

# Disaster preparedness and resilience training for libraries

Rachel Onuf

Vermont Historical Records Program (VHRP) Director, Vermont State Archives and Records Administration (VSARA)

Vermont Arts & Culture Disaster and Resilience Network (VACDaRN) Co-lead

COSLA Continuing Education Forum

18 August 2025

Providence, Rhode Island

# Agenda

- Introduction
- What content to cover
- How to structure the training
- Examples
- Additional resources
- Logistics & other considerations
- Discussion!



# Introduction to me & the VHRP & VACDaRN



# Content to cover in your training

- Risk assessment
- Disaster plans
- Engagement with local emergency management
- The role libraries can play in community recovery



# Risk assessment

## Steps

- Identify the hazards
- Assess the risks
- Implement appropriate measures
- Monitor and reassess risks

## Resources

- State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP)
- [Risk Evaluation and Planning Program - American Institute for Conservation](#)
- Probability | Impact chart

Natural Hazards
• Fluvial Erosion
• Inundation Flooding
• Heat
• Wind
• Snow
• Ice
• Drought
• Infectious Disease Outbreak
• Cold
• Invasive Species
• Landslides
• Wildfire
• Hail

Technological & Human-Caused Hazards
- Cyber-Based Incident
- Hazardous Materials
- Known and Emerging Contaminants
- Incursion of a High Consequence Livestock Disease
- Aging Infrastructure
- Transportation-Based Accident
- Civil Disturbance
- Terrorism/Mass Violence
- Long-Term Utility Outage
- Conflagration

**Figure 7: State Hazards of Concern**

# RISK EVALUATION AND PLANNING PROGRAM

## Risk Prioritization Worksheet

HAZARDS	Likelihood of Occurrence (1-5)	multiplied by	Severity of Damage (1-5)	equals	Risk Rating	Comments
<b>1. EXTERIOR: Natural disasters</b>						
1a. earthquake		X		equals	0	
1b. flooding below ground level or below the water table		X		equals	0	
1c. flash flood		X		equals	0	
1d. hail		X		equals	0	
1e. heavy snow		X		equals	0	
1f. high winds		X		equals	0	
1g. hurricane		X		equals	0	
1h. ice		X		equals	0	
1i. land/mud slide		X		equals	0	
1j. lightning strike		X		equals	0	
1k. loss of water supply for firefighting		X		equals	0	
1l. major flooding		X		equals	0	
1m. minor flooding		X		equals	0	
1n. terrain fire		X		equals	0	
1o. tidal or other unusual water phenomena		X		equals	0	
1p. tornado		X		equals	0	
1q. volcanic activity		X		equals	0	
1r. wind damage from flying debris		X		equals	0	
1s. wind damage from trees		X		equals	0	

Risks Evaluated By:  
Risk Evaluation and Planning Program

Date:  
[www.heritagepreservation.org/REPP](http://www.heritagepreservation.org/REPP)

(Institution)  
Risk Prioritization Worksheet

		Impact				
		Trivial	Minor	Moderate	Major	Extreme
Probability	Rare	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
	Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium
	Moderate	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
	Likely	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High
	Very likely	Medium	Medium	High	High	High



# Disaster plans

## Steps

- Make the case
- Provide a template
- Chunk It! (Break it down)
- Identify resources the library may already have
- Provide support | incentive

## Resources

- [Pocket Response Templates - Council Of State Archivists](#)
- [dPlan | ArtsReady](#)
- [Overview of dPlan | ArtsReady for Libraries](#)
- [VT-Disaster-Plan-Template 2022.docx](#)

# Making the case for creating a plan

- Helps alleviate chaos during an emergency
- Tells you what to do and how
- Protects the safety of people and property
- Facilitates a quicker return to normal operations
- Reduces losses
- More prepared organizations means a more resilient community
- Disasters are occurring with more frequency
- “Non-clouded thought process” – AJ Seely, Dallas County, Iowa EMD
- Don't fall into the "**It can't happen here**" trap...it can!



...and disaster CAN strike twice





**SIDE A (Communications).** Use this side to collect phone numbers for the individuals and organizations you are most likely to need to talk to in the first minutes and hours after an emergency occurs: staff, emergency responders, facility managers, utilities, vendors, and assistance organizations.

<p><b>Pocket Response Plan<sup>™</sup> (PRP<sup>™</sup>)</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>LIBRARY CONTACTS</b>  <b>Library Director</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Assistant Director/Librarian</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Library Board Chair</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Select Board Chair (for municipal libraries)</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>DISASTER TEAM</b>  <b>Response Team Leader</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Communications Coordinator</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Building Recovery Coordinator</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Collections Recovery Specialist</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p>	<p><b>FIRST RESPONDERS</b></p> <p><b>Police Department</b>          [phone]</p> <p><b>Fire Department</b>          [phone]</p> <p><b>Emergency Medical Services</b>          [phone]</p> <p><b>Security</b>          [phone]</p> <p><b>Local Emergency Management</b>          [name/title]          [phone]</p> <p><b>State Police</b>          [phone]</p> <p><b>Local Health Office</b>          [phone]</p> <p><b>Red Cross</b>          (800) 464-6692</p> <p><b>NEIGHBORING LIBRARIES</b></p> <p>[library]          [contact name]          [phone]</p> <p>[library]          [contact name]          [phone]</p> <p>[library]          [contact name]          [phone]</p>	<p><b>FACILITIES MANAGEMENT</b></p> <p><b>Building Manger</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>Building Staff</b>          [name]          [library phone] / [home phone] / [cell]</p> <p><b>UTILITIES</b></p> <p><b>Electricity</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Gas</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Telephone</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Water – Fire sprinklers</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Water – Potable</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Internet provider</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>OPAC Provider</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Security system</b>          [name]          [phone]</p>	<p><b>Fire alarm/suppression system</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>STATE GOVERNMENT CONTACTS</b></p> <p><b>Health Department</b>          (800) 464-4343</p> <p><b>Regional Planning Commission</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Conservation District</b>          [name]          [phone]          [email]</p> <p><b>Assistant State Librarian</b>          Tom McMurdo          thomas.mcmurdo@vermont.gov          802-622-4012</p> <p><b>Vermont Historical Records Program (VHRP) Director</b>          Rachel Onuf          rachel.onuf@vermont.gov          802-622-4092</p> <p><b>State Archivist/Chief Records Officer</b>          Tanya Marshall          tanya.marshall@vermont.gov          802-828-3700</p> <p><b>Director of Municipal Assistance (for municipal libraries)</b>          Jenny Prosser          802-828-1027          jenny.prosser@vermont.gov</p>	<p><b>EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDERS</b></p> <p><b>Conservator</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Data Recovery Service</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Dehumidification Services</b>          (building)          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Exterminator / Fumigation Service</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Freezer Storage Space</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Mold Testing Lab</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Refrigerated Trucking Service</b>          [name]          [phone]</p>	<p><b>REGIONAL PRESERVATION SERVICES</b></p> <p>Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC)          Collections Emergency Hotline          855-245-8303 (24/7)</p> <p>National Heritage Responders          202-661-8068 (24/7)</p> <p><b>OTHER CONTACTS</b></p> <p><b>Insurance Agent</b>          [name]          [phone]</p> <p><b>Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) Public Assistance Officer</b>          Kim Canarecci          802-347-0488</p> <p><b>Disaster Recovery Vendor Contract</b>          Polygon          Matt Declirce          732-567-0440</p> <p><b>Vermont Arts &amp; Culture Disaster and Resilience Network (VACDaRN)</b>          Rachel Onuf          802-622-4092</p> <p><b>FEMA regional office</b>          (877) 336-2627</p>
--	---	--	---	---	--

**SIDE B (Actions).** Use this side to provide step-by-step instructions for personnel who will respond to a disaster affecting your library. Ideally, steps should already be defined in the library's disaster plan. This PReP™ document is NOT intended to be a substitute for a comprehensive emergency plan. Instead, it should distill the most important tasks to be taken in the first minutes and hours after an event occurs, especially those that occur when staff members or volunteers are away from the building.

<p><b>Pocket Response Plan™ (PReP™)</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Response checklist for an emergency in a facility housing collections</b></p> <p><b>Coordinate your library's response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognize and define the emergency</li> <li>○ Notify appropriate authorities and first responders</li> <li>○ Ensure that all staff and visitors are safe and accounted for</li> <li>○ Activate the Disaster Plan</li> <li>○ Activate the Disaster Team</li> <li>○ Establish communication with staff, public</li> </ul> <p><b>Phone tree</b> [Example tree - customize to fit your library]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Emergency Services</b></li> <li><b>2. Response Team Leader</b></li> <li><b>3. Communications Coordinator</b></li> <li><b>4. Building Manager</b></li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify and gather emergency supplies</li> <li>○ Locations of supplies:</li> </ul>	<p><b>Assessment, salvage, recovery, post-emergency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ensure that all hazards are cleared before entry</li> <li>○ Assess and document damage to holdings, building, information systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What type of an emergency was it (fire, smoke, chemical, clean water, dirty water, heat, humidity)?</li> <li>○ What areas have been affected?</li> <li>○ What is the nature of the damage?</li> <li>○ How much of the collection has been affected?</li> <li>○ What types of materials have been damaged?</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Are critical information systems functional / safe?</li> <li>○ Maintain security</li> <li>○ Stabilize the environment at your facility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contact other aid partners</li> <li>○ Contact outside emergency service providers</li> <li>○ Contact insurance agent</li> <li>○ Begin salvage</li> <li>○ Contact news media</li> <li>○ Report status to constituents</li> </ul> <p><b>Establish and maintain channels of communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make contact with VEM Public Assistance</li> <li>○ Establish communication with appropriate local government networks</li> <li>○ Post emergency information and instructions on town website</li> <li>○ Contact DOL</li> <li>○ Establish communication with FEMA</li> <li>○ Contact the news media</li> </ul>	<p><b>Protect vital records essential to operations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assess status of storage areas</li> <li>○ Check condition of vital records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Contact VHRP or DOL for assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Obtain appropriate storage space for threatened vital records</li> <li>○ Determine if duplicates of vital records are stored elsewhere</li> <li>○ Establish salvage priorities</li> </ul> <p><b>Provide emergency services to other libraries, as needed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recruit volunteers</li> <li>○ Prepare supplies</li> <li>○ Provide transportation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Educate and train responders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Coordinate deployment of staff and volunteers to affected areas</li> <li>○ Work with VACDaRN to train response and salvage crews</li> </ul>
--	--	--	--	--	---

# Dashboard

Welcome to dPlan|ArtsReady! . . . Start with "Getting Started" <https://www.dplan.org/help> . . . Email [help@dplan.org](mailto:help@dplan.org) with any questions.

## Risk Assessment

Collections and Assets	0/12 Completed
Communication	0/5 Completed
Community	0/5 Completed
Facilities	0/18 Completed

## Action Items

Create Action Items to help you and your organization track progress towards completing your disaster plan.

+ Create

# BASIC COMPONENTS OF A DISASTER PLAN

---

Immediate Response

---

Disaster Response Team

---

Emergency Services and Contacts

---

Insurance

---

Facilities

---

Disaster Response Supply Inventory

---

Salvage Priorities

---

About this Plan

# Engagement with local emergency management

## Ways to Connect

- Have the police and fire department do a walk-through
- Invite them to an event at your institution
- Ask for help with site assessment and emergency planning
- Invite emergency responders to participate in your training and drills
- Food!

## What They Should Know

- That your institution holds collective memory and culture for your community
- Your collections can be irreplaceable (especially if you have a local history collection)
- Libraries and cultural institutions can be helpful in recovery
- Your layout! Floor plans, locations of building electrical and water systems, etc.



Don't forget: staff turns over! Keep up the relationship.



# The role libraries can play in community response & recovery

- Place for community members to connect with essential services
- Information centers
- Community gathering places
- Exhibits that reflect on what happened
- Programming that makes space for people to work through what happened

# Other potential content

- Phases and language of emergency management
- Climate adaptation strategies
- Disaster response
- Wet book salvage
- Contingency contracts and working with disaster recovery vendors



# How to structure the training

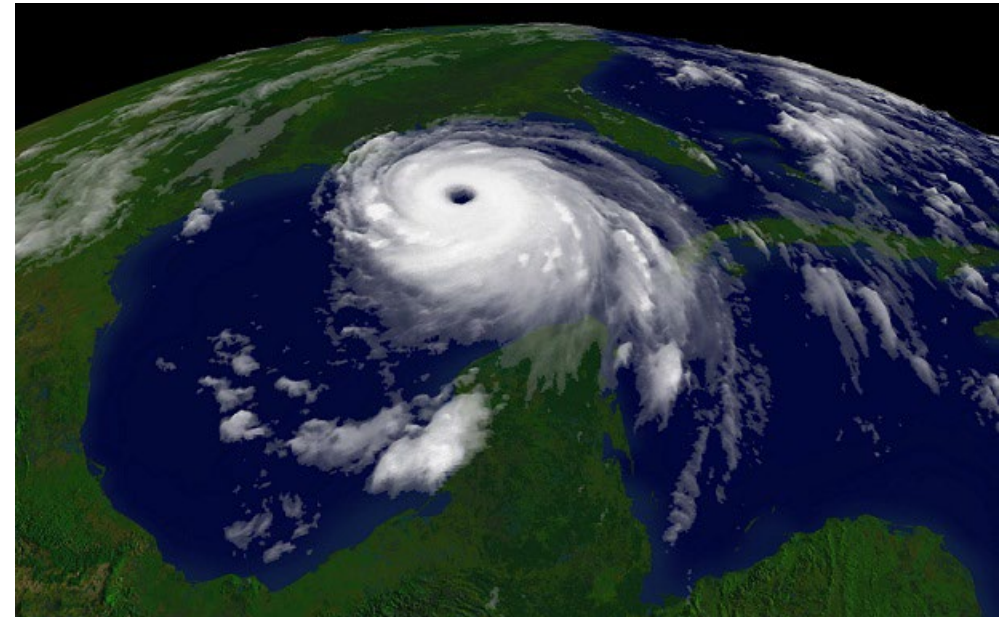
- Presentations
- Workshops
- Tabletop exercises
- Games
- Drills
- Functional exercises
- Full-scale simulations

...or a mashup!



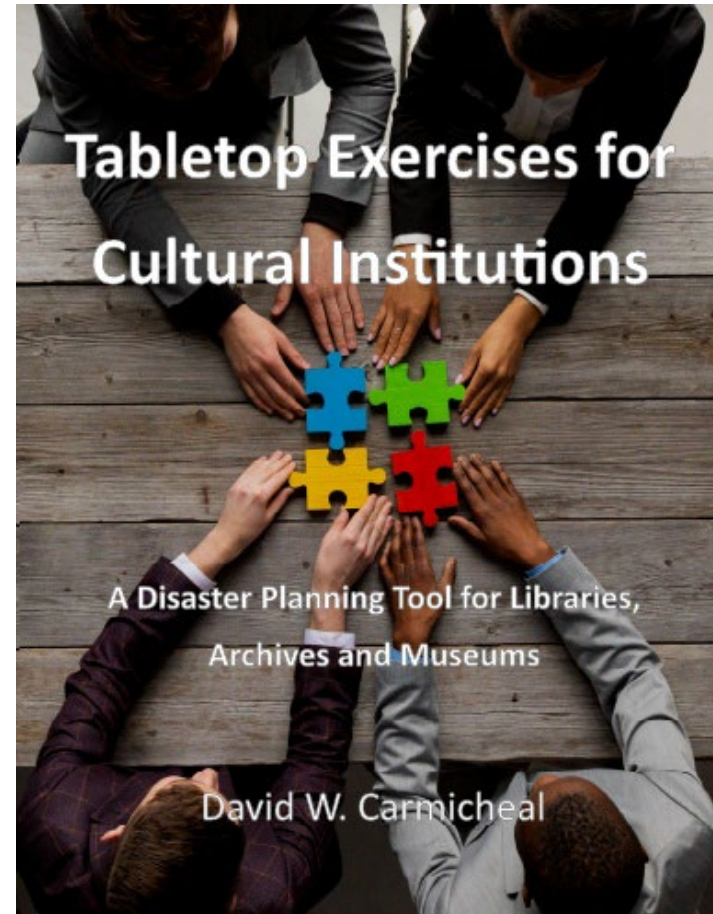
# Presentations and Workshops

- Imparting expert knowledge
- Evergreen content a good candidate for recording
- Peer to peer sharing
- Opportunity for supervised hands-on practice



# Tabletop exercises (once there is a plan)

- [Tabletop Exercises for Cultural Institutions](#) (a BOOK!)
- [Exercising your Disaster Response Plan](#) (Connecting to Collections Care)
- [Sample scenarios and questions to talk through](#) (Library of Congress)
- [Elaborate IT-related scenario](#) (Brandeis University)



# Games

- [Master the Disaster](#) (James Madison University) download and print
- [Disaster Master](#) and [Build a Kit Game](#) (FEMA) online, geared toward kids





# Drills, Functional exercises & Full-scale simulations

- Value of acting out initial response
- Range from simple to complex and costly
- Connect with State Emergency Management about any planned simulations



## Example: Association for Rural & Small Libraries Training, Roundtables, and Informational Networking (ARSL TRAIN)

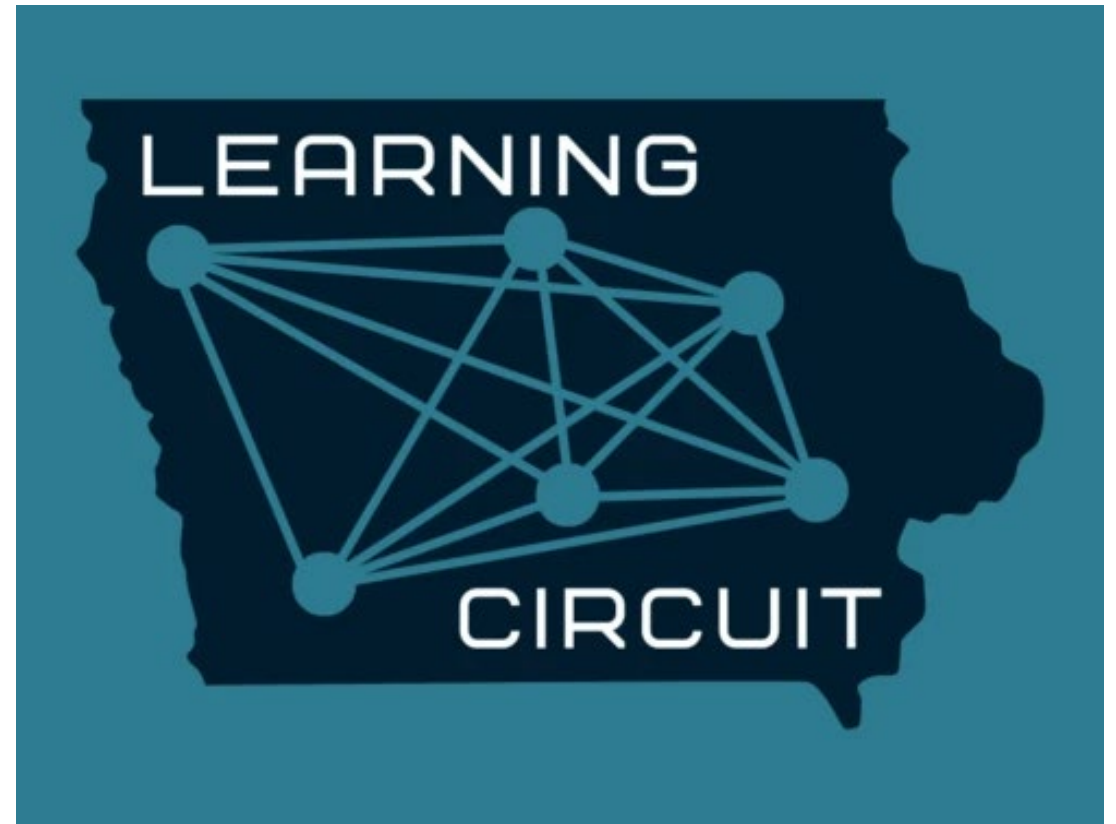
- Four sessions over the course of a month in 2021 “Just Do it, Now! Draft a disaster plan for our library” with homework
- ARSL also offered a two-part “Creating a Building Book for your Library” workshop led by Judy Calhoun, Regional Director, Southeast Arkansas Regional Library
- [ARSL TRAIN Archive](#) (for members only)





# Example: State Library of Iowa Learning Circuit

- *The Learning Circuit features a hybrid format, combining Zoomed-in national experts with hands-on learning activities, led by each district's consultant.*
- 2022 Learning Circuit was Disaster Preparedness
  - Weekly videos released Oct. 24, Oct. 31, Nov. 7, and Nov 14 encouraging people to complete the various parts of their plan
  - Nov. 16: Follow up workshop & check in for completed plans
  - Nov. 22 or 29: Panel of librarians discussing their library's response to a disaster
  - Nov. 30: Island of Misfit Policies/Importance of disaster preparedness for library boards
  - Dec. 7: Supporting staff/community wellbeing during/after a disaster
  - Dec. 13: Salvage 101
- [Learning Circuit | State Library of Iowa](#)
- Toolkit for [Disaster Preparedness | State Library of Iowa](#)



# Example: VACDaRN

## Culture for Climate Action

- [Free virtual workshop series](#) designed by UMass Amherst Arts Extension Service to empower Vermont arts and cultural organizations to develop, fund, and implement creative climate actions that align with their unique organizational mission, values, and priorities.
- Geared toward staff and board members from Vermont's arts and cultural heritage sector who own or lease facilities for their organizations.
- Sessions were held every other week in February and March, 2024, from 12-2 p.m., via Zoom, on the following topics
  - Carbon Mitigation, Climate Resilience, and Your Organization
  - Evaluating Your Facility and Operations
  - Strategizing for Organizational Resilience and Sustainability
  - Programming, Outreach, and Community Engagement.

**Culture for  
Climate Action  
Vermont**  
*Workshop Series*



# Additional resources

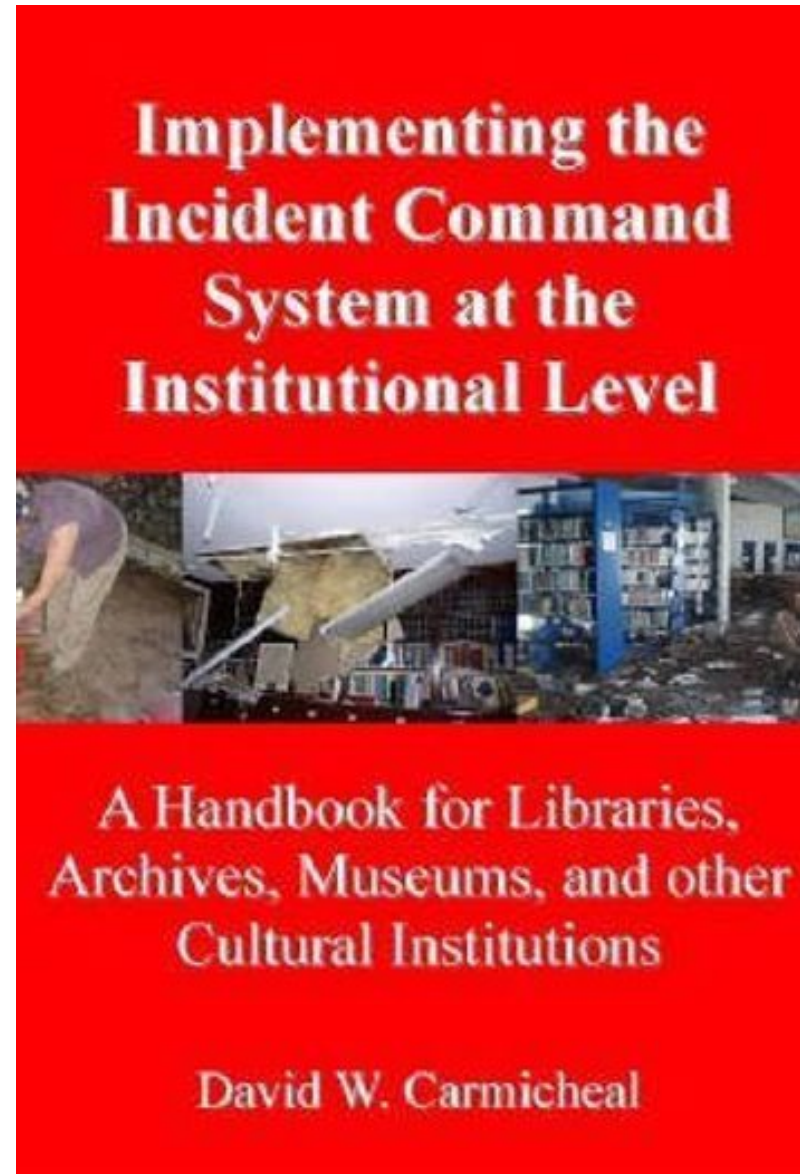
- [Alliance for Response networks](#)
- [Heritage Emergency National Task Force \(HENTF\) Tools and publications](#)
- [NEDCC Emergency Management Leaflets](#)
- [Northeast Summit on Climate Adaptation Resources](#)
- [Sustainable Libraries Initiative](#)

AFR Networks



# Logistics & other considerations

- Do you know what the library community wants?
- What are the state library objectives?
- What timing and time commitment works best for prospective participants?
- What is a feasible scope and scale?
  - Entire state to single library
  - For beginners or more advanced



Keep [MayDay](#) & [National Preparedness Month](#) in mind (September) and

Keep it  
entertaining...

The Office (U.S.) [Fire Drill scene](#)

Thank you!

[rachel.onuf@vermont.gov](mailto:rachel.onuf@vermont.gov)

802-622-4092

people learn in lots of different ways, but experience is the best

0:42 / 4:56

