

## WATER-DAMAGED RECORDS – FIRST RESPONSE



The following checklist provides some initial steps to take in situations where records have been damaged by water/flooding. It is important to contact your [Records Officer](#) or [Government Records Service](#) to advise them of the situation as soon as possible after the event.

1. **Ensure your personal safety.** Arrange to have the electrical circuits 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 building maintenance contact (e.g. Integrated Workplace Solutions or other facilities contact) to arrange for repairs and water cleanup.
3. If water is dripping on records and it is safe to do so, **move the records to a dry place or cover them with plastic sheets.**
4. **Assess the damage.** Approximately how many boxes are wet? How long have the records been wet? What types of materials are wet (e.g., paper, photographic, magnetic media)? Are they starting to mould? Are the records vital/critical to business operations?
5. **Begin disaster recovery.** In consultation with your Records Officer and facilities contact, arrange for packing supplies, transportation, and drying facilities. **Document** the damaged records in a general way. Record the damage and track the location and contents of the boxes. Document original order if it has been disrupted.
6. **Try to control the environment** to prevent mould from growing if possible. Lower the temperature to below 18°C (65° F) and keep **the relative humidity** low. Circulate the air **with fans.**
7. **Pack paper records and ship to cold storage.** If paper records are allowed to 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.
8. **Box different media types in separate boxes.** Paper, photographic, microfilm and magnetic media records require different treatment strategies.
9. If you have significantly **wet magnetic media** (e.g., items that have been immersed) 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. **Do not freeze or send to cold storage.** Most microfilm and photographic records should be kept wet until treated. Pack them in plastic bags in boxes, but do not rewet them if they have dried out.

Also see: Canadian Council of Archives' [Salvage Operations for Water Damaged Archival Collections: a second glance](#)

**SALVAGE WET RECORDS WITHIN 48 HOURS**