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Planning for a Hurricane or Natural Disaster

A Guide for Non-Profit Arts Organizations

Planning for a natural disaster can feel impossible. However, well-managed organizations can prepare in advance with a detailed crisis and continuity plan for hurricanes, flooding, extended power outages, cybersecurity threats, and other emergencies that may disrupt operations throughout Miami-Dade County during the hurricane season.

PRE-PLANNING

Schedule an annual preparedness meeting with department heads, executive leadership, board officers, artistic staff, IT personnel, and facilities representatives. Small organizations should involve all staff and key volunteers in emergency planning discussions.

Have a Detailed Disaster Plan

Have a written disaster preparedness and business continuity plan in place. Outline who is responsible for each essential operational area and establish a clear chain of command.

Examples include:

- Cancelling performances, classes, meetings, and public events
- Securing offices, theaters, studios, and facilities
- Managing payroll and staff communications during closures
- Coordinating remote work operations
- Maintaining cybersecurity and data protection
- Conducting post-storm inspections and damage assessments
- Managing media, donor, and audience communications

Insurance

Conduct an annual review of all insurance policies, including property, flood, business interruption, general liability, cyber liability, and equipment coverage. Organizations should confirm hurricane deductibles, replacement value coverage, and temporary relocation protections.

If your organization leases office or rehearsal space, verify responsibilities between landlord and tenant for repairs, flooding, and emergency building access.

Computer Files & Technology

Use secure cloud-based storage systems such as Google Drive, Dropbox, Microsoft OneDrive, or SharePoint to back up critical organizational files including financial records, donor databases, contracts, grant documentation, and marketing assets.

Enable multi-factor authentication and maintain at least one encrypted off-site backup. Ensure



staff have the ability to work remotely during prolonged office closures. Make sure to back up all computer files on a regular basis and store backup files off-site. In an abundance of caution many companies back up their cloud stored files on a portable hard drive for extra protection.

Office Records & Contents

Store important files in waterproof or fire-resistant cabinets whenever possible. Photograph and inventory office equipment, artwork, instruments, furniture, and technology annually. Save documentation securely off-site or in cloud storage for insurance and FEMA purposes.

Maintaining Contact

Maintain updated emergency contact information for staff, board members, volunteers, vendors, and contractors. Establish emergency communication procedures including:

- Group text or email alerts
- Emergency voicemail recordings
- Zoom or virtual meeting systems
- Website and social media updates

Set up a designated phone number that staff can call for a recorded message instructing them on the status of the organization. Set up a web communications account such as Zoom so your team can effectively work remotely and stay connected. Ask all your staff and board members to leave voice messages about their personal situations so you can arrange to help those that need it most.

AFTER THE STORM

1. Contact executives, staff, board members, and artists to confirm safety and determine operational capacity.
2. Assign a lead to provide regular updates through your website, email newsletters, ticketing systems, and social media platforms. Set up an emergency message on your voicemail instructing on the status of the organization.
3. If safe, have a designated lead inspect facilities and document all damage with photos and video before beginning cleanup. If necessary or possible, remove salvageable equipment, files, etc. If the office did not sustain significant damage, lock up and leave. If the office was damaged, document the extent of damage as thoroughly as possible.
4. Contact insurance providers immediately and maintain detailed documentation of all losses and repair estimates. Do not sign any final agreements with insurance until a board member or expert reviews the compensation offer. Do not accept any final payment until after electricity is on to confirm equipment working properly, etc. Some damage may not be readily apparent. If your space was damaged have a licensed contractor look at it and give you an estimate of repair prior to accepting any settlement.



5. Monitor assistance opportunities through FEMA, Miami-Dade County, the State of Florida, the National Endowment for the Arts, and emergency relief funds.
6. Develop a phased reopening plan that considers building safety, staffing capacity, transportation access, utilities, and community conditions. Set up a timeline which will include decisions about when the office will reopen, when staff will begin working on-site or remotely and when performances and events will resume. These decisions will be affected by many factors including: is the area where your office is located safe, accessible, and with power; is your staff available and what is the mood of the community. If your office is not habitable or without phone or power for a long period, you may need to set up a temporary office. People and companies are very generous immediately following the storm. If you need a temporary office, do not be afraid to ask companies in unaffected areas for assistance.
7. Support community rebuilding and recovery efforts whenever possible.
8. Advocate for arts and cultural organizations to be included in local disaster recovery planning, funding, and rebuilding initiatives. Help ensure arts executives and arts board members are on the rebuilding committee(s) to ensure the cultural community will be part of the solution and be in discussions to receive necessary funds and assistance.