



# DISASTER PLANNING FOR FINE ART AND COLLECTIBLES

Furniture, rugs, wine, cars, firearms, jewelry, coins

Having a disaster plan for your collection – whatever it may be – can help you more effectively preserve your investment in those valuable items to enjoy for years to come. Thinking through options, setting priorities and identifying resources before a loss will help you respond immediately if a loss occurs, helping to minimize damage.

## BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES

- Inventory your collection – If you don't already have an inventory for insurance purposes, create one
  - List all relevant details: medium, artist, size, value
  - Record any pre-existing damage or flaws
  - Include photos; have at least two copies, digital and printed. One set should be stored off-site
  - Maintain and preserve any records connected to your collection – receipts, artist bios, auction catalogs, etc.
- Do a vulnerability survey – Consider what the object might need in a variety of circumstances: fire, water, extreme temperatures, breakage from earthquake, etc. A qualified conservator can help you identify a course of action should you have a loss.
- How is the object installed? What resources (from a screwdriver to a forklift) will be needed to access, stabilize or move it?
- List the names and contact information for restoration professionals qualified to work on each item

## PERSONAL SAFETY

Above all, remember that safety comes first. Don't endanger yourself, your family or staff on behalf of decorative art objects.

- Buildings damaged by fire, hurricane, flood or earthquake may be unstable, and it could be hours, days or even weeks before recovery can begin. Public safety authorities may restrict access to your property until danger has passed.
- Handle items carefully, considering potential health risks. The air or surfaces may be contaminated by asbestos, chemicals, residue from floodwater or sewage or other hazards. Depending on materials used, the artwork itself may pose a hazard – for example, ethnographic material may have been treated with arsenic compounds or other toxic material or may contain lead.
- Guard against fatigue and exertion so as not to increase your risk of injury.
- Be alert for ongoing hazards such as earthquake aftershocks or electrical charge when power is restored after an outage.

## RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

- As soon as possible, secure the site with an alarm system or armed guards.
- Install a generator to add illumination and climate control that will deter theft and prevent further damage from changes in humidity and temperature.
- Photograph damaged items in place, if possible.
- Recover and transport offsite as much of the collection as possible for temporary safekeeping, taking care with packing, handling, transportation and documentation.
- Timely response can protect items from rapid changes in temperature and humidity. Direct contact with water may result in mold growth, and the sooner the works can be removed, triaged and stabilized, the better the prognosis for preservation.

## STAY ON TRACK

While your instinct may be to save everything, that is not always possible or effective. Your inventory will help you prioritize salvage operations, putting your efforts toward rare or more valuable objects.

## SALVAGE

A trained conservator can help you refine your plan for your specific collection. Here are just some of the conditions you may need to plan for, depending on your circumstances. While you may be able to complete some salvage operations yourself, you may choose to engage professionals to assist with others.



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