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National Task Force Releases New Tools to Protect Cultural Heritage

PRESS RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A new collection of handy tools designed especially for libraries, archives, museums, historic sites, and historic preservation and arts organizations has been released by the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. The tools are the result of the Task Force's "Lessons Applied" initiative to develop practical applications for the lessons from Hurricane Katrina, such as helping cultural institutions apply for disaster aid and developing relationships with emergency responders.

The new tools are available as free downloads at www.heritageemergency.org:

- **Tips for Working with Emergency Responders.** Getting to know local emergency responders and how they work before disaster strikes can help keep staff and collections safe. This handy sheet tells how to find and build relationships with emergency responders, as well as what information needs to be exchanged to help responders protect cultural institutions.
- **Guide to Navigating FEMA and SBA Funding.** This concise Web site leads cultural institutions through the process of applying to the Small Business Administration (SBA) and FEMA for assistance after major disasters. Links put policies, application forms, and other necessary paperwork at the user's fingertips along with simple, step-by-step instructions for the application process.
- **MayDay.** MayDay is an annual event that encourages cultural institutions to undertake one simple emergency preparedness task. Created by the Society of American Archivists, MayDay was expanded in 2007 to include libraries, museums, and arts and historic preservation organizations. This year hundreds of organizations promoted the message, and FEMA featured MayDay on its Web site. The Task Force has produced a list of suggested MayDay activities, as well as promotional materials.
- **Recommended Professional Emergency Management Training.** Most staff members want to help in the aftermath of an emergency at

ALAWON Editor:
Andy Bridges

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ALA Washington Office
Emily Sheketoff, Executive Director
1615 New Hampshire Ave
NW, First Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009
202.628.8410 (V)
202.628.8419 (F)

Office of Government Relations
Lynne Bradley, Director;
Melanie Anderson, Don
Essex, Erin Haggerty, Miriam
Nisbet, Tara Olivero,
Rosalind Reynolds

Office for Information Technology Policy
Rick Weingarten, Director;
Mark Bard, Carrie Lowe,
Kathy Mitchell, Carrie Russell

their institutions or in their communities. The free courses listed in this resource teach cultural heritage staff and volunteer teams about local, state, and federal disaster response frameworks already in place, as well as official protocols and structure, terminology, and key local contacts.

Panels composed of Task Force members and other experts have been working since October 2006 to prepare new resources and develop longer-term recommendations in the areas of incentives for preparedness, working with first responders, effective regional response, funding, and coordination among service organizations. The Task Force met July 17, 2007, to announce the new tools and discuss results of a member survey on Katrina, which will help the group prepare for future events. Other proposed initiatives include a preparedness poster, speakers' bureau on cultural heritage emergencies, guidelines for mutual assistance networks, GIS standards for cultural collections, a collections stabilization fund, and a new Foundation Center guide identifying disaster resources.

The "Lessons Applied" initiative has been made possible through grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Bay and Paul Foundations and the volunteer efforts of Task Force members. Click [here](#) for the complete roster of panel members.

For more information, please visit the [ALA Washington Office's Disaster Preparedness page](#).



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