

Storm-Proofing Your Gallery: A Step-by-Step Guide

With hurricanes and tropical storms posing a significant risk to art collections, galleries must prioritize preparedness to safeguard priceless works. By putting the right plans in place, you can protect your collection and minimize storm-related damage.

1 Ready Your Inventory

- **Digitize and Organize:** Use inventory software, spreadsheets or database programs to document every piece in your gallery. Record essential details like the artist's name, title, dimensions, medium and creation year. Add scanned consignment agreements, invoices and condition reports for each piece.
- **Regular Updates:** Schedule periodic inventory updates to keep records accurate and current.
- **Off-Site Storage:** Secure a digital backup of inventory records off-site in a water- and fire-proof safe or upload them to a commercial cloud server for easy access.
- **Visual Documentation:** Photograph each exhibition, installation and storage area to create a comprehensive visual reference.

2 Protecting Your Storage Spaces

- **Elevate At-Risk Pieces:** Move any artwork stored in the basement or low-level areas to higher floors. Ensure no pieces are stored directly on the floor.
- **Assess Flood Risk:** Check if your gallery is within a flood zone and stay informed about shifting flood boundaries. If your gallery is at risk of flooding, consider adding a flood policy to your existing insurance coverage.

3 Equip Your Team

- **Emergency Contacts:** Share an up-to-date contact list with cell and emergency numbers for every team member. You never know who will be closest to the gallery when a storm arrives, so swift communication is key.
- **Vendor and Service Contacts:** Compile a resource list with contacts for insurance brokers and agents, conservators, art storage and transport companies, freeze-drying facilities, disaster recovery specialists and local contractors for emergency repair work.
- **Plan for Art Evacuation:** Develop an evacuation strategy for valuable pieces. Consider installing an HVAC climate control system with a backup generator to protect against humidity spikes.
- **Create a Response Protocol:** Establish emergency handling steps for different types of art, including paintings, sculptures, photographs and media works. Reference guidelines for water-damaged art recovery and mold prevention, such as MoMA's Immediate Response for Collections guide. For specific information, access the MoMA Immediate Response for Collections guide: www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/explore/emergency_guidelines_for_art_disasters.pdf





④ When a Storm is on the Horizon

- **Monitor Local Alerts:** Stay informed of road, bridge or tunnel closures and heed all official warnings.
- **Prepare Your Staff and Your Building:** Ensure the gallery has essential supplies on hand, such as flashlights, batteries, duct tape, bottled water, non-perishable food and trash bags. Fortify your building by lowering storm shutters or installing plywood over windows and doors to shield the gallery.
- **Coordinate with Service Providers:** Pre-arrange for services from generator suppliers, freeze-drying facilities, art handlers and transport companies. If it is necessary transfer pieces to a fine art warehouse outside the storm's path, ensure that the facility has a solid preparedness plan and notify your insurance broker of any temporary relocation to ensure coverage continuity.
- **Safeguard Works:** Lower hanging art so frames rest at least three feet above the floor, elevate electronics to protect from potential flooding, and tape glass on framed works to reduce shattering risk (avoid taping plexiglass).

⑤ After the Storm Has Passed

- **Ensure Staff Safety:** Check in with all team members and confirm the gallery building is secure.
- **Document Damages:** Photograph each room and assess any damage to artwork, noting moisture exposure or other weather-related deterioration.
- **Prioritize Water Mitigation:** Take immediate steps to remove water and control humidity to minimize the chance of mold development on valuable works.

With the right preparation and a proactive team, your gallery can weather the storm and emerge ready to continue its mission of showcasing and preserving art.

