



NATIONAL BANK  
OF GREECE

*Disaster Prevention Measures and Disaster Planning*

Archival and library material are vulnerable to natural disasters, and disasters caused by human factors.

The purpose of Disaster Prevention Measures is to address directly the issue of disaster preparedness. Its purpose is the prevention of a disaster.

Greece is a country vulnerable to natural disasters caused mainly by earthquakes, fires in summer, and floods in winter.

In our report we will discuss the steps adopted so far in the Historical Archives of the National Bank of Greece in order to prevent or reduce the harmful effects of natural disasters and disasters caused by human factors. Before starting the renovations works of the new building of the Historical Archives, officers in cooperation with the Banks Technical Services Division decided to adopt preventive measures to reduce possible harmful effects due to natural disasters. The How to do Manual for Disaster Planning and Recovery of Judith Fortson, our previous experience and our visits of European archival repositories proved to be valuable guides. The guidelines of Judith Fortson have been extensively used in our report.

*Disaster Prevention Measures*

*Fire*

Fire is probably the most devastating of the various catastrophes mentioned above. When it gets underway it may quickly reach temperatures hot enough to damage paper so severely that it will crumble when touched, even though it may not be visibly burned. Various sources may be the cause of fire. A fire may start from strike of lightning, from an electrical spark, from

faulty wiring, from an explosion of a boiler engine, etc. Fire may be provoked during periods of social and political unrest, war times, building renovation or maintenance, etc. Finally fire is also provoked intentionally or inadvertently by persons.

Some measures derive from common sense and are inexpensive where applied together with more substantial actions.

The Historical Archives of the National Bank of Greece have adopted a series of precautionary measures to prevent fire. These measures relate to the activities of staff, researchers and outside contractors, storage configuration and practices, structural and design elements of the building, detection and alarm systems, extinguishing systems.

To prevent fire

1. Smoking is prohibited in all areas with archival and library material such as reading rooms, processing areas and storage areas. Smoking in the Historical Archives of the National Bank of Greece is allowed only in the area of the main stairs of the building specially arranged to host smokers where wastebaskets are routinely checked at the end of each day.
2. Special precautions are taken in turning off all appliances and heat producing machines used in daily activities.
3. The Historical Archives of the National Bank of Greece are guarded by the Bank's security forces on a 24 hours basis to prevent acts of vandalism.
4. Outside workers coming to the Historical Archives for building maintenance are continuously under surveillance by the staff of the archives in order to prevent smoking in prohibited areas and the use of devices such as

electrical saws, sanders or drills near archival material which accidentally could cause fire.

5. During the renovation phase the Technical Services Division of the National Bank of Greece incorporated several fire preventive measures. The building load bearing structure was fully strengthened with reinforced concrete which is an appropriate fire resistant material. Storage areas were subdivided into smaller rooms by the construction of fire walls and fire doors. The building ventilation system is connected to a smoke-detection system so it automatically turns off in the event of fire.

The building is equipped with an advanced detection system capable of giving early warning for the safety both of collections and people. It operates automatically and is connected to an automatic gas fire suppression system using FM200. The building is also supplied with fire hoses which can be used as last resort in the case that all other suppression systems fail. For this reason the building is also equipped with a water tank and a pump. The building is equipped with portable extinguishers placed in strategic locations throughout the building.

Storage practices against fire include measures such as, keeping clear the aisles in the storage areas to facilitate access to firefighters in case of emergency, maintaining archival material in acid free boxes which provides some protection from flames, soot, ashes and water. Care has been taken so that no material is stored on top of the shelves. Dense storage is always accompanied by spaces between materials in order on the one hand to prevent flames to travel quickly and on the other to facilitate detection of fire and penetration of suppression agents. Materials with high monetary value are stored in safes and materials with high research value are micro-filmed, digitized and stored in areas located far from the original material so that fire will not destroy simultaneously the original and the microfilmed or digitized copy.

### *Water*

Flooding can be the result of heavy raining but also can be caused by dripping pipes. All water based disasters have the potential for causing extensive damage to our holdings but those that result from natural events have usually a widespread catastrophic nature bringing destruction to a big part of the envioning community. This complicates recovery efforts because of lack of assistance from the community and the unavailability of necessary supplies. Flooding from sudden storms or ruptured pipes can occur almost instantly.

As with all disasters the first goal is to take measures to prevent damages, in other words to prevent water from coming in, rather than to expect to remove it and recover from its effects once it has entered. The building of the Historical Archives of the National Bank of Greece was waterproofed to be protected against the possibility of water entering its foundations and rain water entering from its flat roof. Leaks also develop inside a building usually from defective pipes. For this reason pipelines do not pass above storage areas. As violent storms may cause power failures the building is equipped with a generator. Water alarms have been placed in all storage areas and in strategic locations throughout the building and activate with the presence of water. The basement is supplied with a pump connected to the generator. Concerning storage practices and staff activities the Historical Archives have also taken some preventive measures. All archival and library material are stored at a considerable distance away from windows to reduce susceptibility to flood damage as well as to prevent exposure to ultraviolet radiation. All material are shelved 15cm above the floor in order to reduce the possibility of water damage. Collections stored temporarily on the floor are always placed on pallets.

### *Earthquakes*

Greece is situated in a high seismic zone where devastations occur now and then. This fact emphasizes the need for earthquake preparedness. The Greek State in response to this considerable threat has adopted very strict legislation concerning building technical specifications to avoid injuries and deaths. The load bearing structure of the building of the Historical Archives was fully strengthened on the basis of the study conducted by the National Technical University of Athens in order to support the load strength required by the large quantities of paper stored and to conform to earthquake resistance standards.

The Historical Archives of the National Bank were equipped with movable shelving which also provides some degree of protection during an earthquake both because it has flexibility of base movement and because the close proximity of the shelves to each other protects material to be thrown on the floor. In order to reduce physical damage from falling all documents are placed in archival boxes. All shelves have end brackets to prevent material from falling off. Antiriot security glasses were placed on the windows of the ground level and the first floor.

### *Disaster Planning*

We will also discuss further measures to be taken in order to improve the safety of our material.

In every archival facility there should exist a written disaster plan that will serve as a vital organizational plan in the event a disaster occurs. The Historical Archives of the National Bank of Greece is under the process of developing such a detailed plan. The goal of such a plan is to assign to every person working in the Archives responsibilities and duties for the recovery efforts. This will allow rapid response and correct coordination of the efforts in disaster response activities. The disaster plan should give precise guidelines as to who has the general command, who provides special training of

the staff at regular intervals, who alerts the fire brigade, who can use portable extinguishers, which material is the most valuable and must be given priority, which material must be removed and where it must be transferred, who will inform and mobilize the staff, who will check the building for further threatening conditions, who will evaluate the damages caused etc.

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EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

I  
Shortly after its establishment, the ECB launched in November 1998 a Disaster Standby Site Project to analyse how the ECB could ensure the functioning of the essential IT systems in case of a major disaster and to develop and realise a plan for that. This project was lead-managed by the ECB's Directorate General Information Systems. After project closure, a dedicated business continuity function was established within the ECB and an internal committee was set-up.

II

The ECB's Disaster Standby Site is directly connected with the ECB IT systems. In case of a disaster effecting the ECB IT systems, procedures would automatically be performed from the ECB's Disaster Standby Site.

III

The ECB Archives has identified several record groups (counterparty agreements, legal acts etc.) which are currently in the process of being microfilmed. In addition, the ECB Archives is developing a vital records programme for the ECB.

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