

Water Damaged Records - First Response

The following checklist provides some initial steps to take in situations where records have been damaged by water/flooding. It is important to immediately contact your [Corporate](#) or [Ministry Records Officer](#) to advise them of the situation, and to obtain detailed information on how to salvage wet and damaged records.

SALVAGE WET RECORDS WITHIN 48 HOURS

1. **Ensure your personal safety.** Shut off electrical circuits if there is an electrical hazard in the flood area. **Do not** enter the area until it has been declared safe to enter.
2. **If possible, stop the cause of the water.** Immediately notify your ARES (Accommodation and Real Estate Services) contact to arrange for repairs and water cleanup.
3. If water is dripping on records, **move them to a dry place, or cover with plastic sheets.**
4. **Assess the damage in a general way.** Roughly, how many boxes are wet? How long have the records been wet? Are they starting to mould? What types of materials are wet (e.g. paper, photographic, magnetic media)?
5. **Begin disaster recovery.** Arrange for packing supplies, transportation, and freezing facilities. Your Records Officer will provide guidance.
6. **Control the environment** to prevent mould from growing. Lower the temperature to below 18° C (65° F) and keep the relative humidity low. Circulate the air with fans.
7. **Box different media types in separate boxes.** Paper, photographic, microfilm and magnetic media records require different treatment strategies.
8. **Document** the damaged records in a general way. Record the damage and track the location and contents of the boxes.
9. **Pack paper records and ship to cold storage.** If paper records are allowed to remain wet, they will grow mould and content may become irretrievable. Your Records Officer will provide you with guidance on how to pack materials for shipment and contact information for the cold storage facilities.
10. If you have significantly wet **magnetic media** (e.g. items that have been immersed), begin immediate salvage following **established guidelines** available from your Records Officer. If immediate salvage is not possible, it is often best to rinse the items in distilled water and store in cool (5°C) clean water until salvage can begin. Media can be left in original plastic storage cases for additional protection. **Do not freeze or send to cold storage.**
11. Contact your Records Officer for other media salvage requirements. Most **microfilm** and **photographic records** should be kept wet until treated. Only some can be freeze dried.