

## Historic Preservation - Technical Procedures

**Spectitle:** Guidelines for Salvaging Historic Building Materials in the Event of a Disaster

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**Details:** Guidelines for Salvaging Historic Building Materials in the Event of a Disaster

### **GUIDELINES FOR SALVAGING HISTORIC BUILDING MATERIALS IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER**

This procedure includes guidance on what to look for and what to do in a disaster to minimize financial and cultural loss at a historic property. Disasters such as fire, floods, and structural failure are never anticipated. Fire drills and emergency evacuation plans reduce the safety threat that sudden crises and ensuing panic pose to building occupants. In the same way, the loss of costly ornamental finishes and craftsmanship in historic buildings can be reduced by planning in advance for effective recovery of damaged architectural materials.

All building managers, construction engineers, maintenance supervisors, and other individuals directly responsible for the management and protection of historic property should familiarize themselves with these emergency salvage guidelines. **IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER, CONSULT THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER (SHPO) IMMEDIATELY.** First step is do a complete photo-documentation of the existing conditions, post-disaster prior to salvage. Provide copies of these guidelines to all Contractors and Government personnel involved in clean-up, debris removal, and repair operations. **DO NOT THROW AWAY MATERIALS WITHOUT APPROVAL OF SHPO.** Label all salvage as to building, room and location in room for future documentation.

#### **A. Metals, Stone, Structural Glass, Ceramics, and other Non-combustibles, Waterproof Materials:**

1. **SALVAGE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. IF POSSIBLE, LEAVE IN PLACE.** These materials survive most disasters completely intact. Damaged ornamental metals and stone can often be repaired at far less expense than they can be replace. Locating new matching stone for a replacement may be impossible if the original quarry is closed. Even completely shattered stone may be ground for use in composite patch repair of cracked or chipped stone panels.
2. Salvaging ornamental metals, including grilles, fixtures,

and hardware saves the Government the cost of expensive custom casting. REMOVE ORIGINAL METAL HARDWARE FROM SEVERELY DAMAGED WALLS, CEILINGS, FLOORS, DOORS AND WINDOWS.

3. IF ORNAMENTAL METALS ARE SEVERELY DAMAGED, RECOVER THE LEAST DAMAGED PIECE AVAILABLE FOR EACH UNIQUE TYPE OF HARDWARE/FEATURE.

The intent is to obtain models to fabricate/replicate elements. For every piece that can be reproduced directly from an existing element, the time and expense of design is eliminated in the casting process.

#### **B. Woodwork and Ornamental Plaster:**

1. Immediately separate intact and partially damaged material from severely damaged/destroyed material. Retain all intact woodwork.
2. In cases of major damage, recover samples of each ornamental feature for replication. Salvage the least damaged examples of each different type of plaster ornament and each millwork feature, including doors, windows, paneling, baseboards, columns, plasters, door/window trim, etc.
3. If possible, get whole pieces. If this is not possible, try to gather enough pieces to assemble into a whole element. Broken plaster castings can be glued together and built up, where damaged, to create a mold for replication. Remember, making molds from existing elements is much less expensive than sculpting new plaster and wood pieces to create a mold from nothing.

#### **C. Flooring:**

1. Leave surviving flooring in place for evaluation by an architectural conservator. If the floor is severely damaged or unstable, preserve, at a minimum, one complete floor section extending from its center to the wall. The intent is to preserve enough material to show the floor pattern, color, and layout, including the locations and widths of borders. Select the most intact section of the floor to salvage.
2. Leave in place as much of the wall-floor edge as possible: the edge of the floor often provides a complete "footprint" for reproducing wall features such as columns, wainscoting, and built-in furnishings.

#### **D. Artwork:**

Salvage as much as possible, whatever the condition. Consult with the SHPO prior to salvage efforts.

#### **E. General Clean-up:**

1. Use non-chemical, non-abrasive methods only. Vacuum; brush with soft bristled, non-metallic brushes; or damp (water) wipe using well-wrung cotton rags.
2. Do not use detergents or other proprietary cleaning products on unpainted wood or metal. Always rub in the direction of the grain. Immediately buff surfaces dry with soft, cotton cloths.

**END OF SECTION**