

Initial Steps BEFORE Recovery of Wet Records

When records have been damaged by water, it is very important to begin the recovery process as soon as possible. However, **do not go in and start pulling records**. Below are some *initial steps* that need to be taken prior to initialize the recovery of wet records.

HUMAN SAFETY IS ALWAYS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY

Do not enter the affected area or building until it has been determined that it is safe to do so. In a **WATER EMERGENCY**, potential dangers to people include electrical shock and exposure to sewage, chemicals and mold.

- If the water source is not determined, assume the water is contaminated and protective clothing must be worn. If sewage or other dangerous substances contaminate the water, **enlist professional assistance**.
- Do not enter an area with standing water until the electricity has been turned off.

SECURITY

If confidential records have been damaged, recovery will need to take place under proper security conditions.

Once safe access is available, assessing and stabilizing the area immediately is necessary. The greatest damage to records happen during the first 8 hours. Within 48 hours, paper will begin to breakdown and to show initial stages of mold. Photographic and magnetic/electronic media will breakdown sooner.

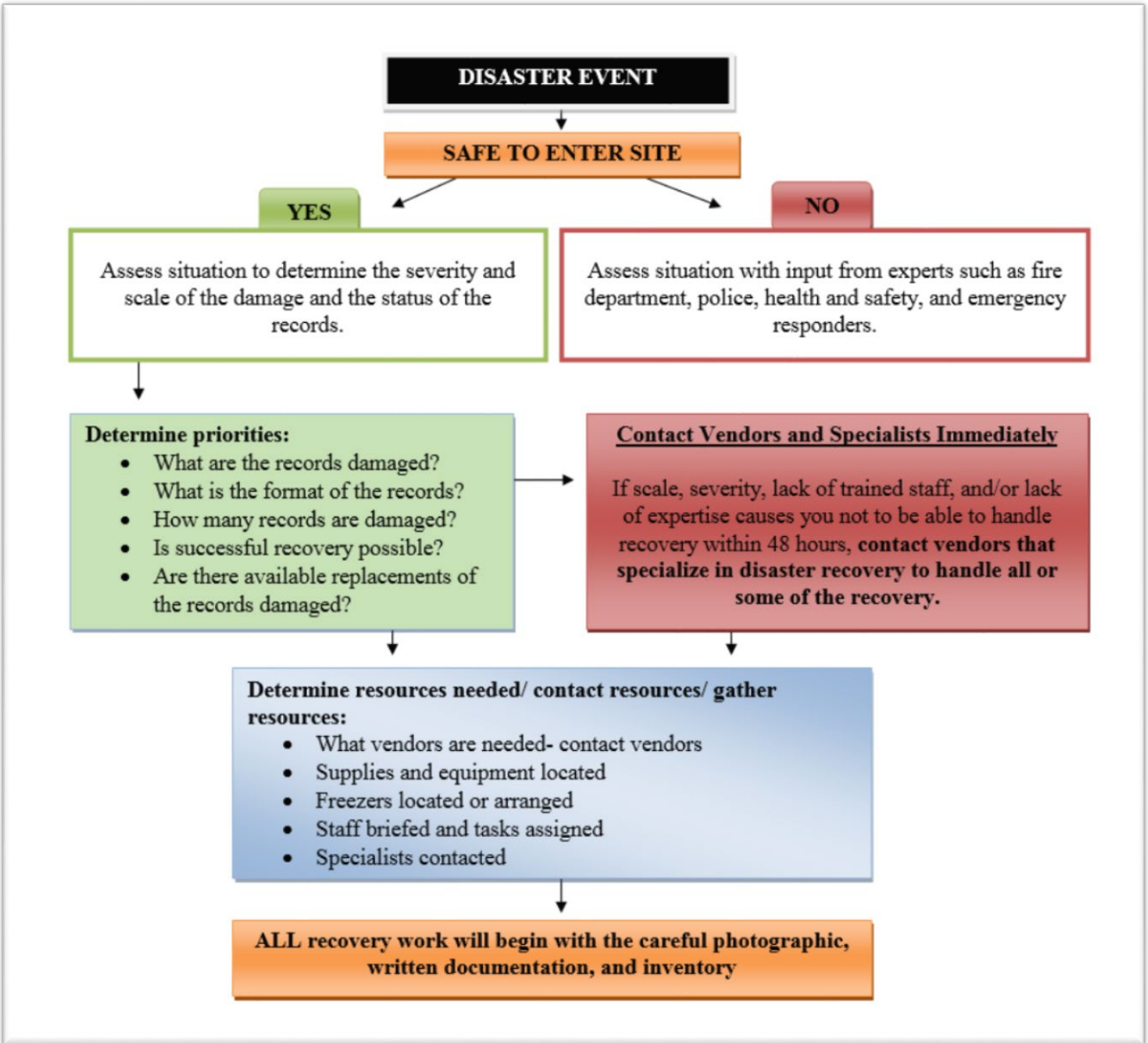
If recovery is beyond your capability to handle due to severity, size, staffing, and/ or resources, contact vendors and specialists immediately.

Quantities too large to stabilize within the first 48 hours should be frozen either for defrosting and air drying at a later date, or for referral to a commercial drying vendor or preservation professional.

Inventory and Document

Documentation of every step of the recovery process needs to be done. Be sure to keep a complete inventory of all records that are moved. All records should be eventually removed from the damaged area, even if the records are not wet. They have been in an area that once did, or may still have high humidity level which can promote mold growth.

The inventory needs to include: **type of record, record description, record format, original location, extent of damage, new recovery location, and any other tracking/ recovery identification**.



For more information on disaster mitigation, preparation and recovery, please feel free to contact Cindy Bradley, Head of Collections Management Branch at the State Archives of North Carolina at (919) 814-6849 or at cynthia.bradley@ncdcr.gov.