



Evacuating Collections: What You Should Know

With enough notice before a large disaster like a hurricane, you may plan to evacuate collections to a safe area out of the way of the storm. These suggestions will help you manage the evacuation process to ensure your collections travel safely.

Security of the Collections is Crucial

Keeping your collections in order and under control will help you ensure that all items are accounted for. If possible, save finding aids, accession records, card catalogs, and shelf lists. Have a packing list by box, especially if multiple people are evacuating things. Place a copy in the box, take a copy with you, and take a photograph to store on the cloud to ensure your list is always available. Also photograph the contents of each box for future reference.

Packing Up

In an emergency situation, packing in standard packing or filing boxes is fine. Do not use bubble wrap for padding, especially directly against objects, as it can cause damage. Instead use newsprint or newspaper.

The most efficient way to pack is to work in an assembly line, with one person wrapping objects, one placing them into boxes and one recording which objects are in each box.

Label boxes with any special handling needs, such as "This Side Up" or "Fragile." When packing, make sure that your boxes are not too heavy for an average person to carry. If a box is heavy, mark the outside, so your workers know to ask for help.

Your Temporary Space

Identify a safe space for temporary storage that is clean, dry and secure. Ensure that travel routes will remain open while you are evacuating the collection.

Once you move your boxes to the temporary space, store them on shelves. If no shelving is available, store boxes on pallets to raise them off the floor. Use care when stacking boxes to ensure the boxes on the bottom do not get crushed by the weight of the boxes on top.

Collecting institutions affected by an emergency event should contact the National Heritage Responders for additional response advice: 202.661.8068 or nhr@conservation-us.org