

Hurricane Preparedness for Harvard Libraries

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) defines a hurricane as “an intense tropical weather system of strong thunderstorms with a well-defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 mph (64 kt) or higher... Hurricanes are categorized according to the strength of their winds using the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. A Category 1 storm has the lowest wind speeds, while a Category 5 hurricane has the strongest.”

Getting Ready for Hurricane Season (June-November)

1. Review Emergency Plan for completeness and accuracy, and update if necessary.
2. Inventory emergency supplies, and replace any that are missing or past expiration date.
3. Walk through and around facility looking for conditions that might be vulnerable in high winds and rain (e.g., damaged windows or overhanging tree limbs). Arrange with facilities personnel to correct those conditions.
4. Verify with facilities personnel that their emergency plan, supplies and equipment are up-to-date and operational.
5. Review back-up arrangements for important electronic information.
6. Encourage staff members to have a personal hurricane emergency plan for their homes.

During a Hurricane Watch (hurricane threat in 36 hours or sooner)

1. Monitor weather situation closely.
2. Alert staff members, and indicate their responsibilities in the event that a hurricane hits.
3. Determine locations for and communication methods with essential staff members for the next 48 hours.
4. Co-ordinate response plan with facilities personnel.

During a Hurricane Warning (hurricane threat in 24 hours or sooner)

1. Monitor weather situation closely.
2. Move collection materials away from windows and off floors.
3. Move collections from lower to higher floors if there is a danger of flooding.

4. Cover desks and equipment with plastic sheeting and secure with tape.
5. Obtain cash or authorization to purchase post-hurricane supplies.
6. Turn refrigerators and coolers to lowest setting.
7. Send staff members home unless advised otherwise by local authorities.
8. Co-ordinate closing and securing library with facilities personnel.

For more information about:

- the nature of hurricanes, see the NOAA web page, [Hurricanes](http://hurricanes.noaa.gov/)
<<http://hurricanes.noaa.gov/>>
- hurricane preparedness for institutions, contact the Weissman Preservation Center (617-495-8596)
- hurricane preparedness for individuals and families, see the American Red Cross web page, [Hurricane](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_587_,00.html) <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_587_,00.html>