



VALUE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN DISASTER RESILIENCE

MESSAGING GUIDE

How to use this Messaging Guide

In working with heritage organizations in Oregon to meet the goals established in the 2020-2025 Oregon Heritage Plan, Oregon Heritage laid out as one of its strategic priorities promoting the value of heritage “with public and decision makers to inspire awareness, funding, and respect for long-term preservation of Oregon’s heritage.” Communicating the value of heritage to local communities remains an imperative. Incorporating disaster resilience into that narrative is integral to saving the state’s built and indigenous heritage.

Introduction to the disaster resilience messaging guide

Nations around the world have become much more informed about the global impacts of climate-related disasters on communities. How do we as preservationists and heritage advocates translate that understanding into a value that supports planning for the protection of heritage resources?

This messaging guide is developed to meet the need for communicating the value of heritage within the context of disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. The goal is to communicate to heritage professionals and volunteers, government agencies and the public the value of Oregon’s cultural heritage in community disaster recovery and disaster preparedness planning.

The information provided in this communication tool is intended to engage and influence community members and decision-makers to advocate for the inclusion of cultural heritage resources into all manner of local and emergency plans.

Since its beginning in 1803, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has coordinated the federal government’s role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or human-made. FEMA supports the development of regional disaster plans along with regional communications working groups composed of federal, state, tribal, and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector entities. As part of this planning effort, FEMA identifies three potential audiences for disaster communication: **core users**, **end users**, and **specialty audiences**.

Core Users

- Heritage advocates and Main Street organizations
- Messaging playbook to guide decisions

End Users

- Elected officials, agency staff, residents, leaders
- Determine measures for heritage assets

Specialty Audiences

- Heritage tourism, real estate, insurance, media
- Connections and communication outlet with historic property stewards

How to use this Messaging Guide cont.

For purposes of this cultural heritage messaging guide, core users are those heritage advocates and Main Street organizations who use this tool as a messaging playbook to make decisions about communication strategies. End users are elected officials, agency staff, residents, property owners, and community leaders who determine the protection measures appropriate for heritage assets. Lastly, specialty audiences include those in heritage tourism, real estate, insurance, and media who have ongoing connections and communication with historic property stewards.

It is critical that institutional and community planning efforts, be it for comprehensive plans, preservation plans, strategic plans, master plans, or capital improvement plans, incorporate the potential for disasters and associated impacts to heritage assets into plan goals, objectives, and actions.

The messaging tools provided in this publication can be used for information sharing in a variety of ways with relevant audiences. Some of these methods include:

- Creating presentation and talking points for community meetings
- Posting content to social media
- Writing fact sheets, letters, or media releases
- Preparing for a meeting with elected officials
- Developing educational outreach events
- Drafting brochures or other informational materials
- Presenting lectures or webinars

However the information is used, it must be tailored to the intended audience. The words used and the examples illustrated must demonstrate an awareness and interest in that audience's individual needs and the larger community in which they live as relevant to the meeting topic, venue, or occasion. For example, in writing a letter to the editor you may choose to:

- Craft it for a general audience using plain language (no acronyms, please)
- Clear and correct taglines ("where it rains, it floods")
- Include a "call to action" that resonates with all readers ("but flood insurance to protect your home, business and family")

This is relevant not only to property owners, in general, but also to individuals and institutional organizations that serve as stewards of Oregon's heritage resources.

Using this messaging platform

Why use this messaging platform?

The result of a successful communication strategy is action by the audience to whom the message is addressed. In the case of planning for greater disaster resilience for cultural heritage, a successful communication outcome would be historic places and cultural resources protected or recovered from a disaster. Identifying heritage as key to community identity, particularly in disaster recovery, can be a unifying force, creating home, and inspiring action. If the value of heritage is woven into messaging about disaster resilience by trusted organizations, then action will result. This messaging platform is intended to do just that, inspire action so your audience will act! Through acting they will:

- Recognize the value of heritage resources in community disaster and recovery
- Include heritage assets in disaster planning and direct resources toward them
- Ensure historic places and cultural resources protected or recovered from a disaster

This messaging toolkit is meant to help trusted organizations weave the value of heritage into messaging about disaster resilience and result in protective actions for Oregon's historic places.

How to use this messaging platform

Consider your audience in deciding the most effective communication technique and message for your users (core, end, or specialty audience). The fuller list of communications techniques provided in the Communications Toolkit is crafted to appeal to different audiences using simple to more complicated tools. Which you choose depends on the character and culture of your community as well as the message and messenger for its delivery. For purposes of audience identification, this message platform guide suggests audiences specific to each message, color-coded as follows:

- **General Public** (Residents, property owners, media)
- **Decision-Makers** (elected officials, tribal leaders, real estate, or insurance professionals)
- **Community Stakeholders** (business associations, civic leaders, community organizations)

In several instances, the message is relevant for all three audiences.

Opening Message

The message umbrella, also referred to as an “opening message” fits within the three-step messaging approach developed by Oregon Heritage for its *Value of Heritage* Message Platform. As detailed in the *Value of Heritage*, “the most compelling language resonates first with people’s emotions—through their deeply held values, beliefs, and aspirations—before appealing to logic and reason.” Thus, the Opening Message must: 1) Grab the audience’s attention (define your audience); 2) Connect with broad values held by that audience; and 3) Set the stage for the more compelling and impactful message to follow.

Begin crafting your **opening message** by asking yourself “Why do I care about saving this... place, artifact, collection, landscape, cultural tradition?” You must be the advocate for the resource before you can develop a compelling story about why others in the community should care.

Core, End, or Specialty Audience: **General Public/ Decision- Makers/ Community Stakeholders**

Disaster resilience opening messages combined with *heritage value* messages, result in this:

- Anywhere it can rain, it can flood. Keep your history high and dry.
- We want to protect what we cherish most—this historic place we call home.
- Our homes, our lives, our history...kept safe from disaster.
- Think of the people, places, and things you value most. Your heritage is worth saving.
- Owning a piece of history is an investment in the future. Protect it from peril.
- Floods don’t follow lines on a map, but archeologists do.
- A disaster resilient community ensures places made are kept.
- History is filled with stories of loss, fill your future with stories of history.
- Be Resilient. Protect Heritage. Preserve Community Identity.
- Anchor your community to its heritage. Rebuild right.
- Disaster is emotionally devastating. Find solace in the past, hope in the future.

Impact Message

As underscored throughout the Communications Toolkit, emotions play a big role in influencing and compelling individuals to action. But as has also been stated, negative messages are non-starters. Impact messages provide hopeful and forward-looking opportunities for those concerned about disaster impacts on their homes, businesses, or communities. The **impact message** should incorporate ways in which the audience can achieve a positive outcome that benefits them by lessening the risk should a disaster strike their historic community.

Core, End, or Specialty Audience: General Public/ Decision- Makers/ Community Stakeholders

Disaster resilience impact messages combined with *heritage value* messages, result in this:

- Having a disaster plan for cultural heritage helps communities connect with resources
- **Adapting your historic property reduces disaster risk, improves property value, and preserves** community character for yours and future generations.
- Preserving historic places is a sound economic decision for our community; every \$1 invested in disaster resilience saves \$6 later.
- **When making improvements to your historic property, consider disaster risk before you begin.**
- Collection management + disaster management = Protecting the Irreplaceable
- **A continuum of care for cultural heritage begins with a community-wide commitment to disaster preparedness and recovery.**
- Disaster recovery must ensure history's survival.
- Heritage salvaged from disaster can reconnect a community.

Approach Message

The **approach message** is your “work plan” for your audience; how they can incorporate cultural heritage into disaster resilience and recovery for their home, business, and community. At this point you will have built the emotional foundation for why they value heritage, compelled them to understand how disaster impacts heritage, provided optimistic and forward-looking solutions or benefits to them in preparing heritage assets for disaster and now you’ve set the stage for how they can help protect Oregon’s heritage from disaster.

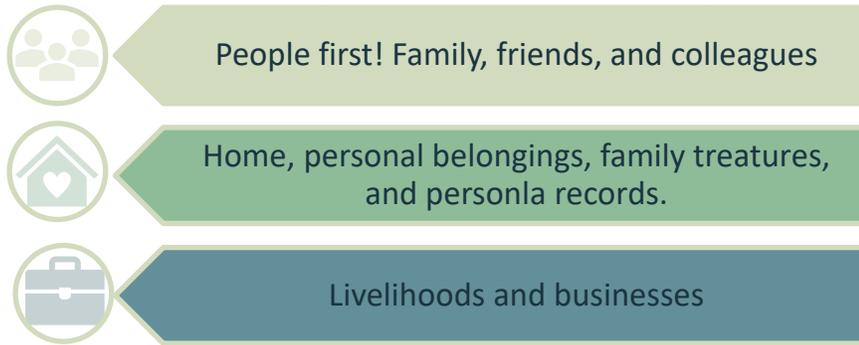
Core, End, or Specialty Audience: General Public/ Decision- Makers/ Community Stakeholders

Disaster resilience approach messages combined with heritage value messages, result in this:

- We inform community rebuilding and recapture personal history post-disaster by sharing our historic collections.
- We protect community identity by recovering historic places from disaster.
- We support community disaster recovery by connecting heritage, people, and place.
- We make historic communities more disaster resilient by working with historic property owners and disaster personnel to identify hazards and recommend adaptation actions that respect the historic significance of the property.
- We gather tribal knowledge about traditional practices in land management and consider treatment approaches that ensure the safety of people and the protection of cultural resources at risk.
- We provide planning guidance for preparing cultural institutions for future conditions of flood, fire, and earthquake and the protection and recovery of heritage assets.
- We gather data to make the economic case for valuing heritage assets at risk from disaster so that community leaders can make informed risk management decisions.
- We share strategies for incorporating cultural heritage into FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plans to support federal grant funding for cultural-resource based risk reduction projects.
- We engage in an ongoing dialogue with our community to involve and empower them to collective action in protecting local landmarks and community identity from disaster.

Approach Message

As with all planning, a communications plan must be monitored, evaluated, and adapted in response to current and future needs. If a disaster strikes, messaging must be respectful and hopeful, pointing to shared values in the community, while at the same time resonating to individual circumstances. Understand and respect that people come first, homes and possessions follow, and livelihoods and business may be leading drivers of disaster recovery.



The success of the message may not be determinable until after a disaster strikes, the community responds, and recovery is underway. However, there are ways to determine the success of your message in the disaster preparedness phase. Begin with the following:

- Develop criteria for success in the use of the specific message and the intended audience. For example:
 - Were you successful in getting an editorial in your local paper on the importance of preparing local landmark buildings for disaster? Did you receive any follow-up from community members regarding the editorial?
 - Did you meet with your elected official and deliver your bullet points? Were you successful in securing his/her commitment to action?
- Gather stories from heritage advocates about use of the messaging platform, both successes and challenges. Share those with other heritage advocates in your community.
- After a disaster awareness event (could be a talk, workshop or even a near disaster event in your community), put a poll in your newsletter, the local newspaper or post it on social media asking community members what places matter most to them in the event of a disaster.
- Poll cultural institutions prior to and after using the messaging platform to determine who has begun putting disaster preparedness plans in place.
- Approach emergency management officials with information on incorporating cultural resources into emergency and hazard mitigation planning. Accept a seat at the planning table for the next plan update.

Finally, the ultimate measure of success is if the core user of the messaging platform, the heritage advocate, has put into place a disaster preparedness plan for their own cultural institution, historic property, business, or family. **Remember, people first!**