



Collections

Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Prevention

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NMI Collections Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response Policy

This National Museum of Ireland (NMI) policy addresses Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Prevention at the National Museum of Ireland. It acts as a framework to introduce risk assessments and actions to take before, during, and after situations that could lead to disasters for collections. This policy is not a set of procedures or steps to take during an emergency, but outlines the risk to collections associated with disasters, and what structures and training should exist within the museum to mitigate and prevent them. It also addresses contingencies for business continuity after disaster.

Legislative Basis

The NMI manages its collections of Museum Heritage Objects under powers conferred by section 11 of the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997. This states that:

12. — (2) *The Board shall have all such powers as it considers necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions under this Act including, but without prejudice to the foregoing, the following powers:*

(a) to conserve and restore the museum heritage objects in the collection of the Museum,

The term “museum heritage object” is defined in the 1997 Act as:

(a) any object in the collection of the Museum on the Museum establishment day,

(b) any object (including archaeological objects, objects relating to the decorative arts or natural sciences or to history or industry or folklife) over 25 years old considered appropriate by the Board for inclusion in the collection of the Museum concerning human life in Ireland, the natural history of Ireland, and of the relations of Ireland with other countries, and

(c) any other similar objects;

In order for the Board of NMI to fulfil its statutory role to conserve the objects in its care, it is necessary to plan for events that could adversely affect those objects, and have suitable plans in place to recover from such an event, with minimal loss or damage to those objects.

Emergencies in the Museum

Emergencies may be sudden events that lead to harm to the people within the museum, damage or loss of the collection, or to the structure in which the collection is housed. These can cause sudden or unexpected disasters that may be small and focused on a small area of the museum, or be all encompassing and a threat to the entire site. These emergencies can be natural or human-made.

Examples of emergencies include:

- Water/Flood
- Fire
- Earthquake
- Warfare, Terrorism, Protest

- Hurricane/Severe Storms
- Hazardous Material Accident
- Explosion
- Building Management System (BMS)/Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Malfunction
- Handling Accident
- Theft

In addition to emergencies, collections may be at long-term risk from less obvious sources of hazard. Incremental disasters may occur slowly over time, often without being noticed until there is a large amount of loss or damage. Despite their incremental effect, the level of damage can be more or equal to a sudden or unexpected disaster. Examples include:

- Chemical degradation from environmental acids and gases
- Mould infestation
- Insect infestation
- Custodial neglect leading to loss of objects
- Uncontrolled environmental conditions
- Uncontrolled natural or artificial light
- Impact of building works on building structure and objects

NMI will mitigate the risks of disasters by:

1. Using a risk assessment approach to the identification of potentials for disaster across all collections, on all sites.
2. Ensuring appropriate training of all relevant staff to the levels required for each.

Emergency Preparedness

In relation to this policy, an 'emergency' is an unexpected event that leads to harm to the people within the museum, damage or loss of the collection, or to the structure in which the collection is housed.

1. NMI will prepare an Emergency Plan for Collections to address all core collections on all sites of NMI, including as far as is practicable, objects on loan to other institutions.
2. The responsibility for the production and regular updating of an Emergency Plan for Collections will rest with the Head of Collections & Learning.
3. The Emergency Plan for Collections will document agreements with other institutions for shared response to a major incident.
4. The Emergency Plan for Collections will include a list of designated staff to have particular responsibilities during and after an emergency. These will be in the form of a contact tree hierarchy, with named contacts or post-holders as appropriate.
5. The Emergency Plan for Collections will be accessible in all security control centres of NMI.
6. NMI will designate a named manager for each museum site with responsibility for emergency preparedness for that site.
7. Regular site risk assessments will be undertaken by collections staff.
8. Object registers will be duplicated in digital and/or paper form and kept in separate areas from the originals.

9. NMI will ensure that all staff has received disaster and scenario training, undertaking refresher courses across all sites.
10. NMI will maintain and regularly update an inventory list of high priority, high value, and high significance objects that are priorities for rescue.
11. In line with digital and retention policies, records and archives are to be securely stored in duplicate, and if possible on a secondary site
12. HVAC systems will be monitored, cleaned, and professionally assessed yearly.
13. NMI will operate continuous Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and other preventive monitoring programs.
14. NMI will maintain a strong relationship with local emergency first responders including An Garda Síochána, local Fire Services and First Aid.
15. Each site will be required to have a Disaster Procedures Manual designed specifically for that site and its buildings.
16. All on-site staff should have access to the Disaster Procedures Manual, know where it is kept, and have access to emergency contact numbers to call in the event of a disaster.
17. The disaster recovery team present during the recovery effort should include at every possible instance at least one conservator, curator.
18. The Emergency Plan for Collections and local Disaster Procedures Manual will be tested by regular exercises that are recorded and reviewed.

Emergency Response

The response in the event of an emergency may contain the scale of any disaster that could lead to harm to the people within the museum, damage or loss of the collection, or to the structure in which the collection is housed.

1. The Emergency Plan for Collections will be activated at a local level in response to an emergency and local NMI Security staff informed.
2. NMI Security staff will manage the notification process to ensure that the contact tree hierarchy is followed.
3. NMI will use designated off-site recovery spaces into which objects, and other museum materials can be relocated following an emergency. These will be secure and as environmentally stable as possible.
4. Each site will maintain disaster bins with emergency supplies and ensure that staff are aware where they are located.
5. Following initial rescue, conservators will approve and oversee all treatment procedures for objects damaged or compromised during a disaster.
6. NMI will ensure that staff and other responders are cared for throughout the disaster recovery process.
7. NMI will review and document all emergency response and disaster recovery activities.