

General Guidelines on Historic Properties in Recovery

In the rush to get life back to normal after a natural disaster, it may at first appear easier to demolish historic buildings, or historic features of buildings, than to repair them. However, once they are demolished, they are lost forever. **We recommend that you take the time to carefully evaluate the damage to your building, and carefully research options for repair prior to making any decisions to demolish part or all of it.**

IMMEDIATE POST-DISASTER ACTIONS FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Immediate steps should be taken to stabilize the structure. However, do not enter a building until after it has been deemed safe to enter. Please consider the following actions:

- Consult an architect, engineer or contractor who is familiar with historic building methods and materials and is sensitive to them.
- Check walls and ceilings for misalignment from foundation.
- Temporarily secure broken boards with plywood. Secure doors and window openings with appropriate coverings. Keeping additional moisture out of building is a key step in preserving the structure.
- Maintain protective roof coverings. Continued attention must be paid to temporary repairs. Repairing gutters and downspouts will help move water away from the building.
- Salvage broken historic elements such as bricks or decorative ornaments from debris for reuse or replication.
- Document damage to structure with photographs prior to any activity.

MAINTAIN PRESERVATION STANDARDS:

Follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards through the National Park Service which can be found at <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>

- **Repair rather than replace:** Retain original features and materials wherever possible. Repair is historically and economically preferable to replacement.
- **Replace in kind:** If replacement is necessary, use items that match the original in design, size, and materials.
- **Retain historic character:** If matching replacements are impossible because features are unavailable or too expensive, try to reproduce important visual characteristics of the original such as material, composition, proportion and color.

RESTORATION HAZARDS

- **Fire:** Never use an open flame or heat gun when working on wood trim; both present a severe fire hazard.
- **Asbestos:** Wind and water damage can cause asbestos fibers, which were used as insulation even into the early 1970's, to become airborne. If loose asbestos is detected on the site of a disaster, halt work and consult a professional.
- **Lead Paint:** Any stripping or scraping of paint on old buildings may uncover lead paint and release lead-contaminated dust, which is potentially poisonous to children. Equally dangerous is the use of heat guns or flames, which vaporize the lead in old paint.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

- **The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** has information and links on its website at <https://www.fema.gov/historic-preservation-information> about immediate steps to take after a disaster to protect historic structures and care for water damaged family heirlooms and other valuables.
- **The Mississippi Dept of Archives and History (SHPO)** can be reached at (601) 576-6940 to determine if a building or site is historic, or visit their website: <http://www.mdah.ms.gov/new/>
- Contact your **Local Planning Department** for guidance on buildings and sites in locally designated historic districts as well as information on local tax incentives for which you may be qualified.