

# National Archives and Records Administration

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NARA 1561  
February 15, 2002

**SUBJECT:** Records Emergency Preparedness and Recovery in NARA Facilities

**TO:** Heads, Staff Directors, ISOO, NHPRC, OIG

**Purpose of this transmittal memo.** This transmits the new policy directive, NARA 1561, Records Emergency Preparedness and Recovery in NARA Facilities.

**Background.** NARA's current policy in the NARA Administrative Procedures Manual (ADMIN. 201) concentrates on recovery operations for records damaged by water or fire but not the planning to prevent or minimize such threats to records. Also, because of the terrorists' attack on September 11, 2001, we think it's important to add "chemical or biological contamination" to the list of possible threats. Records emergency preparedness planning, along with an occupant emergency plan, will help to ensure NARA's mission to ensure " . . . ready access to essential evidence."

**Canceled directives.** This directive cancels ADMIN. 201, ch. 10, part 12; and apps. 10F, 10G, and 10H. This also cancels ADMIN. 201, CHGE 26.

JOHN W. CARLIN  
Archivist of the United States

Attachment

# National Archives and Records Administration

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NARA 1561  
February 15, 2002

**SUBJECT:** Records Emergency Preparedness and Recovery in NARA Facilities

## **1561.1 Purpose of this directive**

This directive provides NARA's policy for

a. Records emergency preparedness and records response and recovery planning in all NARA facilities to prevent or minimize damage to records for which there is a threat of damage or loss by water, fire, chemical or biological contamination, or other causes.

b. Recovering records that are damaged by water, fire, chemical or biological contamination, or other causes.

## **1561.2 To which NARA buildings does this directive apply?**

This directive applies to all facilities that NARA occupies.

## **1561.3 What records are covered by this directive?**

The following records in NARA facilities are covered:

- a. Archival holdings
- (1) Federal records and donated historical materials transferred to NARA's legal custody;
  - (2) Presidential records in NARA's legal or physical custody;
  - (3) Nixon Presidential historical materials; and
  - (4) Supreme Court records, records of Congress, and records of the Architect of the Capitol that have been deposited in NARA's physical custody.
- b. Records of other agencies that are stored in NARA records centers.
- c. NARA operating records - records created by NARA in the course of the conduct of its business, including materials having reference value.

## **1561.4 How does NARA monitor emergency preparedness and recovery for archival records that are not in NARA facilities?**

- a. For NARA records that are stored long-term in facilities not covered by this

directive, such as affiliates or leased offsite cold storage facilities, the office responsible for the records, in conjunction with Preservation Programs (NWT), must review the suitability of the non-NARA facility's records emergency preparedness and recovery plan, and the capability to provide adequate emergency protection and response.

b. For NARA records that are stored short-term in facilities not covered by this directive, such as exhibition loans, the office responsible for the records or the loan arrangements must determine that the borrowing facility has an up-to-date emergency preparedness and records recovery plan.

**1561.5 Definition of terms used in this directive**

The terms in subpars. a - n apply in this directive. It is recognized that specific positions and associated responsibilities may vary among NARA sites, and that in some instances one person may carry multiple responsibilities.

a. **Records emergency management team (REMT)** - the group appointed for each NARA facility (see par. 1561.7a) and is responsible for

(1) Planning, coordinating, and overseeing the development and implementation of the records emergency preparedness plan and the response and recovery plan;

(2) Overseeing and coordinating records emergency response and recovery as needed (see par. 1561.6); and

(3) Being aware of restricted records and the staff responsible for access to such records.

b. **Records emergency management team leader** - the leader of the REMT is the person appointed by the official in par. 1561.7a and must be a member of the facility and occupant emergency planning team for that facility.

c. **Assistant information security manager** - the person who ensures the appropriate handling and security of national security-classified information whenever such records are involved.

d. **Communications officer/liaison** - the person who coordinates with other NARA officials to convey official information to the media, Congress, Federal agencies, and donors.

e. **Facility director/administrator** - the person who is responsible for staff, NARA records of the facility; has knowledge of NARA policies and procedures; has access to other NARA resources; and, during an emergency, serves as or coordinates with the REMT leader to inform the office head, NWT, Congressional and Public Affairs Staff (NCON), and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).

f. **Facility manager** - the person who has onsite responsibility for and knowledge of

the physical plant with authority to address issues, such as heat, electrical services, plumbing, etc.

g. **Preservation officer/liaison** - the person having knowledge of materials and media, records emergency preparedness planning, response and recovery, and knowledge of contractor recovery services and options. NWT serves in this capacity or provides assistance and oversight to the field unit preservation officer/liaison in planning and providing records recovery response.

h. **Procurement authority** - the person providing knowledge and authority regarding establishing services contracts, knowledge of NARA standard and emergency procurement processes, and access to other NARA resources.

i. **Records custodian** - the person providing knowledge of records in NARA's custody; media and format, relative values and national significance, access restrictions (national security-classified, or other statutory or regulatory restrictions, and privacy) for records in NARA's physical or legal custody.

j. **NARA Records Officer (NH)** - the person who identifies those NARA operating records considered vital for emergency operations and recovery; establishes procedures for the advanced protection of vital records; coordinates with the REMT to ensure salvage and recovery of operating records in the event of an emergency.

k. **Records response team** – a team of persons, appointed by the response team leader in coordination with the REMT leader, trained to go onsite to organize mitigation and recovery and to provide hands-on support for records recovery.

l. **Records response team leader** – a person designated by the REMT leader who serves as the overall leader to coordinate all aspects of the records response team, in consultation with NWT.

m. **Safety officer** – the person who ensures facility safety for personnel at the time of an emergency, and before and during records recovery.

n. **Security officer** – the person who ensures physical security of the facility and records, and authorizes emergency procedures needed to recover national security-classified materials.

#### **1561.6 What functions must be represented on the REMT?**

The following functions must be represented on the REMT: facility director/administrator, facility manager, records custodian, preservation officer/liaison, communications officer/liaison, NARA records management, safety officer, procurement authority, and security officer.

#### **1561.7 Staff responsibilities**

a. **Assistant Archivist for Records Services--Washington, DC, regional administrators, and Presidential library directors** are responsible for designating a REMT and a REMT leader for each facility, as well as the completion and periodic review of each facility's records emergency preparedness plan and the records emergency response and recovery plan.

b. **Office heads, Presidential library directors, and regional administrators** must educate and inform employees of their responsibilities and skills required under their records emergency preparedness plan and records emergency response and recovery plan, and the importance of a rapid response if records are damaged or if there is potential damage to records.

c. **NARA employees** who discover a situation involving actual or potential damage to records must immediately follow the procedures in subpars. (1) and (2), providing as much information as possible about the conditions.

(1) Report the incident to appropriate personnel as designated in the records emergency response and recovery plan for that facility; and

(2) Notify their supervisor or the supervisor whose records are involved. If the immediate supervisor is not available, contact the next available level. Supervisors must notify their supervisors up through the chain of command..

d. **Preservation Programs (NWT)** – provides direction, guidance and oversight for records emergency preparedness planning and for records recovery efforts, technical assistance for emergency preparedness and response training, guidelines on emergency supplies list, basic salvage guidelines for each medium, and bibliographic resources on records emergency planning and response. NWT reviews records emergency preparedness plans and records emergency response plans for each facility.

#### **1561.8 What is records emergency preparedness and recovery planning?**

Records emergency preparedness and recovery response planning is a documented process, guided by the REMT, to prepare for a threat of damage by water, fire, chemical or biological contamination, or other causes, in order to mitigate any damage to the extent possible. The action steps are:

a. Assess building and site risk to determine current conditions and vulnerabilities that could affect records over time;

b. Assess probability of risks;

c. Prioritize records to determine intrinsic value and media vulnerabilities;

d. Identify NARA's own vital operating records and implement measures to protect them;

- e. Map record locations and media types;
- f. Implement preventive measures to reduce risks;
- g. Develop a records emergency response and recovery plan; and
- h. Orient and train on an annual basis all NARA and non-NARA staff involved in records emergency response.

**1561.9 What elements must be included in a records emergency response and recovery plan?**

A records emergency response and recovery plan must be a written plan for responding to a threat of damage to records and for recovering records that are damaged. At a minimum, the plan consists of

- a. Notification procedures and contact information for reporting a potential threat, an existing threat, or damage to records (24 hours/day; 7 days/week).
- b. Emergency contact information for the REMT and other key NARA personnel on a 24 hour/7 days per week basis. Key NARA personnel to be notified include the appropriate office head, NWT, Document Conservation Laboratory (NWTDC beeper team), the Space and Security Management Division (NAS); and the Records Management Team within the Office of Human Resources and Information Services (NH) (if operating records are threatened, damaged, or destroyed).
- c. Procedures and contacts for gaining access to secured areas.
- d. Contact information for the records response team and response team leader (24 hours/day; 7 days/week).
- e. Checklist of first response actions.
- f. Checklist for determining records recovery priorities
  - (1) The vulnerability of the medium of the damaged record(s) and the complexity of conservation treatment requirements and options for duplication;
  - (2) The extent or source of research interest (e.g., the originating agency or donor, the White House, a congressional office, or other requester with an urgent or critical need);
  - (3) Intrinsic value of damaged or destroyed records;
  - (4) Whether damaged or destroyed records contain unique information that cannot be reconstructed; and
  - (5) Whether damaged or destroyed operating records have been identified as

vital records.

- g. Stock list and locations of available emergency supplies and equipment (see par. 1561.7d).
- h. List of emergency services, equipment, and supplies sources with contact information.
- i. Guidelines on basic salvage procedures for each medium (information provided by NWT).
- j. Location guide and maps to facility's records (information must be adequately secured).
- k. Location of backup offsite copy of records inventory.
- l. List of potential storage and recovery sites and transport options to be used in case offsite placement of records is required (if applicable to the facility's records, sites list must include locations that could meet classified and privacy requirements).
- m. Notification procedures, personnel, and designation of decision-making authority for records with classification, restricted and privacy requirements (when damage occurs in an area containing national security-classified records, notify the NARA Information Security Officer (NA) or alternate Information Security Officer (NAS) and the assistant information security manager of the affected unit(s)).
- n. Checklist for after-action report to be completed by the REMT with copies to be retained at the facility and forwarded to NWT, the appropriate office head, and to the regional administrator or Presidential library director.
- o. Bibliographic resources on emergency planning and disaster response and recovery (information provided by NWT).

**1561.10 How often must plans be reviewed?**

The facility director/administrator and the REMT must annually review the records emergency preparedness plan and the records emergency response and recovery plan, and update the plans, as needed. Procedures outlined in par. 1561.11 must be followed when the plan is updated.

**1561.11 Location of the plans**

The REMT leader for each facility must

- a. Send a copy of its records emergency preparedness plan and records response and recovery plan to NWT, NAS, the office head, and NCON.
- b. Maintain a paper copy of each plan offsite.

- c. Maintain a paper copy of relevant sections at all times at the homes or in the cars of the REMT and facility director/administrator.
- d. Maintain a copy at each facility's security control center.
- e. Ensure for his or her facility that the following persons have a copy:
  - (1) Members of the REMT;
  - (2) Potential members of the emergency response team; and
  - (3) Appropriate unit heads or program managers.

Emergency recovery plans are to be considered vital records. Their distribution as outlined above ensures their preservation in the event of an emergency.

**1561.12 When must the procedures in this directive be implemented?**

These procedures must be followed in every situation involving damage to records, regardless of the extent of damage. With special attention to situations involving fire, biological, chemical, or electrical hazards, the records response and recovery plan is implemented after safe access to the building or records storage area has been confirmed, NARA personnel control access, and no dangerous conditions exist.

**1561.13 Personal safety**

The personal safety of all individuals is of paramount importance during any type of emergency. No one may take any action(s) that may imperil anyone's safety. Anyone in an area affected by emergency conditions is expected to follow the instructions of emergency personnel in charge (i.e., firefighters, explosives experts, law enforcement personnel, NARA safety and security personnel). Emergency personnel must establish safe access before undertaking records recovery activities. When human safety is at risk, staff must evacuate the affected space before taking further actions or notifying appropriate parties.