

Master the Disaster



# Master the Disaster

*A response and recovery card game for museum and  
library personnel*

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## Why is it important to prepare for disasters?

Preparing for disasters buys TIME, and time is critical for recovery.

As cultural heritage professionals, many things can happen to the collections entrusted to our care. Situations as mundane as burst pipes and small electrical fires can affect any institution while extreme events like high magnitude earthquakes and increasingly common natural disasters driven by climate change wreak havoc on larger geographic regions that may previously have been considered low risk for such catastrophic events. We are living in an era of “100” and “500” year floods happening regularly; of wildfires creating their own weather systems, of hurricane and tornado seasons starting earlier, lasting longer, and devastating communities in their paths.

Having a strong response plan and teams that can come together quickly can make the difference between a manageable situation and a major crisis. “Master the Disaster” is intended to assist teams with critical thinking and problem solving AHEAD of crisis situations. Awareness of team skillsets and available resources can mitigate physical and emotional damage in a crisis. Every institution should have caches of supplies on hand, know how to source equipment, and practice practice practice.

“Master the Disaster’s” format is loosely based on the structure of “Apples to Apples” and “Cards Against Humanity.” “The Captain is Dead” was another inspiration though one with a high learning curve and many more moving parts. “Master the Disaster” was created with simplicity in mind and room for a range of responses. Teams can be assembled from across an organization or from within a smaller unit to practice and problem solve in a low stake environment.

## How does Master the Disaster work?

1) Gather 3 or more players, and assign one person to be the moderator. (The role of moderator can be permanently assigned for the duration of the game or may rotate as scenarios progress.) If there are more than 5 players, consider teams of 2 players each.

2) Deal each player 5 response cards, the remaining cards go into a “draw” pile. (There are forty-seven cards including a few “wild” and “bonus” cards to enhance the spirit of surprise and competition.)

3) The moderator draws from the scenario pile (or chooses one ahead of time if a specific situation is desired), and reads the scene (but not the suggested resources and actions) aloud to those assembled. The fourteen scenario cards are either readiness or recovery-based.

4) Each player chooses 1 card from their hand to respond to the scenario, hands it to the moderator, and draws another card to replenish their hand.

5) The moderator reads all the responses aloud and invites discussion and commentary from the group before sharing suggested resources and actions. The moderator chooses the most “on point” response, and that player keeps the scenario card. Used response cards (Resource/Recovery Action/Readiness Action) are discarded to the bottom of the draw pile.

6) When time runs out or all scenario cards have been played, the player with the most scenario cards at the conclusion of the game wins, but really, everyone who is more prepared for the next real disaster is a winner.

“Master the Disaster” can be played with open hands, but closed hands will invite more participation from players of an introverted nature. Tailor the rules of the game to encourage the most creativity and the most fun. May the games begin!



## A note on **Scenarios** and **Responses**

Originally, I had intended to create scenarios based entirely on events that have happened in our library buildings, on or adjacent to campus, or even in the greater community. It quickly became apparent that more general situations would apply to more collecting institutions in a greater geographic area. Editing out “Flash mob storms Rose Library” and “Cigarette ignites storage closet closes Carrier Library” and “Fluorescent bulb ballast forces evacuation” and “Blasting of smoke stack topples library stacks” etc. were difficult decisions. Ultimately, the fourteen scenarios that made the cut represent a representative sampling of what could happen. Of course, the game can be expanded and tailored to individual institutions needs. Somewhere there is a “Zombie Apocalypse” training tool, and I do hope that someone will revive that situation for their own version of “Master the Disaster.” Likewise, limiting response cards to forty-seven was also difficult. Creating sub-lists for each card made the deck much more manageable and the possibilities more abundant.

### **Printing the Game Box**

The box template was designed to fit standard copy paper cards to ease the burden of cost and printing logistics for organizations on a budget. If card stock is preferred, print two or more boxes to house the full set. All cards were designed to be printed on only one side—also in deference to the environment, simplicity of printing, and cutting in-house.

## Acknowledgements

*“Master the Disaster” was intended to be completed during the summer of 2020. As fortune would have it, educational leaves were paused while the university remained in lockdown mode. This set-back allowed for a re-set as well as the opportunity to space out the research and practice of living thru a pandemic over the subsequent two summers. As a member of the JMU Libraries’ emergency response team “aLERT” which met daily, weekly, and eventually bi-weekly and ultimately monthly, I was given the opportunity to observe and participate in the libraries’ pandemic response which aided in the formation of this game. May we all be blessed with such collegial teammates.*

*Thank you to the Libraries’ Educational Leave Committee, to Special Collections teammates (Kate Morris, Tiffany Cole, and Faith Benavides) for the time and space to put several years of ideas, note-taking, workshops, webinars, and trainings into one medium; to Kelly Giles for her introduction to games for training, to Howard Carrier for copyright assistance; and especially to Liz Thompson for her technical and aesthetic PressBooks skills, and Mark Lane with digital objects.*

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*Julia Merkel*

# I.

Preview and print the directions and **scenario cards**.

[MasterTheDisaster\\_Directions.Scenarios1to14](#)

Arson/Fire/Smoke, Blizzard/Ice Storm, Bomb Threat, Chemical Spill, Earthquake, Flood, Hurricane, Insect/Rodent Infestation, Mold Outbreak, Pandemic, Power Outage/System Failure, Tornado, Volcano, Wildfire

## 2. Response Cards

Preview and print the **response cards** which are a mix of resources, readiness actions, and recovery actions with a few bonus and wildcards thrown in for good measure.

[MasterTheDisaster\\_Cards1to46](#)

An example of a response card:

**“STABILIZE the ENVIRONMENT** Quarantine/isolate area, Fresh Air & De-humidification, Remove standing water and moisture retention (wet carpeting), Heating/Cooling as needed, Remove hazards”

### 3. Game Box

Preview and print the game box.

[MasterTheDisaster\\_GameBox](#)



## Resources

American Alliance of Museums. <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/disaster-preparedness-response-resources/>

American Institute for the Conservation (AIC) wiki....  
[https://www.zotero.org/groups/2739440/aic\\_emergency\\_committee\\_library/library](https://www.zotero.org/groups/2739440/aic_emergency_committee_library/library)  
[https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Emergency\\_Preparedness\\_&\\_Response](https://www.conservation-wiki.com/wiki/Emergency_Preparedness_&_Response)  
<https://www.culturalheritage.org/resources/emergencies/disaster-response-recovery>

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California Preservation Program. Disaster Plan Template, 2005.  
<http://calpreservation.org/disasters/index.html>

Carmicheal, David W. Implementing the Incident Command System at the Institutional Level: A Handbook for Libraries, Archives, Museums, and Other Cultural Institutions. Heritage Preservation and RescuingRecords.com, 2010.

Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) Technical bulletins. <http://www.ccaha.org/publications/technical-bulletins>

Dorge, Valerie and Jones, Sharon. Building an Emergency Plan: A Guide for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions. 1999  
<https://www.getty.edu/publications/virtuallibrary/089236551X.html>

dPlan. <http://www.dplan.org>

Federal Emergency Management Institute (FEMA)  
<https://training.fema.gov/nims>

Fortson, Judith. Disaster Planning and Recovery: A How-To-Do-

It Manual for Librarians and Archivists. New York: Neal-Schuman, 1992.

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<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/wheel>

Heritage Preservation. Field Guide to Emergency Response. Washington: Heritage Preservation, 2006.  
<http://www.heritagepreservation.org/catalog>

Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)  
<https://www.imls.gov/blog/2017/09/natural-disaster-recovery-resources-museums-and-libraries>

Library of Congress. Emergency Management.  
<https://www.loc.gov/preservation/emergprep/#response>

Museum SOS <https://museum-sos.org/htm/index.html>

National Park Service. Museum Handbook. Washington: National Park Service, 2019.  
<http://www.nps.gov>

Northeast Document Conservation Center. Free Resources.  
<https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/overview>