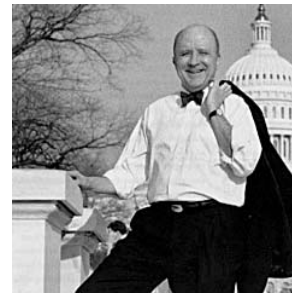


LAWRENCE L. REGER
President, Heritage Preservation



Alliances for Response = Effective Emergency Response

Lawrence Reger is the President of Heritage Preservation, a non-profit organization in Washington D.C. that works to ensure the preservation of America's collective heritage. As Chief Executive officer since 1988, Mr. Reger is responsible for development of a long-range strategy and a comprehensive program of services to improve the care of the collections and other resources that comprise our nation's patrimony. Key to the strategy is the involvement of philanthropic leaders and government officials, as well as directors, curators, conservators and other preservation specialists from historic preservation organizations, libraries and archives, and museums.

Mr. Reger has held several nationally recognized positions, including Director of the American Association of Museums (1978 – 1986) and Director of Program Development and Coordination, Director of Planning and Management and General Counsel for the National Endowment for the Arts. He received the Forbes Medal from the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in recognition for his distinguished contribution to the field of conservation.

Alliances for Response = Effective Emergency Response

While the United States does not have an official national policy regarding the provision of assistance to museums, historical societies, and libraries to mitigate, prepare or respond to disasters and other kinds of emergencies, it does have an increasingly effective network to address these events at the national, state and local levels.

This paper will focus on the work and initiatives of the Heritage Emergency National Task Force. Over the last several decades there have been major accomplishments in deterring the slow but relentless threats to the preservation of our scientific and cultural heritage. Efforts have focused principally on preventive conservation. The Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNCH) has been a leader in this movement.

However, the swift but catastrophic destruction of collections, whether from breaking of water pipes or natural or manmade disasters has not received similar the ongoing attention. Since September 11, 2001 this has begun to change. Led by Heritage Preservation and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a voluntary partnership of 34 non-governmental associations, including SPNCH, and U.S. government agencies established the Heritage Emergency National Task Force in 1995. The Task Force's mission is to assist non-profit institutions that own collections to better protect their collections from disasters. It promotes preparedness and mitigation measures and provides expert information on response and salvage to institutions.

The Task Force works to prevent or minimize damage to cultural heritage by developing and providing information about emergency preparedness and response; creating a database of conservation and preservation specialists available for onsite assistance in major disasters; and preparing a training manual for personnel of collecting institutions. Best known of the Task Force's accomplishments is the Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel, a highly respected and practical tool for protecting documents, art, and artifacts from water damage in both English and Spanish. More than 90,000 of these wheels are in use throughout the world in our and 40 other countries. It has been translated into Chinese, Dutch, French and Japanese.

Cataclysm and Challenge is a comprehensive report of the damage and loss to cultural property that resulted from the events of September 11, 2001. It also addresses basic emergency management needs and explores what resources institutions will need to cope effectively in the future. The report was widely disseminated to the cultural heritage community and many groups are taking action to implement its recommendations. It also received considerable national and local media attention, making the general public more aware of the importance of cultural heritage.

The latest Task Force initiative, "Alliance for Response," has brought together cultural heritage leaders and emergency management professionals, e.g., firefighters, together to strengthen local response networks and develop mitigation projects for their communities. Alliance for Response pilot communities, include, Cincinnati, Dallas and Boston.

While much has been accomplished, even more remains to be done to have a truly comprehensive national strategy. For more information go to www.heritagepreservation.org