

**AAM Standards Regarding Facilities and Risk Management**  
*Approved by the AAM Board of Directors July, 2007*

***Why are facilities and risk management important?***

Museums care for their resources in trust for the public. It is incumbent upon them to ensure the safety of their staff, visitors, and neighbors, maintain their buildings and grounds, and minimize risk to the collections that they preserve for future generations. Conscious, proactive identification of the risks that face people and collections, and appropriate allocation of resources to reduce these risks is a vital part of museum management.

***What are AAM standards regarding facilities and risk management?***

The *AAM Characteristics of Excellence*, as related to facilities and **risk management**<sup>1</sup>, state:

- The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum complies with local, state, and federal laws, codes, and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.
- The museum allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of the collections, audience, and staff.
- The museum has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.
- The museum has an effective program for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities.
- The museum is clean and well maintained, and provides for the visitors' needs.
- The museum takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.

Simply put, a museum should manage its facilities, e.g., buildings and grounds, in such a manner as to ensure that they are:

- Clean
- Well maintained
- Safe
- Accessible

---

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary at the end for definitions of bolded terms.

Risk management is an institution-wide activity encompassing functions as diverse as building and site security, visitor services, **integrated pest management**, storage and use of hazardous materials, and insurance. A museum should manage risk to ensure that:

- Risks to people (visitors, staff, neighbors) and to collections are accurately identified and assessed.
- Appropriate methods are employed to avoid, block, mitigate, share, and assume or insure against risk.
- Resources are appropriately allocated so as to have the greatest effect on reducing risk to people, facilities, and collections.

Museums should also have:

- Regular, adequate training of staff in implementation of an emergency preparedness plan, including practice or drills
- **Inspections related to facilities and risk** (fire, health and safety, etc., as appropriate to the institution's circumstances)
- A process for addressing deficiencies identified in these inspections
- A program of **health and safety training** for staff and volunteers, as appropriate to the institution's circumstances

AAM expects museums to comply with all applicable local, state, federal, and laws, codes, and regulations.

***What are AAM standards for facilities and risk management as related to contractors?***

When museums contract out key services related to facilities (e.g., food service, museum store, housekeeping, security) they are expected to require contractors to abide by AAM standards regarding facilities and risk management. If the museum does not have control over the contract governing this relationship (e.g., a city hires and supervises contractors operating in the museum's building) the museum should educate contractors on AAM standards and encourage them to abide by them.

***What are AAM standards for museums housed in historic structures?***

Museums housed in historic structures should balance the preservation needs of the building with actions necessary to mitigate risk to people and to the collections housed in the building. AAM standards do not dictate specifically how this is achieved—they focus on the outcome of appropriate risk management. For example, a historic house museum needs to weigh all relevant factors (mission, resources, impact on the structure, alternative mitigation techniques) when deciding whether to install an automated fire suppression system. In order to be accountable, the institution should be able to explain how its decisions are appropriate to its circumstances.

***What documentation should a museum have as evidence of facilities and risk management?***

Museums should have a current, comprehensive **emergency/disaster preparedness plan** that:

- Is tailored to the institution's needs and specific circumstances
- Covers all relevant threats
- Addresses staff, visitors, structures, and collections
- Includes evacuation plans for people
- Specifies how to protect, evacuate, or recover collections in the event of a disaster
- Delegates responsibility for implementation

Museums should also have certificates of inspection related to facilities and risk, as appropriate to their circumstances, when such certificates are provided by the inspecting agency.

*See also AAM Standards Regarding Collections Stewardship for more information on standards about risk management specific to collections.*

**Notes for Accredited Museums**

Although the Accreditation Program does not assess or certify compliance with local, state, federal, and international laws, codes, and regulations, institutions are expected to report appropriate inspections/certifications of compliance as part of their self-study.

As part of an accreditation review, the museum must also submit:

- Floor plan/site map
- Images of the museum's interior and exterior spaces

*AAM Standards and Best Practices are reviewed and approved by the AAM Council of Standing Professional Committees, the Accreditation Commission, and the AAM Board of Directors.*

## **Glossary**

**Emergency/disaster preparedness plan:** written policies and procedures intended to prevent or minimize damage to people (staff and visitors), buildings, collections, archival materials, or organizational records resulting from natural and manmade events that threaten the building and the people and objects inside it. All museums are expected to have plans that address how the museum will care for staff, visitors, and collections in case of emergency. This includes evacuation plans for staff and visitors, and plans for how to protect, evacuate, or recover collections in the event of disaster.

**Health and safety training:** theoretical and/or practical instruction regarding such issues as office ergonomics, safe lifting, blood-borne and airborne pathogen safety, hazards communication, and use of Material Safety Data Sheets.

**Inspections related to facilities and risk:** may include, for example, building occupancy permits, fire department inspections, health inspections of food service operations, USDA inspections of animal displays, and insurer inspections for safety issues.

**Integrated pest management:** the coordination of information about pests and environmental conditions with available pest control methods to prevent unacceptable levels of pest damage while minimizing hazards to people, property, collections, and the environment. IPM programs apply a holistic approach to pest management decision-making, and consider all appropriate options, including but not limited to pesticides.

**Risk management:** the overall process of identifying, controlling, and minimizing the impact of uncertain events in order to reduce the likelihood of their occurrence and/or the severity of their impact.