-wide disasters. Cultural organizations can respond more rapidly and comprehensively to prevent damage to collections by fostering regional networks and establishing relationships with emergency managers at the state and local levels.

Covered under federal ESF #11, our natural, cultural, and historic (NCH) resources include irreplaceable documents, books, photographs, buildings, significant landscapes, recordings, artwork, furniture, and much more. They are found in a wide range of community locations, from libraries, museums, and archives to parks, historical sites, municipal offices, performing arts organizations, and businesses. They document who we are and what we have done, and they provide inspiration for what we will become. In the aftermath of a disaster, these resources can help restore a sense of identity and

normalcy, provide an economic anchor during the long-term recovery, and sustain and heal distressed communities. As tourist destinations, cultural institutions may represent a dense and vulnerable concentration of people at any given time. It is vitally important that emergency managers help prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters that might affect these institutions and organizations.

*Our cultural resources document who we are and what we have done,  
and they provide inspiration for what we will become.*

COSTEP (Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness) is a free framework that can help the emergency management and cultural communities work together to preserve the natural, cultural, and historic resources that matter to us all. This Starter Kit aims to familiarize users with the COSTEP process and suggest ways to get started. Notice the unique layout of this booklet: one side is designed for emergency managers, and the other, for cultural heritage staff. By meeting in the middle, these two communities can achieve success in protecting our nation's cultural heritage.

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Georgia Archives/Christine Wiseman

## Partners in Response: How Can We Help Each Other?

- Y**our knowledge of current risk assessments, CEMPs (Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans), and hazard mitigation plans is extremely valuable to the COSTEP process. Ways in which your expertise can help safeguard cultural resources include:
- Educating the cultural community about national and state frameworks, risk assessments, and mitigation and preparedness planning
  - Incorporating threats and damage to cultural resources as injects into state all-hazards preparedness exercise scenarios
  - Providing assistance with access to cultural institutions following a disaster
  - Working with institutional disaster response teams to facilitate the salvage of their collections
  - Understanding the importance of restoring power to an institution—to provide services to the community, to address climate control issues for collections

No one expects you to do all the work. Cultural heritage workers are passionate about their profession and want to work with you to save their collections. They are used to serving the public and recognize that their collections belong not to them, but to the community. Still, they can't do it alone; planning for area-wide disasters must be a joint effort. ESF #11 Coordinators can help by getting to know institutional contacts at the local level and establishing a primary Point of Contact for the cultural community at the state level. A COSTEP team consisting of cultural resource managers and EMs can work together to develop an annex to the state CEMP for the protection of cultural and historic resources.

In the aftermath of a disaster, cultural resources can help restore a sense of identity and normalcy, provide an economic anchor during the long-term recovery, and sustain and heal distressed communities.



FEMA/Jennifer Smits

## COSTEP Outcomes

When cultural organizations and emergency management agencies form partnerships, successful planning for emergency preparedness is more likely to occur. Outcomes can include:

- Identifying libraries and/or museums as potential Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)
- Incorporating cultural resource data into existing Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs)
- Familiarizing cultural institutions with standard emergency management structures and terminology
- Presenting workshops that encourage individual institutions to create emergency plans
- Launching a GIS initiative to create data layers that show the location and basic attributes of cultural resource institutions
- Developing training modules on cultural resources for local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)

## COSTEP in a Nutshell

We understand that the work of coordinating statewide response for NCH resources can seem daunting, but a COSTEP program can be built in stages and worked around busy schedules. It should be viewed as a process that will continue over time, rather than a project that begins and ends. To help make the process more manageable, COSTEP is organized around four components.

### COSTEP's Four Basic Components

- **Building Relationships**—Establishing relationships with personnel in key organizations in your state is one of the most important steps. This component encourages discussion and interaction about similarities and differences among agencies/institutions, and building relationships among them.
- **Mitigating Hazards**—Emergency management agencies in each state have conducted hazard and risk assessments, and have plans and processes in place that can easily incorporate cultural institutions.
- **Preparing for Response**—Focusing on preparation for the response and recovery phases of an emergency, this section is at the heart of the project. A timely and organized response will ensure human safety as well as proper salvage of collections.
- **Sustaining COSTEP**—Because emergency management is a process rather than a project that begins and ends, sustainability must be considered. Training, outreach, and relationships are emphasized in this component.



Each state will be starting from a different level of “preparedness.” To help you determine how prepared your state is, the COSTEP framework provides checklists for the *Essential*, *Enhanced*, and *Excellent* outcomes and products for each component. *Essential* is the basic level of preparedness; *Enhanced* and *Excellent* are more developed stages.

**For example, the *Essential* outcomes for the Building Relationships component include:**

- A list of agencies, institutions, and organizations participating in statewide emergency planning efforts to date
- A mission statement for the COSTEP initiative, approved by the participants
- A prioritized list of initial COSTEP goals and next steps
- Dates for meetings of the leadership team and the larger group to address the next phases of COSTEP

***Enhanced* outcomes for the Building Relationships component include the *Essential* outcomes, plus:**

- A detailed, written plan for proceeding with statewide emergency planning for cultural resources (e.g., prioritized issues to address, structure for the planning effort, future meeting schedules, and participants for such meetings)
- A Web site or wiki to communicate information about COSTEP activities to participants and other interested institutions and organizations within the state

It is important to remember that COSTEP is not a “fill-in-the-blank” template but an action plan designed to help you create a process that will work in your state. It is freely adaptable and works well with other emergency preparedness initiatives underway in both the cultural and emergency management communities.



FEMA/George Armstrong

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## Funding

Though lack of funding is often a concern for cultural institutions, it should not be an obstacle in emergency preparedness efforts. The costs associated with a COSTEP project are minimal, although they may vary with respective circumstances in each state. Face-to-face meetings represent the greatest potential expense because they typically require some travel, as well as donations of staff time, meeting space, and perhaps refreshments. But it's important to remember the payoff—every dollar spent on mitigation saves an average of four dollars on recovery!

The geographical size of your state will likely have an impact on both the meeting process and financial considerations. Larger states might find it too expensive to meet face-to-face and might instead utilize conference calls and/or email listservs to communicate. Regional professional association meetings provide good opportunities to meet with other participants, talk about the project, and bring in new members. There are also new and exciting ways to use technology to connect people over long distances at little to no cost. See the Technology section of this booklet for more information.



FEMA/Marvin Nauman

## Talking Points

You may find it necessary to make a pitch to potential team members. Here are a few talking points that might help you bring people on board.

**Cultural institutions can be partners, not consumers.** Just as emergency managers have access to resources and capabilities that could be used to assist cultural institutions during an emergency, cultural institutions bring resources and capabilities of their own to the table. Large, centralized facilities and considerable experience in dealing with large numbers of people are just two of those assets.

**Affirm the importance of saving cultural resources.** Salvaging cultural collections is an important part of recovery following a disaster. Documents stored in a town hall prove land ownership, births, deaths, and marriages. Collections in a library, museum, or historical society contain books, manuscripts, art, and photographs that document local history. These are often the only copies in existence and have powerful meaning to residents of the community as it recovers. Natural and cultural resources and historic properties are now covered in the National Response Framework under ESF #11.

**Timely response is important.** Though ensuring life safety is paramount in the aftermath of a disaster, designated staff members at cultural institutions need to be granted access to their collections as soon as possible. For example, many items are fragile and highly susceptible to mold damage, but mold growth can be prevented if an appropriate response occurs within approximately 48 hours after a water emergency.

**All response is local, but management can be statewide.** Response to disasters begins at the local level. Yet emergency management is a statewide effort. COSTEP can help shape a preparedness and response plan for natural, cultural, and historical resources that can be incorporated into the existing state Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and/or other state-level plans.

**Why use COSTEP?** Often, making contact and establishing communication are the most difficult parts of emergency preparedness and response. COSTEP can serve as a platform for initial and ongoing dialogue between emergency managers and stewards of cultural resources.

## Cultural Institutions *Do* Bring Something to the Table!



FEMA/George Armstrong

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Cultural institutions have important resources to contribute.

Cultural institutions have important resources to contribute. In Massachusetts and Florida, working in conjunction with state and federal emergency managers, public libraries are being prepared to serve as Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)—sites to which individuals go for assistance after a disaster. This use is a natural extension of what libraries do best: serve the public. America's public libraries have long been a centralized information resource, providing reference assistance, family programs, and Internet access. Library staff members support their patrons on a personal as well as community level. In the event of a disaster, these services become even more valuable to recovering communities. Libraries can help in many ways, from providing assistance in filling out FEMA forms to supplying electricity for charging cell phones and laptops to restoring a sense of normalcy by providing library materials, children's programs, and meeting spaces. To learn how Florida's public libraries are engaging in hurricane preparedness and response activities, see <http://hurricanes.ii.fsu.edu/>.

Museums can be useful emergency planning and response sites as well. They often have auditorium and meeting rooms where, for example, hurricane preparation training can be offered. These spaces can be offered to relief workers, can serve as shelters for evacuees, or can be staffed for phone banks. Museum professionals, accustomed to dealing with large crowds, can organize their institution to serve as a point of distribution (POD) of aid, a venue for a live performance to lift the spirit, or simply a place for residents to gather.



## Ideas for Making Contact

Cultural heritage managers and emergency managers share a desire to safeguard resources that are important to the history and the ongoing lives of communities. You don't have to wait for a cultural resource manager to contact you.

- If you're an emergency management director for a city or town, reach out to the directors of local cultural institutions—the public library, the historical society, the preservation society.
- If you're an emergency manager at the state level, contact the state librarian, the state archivist, or the head of the state historic preservation office.
- If you're an emergency manager at the federal level, explore the collaborative activities undertaken in FEMA Region I.



FEMA/John Shea

- The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the Heritage Emergency National Task Force are both support agencies of ESF #11. Connecting with your NARA regional office or with the Task Force will provide some leads.
- Find out if an Alliance for Response Forum has taken place in your state; if so, you will already know a fair amount about the importance of cultural collections. More information may be found at the Forum Web site, [www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/index.html](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/AfR/index.html).
- Find out if your state emergency management agency was involved with CoSA's IPER initiative. More information may be found at the CoSA Web site, [www.statearchivists.org/iper/index.htm](http://www.statearchivists.org/iper/index.htm).

## Using Technology

There are many new and exciting ways to use technology to start and support your COSTEP program. Using online tools is a low- or no-cost way to bring people together, especially when travel costs are an issue.

- **Email listserv**—This is the most basic way to keep people connected. Nearly everyone uses email, and listservs can be set up easily through Yahoo!, Google, or other free online services. You need invest very little time in setting up listservs, and even people who shy away from technology find them easy to use.
- **Web site**—A Web site is an easy way for one person to post information about COSTEP. The page can be an extension of a participating institution's Web site.
- **Blog**—There are several free blogging platforms out there, including WordPress and Blogger. They are easy to use and can be updated by one or many people.
- **Online videos**—Training videos, presentations, or meetings can be uploaded to sites such as YouTube and shared with team members unable to attend live events. Also, videos can be produced by the team and shared with people across the state as outreach or training tools.
- **Wiki**—Requiring a bit more technological expertise, wikis enable everyone who can access the site to edit that site. They can upload files, leave comments, create pages, and so on. Administrators still retain control of the majority of the site, but enable users to update certain parts of the site.
- **Social networking**—Setting up a social networking site is great for a team that is widely dispersed. If there is enough involvement, members can benefit from discussion boards, forums, or just day-to-day updates. Sites such as Facebook and Ning are examples.