

Tornadoes Impact on the Local Records (Government & Private) Community in Alabama

Updated 5/12/2011

The tornadoes that devastated Alabama and other states on April 27 killed over 318 people and did millions if not billions of dollars in damage.

If you know of local government or local historical entities that have been impacted, please forward that information to us at the following email addresses:

- Tom Turley: tom.turley@archives.alabama.gov
- Christine Garrett: christine.garrett@archives.alabama.gov

While nothing can replace those lives lost, all of us can help the living and rebuild communities. Please give generously to the relief agencies listed here.

Local Entities and HRAB Regrant Projects

Courthouses

- **Cullman County Courthouse.** One side of the courthouse roof was damaged, and the third floor (trial court offices and courtrooms) was still closed. Damage to the building was apparently confined to the third floor. No records damaged or lost.
- **All other County Courthouses.** No records damage reported.

HRAB Regrant Projects

- **Ragland Historical Society (St. Clair County).** No destruction of any of their collections housed at the Depot Museum. Status of any of their collections housed at the local library is undetermined.
- **Tuscaloosa Genealogical Society.** Building and records collections are okay.

Other Locations

- **Town of Riverside (St. Clair County).** The town hall in Riverside had suffered roof damage, and records in the attic had gotten pretty wet. They had several high-powered fans running in the records room and had pulled the wettest boxes and records and placed them around the room strategically to air-dry. All the boxes contained short-term financial records—some of which were

already disposable—except for some building-related records (13-year retention) and some traffic tickets belonging to the municipal court.

- **Town of Odenville (St. Clair County).** Odenville’s clerk reported that the municipal records were not damaged.
- **Cullman City Hall.** The building was undamaged and no records had been lost.
- **City of Hanceville (Cullman County).** No records lost due to tornadoes.
- **City of Fultondale (Jefferson County).** No records from the city’s inspections department had been lost except for a few maps and plats, which the city can recover from their vendor.
- **Town of Phil Campbell (Franklin County).** Although water got into parts of the town hall, the records were in a room that remained dry.
- **Town of Cordova (Walker County).** City Hall was heavily damaged by the tornado. However, city records were housed in office areas that remained intact, so none was lost or damaged.

Schools and Libraries

- **Local Schools.** 18 schools across the state sustained heavy damage and at least 5 schools were completely destroyed. According to the Alabama Department of Education Holt Elementary School in Tuscaloosa County, two elementary schools in Tuscaloosa, and the elementary school and high school in Hackleburg appear to be total losses.
- **Libraries.** Six libraries were heavily damaged. The affected libraries are Pell City Library; The Carl Elliott Regional Library System in Jasper; The Killen Public Library; The Ragland Public Library; The Cordova Public Library; and the Pratt City Branch of the Birmingham Public Library.

If you have information on any of the localities we have been unable to reach, please let us know.

For more information on libraries please go to “Tornadoes Impact on the Library Community in Alabama” located at the Network of Alabama Academic Libraries web site: <http://www.ache.state.al.us/NAAL/>

Preservation Resources

Alabama Cultural Commons

Randy Silverman, a preservation librarian who provided disaster preparedness workshops for the Commons last fall, is volunteering to help librarians whose collections have been damaged.

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Mr. Silverman provides a tip to the public: “The number one thing people should be aware of is that if their family photos got wet they need to be separated immediately or they will irreversibly stick together. This needs to happen in the first 24-48 hours generally so we are already out at the edge of the time to do that. If people want to help, offering to take a person’s family photos home and separate them if they can still be peeled apart to allow them to air dry (face up) would be a huge step in terms of saving people’s photos.”

Alabama Department of Archives and History

Disaster Resources Vendors:

<http://www.archives.alabama.gov/whatsnew/disastervendors.html>

Heritage Preservation

<http://heritagepreservation.org/PROGRAMS/TASKFER.HTM>

Lyrasis

Disaster Resources: <http://www.lyrasis.org/Products-and-Services/Digital-and-Preservation-Services/Disaster-Resources.aspx>

- Call Lyrasis Preservation Services, 1.800.999.8558, day or night for help with emergencies.
- The Disaster Recovery and Response section has numerous resources identified by type of damage and type of material.

Per Kate Nevins at Lyrasis, if anyone’s library is closed due to damage, Lyrasis will notify vendors.

Alabama Cultural Commons – Disaster Recovery Resources:

<http://alabamaculturalcommons.org/about-the-project/tornado-recovery-resources/>

- “...ways for us to give, volunteer and advocate for our friends and neighbors”