


Customer Segment Story: MUSEUMS/HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

A true testimonial brought to you by **FireKing** 

“Regardless of whether you are talking about museum artifacts or vital business records, the combination of alarms, fire suppression equipment, fireproof containers, and a disaster plan will help a museum save as many things as possible during a disaster.”

– Lorie Foley, Director of the Northeast Document Conservation Center

Preserving items from the past to show future generations the successes and failures of their elders is a great way to provide an interesting history lesson for all who are interested. The world’s museums and historical societies are places where the details of yesteryear are collected, restored, and guarded for everyone to appreciate. Exhibits can be as simple as a desk from the first school house in the town the museum is located, or as complex and fascinating as the device used by the Wright Brothers to become the “first in flight” in Kitty Hawk, NC. Regardless of the nature or value of the display, all museums and historical societies share a unique responsibility when it comes to protecting important items from fire, flood, theft, or other disaster.

Using effective and fully tested alarm systems, fire suppression equipment, dampeners, and fireproof containers to protect the exhibits and vital administrative documents can save a museum from losing precious, sometimes irreplaceable items. Museums, like any other business, need to protect not only the things that make them different, but also the things that make them the same. For example, every museum or historical society should be protecting general business items such as financial records, tax information, lease agreements, titles, deeds, human resources information, and computer back-up disks from the risks that affect every business.

The Flagler Beach Historical Museum in Florida has many things to protect. Fire suppression equipment and alarms are installed in the museum to protect the exhibits, which include Flagler Beach items dating back to 1915. From old election results to fossils found on the area beaches, everything is locked in a glass case and under a working sprinkler system to protect from theft or fire. Museum volunteer, David Eichenberg, speaks about what is kept in fireproof containers at his museum:

“When the city decided to open the museum in 2001, they purchased a 2-drawer FireKing fireproof filing cabinet to keep important items such as our financial information, membership records, news clippings, tax licenses, computer back-up disks and so on. Some of the photos that we have on display are put in the FireKings to provide extra protection when the museum is closed.”

Most museums are well aware of the risk of fire damaging their collection and the buildings in which they are displayed. The offices of these museums and historical societies, however, are often overlooked when it comes to fire safety. The Yankee Air Museum, located in Van Buren Township, has begun to implement new fire safety strategies during the rebuilding process after a disastrous fire that occurred in October, 2004. Dick Stewart, Vice President of Operations, explains:

“The fire destroyed the whole airplane hanger, seven planes, and a lot of other really valuable and irreplaceable items. The rebuilding has just begun and we are still getting set up in our new quarters. We have yet to determine exactly what caused the fire, but I’m sure that regardless of the cause we will be using a combination of off-site storage and fireproof cabinets to hold important items in the future.”

There are many things that all businesses can do either in the planning or rebuilding stage to increase their fire safety precautions. Any company can consult their local fire department, the National Fire Protection Association, or the United States Fire Administration for advice on how to best prepare for fire. Museums and historical societies have an outlet that is uniquely positioned to develop and implement these safety strategies – the American Association of Museums, which operates the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NDCC) for their member museums. They guide museum professionals to several sources when developing an emergency plan or dealing with disaster preparedness and recovery. Lorie Foley, Director of the NDCC, is an expert in museum safety and speaks about what a museum should do to protect itself:

“Regardless of whether you are talking about museum artifacts or vital business records, the combination of alarms, fire suppression equipment, fireproof containers, and a disaster plan will help a museum save as many things as possible during a disaster. It is crucial that the museum shares its disaster plan and the placement of important items with the fire department in order for them to know which displays and fireproof cabinets must be removed first.”

Every business is susceptible to loss, but museums need to make special considerations for some of the items kept on display. Proactively installing the fire safety equipment needed to secure a museum is something that cannot be overlooked. When considering fireproof containers, decide the value of the documents you wish to protect and weigh that against the cost of the container. If the document is of real importance, FireKing will be well worth your money.