

Thriving in Disaster

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At the 2018 American Public Gardens Conference in California a session was dedicated to “Thriving in Disaster”. The panel consisted of Barbara Backlund, Visitor Services Manager at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden; Ian Simpkins, Director of Horticulture & Urban Agriculture at Vizcaya Museum & Gardens; Barbara Faust, Director at Smithsonian Gardens, and Kim Slager from BHS Insurance.

In 2017 there were over 350 billion dollars in natural disasters, many affecting the public garden community; from the Wildfires in California, to the Hurricanes in Texas, Florida & Puerto Rico, to the severe weather in the Midwest, all areas of the country have been affected which is why a focus for emergency preparedness at all levels of your institution has never been more important.

The panel presentation can be found on the [APGA website](#), but here are some key session points to get started with:

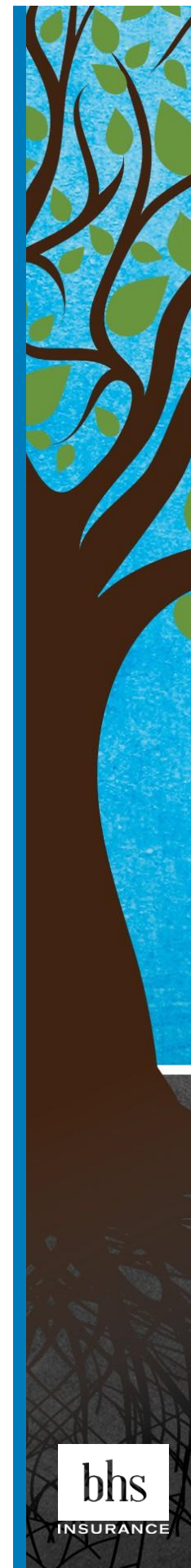
RISK ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

- ✓ Does your garden have insurance coverage to recover from weather related damage? Including loss of revenue.
- ✓ Has your garden appraised your infrastructure and living collections on your property for insurance purposes?
- ✓ Do any of your garden’s financial resources address climate adaptation and risk management?
- ✓ Has your garden considered applying for grants for climate resilience purposes and from whom (green infrastructure, etc.)?
- ✓ Has your garden considered renovating or building facilities with climate adaptation in mind?
- ✓ Does your garden have insurance in place to cover the cost of restoring plant records?
- ✓ Has your garden investigated recovery opportunities from FEMA?
- ✓ Does your garden have a Disaster Recovery Plan?
- ✓ Does your garden have a Crisis Management plan? Is it funded by insurance?

KEY POINTS

Relationships:

- ✓ Build disaster assistance partnerships with other gardens for recovery and living collections backup.
- ✓ Get to know your local and state emergency management offices.
- ✓ Establish contracts and pricing in advance with contractors who can provide emergency response and ongoing cleanup / recovery services.
- ✓ Create a list of disaster relief volunteer first responders.
- ✓ Don’t forget to take care of your employees too.



Logistics & Planning:

- ✓ Create a clear and concise preparation, response, and recovery plan with specific and realistic implementation, and review regularly. Be sure to include regular dry runs.
- ✓ Develop a specifically disaster focused table of organization.
- ✓ Create a living collections disaster plan.
- ✓ Assess the condition of your garden and your collections at least twice over a period of several weeks.
- ✓ Be sure to back up your most critical collections and have duplicated held at other gardens.

Communication:

- ✓ Streamline communications as much as possible.
- ✓ Receive emergency messaging straight from the source.
- ✓ Evaluate how you will contact your staff.

Advice Gained from Experience:

- ✓ Remember to be reasonably flexible
- ✓ Try to analyze the impending disaster to tailor your preparations.
- ✓ If it's possible, record the event to gain insight on how to better prepare for the future.
- ✓ Record as much of the garden as possible before the event, video is best. Consider a Go-Pro attached to your hat and/or a drone.
- ✓ Don't forget to thank your employees, volunteers, and recovery partners.
- ✓ Have supplies and equipment stocked at quantities 30% more than what you think you will need.

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ How are you funded?
- ✓ Do you know what assistance may be available to you after a disaster?
- ✓ Do you know what employee assistance programs may be available?
- ✓ Do you know who your first responders are and where they will come from? Do they know your staff?

The key in preparation is including all members of your team and the panel provided different perspectives from visitor services, horticulture, management and finance.

The common message amongst all viewpoints is to build relationships within your community and the broader American Public Gardens Community to assist you in preparing for the potential disaster so that your institution can continue to thrive in all circumstances.

CONTACT

Consult [BHS Insurance](#) to make sure your coverage is adequate and protects your risk sufficiently. For more information, please call Kim Slager or another member of the BHS Insurance Public Garden team at 800-350-7676.

