

Appendix 2: Packing records in a recovery operation

There are two types of packing that may be needed in a recovery operation:

- pre-evaluation packing where records need to be packed and taken to a different treatment site, in other parts of the building or in a different building, and
- post evaluation packing where records are packed for freezing.

Boxes should not exceed the weight recommended by Occupational Health and Safety officers.

Material should not be piled on top of each other or moved in large batches. It should not be left packed for more than a few hours. If the journey to the freezing facility is long, refrigerated vans are desirable.

For pre-evaluation packing, records can be packed in plastic crates and taken by trolleys to the vehicle. Plastic crates (e.g. bread crates) are better for very wet records than cardboard boxes, which can sag and break with moisture and pressure.

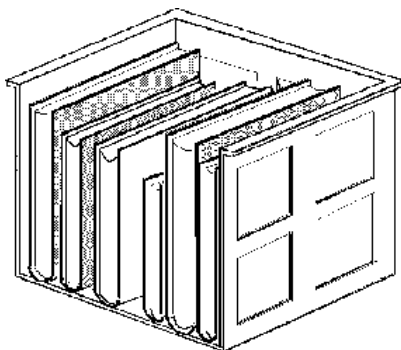
Absorbent/blotting paper can be placed under items to absorb excess water. All rare, intrinsically valuable and delicate material should be prepared separately from other materials so they can be located and identified for treatment by a conservator.

For post evaluation packing where there are small amounts of damaged materials, debris can be washed away under cold running water (if clean) by experienced people unless the material is fire damaged or contains soluble inks and dyes. Volumes, books or groups of papers should be held in two hands and dipped into containers of clean water or a hose should be gently applied providing the water is not contaminated. No materials should be scrubbed. In cases where there are vast amounts of material to pack, washing may not be viable.

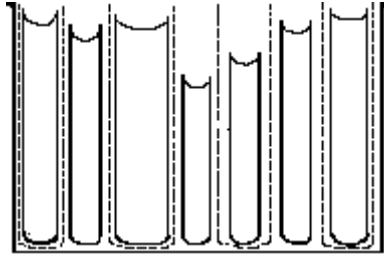
The following packing rules should apply:

Volumes

- Volumes should not be flattened, simply packed as they are.
- Very wet volumes should be packed separately and vertically with their spines down. Volumes of similar size should be packed together in a single layer and supported so that they do not bend. There should be a little space left in plastic crates to allow for their expansion when frozen.
- If it is likely that dyes from the covers of volumes will run, or if time allows, they should be individually wrapped or at minimum interleaved with freezer sheets. Use wax or freezer paper, not plastic or plastic coated paper.



Packing wet records in plastic crates. (Reproduced with permission of National Archives of Australia)



Preparing wet records for freezing. Reproduced with permission of National Archives of Australia

Documents, files and cards

- Wet files should be wrapped in batches that are not more than 10cm deep. Large items should be packed flat on the bottom so that they will not sag. If wet file covers are removed because of damage care should be taken to identify loose documents.
- Soaking wet bundles of wet paper that sustain damage should be packed into large plastic bags or packed on their side in boxes. Do not try and separate them as it is labour intensive.
- Scattered sheets should be placed together in relation to their location and the approximate location noted.
- Files and cards should be left where possible in the original boxes, unless the contents are dry and can be taken out and put in dry boxes without risk of damage.
- Burnt, scorched or dirty records should be supported on single sheets of uncoloured cardboard or heavy paper when transferring to crates.

Microfilm

- Microfilm should be left in storage cartons and secured with rubber bands to retain labels.

Maps and plans

- Large format items such as maps should be interleaved with blotting paper and polythene and placed on flat supports (may be several on each). Do not build up too much weight.

Remember when packing that you need to record information about the item and its location. If records are not in boxes or containers, or if the containers have no identification, label each box or bundle showing the location and identification if possible. Use a soft pencil and paper to write on labels which should be tied onto boxes or bundles. Do not use coloured paper, felt tipped or ballpoint pens or write on the records themselves. Crates should be numbered and the numbers added to documentation, and the removal and destination of boxes should be recorded.