



Water-Damaged Records: First Response

This checklist will guide you through your initial response to recover records exposed to water/flooding. Contact your [Records Team](#) or [Government Records Service](#) as soon as possible after an event.

1. **Ensure your personal safety.** Electrical circuits must be shut off if there is an electrical hazard in the flood area. Do not enter the area until it has been declared safe.
2. **Immediately notify** your [Records Team](#) and also your building maintenance contact to arrange for cleanup and repairs. (e.g. Integrated Workplace Solutions or other facilities contact).
3. **Move the records to a dry place or cover them with plastic sheets** if water is dripping on records and it is safe to do so.
4. **Assess the damage.** Approximately how much is wet? How long have the records been wet? What types of materials are wet (e.g. paper, photographs, magnetic media)? Are they starting to mould? Are the records vital/critical to business operations? Has original order been disrupted?
5. **Record the assessed damage** and track the locations and contents of boxed records.
6. **Control the environment** to prevent mould from growing, if possible. **Lower the relative humidity and temperature** to below 18°C (65° F). **Circulate the air** with fans.
7. **Begin disaster recovery.** In consultation with your Records Team and facilities contact, arrange for packing supplies, transportation, and drying facilities required for the actions outlined in Step 8.
8. **Box different media types in separate boxes.** Paper, photographs, microfilm and magnetic media records require different treatment strategies.
 - **Pack paper records and ship to cold storage.** If paper records remain wet, they will grow mould and content may become irretrievable. Pack carefully into boxes, separating contents every 5 cm with freezer paper/waxed paper, and load them into a refrigerated truck.
 - **Magnetic media** that is **significantly wet or immersed** in water, and immediate salvage is not possible: rinse the items [in distilled water and store in cool \(5°C\)](#), clean water until salvage can begin. Media can be left in original plastic storage cases for additional protection. Pack them in plastic bags in boxes. Most **magnetic media, microfilm and photographs should be kept wet** until treated, but do not re-wet them if they have dried out. Unlike paper records, **do NOT send to cold storage** or freeze.

SALVAGE WET RECORDS WITHIN 48 HOURS

*Recovery is most successful when **immediate action** is taken*

See the Canadian Council of Archives'
[Salvage Operations for Water Damaged Archival Collections](#)

Additional Information

Contact your [Records Team](#) or check out the [Records Management website](#).

