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SUBJECT: Tips for Protecting an Agency's Records in Anticipation of Severe Weather Events.

Every year the Atlantic hurricane season begins June 1 and ends November 30. Delaware Public Archives requests that agencies review the following tips so that state and local government agencies can protect records from damage or loss. In doing so, agencies are able to provide services to the citizens of the state during an emergency and throughout any recovery operations.

Organizations that provide information and guidance on actions to take during weather events:

- The National Weather Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has the following website for updated weather information: http://www.weather.gov/media/phi/current_briefing.pdf
 - Department of Safety and Homeland Security, Delaware Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.dema.delaware.gov/> .
 - DEMA Contact numbers: 302-659-3362; in-state toll free: 877-729-3362.
1. Identify the agency's *Vital Records* and review the plan to transport these records to a safe location. The loss of *Vital Records* may greatly compromise an agency's operations; therefore, it is highly recommended to move vital and essential records to the location identified in the agency's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).
 - Create a check list that identifies the location and volume of the agency's records.
 - Form teams that are responsible to secure the vital records and move them to a safe location. Advance coordination with vendors or other support organizations may be required if the volume of Vital Records is too great for staff to move on their own or if an agency's organic transportation is limited.
 - If your agency elects not to evacuate records in advance, it may be a good idea to stage record boxes near the *Vital Records* to expedite their removal at a later time.
 2. Assess your building/office for the following: (indications of past of leakage)
 - Damage from leaking roofs
 - Areas near exposed windows and doors
 - Damage from flooding due to improper drainage, cracked foundations and high water levels outside the facility
 - Retain the information for vendors that can provide damage mitigation and recovery
 3. Please remove as many boxes as possible from the floor and away from areas around doors and windows. This is especially important if your agency/section is located in an area that is prone to flooding.

4. Review and verify the last time the agency's electronic data systems were backed-up by their Information Technology department.
 - Consider unplugging and covering monitors, CPUs, and other electronic devices with plastic sheeting or bags.
5. Create a list of vendors that specialize in disaster recovery and that are able to respond to the agency. The list should include:
 - The specialty or area of expertise.
 - A vendor may be able to remediate water damage to a building but may not have the expertise to recover water or smoke damaged records.
 - Vendor points of contacts, names, telephone numbers, email, addresses, etc.
 - It is recommended to have multiple vendors on the list in case a disaster effects a region and a vendor commits assets to other business in the area.

Please remember that the first 24 to 48 hours following the disaster is the most critical for the recovery or safeguarding information. For instance, records that become damp can quickly develop mold and the records will likely become unsalvageable if left untreated.

The staff at the Delaware Public Archives can provide advice, vendor contacts, and, at times, labor, to assist agencies with their disaster recovery. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact your assigned analyst.

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