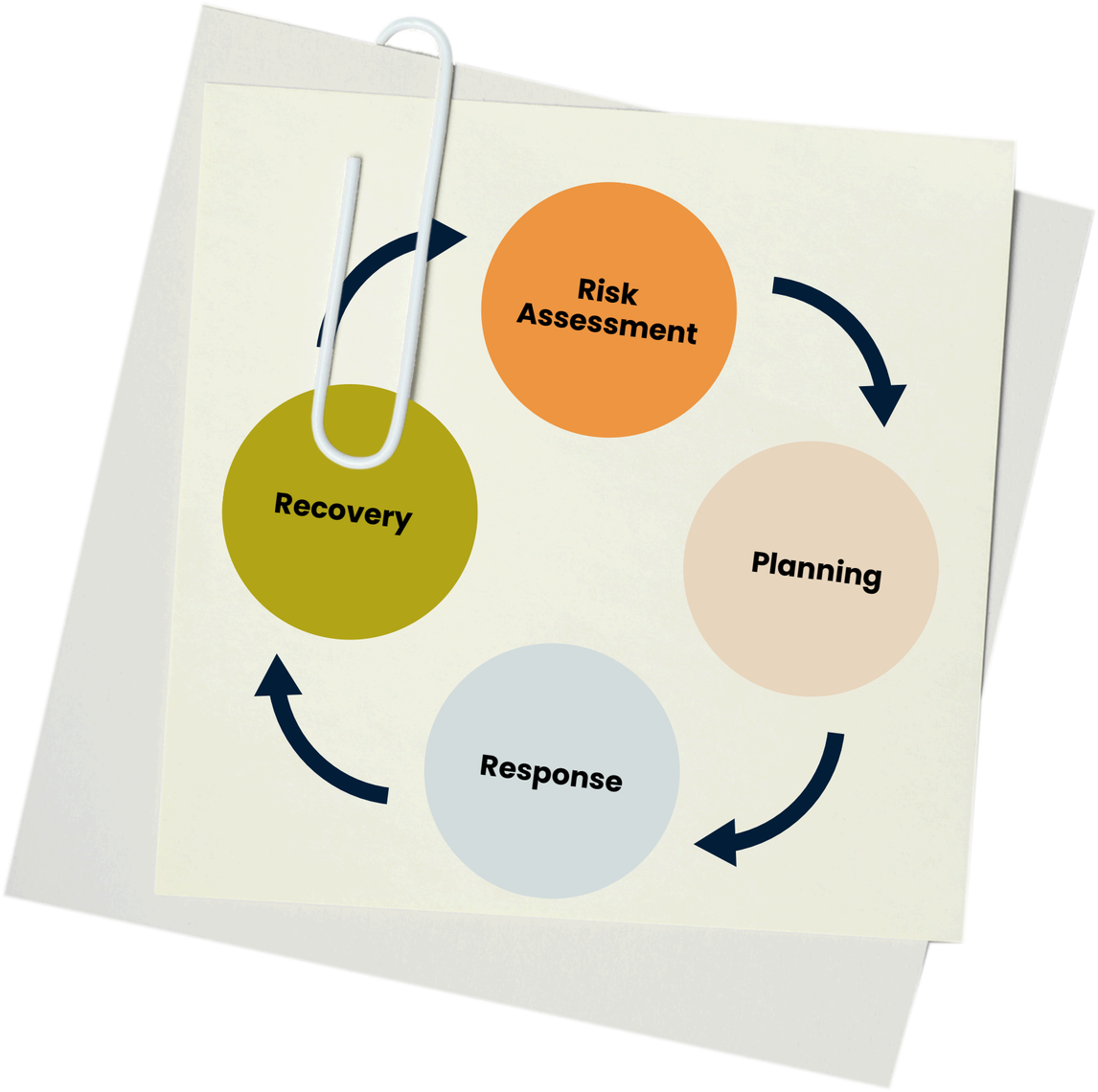
Salvage Priorities

What’s next?

Presented By Maddie Cooper, Preventive Conservator

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

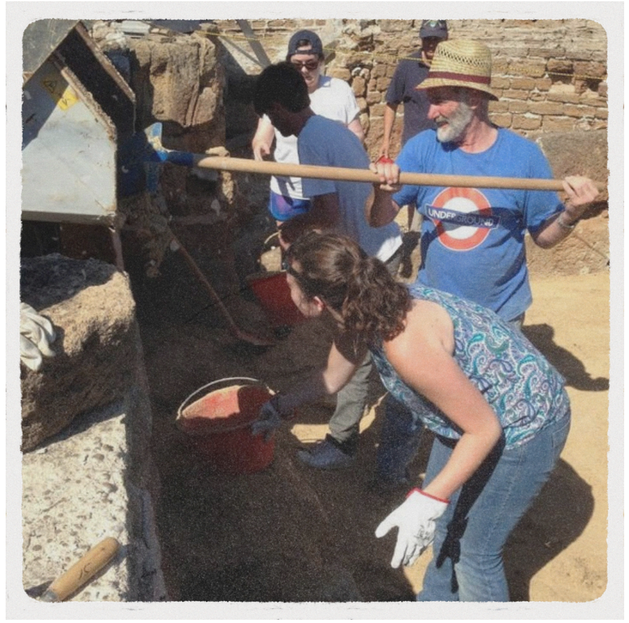
Emergency Management Cycle



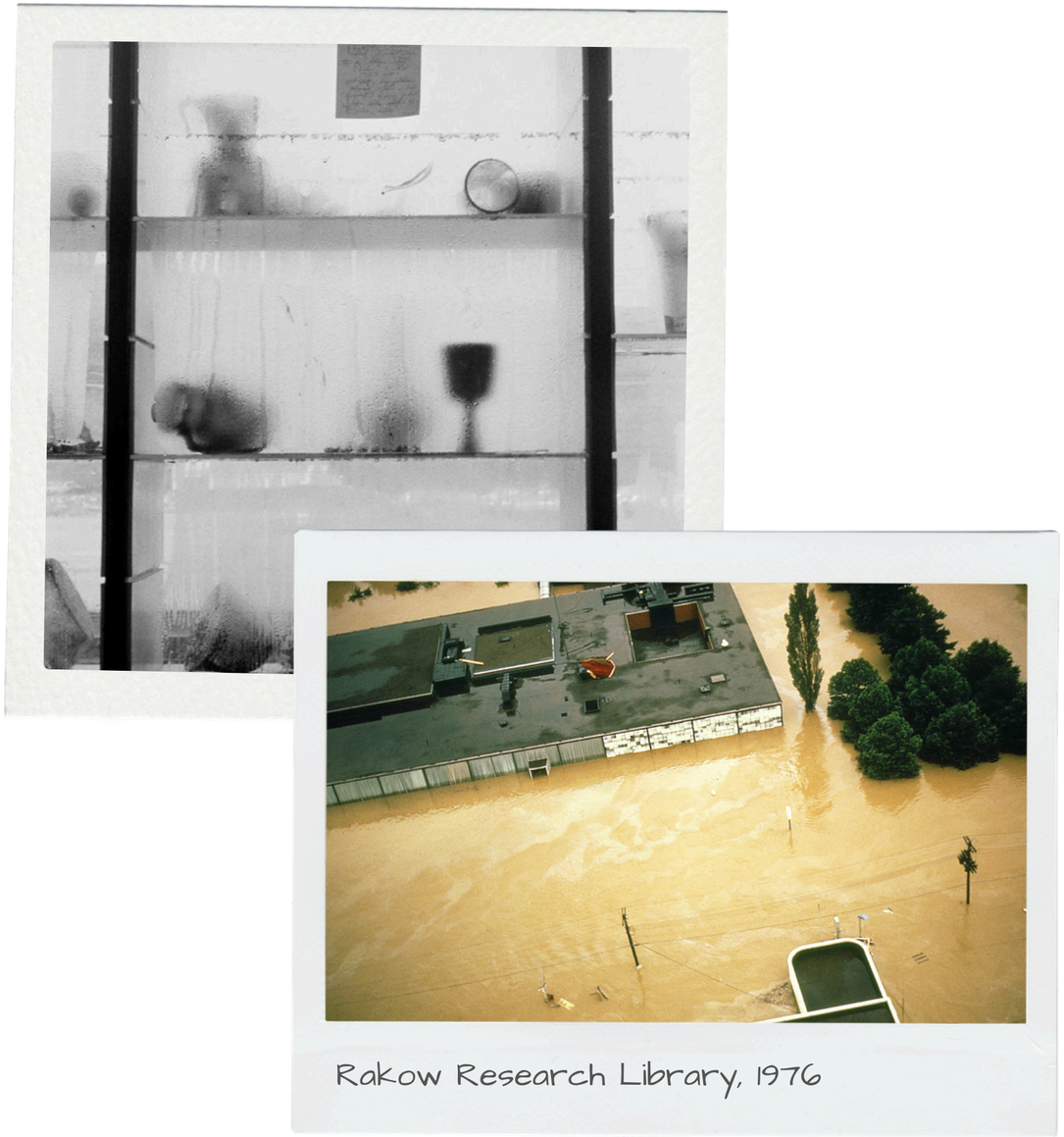
Emergency Management Priorities

1. Human health and safety
2. Communication
3. Incident stabilization
4. Documentation
5. Collection first aid









Rakow Research Library, 1976

Corning Museum Flood, 1972

Flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes left hundreds of objects broken and over half of the library collections saturated with flood water and mud.

"**Identification of Items to be saved:**
Each institution must develop its own list of items to be saved and the priority of such protection."
-*The Corning Flood*: :*Museum Under Water*, 1977

Salvage Priorities



British Museum collections evacuated during WWII



Salvage of Museum of Chinese in America collections after 2020 fire

What are salvage priorities?

A list of collections that will be addressed in some way either before or after an emergency situation.

Pre-emergency they can be used to mitigate risks and secure collections before emergencies.

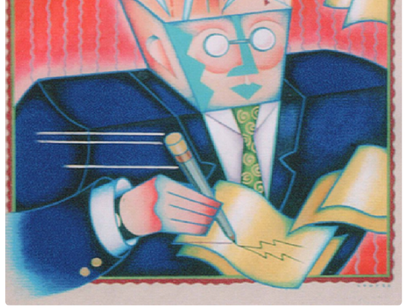
Post-emergency they can guide emergency response and salvage operations.

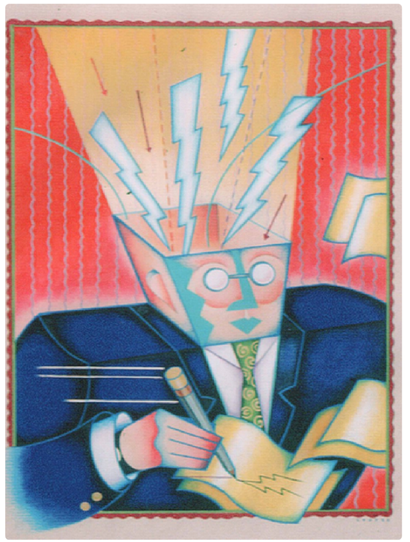
Left: ICCROM archives
Right: Elise Wrabetz NBC News, 2020

Why are they important?

“Presumably people are under increased cognitive load after a major disaster… Processing a disaster during tasks is perhaps similar to dual-tasking, like driving and having a cell phone conversation at the same time, and this can have consequences.”

- *William S. Helton, Professor of Psychology*





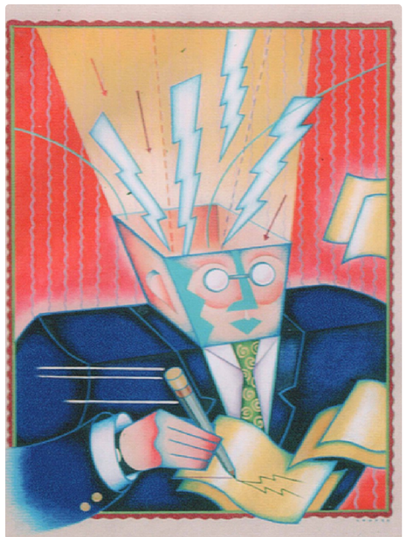


Illustration by
Sherrill Cooper



Phyllis Diller's Joke File

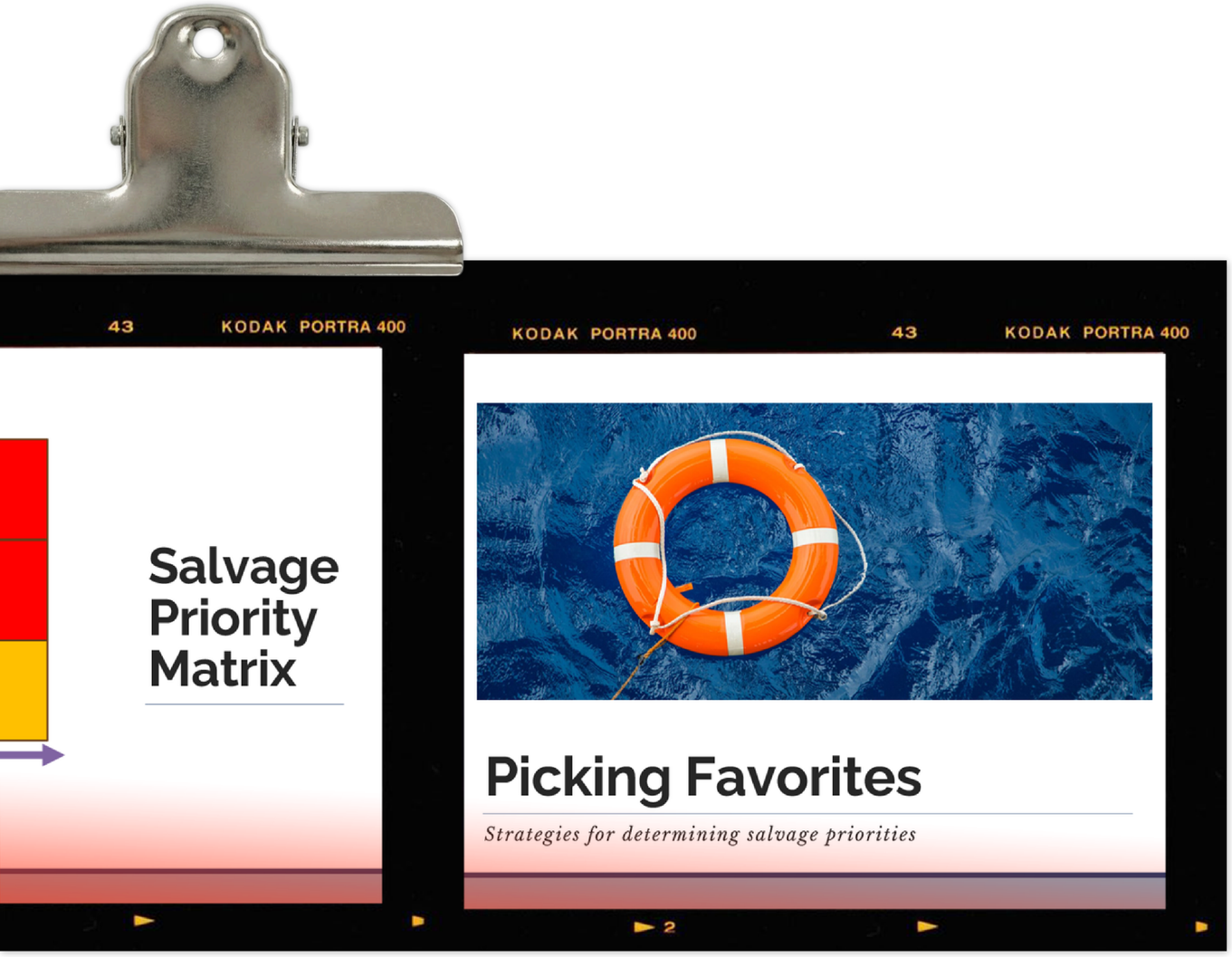
Image: Hugh Talman, National Museum of American History



CHARTER OF THE COLLEGE OF PENNSYLVANIA

Salvage Priorities

1. Vital institutional information
2. Items on loan
3. Collections that most directly support the organization's mission
4. Collections that are unique, most used, most vital for research, least replaceable
5. Items most prone to continued damage if untreated
6. Materials most likely to be successfully salvaged



Picking Favorites

A 2023 webinar covering the use of significance assessment for determining salvage priorities

youtube.com/@ccaha3300

Salvage Priorities



Salvage Priorities



Documentation

Document



PRIORITY

- Internal emergency plans
- Responder-focused plans
- Physical markers

EMERGENCY CONTACTS – CALL IN ORDER

1.	Primary Contact	Name: Daniella Duran, Head of Collections Phone: 561-555-1234
2.	Backup Contact	Name: Zara Koch, Curator Phone: 561-555-9452
3.	Facilities / Building	Name: Bode Swanson Phone: 561-555-9263

CRITICAL LOCATIONS

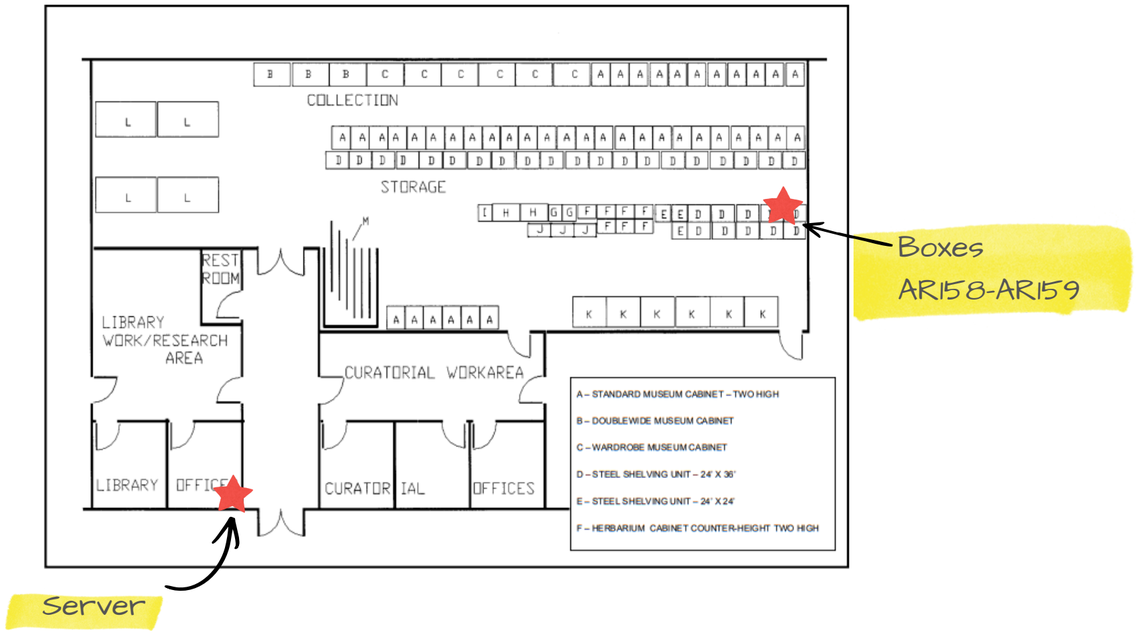
Water shutoff	Mech003 West Closet, Gallery B	*Electrical shutoff*	Mech006 Entrance next to annunciator panel
Emergency supplies		*HVAC shutoff:*	

PRIORITIY COLLECTIONS

Locations/Reference:
Historic card catalogue: ARCH201 FC3
Murillo Collection: ARCH201, Row1Unit3Shelves4-7; 12 boxes

Last updated: 1/22/2026

Emergency Plans





What: Documentation of the identity and location of priority collections. This can be a short list or a larger inventory.

Why: Helps expedite decisions about collection evacuation and recovery.

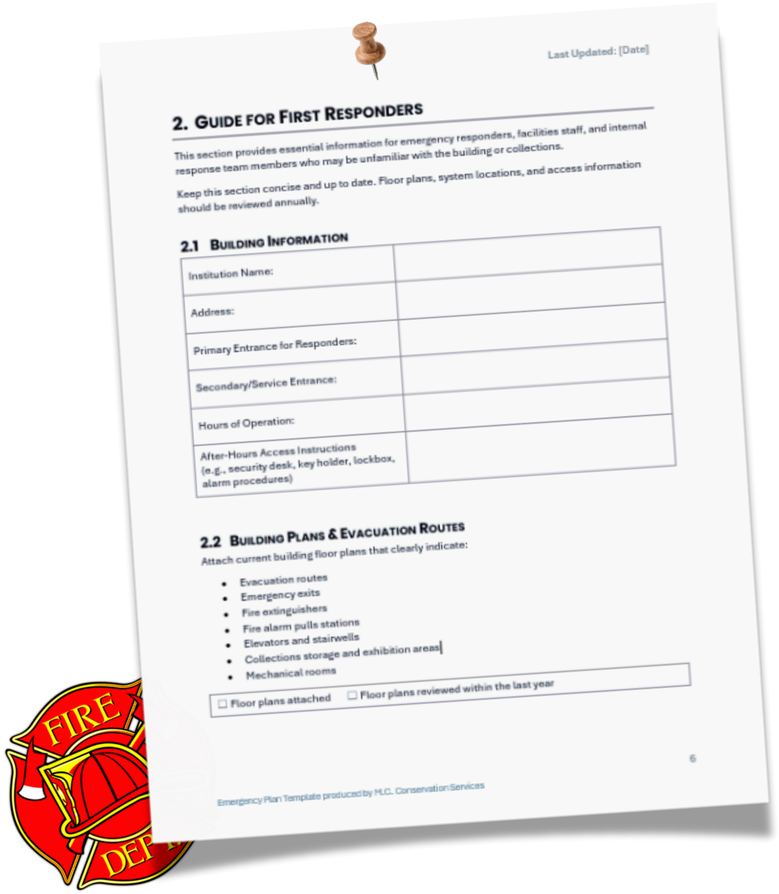
What about? If you are concerned about security, this portion of the plan can be restricted to authorized peronnel only

Remember: The audience you're writing for isn't necessarily someone who is familiar with your collection:

- Marked floorplans
- Maps
- Images

Responder Guides





Last Updated: [Date]

2. Guide for First Responders

This section provides essential information for emergency responders, facilities staff, and internal response team members who may be unfamiliar with the building or collections.

Keep this section concise and up to date. Floor plans, system locations, and access information should be reviewed annually.

2.1 Building Information

Institution Name:	
Address:	
Primary Entrance for Responders:	
Secondary/Service Entrance:	
Hours of Operation:	
After-Hours Access Instructions (e.g., security desk, key holder, lockbox, alarm procedures)	

2.2 Building Plans & Evacuation Routes

Attach current building floor plans that clearly indicate:

- Evacuation routes
- Emergency exits
- Fire extinguishers
- Fire alarm pulls stations
- Elevators and stairwells
- Collections storage and exhibition areas
- Mechanical rooms

☐ Floor plans attached ☐ Floor plans reviewed within the last year

6

Emergency Plan Template produced by M.C. Conservation Services

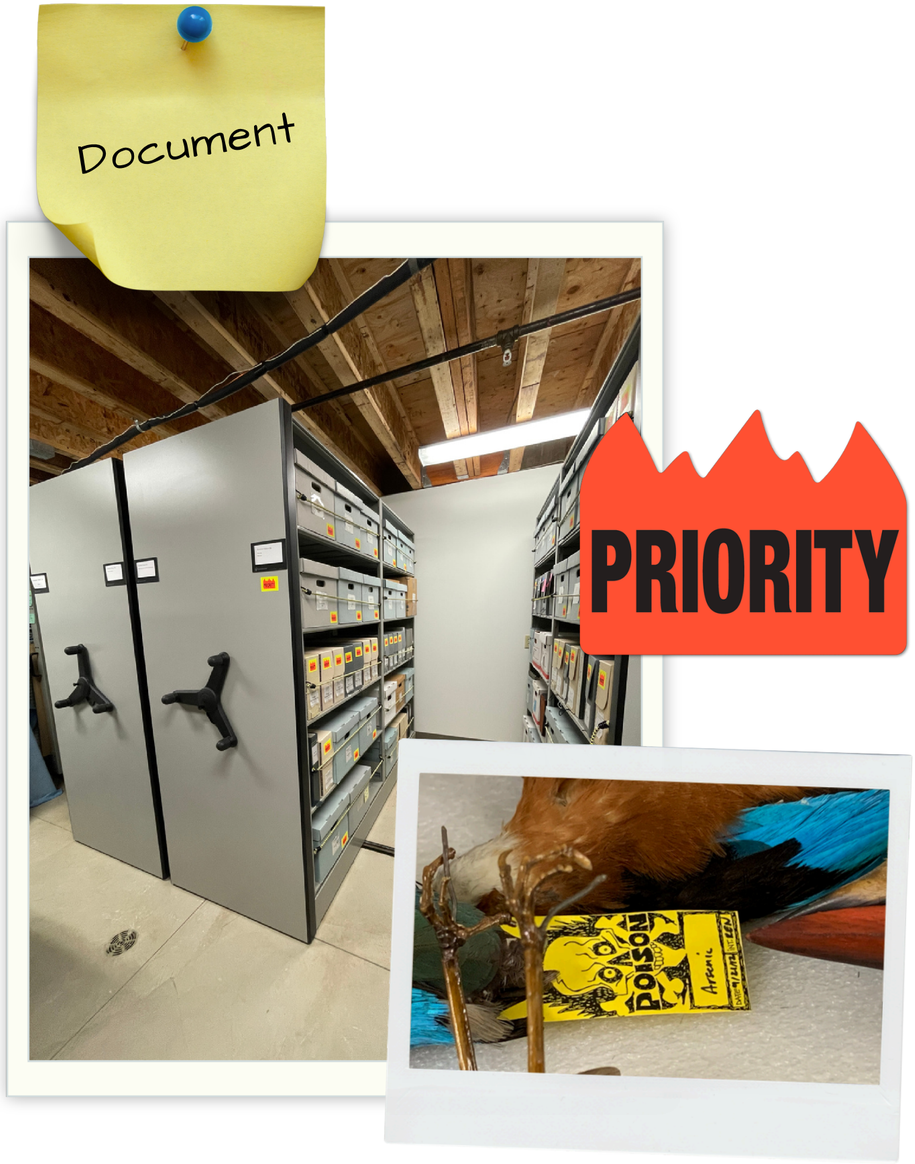
What: A document or part of a larger internal emergency plan that is written specifically for emergency responders.

Why: Helps emergency responders handle situations safely and effectively.

What about? Talk to your local first responders about what is most helpful to them to have in this document.

Remember:

- Building information
- Plans and evacuation routes
- Emergency systems and shutoffs
- Known hazards
- Priority collections
- Contact information for an emergency responder liason



Physical Markers

What: Stickers, tags or indicators that mark priority and hazardous collections clearly for responders.

Why: Identifies priority collections for evacuation or priority before/after emergencies.

What about? Consider security and access to spaces with marked priorities.

Remember: These should be visible to those who are not necessarily familiar with your institution's collections.

Salvage Priority Communication



Internal:

- Regular emergency management training
- Regular salvage priority assessment

First Responders:

- Site visits and walkthroughs
- Pre-fire planning
- Knox boxes

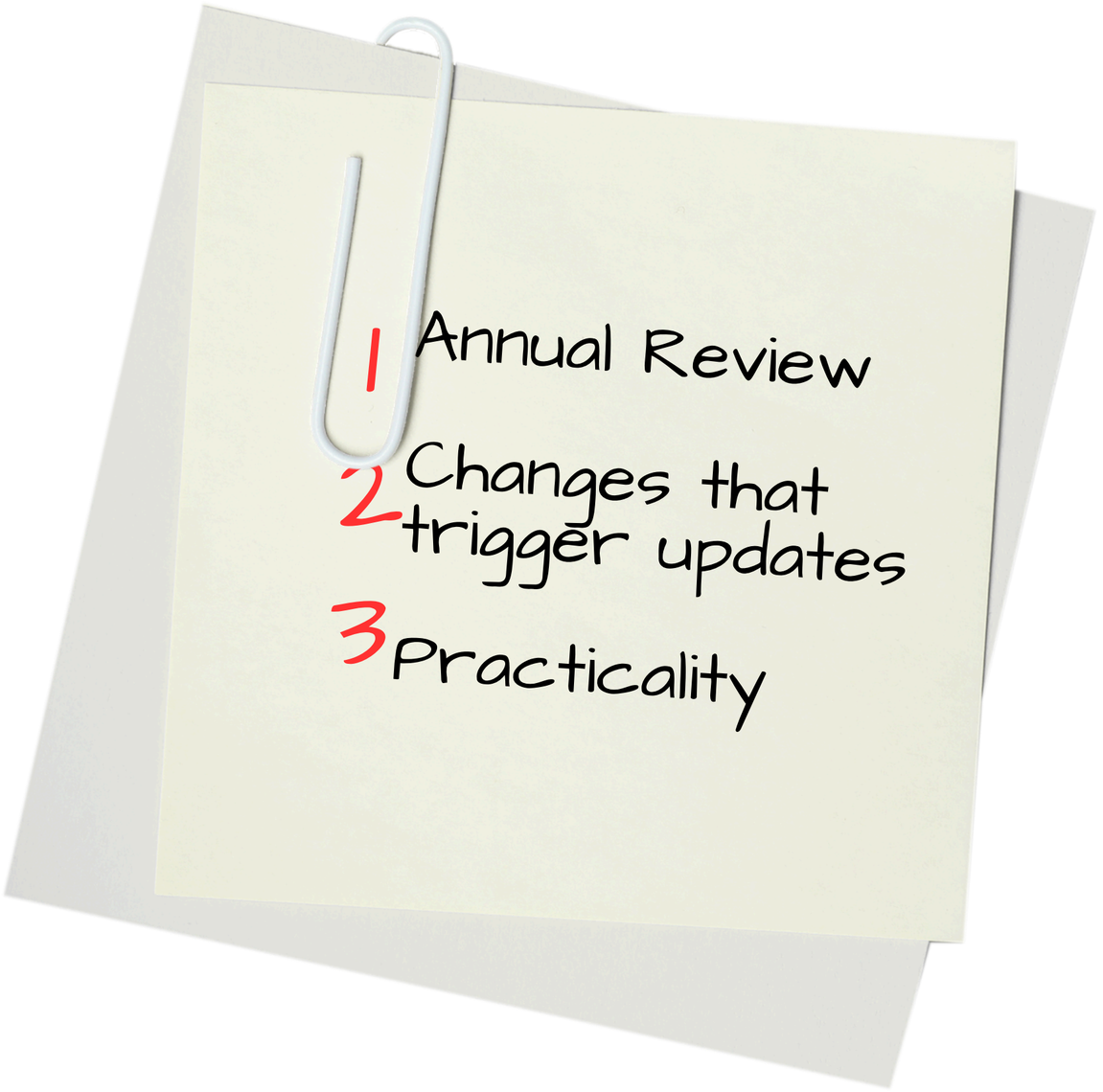








Salvage Priority Evaluation



Salvage Priorities



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www.mcconservation.com



Questions

Presented By Maddie Cooper

October 28, 2026