



# Disaster Recovery

*A major threat to the preservation of information is the risk of disaster, natural or otherwise. Many other minor incidents can also have a large impact on the ability of a business or area to function normally if their records are lost or damaged. This advice is provided to assist in identifying possible risks to records and to aid in the recovery process should an incident occur.*

*All staff have a responsibility to be aware of the need to protect and preserve University Records and to monitor for situations that could be hazardous.*

## How can I prevent a disaster?

Damage and loss of information due to disasters can be minimised or prevented by identifying hazards and assessing possible risks. This can be done by:

### Checking the physical location and environment of records storage areas

- Where are records stored and kept?
- Are the doors fire-rated?
- What kind of fire suppression is in place? If water based, are they directly overhead?
- Are flammable chemicals or other hazardous materials stored nearby?
- Can the area be securely locked?
- Are there overhead pipes which may leak?
- Are nearby gutters and drains unblocked or cleared regularly?
- Is there any evidence of mould or dampness in the area?
- Is there any evidence of pest infestation?
- Temperature and humidity levels - are they constant or widely fluctuating?
- Is there prolonged sunlight in the records area?

### Checking access and security

- Are staff familiar with how to handle and store paper and electronic records?
- Who has access to computerised data?
- Who has access to the area?
- Can records be locked away when the room is unattended?
- Are access routes to records storage areas clear?
- Where are the exits?
- Who has access to the building and at what times?

## What action can I take?

Steps to remedy a problem may include:

- Organise the prompt repair of leaks where necessary
- Arrange for gutters to be cleared of leaves and debris regularly
- Arrange for preventative pest treatments (check which chemicals are used—some can damage paper records and be toxic to people)
- Keep access to records areas clear by removing obstacles and rubbish

- Keep blinds lowered in records storage areas that have windows that let in sunlight.
- Consider alternative fire suppression options rather than water based suppression in records areas
- For open shelf systems, raise the bottom shelf above potential water flood level or don't use bottom shelf at all
- Ensure the top shelf of storage units used to house records have a cover to prevent water pouring onto records in the event of a disaster
- Use proper electrical hardware, don't piggy-back plugs, or use heaters with exposed elements or drape electrical cords across walkways
- Remove any flammable chemicals from the area
- Increase security by locking rooms or filing cabinets when room is unattended

## What changes can I implement to minimise risks?

Sometimes you may have to make changes to the records storage situation if a problem cannot be fixed. These could include:

- Moving records to a better location
- Changing the storage system e.g. a locked cupboard if there is no other security
- Arranging for air conditioning installation or maintenance to regulate temperature
- Place dehumidifiers in very humid areas
- Place folders into archive boxes to eliminate dust and light and slow the effect of water or smoke in the event of a fire
- Store away from sunlight

## What records should be prioritized for protection from risk?

Without certain records a business or area would not be able to function properly or at all. These are called **vital records**.

These recommendations are advisable for storing your areas' vital records:

- Label vital records so that they can easily be identified and removed
- Always keep a copy or back-up at a different location
- Always keep record/file registers up to date
- Make the file register available to all relevant staff in case the person managing the records is unavailable when a disaster occurs
- Keep all vital records together in case they have to be moved out of the building or office
- Make sure that all relevant staff have a copy of a current **Business Continuity Plan** and that a spare copy is stored offsite so that it is available if access to the building is not possible
- Prepare a **disaster bin**

## What is a Business Continuity Plan?

A Business Continuity Plan is designed to assist with the recovery of University business in the event of a disaster and ensure its assets (human, information and property) are protected. The ongoing continuity of Curtin's critical services is maintained and the University is able to meet its legislative obligations.

Part of the Business Continuity Plan includes a list of your area's vital records and a building floor plan supporting the location of the records.

The Business Continuity Coordinator for your area is responsible for managing your plan.

## What is a Disaster Bin?

A disaster bin should be a mobile bin or crate which is always accessible containing supplies to use in the event of “small” disasters, such as leaks or dust, and should include:

- Paper towels
- Dusters
- Garbage bags
- Plastic sheeting
- Mops and sponges
- Packing tape
- Felt tip pens
- Protective gloves
- Buckets
- Writing pads for listing

## Need assistance?

Please see the following related advice:

- [Care and preservation of records](#)

For more information please visit our website at [rim.curtin.edu.au](http://rim.curtin.edu.au)

If you need assistance, please contact us by email at [rim@curtin.edu.au](mailto:rim@curtin.edu.au)