



Imagine... having to start over

Think about how you would feel if tomorrow you came to campus and found you could not return to your office or lab.

It doesn't take an earthquake to create a disaster. A researcher's life's work can be lost due to a fire, a flood, theft, vandalism or some other "unanticipated" event. For the unprepared, it could literally mean starting their research and other work all over again.

While the number of people's careers damaged in this way is very small, the repercussions for those affected can be devastating.

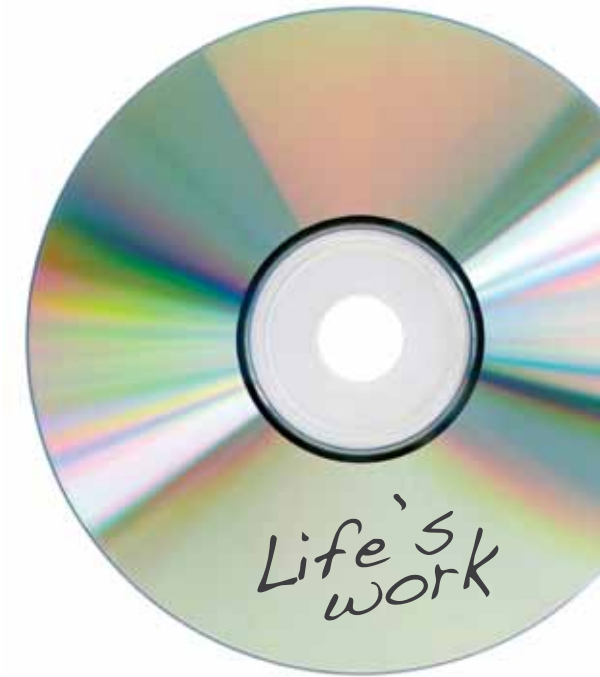
The sciences are often more highly profiled due to the extensive and expensive loss of laboratories and equipment, but catastrophic losses can occur in all disciplines.

Most faculty members have accumulated books, journals and other objects related to their research and teaching over many years, or even decades. Often, these collections are not even inventoried. Some items are irreplaceable, but those that could be replaced may not be able to be recalled by their owners following a crisis.

"Having a fire that pretty well destroys your entire laboratory and office can be quite devastating – but amazingly, restoring my lab and getting my research program back on track went very smoothly.

It certainly helped that I had a comprehensive list of the equipment and material that was destroyed and needed to be replaced. In addition, all the information and data on the laboratory and office computers were backed up (off campus). We literally lost no research data."

– Dr. Nigel Livingston
University of Victoria Biology Department



Back it up.

Tips for continuity planning.

Risk Management and Insurance



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What can you do to protect your life's work?



Back up your work

Technology has provided strategies for backing up research notes, data, teaching notes, course syllabi, exam questions, contact lists, inventories, digital photographs, and other electronically stored items. Ensure that critical data, records and documents are backed up frequently, and test the backup system periodically by retrieving files.

The University of Victoria's back up system, Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM), is an automated backup system which can be installed on your office computer. Encryption software is available if desired, and backups are stored off-site in a secure facility. Contact the UVic Computer Help Desk by email: helpdesk@uvic.ca or by phone: 250-721-7687 for installation assistance.

Alternative backup systems include tapes, disks, portable hard drives and other media. Faculty and graduate students are encouraged to choose the backup system that suits them best. It is important that backups be stored in a different location than your original data. Keeping backup disks in your office with your computer may protect you from a hard-drive crash, but will not protect you from a fire, water damage, or theft.

Know what you need to continue

The use of video or digital photograph records of home contents has become commonplace for insurance purposes. The same strategies are useful for office contents, research tools and collections. You should take photos of your home office space if you also work at home. Store these photos in two or more locations.

A photographic inventory of valuable assets on campus was established in 2005 and updated in 2009. If you have assets that should be added to this inventory, please contact the Risk & Insurance Analyst.

Are there people who you would need to contact in a disaster situation? Are there other faculty, institutions or organizations that could assist you by lending equipment or other materials in the event of an emergency? Do you have their contact information stored away from your office or lab?

Provide special protection for critical documents and assets

There are some items (artifacts, handwritten research notes or ideas, unmarked exams or reports) for which backups are impractical. Consider the effect on you, your students, your department and the university if these items were to be lost. Is special protection warranted?

Some solutions are very simple. For instance, papers are more likely to be damaged by water than by fire, even during a fire. Storing items in plastic bags or containers provides additional protection with very little effort. Placing computers and important objects above floor level may provide protection from water damage. Keeping your assets in two locations reduces the risk of losing everything.

Ensure that student grades are safe

If you don't already store your assignment marks and interim grades electronically, consider doing so, and creating a backup. A lost or destroyed grade book could be impossible to reconstruct.

Think about any special requirements you have

There is nothing that can be done to guarantee immunity from disaster. Only you know what you would need to continue your work.

Reduce your risk

There are several ways to reduce your risks depending on the nature of your work.

- Ensure that critical electronic files are adequately backed up.
- Store software backup copies and license keys in a different physical location than the originals.
- Inventory or photograph your collections, equipment, and other items you would need in order to continue your work.
- Provide appropriate security for items that can not be backed up or replaced.
- Consider dividing assets between two locations.
- Keep items that could be damaged by water (computers, papers, books) off the floor or lowest bookcase shelf.
- Identify faculty at other institutions that might be able to help reconstruct your resources after a disaster.
- Make a contact list of people you would want to contact if disaster struck, and keep copies in at least two locations.