



Preparation for disasters, both natural and man-made, is essential for the protection of your building. This is particularly true of historic resources, which often consist of unique and often irreplaceable building materials and craftsmanship. The following is a guide to aid property owners in choosing appropriate stabilization and repairs for their historic buildings in case of a disaster and to guide them through the review process by the Independence Heritage Commission.

What does it mean to be historically designated?

Historic properties are recognized for their architectural and/or historical significance. They include buildings, structures, objects (statues or headstones) and landscape features. These resources can be high style (grand) or vernacular (simple), residential or commercial, individual or connected as part of a district.

Properties that are determined to be architecturally and/or historically significant may be locally designated by the City of Independence as one of the following:

- Landmarks (individual properties)
- Historic Districts (contiguous areas of unique historical/architectural character and development)

How do I know if my property is designated historic?

The City currently has one locally designated historic district, the [Truman Heritage District](#), which is located northwest of the Independence Square. Additionally, there are 26 Independence properties that have been designated as [local historic landmarks](#) that are found throughout the city. If your property is located within the Truman Heritage District or is one of the individually listed sites, your property is considered a historically designated property and may require review by staff or the Heritage Commission for exterior improvements to your property.

What is the Independence Heritage Commission?

The Heritage Commission is a group of nine volunteers who serve to ensure the retention of architectural and historical integrity of locally designated historic properties. Commissioners are appointed by the Independence City Council. While the Commission does conduct design review of major exterior improvements, it does not oversee interior modifications, exterior or interior paint colors, or basic property maintenance.

What am I permitted to do to my building after a disaster? Am I required to go before the Heritage Commission for repairs to my building?

After a major disaster, the City and Commission's first concern is public safety. Therefore, property owners are never asked to postpone repairs that ensure the security or structural stability of their historic property. However, once the property is secured and deemed safe, major repairs should be completed in-kind, meaning that replacement of any major components of your building should be done with the same materials that existed prior to the disaster. In-kind repairs can always be completed without staff or Commission approval.

In an instance where a building or accessory structure has been so severely damaged that significant demolition is necessary, Heritage Commission approval is required prior to any action. This is true unless it is deemed structurally unsound and a public health hazard by the City's Code Enforcement Department or the Chief Building Official.

How will I know what type of work is appropriate for my historic property?

[Preservation design guidelines](#) and [National Park Service Preservation Briefs](#) are available for designated sites/districts to aid property owners in planning for exterior improvements. Preservation staff is also available to answer questions or to explain the review process. Property owners are encouraged to utilize online resources as well as technical assistance provided by Preservation staff as an integral part of their emergency preparedness plan.

Any reference to work that does or does not require Heritage Commission approval does not reflect the requirements for the Building Division Permit Application Process. Contact the Building Division at (816) 325-7401 before the threat of an emergency for information regarding work that may require a building permit.

BEFORE THE THREAT



Document your property through photographs, video, and a written inventory. This should include documenting important or rare building materials and architectural details. Be certain to update this information on a regular basis and store in a fireproof location or off-site. Copies of this information, including insurance policies and other important papers, should also be kept in a separate location and available for ready access.

Contact your insurance company and make certain that your policy covers historic resources and man-made

emergencies. Your policy should permit in-kind replacement of significant and distinct features.

Check that all doors and windows (points of egress) are operable. Due to the age of many historic buildings, there is a good chance that some doors and windows are inoperable. Often times openings are painted shut, have broken counter weights, or settlement of foundations have caused doors and windows to stick. Please check all means of egress to ensure that they are functional as they may be the only means to escape during an emergency.

Install/check existing Carbon Monoxide (CO) Detectors. It is very important to install CO detectors in older buildings as heating systems can malfunction causing CO to leak into your building. CO detectors can also aid in case of a fire. Many historical buildings were designed with large areas and high ceilings. During a fire these areas can suffer from stratification or layering (a build up of heat causing a thermal barrier), which prevents smoke reaching a smoke detector at the ceiling, or the smoke may cool before it ever reaches the ceiling and the smoke detector may never be activated. Activation of a CO detector can happen in the very early stages of a fire where CO is produced, providing time to safely evacuate individuals and execute an effective and rapid firefighting response.

Review your plan to secure your property and make certain that others (such as a neighbor or friend) are aware of your disaster plan in case of an emergency or when out of town.

Contact the Fire Department to list your property as a historic site. It is possible that during an emergency, measures can be taken to minimize damage to your building if the emergency crew is aware of the property's historic status. Additionally, ensure that your house numbers are posted, legible, and visible from the street fronting the property. The address numbers should contrast with their background for optimal visibility.

Consult with an architect, engineer, or contractor with historic building expertise to assist you in evaluating possible obsolete or subordinate systems on your property. Many older buildings can have multiple utility services and older wiring and construction techniques. Contemporary safety measures such as fire walls and fire stops may not have been incorporated into the building's original design elements.

Install/check existing fire extinguisher. When used properly, a portable fire extinguisher can save lives and property by putting out a small fire or containing it until the Fire Department arrives. Fire extinguishers are rated according to the amount of fire that can be extinguished by an untrained person. Be sure to install multiple, size-appropriate fire extinguishers in your building and review operating

procedures with family and associates. Extinguishers should also be checked regularly to ensure optimal service.

Make any necessary repairs of historic building fabric, fencing, or landscaping that may be loose, rotted, or unstable. Such features could become detached and develop into dangerous debris that could damage other parts of your building or your neighbor's property in the event of a disaster. Pay particular attention to roofing and openings such as entry and overhead doors and windows as they are the most vulnerable features of your building.

Install/check existing smoke detectors. The placement of smoke detectors in historic buildings is often dictated by the overwhelming desire of owners to protect unique interior detailing by concealing smoke detectors or fire suppression systems out of view. Poor placement can result in a slower response from detectors in the early stage of the fire. In fact, high ceilings and low air movement in many of these buildings make proper placement of smoke detectors vital. Check with your local Fire Department if you have any questions about installation of smoke detectors or fire suppression systems in your home or business. Once properly installed, be certain to regularly check that systems are in working order.

AFTER THE THREAT



Evaluate the damage. Once your area has been given clearance to return outdoors (upon removal of power lines, large debris, etc.), evaluate the damage done to your historic resource.

Ensure that the building is structurally stable for you and your family or associates to return.

Document damaged building material and missing features. Again, video and photo documentation is critical as well as written inventory before and after an emergency. This documentation is essential for insurance and disaster relief funding sources that may be available immediately after the threat.

Make necessary repairs to stabilize your property. Refer to the section above for what is appropriate with and without Staff or Commission approval.

Contact the City's Historic Preservation Division for assistance in determining appropriate methods of repair, rehabilitation, and treatments for the exterior of your historic building or property.



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*For further information regarding preparation of your
disaster preparedness plan contact the:*

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