Policy # 200-5
Adopted Date: November 18, 2026
Revised Date: N/A
Related Policies: Emergency Closing Policy (#200-1); Power Outage Policy (#200-3)

Disaster Preparedness Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes Seymour Library's (the "Library") framework for preventing, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and emergencies that threaten the safety of patrons and staff, the Library's building and collections, and the continuity of library service. It reflects best practices for library emergency planning, including guidance referenced in the New York State Library's Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State, and is intended to satisfy the Board's obligation under 8 NYCRR § 90.2 to adopt appropriate institutional policies. This policy should be read together with the Library's Emergency Closing Policy (#200-1), Power Outage Policy (#200-3), Emergency Action Plan, Workplace Safety/Violence Prevention Policy, Personnel Policy, and Confidentiality of Library Records Policy; where those policies address a specific hazard or procedure in more detail, they govern.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all hazards reasonably foreseeable at the Library, including fire, severe weather, flooding or water intrusion, power and utility failure, medical emergencies, hazardous material incidents, structural or equipment failure, and acts of violence or other security threats. It applies to all Library trustees, employees, volunteers, and contractors, and governs the Library's responsibilities to patrons on Library premises during an emergency. Life safety takes priority over protection of the building, collections, and records in every circumstance covered by this policy.

Definitions

- **Disaster/Emergency:** any sudden event, natural or human-caused, that threatens life safety, damages or threatens to damage the Library's building or collections, or disrupts the Library's ability to deliver service.
- **Emergency Coordinator:** the Library Director, or the highest-ranking staff member present, who has authority to direct an emergency response, order an evacuation, and act as liaison to first responders.
- **Emergency Action Plan (EAP):** the Library's detailed operational document, maintained separately from this policy, containing evacuation routes, assembly points, shutoff locations, emergency contacts, and hazard-specific procedures.

- **Pocket Response Plan (PReP):** a condensed, wallet- or badge-card version of critical emergency contacts and salvage priorities, based on the Council of State Archivists model, carried by designated staff.
- **Salvage Priorities:** the pre-identified list of collections, equipment, and records to be protected or recovered first in a damage event, ordered by irreplaceability and value, established by the Director and reviewed by the Board.
- **Shelter-in-Place:** remaining inside a secured area of the building rather than evacuating, used when outdoor conditions (e.g., severe weather, an external threat) are more dangerous than staying inside.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Library Director serves as Emergency Coordinator and is responsible for maintaining the Emergency Action Plan, coordinating with local fire, police, and emergency management officials, arranging staff training and drills, and reporting to the Board on preparedness status and any incident of significance. In the Director's absence, the senior professional staff member on duty assumes this role for life-safety response, though the decision to close the Library remains, per Policy #200-1, an administrative decision of the Library Director or the Board President.

All staff are responsible for knowing their building's evacuation routes and assembly point, their role in an emergency, and how to raise an alarm; specific duties (e.g., accounting for patrons in a given area, operating the public address system, meeting first responders at the door) will be assigned in the Emergency Action Plan. The Board of Trustees is responsible for adopting and periodically reviewing this policy, ensuring adequate insurance coverage, and authorizing emergency expenditures under Communication, Continuity, and Recovery, below.

The Library Director should maintain a detailed, site-specific Emergency Action Plan and Pocket Response Plan (evacuation routes, shutoff locations, call lists, salvage priorities) as an operational companion to this policy, and should have both reviewed by the Library's insurance carrier or municipal risk pool and, as appropriate, local fire and police officials.

Prevention and Mitigation

The Library will take reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood and severity of foreseeable disasters, including: maintaining fire detection and suppression systems and having them inspected on the schedule required by the fire code; maintaining a current facilities inspection and maintenance schedule covering the roof, HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems; keeping water-detection measures and moisture barriers around vulnerable collections and mechanical areas; securing IT systems with offsite or cloud backup of critical records and catalog data; and maintaining clearly marked, unobstructed exits and emergency equipment (fire extinguishers, first-aid kits, flashlights) that are checked on a recurring schedule. Identified hazards or deferred maintenance with disaster-risk implications will be reported by the Director to the Board along with a recommended timeline for remediation.

Emergency Response

Upon discovery of an emergency, any staff member may activate the applicable alarm and, where safe to do so, notify 911 and the Emergency Coordinator without waiting for authorization. The Emergency Coordinator or highest-ranking staff member present will direct the response consistent with the Emergency Action Plan and the general priorities below:

- **Fire:** activate the alarm, call 911, begin evacuation, and account for staff and patrons at the assembly point; do not attempt firefighting beyond a small, containable fire with an extinguisher staff are trained to use.

- **Severe weather or a declared state of emergency:** monitor official weather alerts; move patrons and staff to shelter-in-place locations away from windows for tornado or high-wind warnings; a decision to close ahead of forecast conditions, or because New York State, Monroe County, or a local government has declared a state of emergency, follows Policy #200-1 (Emergency Closing).
- **Water intrusion or flooding:** shut off water or power to the affected area if it can be done safely, move at-risk collections and electronics per salvage priorities, and contact the Library's disaster-recovery vendor and insurance carrier.
- **Power outage:** follow Policy #200-3 (Power Outage), including its evacuation timing (15 minutes daytime, 5 minutes nighttime), outage-reporting, staff/patron notification, and building shutdown steps.
- **Medical emergency:** call 911, provide first aid only to the extent staff are trained and willing, and clear the area to give responders access.
- **Violence or security threat:** follow run-hide-fight principles consistent with the Workplace Safety/Violence Prevention Policy and any local law enforcement training the Library has received; call 911 as soon as it is safe to do so.

For any hazard not specifically addressed above, the Emergency Coordinator will apply the same general priorities: protect life safety first, evacuate or shelter-in-place as conditions warrant, contact appropriate first responders, and account for all patrons and staff.

Evacuation, Shelter-in-place, and Patron Safety

Evacuation routes, primary and alternate assembly points, and shelter-in-place locations are designated in the Emergency Action Plan and posted at staff work stations. The Emergency Coordinator or designee is responsible for accounting for all patrons and staff at the assembly point and reporting anyone unaccounted for to first responders immediately. Staff will assist patrons with disabilities or others needing help evacuating consistent with their training, and will not re-enter the building until first responders confirm it is safe. The Library will not resume normal operations until the Director, in consultation with first responders or building engineers as warranted, determines the building is safe for patrons and staff.

Protection of Collections and Records

The Director will maintain a written list of salvage priorities — irreplaceable local history and archival materials, essential business and patron records, and high-value equipment — ranked for recovery order, and will store a current backup of the collection catalog and critical administrative records offsite or in the cloud. Staff will not risk personal safety to protect collections or records under any circumstance. Following a damage event, the Library will contact its insurance carrier and a qualified disaster-recovery/conservation vendor before undertaking salvage of water- or fire-damaged materials, and will document damage (photographs, inventory) to support any insurance claim.

Communication, Continuity, and Recovery

The Director will notify the Board President promptly of any significant emergency and will designate a single point of contact for media and public inquiries; individual staff should direct such inquiries to that contact rather than responding independently. For a closure or service disruption, the Library will follow the notification steps already established in Policy #200-1 and Policy #200-3 — the 13 WHAM School and Community closings app, the Library's social media accounts, the clerks of the three member municipalities (and DPW on call, for weather events), and the mclslist@libraryweb.org notice to member libraries — rather than a separate communication process. Where the building is unusable, the Director is authorized to relocate essential services (reference assistance, digital access information, program

information) to an alternate location or online, and to make emergency purchases necessary to protect life, safety, or property, reporting such expenditures to the Board at its next meeting or sooner if material. Staff payroll during a closure follows Policy #200-1 and Policy #200-3. The Director will prepare an after-action report for the Board following any significant incident, documenting what occurred, the response, and any recommended changes to this policy or the Emergency Action Plan.

Liability and Risk Management

Life safety decisions made in good faith by the Emergency Coordinator or staff acting within their training and this policy are presumed reasonable, and trustees, officers, and employees acting within the scope of their duties and in good faith remain entitled to defense and indemnification under applicable law. This policy does not expand those protections. The Director will confirm with the Library's property, liability, and workers' compensation carriers that current coverage addresses fire, water, weather, and business-interruption risk, and will report any coverage gaps to the Board.

The Library is not an emergency-management agency and does not guarantee patron or staff safety in every circumstance; this policy reflects the Library's standard of reasonable care, not a warranty of outcome. Any incident resulting in injury, significant property damage, or a security threat will be documented in an incident report retained by the Director, and reported to the insurance carrier and, where legally required, to the Department of Labor or other authorities.

Training and Drills

The Library will conduct at least one fire evacuation drill and one all-hazards staff briefing annually, and will introduce this policy and the Emergency Action Plan to new employees during onboarding. The Director will coordinate periodic training with local fire and police departments where available, and will update the Emergency Action Plan and salvage-priorities list at least annually or after any significant incident or building change.

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