

**Evangeline Parish Library  
Emergency Hurricane Response Policy  
Approved by Library Board of Control  
May 9, 2006**

**This policy arose out of the events and problems of the 2005 hurricane season and is designed to try to smooth operations during future hurricane seasons. The goals are to reduce stress, limit liability exposure for the Library Board, staff, and volunteers, improve employee morale, and improve work flow in emergency conditions.**

**Additional goals are to reduce conflict between the needs of regular patrons, hurricane evacuees, and staff and to increase sustainability of operations.**

**It establishes timelines for response, tiers of response, chains of command and communication, and policies on overtime, leave, and other factors.**

**For more information on the background for creation of this policy, see detailed Hurricane Presentation given to the Library Board on May 9, 2006, a copy of which is attached as Appendix B to this document. (Appendix A is being reserved for legal disclaimers. See below.)**

**Limits of Policy**

**This document does not deal with specifics of tactical plans and procedures, which will be the responsibility of the library director and staff.**

**Any disclaimers proposed for this policy will be submitted for review and approval by the Library's legal counsel before being attached as part of policy (as Appendix A).**

**Priorities**

In a hurricane or other emergency situation, the formal order of priorities shall be as follows:

- Priority 1: Protect staff and patrons (general public) in buildings at the time of a disaster.
- Priority 2: Protect library facilities and equipment and preserve operating data.
- Priority 3: Respond to staff needs during a storm and its aftermath.
- Priority 4: Respond to needs of evacuees and the general public after the storm has passed.

Needs will vary greatly depending upon whether the storm hits Evangeline Parish or an adjacent area.

### **Before the Storm Timeline**

The order of events will be:

- 1) Maintain a state of readiness as much as possible before hurricane season and throughout it. Library director attend parish emergency planning sessions, be on the emergency planning mailing list, and be the single point of contact for the Library for the 911 coordinator in the event of an emergency. Keep Library Board informed.
- 2) Review all supplies, contact numbers, etc. as soon as hurricane approaches the Gulf of Mexico. Begin all final emergency preparations, hold all necessary meetings, and make system deliveries. Brief the Library Board.
- 3) Close the system to the general public no later than when a storm is potentially 36 hours away from landfall. Staff then make final system preparations uninterrupted. These include telephone tree plans and determination of who will assess the situation at each branch following the storm (based on current staff availability).
- 4) Allow staff to evacuate where recommended.
- 5) Secure and leave all facilities when storm is potentially no later than 24 hours away from landfall in order to allow staff to make preparations with their families.
- 6) Make backup tapes and notify authorities and KVPI and Gazette before closing facilities.

### **After the Storm Timeline**

- 1) All staff report in on phone tree and state if they will need to use liberal leave policy (when the system can operate but they cannot return to work).
- 2) Staff designated to check branches check as soon as feasible (even if not a normal work day) and report results to library director.
- 3) Library director confer with branch managers, assistant director, disaster coordinator, and other key staff to make a plan for feasible hours and services for each branch based on branch's condition and available staff.
- 4) Library director then notify library board president (who will notify rest of board) and police jury president of what facilities and staff are available.

### **Tiered Response Plan**

In consultation with the library director, the police jury president and library board president will discuss the feasibility of each of the following tiered responses:

- 1) Level 1: Run normally insofar as possible (minimal change in operating days, hours, and staffing) Also minimal change in services offered.
- 2) Level 2: Increase hours and days of operation at 1 to 2 key facilities and change service mix to emphasize evacuee needs. **(If necessary,** temporarily discontinue

- some regular services of a less time sensitive nature such as genealogy help. Sharply limit homework help, “normal” computer use, etc.)
- 3) Level 3: Increase hours and days of operation at 3 facilities, change service mix to emphasize evacuee needs. (**If necessary**, stop homework help and other basic services temporarily. Deny routine computer use or limit to one 10 minute email check per day for those not affected by the hurricane.)
  - 4) Level 4: Increase hours and days of operation at 4 facilities. (**If necessary**, not only stop homework help and other basic services temporarily but also temporarily close 2 branches.)

After decision is reached by police jury president and library board president as to tier of response needed, library director will inform parish 911 coordinator of what facilities will be available and when.

If decision will impact regular operations, library director will also notify Gazette, KVPI, and have designated staff notify each parish school (if ability to help students with research and computer access for students will be affected).

The system will strive to use staff volunteers (for pay) before requiring anybody to work additional hours or days. Staff may be reassigned temporarily to other branches at the director’s discretion. Leave may be frozen only if the police jury president declares an actual state of emergency.

### **Duration of Tiered Response and Decisions Whether to Move Up or Down Tiers**

Time limits for tiered responses will be as follows:

- 1) Level 1: No time limits needed, as this is the level of regular operations.
- 2) Level 2: No more than 2 weeks of operation at this level without formal recommitment by library board president and police jury president.
- 3) Levels 3 and 4: No more than 1 week of operation at these levels without formal recommitment by library board president and police jury president.

It is the library director’s responsibility to notify the board president and police jury president if something happens to affect the level of tiered response feasible.

This policy acknowledges the following limitations:

- 1) Responding at higher and higher tiers may or may not be possible.
- 2) If possible, it may not be sustainable beyond a short period of time.
- 3) Responding at higher and higher tiers may require:
  - ° Closing smaller branches
  - ° Consolidating staff at larger branches
  - ° Requiring staff to work hours and days not normally worked, at locations not normally worked

- Reducing or even temporarily eliminating some services to regular patrons. (See above.)

It will be the Library Director's obligation to make the library board president and police jury president aware of any adverse effects of the decision.

It will be the library board president's obligation to keep the rest of the board fully informed on what is happening and why.

### **Alternate situation, based on immediate local demand**

If staff working a particular branch see an **immediate** need to run more hours and/or days and have a plan to propose, they shall contact the library director immediately before contacting anybody else (except the branch manager, if they work at a branch).

Director can approve the staff-generated grassroots plan and allow implementation without consulting the police jury president and library board ONLY if:

- It's a last minute emergency.
- The director has not been able to contact the police jury president or library board president (or vice president if she is away).
- The library will have sufficient funds in its operating budget to cover the extended hours (without reducing the amount for other budget items) if the police jury does not elect to cover them.
- There is sufficient security and reliable volunteer help at the facility to allow for one week of operations at this level without damage to the system's budget or the staff's morale.

Director will still be obligated to inform the library board president and police jury president as soon as feasible.

### **Chain of command and communications**

All directives to the library director to move to Level 2 or higher response will come directly from the library board president or from the police jury president and will be documented in the library's records.

All directives to the library director to recommit to a Level 2 or higher response after its time limit is up will come directly from the library board president or from the police jury president and will be documented in the library's records.

The library board president will be the director's point of contact with the board during the crisis and in its aftermath.

The board president will keep the other board members informed.

The library director will coordinate staff. Members of the library board will not direct them, come to them to ask them to “brainstorm” alternatives, etc. or impose hour changes, etc. upon them.

Staff will not bypass the director to coordinate directly with the library board or police jurors, including the board president and police jury president.

Other board members will not bypass the board president.

The library director will be the library’s official point of contact with the parish’s 911 coordinator and will disseminate information to the Gazette and KVPI.

### **Leave protections for library staff (and disclaimers)**

If no part of the library system is operational, staff will be paid for their normal hours worked for as long as is feasible. Staff must continue to call in each day and make their location and contact information known to the director.

If parts of the system are operational, staff may have to take liberal leave if they cannot work where the system is open.

Leave will be frozen and staff ordered to report extra hours and days only if police jury president declares a state of emergency.

If leave is frozen, already approved leave may be carried over to the next year if necessary, even if the carryover amount exceeds the usual maximum carryover.

Attempts to accommodate frozen leave at other times will be made, but specific leave date choices cannot be guaranteed, because of the very limited number of staff and the high demand for leave in the last quarter of the year with Thanksgiving and Christmas.

### **Financial Obligations for Tiered Responses at Levels 2 and Above**

Increasing service levels will require written agreement from the police jury president that:

- 1) Police jury agrees to pay overtime (any time beyond employee’s regular schedule) and time and a half (any time beyond 40 hours per week) as needed out of funds other than the library funds. **Comp. time will not be offered as a replacement in this case.**
- 2) Police jury agrees to pay excess copy charges incurred during time of emergency out of funds other than the library funds.
- 3) Police jury agrees to pay cost of any temporary hires out of funds other than the library funds.
- 4) Police jury provides security if needed for a branch to operate safely.

- 5) Police jury provides emergency repairs if needed for a branch to operate safely.
- 6) Police jury will pay these even if they do not get reimbursement from State or Federal funds.

### **Special aid to evacuees and others**

A disclaimer will be developed with the Library Board's legal advisor for evacuees to sign before receiving help that goes beyond the usual scope of the library's activities and involves issues of helping evacuees input sensitive personal and financial data into computers. The library board, staff, and library volunteers need protection against potential liability and cannot be held responsible for any data decisions, errors, or omissions. Except for any actual criminal activity on their part (which would result in dismissal and probable legal action), they must be protected against any complaints arising from data being seen or overheard or later accessed on the same computer and then misused by others who happen to be in the library. They also must be held blameless if the evacuee does not receive the level of financial aid desired or is audited after filing a claim at the library and has to repay all or part of any financial aid received.

These disclaimers will become Appendix A to this policy.

Procedures will be developed to make computer input more efficient and less stressful. Developing these will be the responsibility of the library director and staff. Written forms for this will be submitted to the library's legal advisor for review.

### **Volunteers and temporary hires or substitutes**

It will be the library director's responsibility to ensure that staff and volunteers and any temporary hires or substitutes receive emergency briefing on panic buttons, data confidentiality, basic first aid, securing buildings, appropriate behavior to avoid liability, and work flow plan for work stations at the facility. The planned briefing items will also be submitted to the library's legal advisor for review.

### **Conclusion**

This is a preliminary policy and may be amended or revised as necessary.

