



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 27, 2012

CONTACT: Jeff Mammenga, Media Coordinator, (605) 773-6000,
Jeff.Mammenga@state.sd.us

MayDay a reminder for heritage institutions to be prepared for disasters

PIERRE, SD -- Every year on MayDay, May 1, historical societies, archives, museums, and libraries are encouraged to spend some time preparing their organization for a disaster.

After the hurricanes in the Gulf Coast, the Heritage Health Index reported in 2005 that few cultural heritage institutions have disaster plans or that the plans are outdated. A call to action went out to help heritage institutions become more proactive in preparing for a disaster.

“Preparing an emergency disaster plan or training staff to respond to different scenarios may seem daunting, but dedicating a little time on May 1st may make a difference if an emergency does happen,” stated Chelle Somsen, State Archivist for the South Dakota State Historical Society at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. “Examples of activities that can be done on MayDay include updating the contact list for staff, checking to make sure the fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are working, surveying the building for risks or conducting a disaster drill.”

On MayDay the State Historical Society-Archives staff will update their pocket response plans and check the batteries in their flashlights to ensure they are working correctly. The State Historical Society will also update their emergency preparedness plan to correct any outdated information.

“These are actions that we can take without the whole process becoming overwhelming,” Somsen said.

If an organization needs assistance with preparing a disaster plan, they are encouraged to contact the State Archives at (605) 773-3804 or archref@state.sd.us

The State Archives is open Monday through Friday and the first Saturday of each month from 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. CDT.

-30-

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.