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**Lessons from a Fire in a Natural History Museum**

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Lesson No. 1

It helps when the firefighters know and love your museum

Invite firefighters to tour your museum

Host a party for families of firefighters and police officers

Lesson No.2

Construction brings extra hazards

Watch what your contractors are doing

Develop guidelines for contractors working in museums

Know what equipment and materials they will be using

Lesson No. 3

Construction increases the fire risk

Insist on a fire watch

Make sure your fire detection and suppression systems are not compromised

Lesson No. 4

Fire is bad - sprinklers are good

OR

A little water is better than too much or none at all

Lesson No. 5

Consider the fire risk when designing exhibitions and storage layouts

Don't block sprinklers

Don't overheat fluid-preserved specimens

Think twice before designing a labyrinth

Lesson No. 6

Leaky cases mean dirty specimens

If an air-tight case is not a good idea, include filtered holes or use positive pressure from a clean air source

Lesson No. 7

Always clean with dry methods before using wet methods

Lesson No. 8

Soot is insoluble

Don't try to "solubilize" soot

Try to lift it instead

Oily components will come with the carbon particles

Executive Summary: Planning can make a big difference

Fiona Graham is a professional conservator specializing in preventive conservation. She holds a Masters degree in Art Conservation from Queen's University, Canada, and is accredited through the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators and the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals. Fiona offers consulting services to the museum and heritage field and teaches at Queen's University, Athabasca University, and the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts as well as for Museum Classes Online. Her areas of expertise include preventive conservation in facility design and operations, specifications and project management for conservation projects, metals conservation, facility assessments, and storage planning.