

# What Is COSTEP?

The **COSTEP framework** is an action plan for building alliances between cultural institutions and emergency management agencies as they prepare for area-wide disasters. Every state has standard emergency management systems already in place on multiple levels—federal, state, tribal, and local—to protect and preserve life and property. COSTEP helps integrate cultural resources into existing state-level emergency management structures and protocols.



Photo: Andrea Booher/FEMA



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**COSTEP**  
Coordinated Statewide  
Emergency Preparedness

AN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

[www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php](http://www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php)

### COSTEP Sponsors

- COSTEP was developed by the Northeast Document Conservation Center in cooperation with:
- The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)
  - The Massachusetts Archives
  - The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA)
  - The Society of American Archivists (SAA)
  - Heritage Preservation
  - Lyrasis (formerly SOLINET)

This project was made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Institute is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Its mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas.

Collections statistics courtesy of the Heritage Health Index. Founded in 1973, the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) is a nonprofit, regional conservation center specializing in the preservation of paper-based materials for libraries, archives, museums, and other collections-holding institutions, as well as private collections. For more information on NEDCC and its services, visit [www.nedcc.org](http://www.nedcc.org).



# COSTEP

## Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness

AN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR CULTURAL RESOURCES

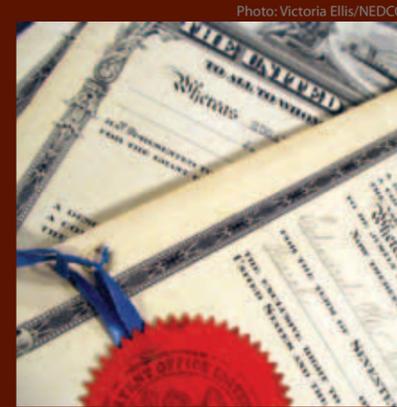


Photo: Victoria Ellis/NEDCC



Courtesy of Hopkinton (NH) Historical Society

## In a disaster, what's worth saving?



Photos: Julie Martin/NEDCC



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# Saving What Matters

**In a disaster, what's worth saving?** The most important—people and property. But then what? On a personal level, we are driven to save our history: photographs, children's artwork, our grandmother's wedding ring. On the community level, saving our cultural resources is just as important; they document what we have done and who we are, and they provide inspiration for what we will become.

Our cultural resources include irreplaceable documents, books, photographs, buildings, significant landscapes, recordings, artwork, furniture, and much more. They are found in a wide range of community locations, from libraries, museums, and archives to parks, historical sites, municipal offices, and businesses. In the aftermath of a disaster, cultural resources can help restore a sense of identity and normalcy and provide an economic anchor during the long-term recovery of ravaged communities.

## Partners in Response

**Disasters require an "all hands on deck" response.** For decades, emergency management agencies and first responders have been involved in emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. In recent years, following a series of large-scale disasters, staff at cultural heritage institutions have begun to focus on their role in disaster planning for their collections, sites, and resources. This work takes a leap forward with the introduction of **COSTEP—Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness**—a framework that helps the emergency management and cultural communities work together to preserve the cultural resources that matter to us all.

Photo: Jennifer Fauxsmith/Mass. Archives



Photo: Marvin Nauman/FEMA



## Who Can Use COSTEP?

Because cooperation is an essential feature of COSTEP, the involvement of the following groups is needed to develop an inclusive plan to preserve our cultural heritage in times of disaster:

- State agencies responsible for cultural resources
- Emergency managers and first responders at the local, state, county, tribal, regional, and federal levels
- Historic houses, sites, and societies
- Public and private libraries, archives, and museums
- Performing arts organizations
- Professional organizations
- Preservation associations
- Municipal/county clerks and record managers
- Academic institutions

Photo: John Shea/FEMA



Over 4.8 billion artifacts are held in the public trust by more than 30,000 cultural heritage institutions in the U.S.

American museums, libraries, archives, historical societies, and scientific research organizations are visited 2.5 billion times a year.

## How Does COSTEP Work?

The COSTEP framework recommends effective ways to convene stakeholders in any state to prepare for a disaster that might affect cultural resources. Participants are free to organize themselves as they choose, but leadership should come from existing state cultural and emergency management staff who would recruit members statewide for a COSTEP working group or team. Once organized, the team should address the four COSTEP components:

- **Building relationships** among key organizations in the state
- **Mitigating hazards** to cultural resources through integration with existing mitigation plans
- **Preparing for emergency response and recovery** for cultural resources
- **Sustaining COSTEP** by maintaining relationships and adapting to changing circumstances over time

The COSTEP framework:

- **Provides suggestions** for getting started, recruiting participants, and building relationships
- **Offers tips** for possible objectives, discussion topics, and action steps
- **Suggests outcomes** for varying levels of preparedness

The COSTEP framework acknowledges that no single model will work in every state due to political and practical differences. That's why COSTEP is designed to be flexible and easily adaptable to the emergency management and cultural landscape of each state.



Photo: Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA

## COSTEP in Action

COSTEP Massachusetts has worked hard to develop initiatives that integrate the needs of the cultural and emergency management communities. Here are two good examples of what COSTEP can accomplish "on the ground":

- The **Massachusetts Cultural Resources Disaster Information Form** protects collections at the local level. Once completed by a cultural institution, it is handed to the local Emergency Management Director (EMD) for inclusion in the local Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). Since EMDs are responsible for maintaining and updating localities' emergency plans, this standardized form and protocol enable a more robust local disaster response for cultural resources than before.
- A **Cultural Resources Annex** to the state CEMP will include cultural resources in existing response systems. This annex will coordinate federal, state, local, voluntary, and private resources to assist, preserve, and protect cultural and historic institutions and resources before, during, and after natural or man-made disasters. This annex will join others, such as the Disaster Resource and Logistics Annex and the Debris Management Plan, to address a need heretofore never met.

Photo: iStockphoto.com

80% of cultural heritage institutions in the U.S. do not have an emergency plan with staff trained to carry it out.

## COSTEP Outcomes

When cultural organizations and emergency management agencies form partnerships, successful planning for emergency preparedness is more likely to occur. Outcomes can include:

- Identifying libraries and/or museums as potential Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)
- Incorporating cultural resource data into existing Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs)
- Familiarizing cultural institutions with standard emergency management structures and terminology
- Presenting workshops that encourage individual institutions to create emergency plans
- Launching a GIS initiative to create data layers that show the location and basic attributes of cultural resource institutions
- Developing training modules on cultural resources for local Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)

Photo: Jocelyn Augustino/FEMA



## Getting Started with COSTEP

The COSTEP framework is available online and as a downloadable PDF at [www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php](http://www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php). A COSTEP Starter Kit is provided for those interested in launching COSTEP in their state. COSTEP is free of charge and adaptable for non-commercial purposes.

For more information about COSTEP, please visit [www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php](http://www.nedcc.org/disaster/costep.php) or email [costep@nedcc.org](mailto:costep@nedcc.org).