



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST LOCAL CHURCH DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLANNING GUIDELINES

The United Church of Christ local churches may use this plan as a guide when preparing their own disaster plans to guide emergency actions prior to, during and after any emergency. Preplanning is the key to being ready for any disaster. The steps taken before and immediately after an event will have a positive effect on how the members of your congregation respond in the event of a disaster. Many hazards do not lend themselves to prior notice. Therefore, this plan will address both prior notice events and no notice events.

Realizing that each of our member churches is different, this document provides guidance to help you formalize your congregation's plan. Each congregation's plan should include the major components of this plan while adding any additional procedures that your individual church feels necessary. In addition, use of this plan as a guide will help standardize the Conference approach. Simply stated, this plan defines the roles and procedures that will enable the Conference to:

1. Identify existing individual and corporate resources within the congregations of the Conference that can be applied to disaster preparedness, mitigation and response.
2. Build individual and corporate resources in the Conference congregations to assist in disaster preparedness, mitigation and response.
3. Link individual and corporate resources in the Conference congregations to meet humanitarian needs of human caused and natural disasters and reduce vulnerability of people to potential disasters.

SITUATIONS, ASSUMPTIONS AND TYPES OF HAZARDS:

Local church disaster plans need to be “all-hazards” to address a wide range of human-caused and natural disasters – including incidents related to public violence, terrorism, chemical explosions, transportation accidents, hazardous waste spills, fires, coastal storms, floods, earthquakes, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes or hurricanes. Contact with the local emergency management office may assist in identifying the types of disasters the community might experience.

Initially, it may seem that such a wide range of potential disasters makes prior planning an impossible task. However, many disasters have similar preparatory and post hazard responses. Identifying your actions and completing a local plan will considerably increase your congregation’s quality of life during and after any disaster. It will reduce your burden by helping you to identify the necessary actions, and complete the corresponding tasks with a minimum of problems.

Creating this Plan might well be the most important document you will ever work on. Positive preplanning can help save your church assets. However, in the execution of your plan, remember that members of your congregations and the residents of the community are far more important than facilities. Your plan should cover both church assets and the safety of church members.

UNDERSTANDING DISASTERS - THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

Phases of Disaster and Response

- Phase 1: Warning/Anticipation
- Phase 2: Impact/Emergency
- Phase 3: Aftermath/Inventory
- Phase 4: Relief/Remedy
- Phase 5: Recovery/Reconstruction

In addition, any planning model must consider two factors. The first is people; any plan must prepare one’s congregation for a disaster, as well as help them to survive and then recover from it. The second factor is property. A disaster plan must help prepare your facilities to meet a disaster, and address how to recover as quickly as possible when the disaster is over. The planning model that follows is based upon the above criteria. The model addresses each of the five stated phases of a disaster. In addition, at each phase, the model helps you to plan to meet the needs of both your congregation and your facility.

APPLYING THIS PLAN TO YOUR CONGREGATION

Your first task as a congregation is to determine who will develop and then implement your individual plan. One such approach would be to develop a committee/task force as described in the attached Plan under “Section II: Organization”. Whatever approach you take, the resultant church task force should review this planning document and then supplement it whenever necessary to meet the needs of your church.

The checklists may be changed or tailored to meet your needs and requirements. The history of recent disasters shows the importance of educating, training and preparing your congregation on how to respond to save their lives. It also points out the importance of having identified those who are in your congregation who will need assistance to escape a disastrous situation.

(NAME AND ADDRESS OF YOUR CONGREGATION)

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Our mission is to establish and manage disaster preparedness and response protocols that will effectively mitigate disasters affecting our church's parishioners and our local church facilities.
- B. This plan seeks to:
 - 1. Equip our staff and congregation with the necessary information, training and preparation to protect themselves and the local church facilities.
 - 2. Identify means of contact in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and identify the immediate needs of the parishioners.
 - 3. Have available reasonable protocols for identification and arrangements for appropriate individuals, parties, or agencies to address spiritual, emotional, and physical needs arising out of a disaster.
 - 4. Establish budgets and mitigation efforts to secure the campus. Develop alternative communication systems.
 - 5. Seek out human and physical resources, and prepare contingency plans for employment of these resources to assist staff and parishioners in a disaster event.
 - 6. Organize, select and train preparation and response personnel, determine who is in charge. (Recognize that the Pastor should not be that person), and decide who will activate the protocols.
 - 7. Recognize that operations do not take place in a vacuum. Learn about and cooperate with other preparation and response agencies. Do not attempt to perform the work of first responders such as police, firefighters, EMTs, etc. Coordinate with all local organizations that are involved in emergency response.

II. ORGANIZATION

- A. This section should define the organization that your church has chosen to manage the Disaster Preparation and Response Plan. The following are recommendations for consideration in your organization. A fundamental need in time of a disaster is to have in place a trained organization:
 - 1. That will react immediately to the situation.
 - 2. That is empowered to make critical decisions regarding actions that needs to be taken.
- B. It is important to establish in advance, which persons are empowered to activate your plan and who will be the media spokesperson for your church. It is also recommended that these individuals have a designated back up. During emergencies, you will not have time to call a meeting of a committee to take this action. The governing body of the local church should empower a Congregation Disaster Coordinator and charge this person with the overall development, operation, and continuing maintenance of your plan. Also, appoint a team that helps develop and maintain a plan for your church. Many churches have individuals who are responsible for the roles and functions in each of the three assignments that follow. **Each local church may determine the titles, roles and functions of those involved, as well as which roles and functions are applicable to the local church:**

1. Local Church Disaster Coordinator
 - Serves as Chairperson of the overall team.
 - Schedules and plans meetings.
 - Schedules and plans training.
 - Recruits a disaster team.
 - Ensures team readiness.
 - Liaisons with community established disaster relief groups.
2. Disaster Volunteer Coordinator
 - Conducts skills and talent survey.
 - Develops a database of volunteer skills.
 - Identifies members needing special assistance and pairs them with members responsible for maintaining contact.
 - Develops a communications chain and arranges for its activation.
3. Resources Coordinator
 - Conducts inventory of facilities, supplies and equipment.
 - Coordinates with the Local Church Disaster Coordinator all information disseminated to the congregation regarding the use of facilities, equipment.
 - Maintains supplies in good order and replenishes as necessary.

C. PREPARING FOR DISASTER - A MODEL FOR PLANNING

Phase 1. Warning/Anticipation

This phase covers the period when a disaster is anticipated until either the danger has passed or the disaster occurred. During this phase, advanced planning and preparedness steps will be put into action. During advanced planning, you will have formulated concepts, built a database of information, and made decisions on how you will handle each situation. Checklists should be developed to cover all known tasks so your planned decisions can be accomplished with relative ease.

Preparing your People

1. Determine and review the needs of each member. The development and completion of a member survey is a good way to accomplish this task. This survey can be used to determine members' individual needs, talents, and any other special information necessary for complete planning. Secure and use local/county forms to identify parishioners with special needs, as county authorities need to be notified (of members with special needs) so that such members can receive assistance prior to a disaster whenever possible. As soon as possible make this needs assessment an integral part of information completed by each new member as he/she joins the church.
2. Map the location of each member's residence. Use this information to develop small groups based upon residence. Make sure that all members of each small group know its make-up and establish a phone chain within the group. This phone chain and alternate communications should be activated from the top down and the bottom up.
3. Put someone in each small group in charge, and assign that person the task of (a) calling and/or visiting all members of the group after a disaster, and then (b) reporting their findings to a central committee member. (Assign a second person for each group as backup. If possible, have group leaders call their groups prior to the disaster to check on preparations

- and reassure them that they have not been forgotten.) In addition, members of the group should keep their group leader informed of their situation.
4. From the survey information Attachment II Survey Form, identify volunteers with special talents and equipment who can be called upon to respond after a disaster. Use this information to develop groups of volunteers ready to assist church members with specific short-term needs (i.e. debris cleanup, temporary repairs, etc.)
 5. Promote preparedness of church members. Encourage pre-disaster planning, and distribute locally/nationally prepared materials helpful in preparing each household to meet disaster needs. (Such preparation should include identification of a “safe room” within the home if possible, and a pre-identified meeting place outside the home where family members can gather.) Encourage parishioners with pets to build their pets’ needs into their family planning efforts.
 6. Encourage local, county agencies to present preparedness workshops, and host these at the local church if possible. These should be geared to the needs of individual church members as well as those serving in any official capacity. A course in basic First Aid should be taught.
 7. Provide specialized training as necessary for those who will be in charge of various portions of the plan. (Such training should include periodic drills or other attempts to test the plan as realistically as possible.)
 8. Develop a list of members with self-contained travel trailers, motor homes, etc. that could be moved to church grounds after a disaster to provide temporary comfort stations for volunteers.
 9. At the time local authorities announce a pending emergency activate the checklist developed during “Phase 1: Preparing Your People.”
 10. Communicate with your UCC Conference about the disaster plan.

Phase 1. Preparing your Property

1. Develop a complete inventory of church property. Be sure to include all equipment, furnishings, etc. Make several hard copies and store off site. NOTE: Make sure that your insurance company has a copy on file. A DVD or camcorder tape that accompanies the inventory is necessary. Review and revise the inventory annually.
2. Review insurance coverage annually, and adjust as necessary.
3. Protect church property. Develop a series of checklists that identify what needs to be done and who is responsible for each task. (Remember to keep the tasks manageable, as those completing these tasks will also be preparing their own homes as well.)
4. Protect church records. Make sure that all records, computer files, etc. are backed up frequently. Arrange for multiple copies, and store such copies at an off site location. If church volunteers maintain certain additional records, make sure that these are also backed up periodically. Appoint individuals that are directly responsible to do this.

5. Review facility communications systems. Supply back-up and/or alternative means of communication should electricity and/or phones be compromised.
6. Determine personnel plans/responsibilities for all church employees, remembering that they will have personal as well as professional needs.
7. Determine if your facility can serve as a pre-disaster shelter, post-disaster shelter or distribution facility. This should be done with the coordination of your local EOC. A checklist is not provided for this item since the local emergency coordinator will want to organize your shelter to best assist the community needs. They will help you determine what supplies would be necessary in either case, and then arrange for the purchase and storage of the supplies. Make sure that items with limited shelf life are rotated periodically. (Determine if your facility could be used to house volunteers after a disaster, and what prior preparation, stocking of essential items, etc. would be necessary. We cannot over state the importance that you need to develop this item with the other agencies in your area so they will include your shelter plans in their over all plan.)
8. Develop a building evacuation plan should this be necessary at any time. (Remember that an unanticipated disaster might well force an evacuation when: (a) only a few employees are present, or (b) a major church function is taking place. Such planning should include identification of a “safe room” within the church, as well as a pre-identified meeting place outside the church where church employees/parishioners can gather after exiting the building.)
9. Develop checklists of steps to be taken following an unanticipated disaster. Items here would be completed as necessary and/or given the nature of the disaster, would include calling appropriate authorities, shutting off power, water, gas, etc. Church employees need to be familiar with these checklists and trained in their implementation.
10. All church employees need to be trained in both first aid, CPR, and the use of the defibrillators in case an unanticipated disaster strikes the church facility during working hours.
11. Create a committee to inspect church facilities immediately following any disaster that results in physical damage. Committee members need to have the ability to identify damage as well as implement emergency repairs to prevent further damage.
12. Develop a phone list of disaster committee members, church employees and/or anyone else of immediate importance, following a disaster. Include cell phone numbers as well as land lines. Develop an alternative method of notification should phone service be interrupted.
13. Identify an alternative church office site that can serve as a temporary back up should the church facilities be too damaged to use immediately.
14. Develop off-site capabilities to keep the church web site operational in case church computer systems are damaged or destroyed. This might prove the only way for some members to keep in communication.
15. Identify possible off site locations for church activities in case the church facilities are temporarily or permanently unusable.

16. Identify operational community, county disaster planning groups and affiliate with same to share preparation, training, and operational activities both before and during any local disaster.
17. Develop a master list of important emergency phone numbers (i.e. fire, police, gas and electric, telephone) and post prominently next to all phones with outside lines.
18. Determine personnel responsibilities in advance.
19. At the time local authorities announce a pending emergency activate the checklist developed during Phase 1 Preparing Your Property.

Phase 2. Impact/Emergency

This phase begins when the disaster actually strikes. In some cases, it follows a varying length of preparation and anticipation (i.e. hurricane), while at other times it can come with little or without any warning (i.e. tornadoes). In the first case, Phase 1 has already been in effect; in the latter case, plan implementation needs to begin directly with Phase 2. Develop a Checklist and include as a minimum those items that are included below.

Phase 2. Preparing your People

1. When a disaster strikes and you did not have adequate warning to prepare you will need to accomplish those items identified in Phase 1. Complete as much as the checklists as possible but do not take any risks that might put your volunteers in harms way. Complete as much of the Master checklist for Phase 1 and Phase 2 as possible.
2. If necessary and/or feasible, parishioners need to be able to assist in immediate rescue/first aid activities for those injured as the disaster is happening. Otherwise, this becomes one of the first actions under Phase 3.
3. If necessary and/or feasible, assist the authorities as directed. Otherwise, this becomes one of the first actions under Phase 3.

Phase 2. Preparing your Property

1. If the building is unoccupied, do nothing until the actual event is over. (Remember property can be replaced; people cannot.)
2. If the building is occupied, call appropriate authorities, (i.e. police, fire, etc.) as soon as possible. (See Phase 1 Preparing Your Property Item 17.)
3. If the building is occupied, implement the evacuation plan if necessary, or shelter in place. (Phase 1 Preparing your Property Item 8.)
4. If possible, take such emergency action as is immediately warranted (i.e. shut off power, gas, water, etc.) to minimize further damage. (Phase 1 Preparing your property Item 9).
5. If necessary and/or feasible, church employees need to assist in immediate rescue/first aid activities for those injured as the disaster is happening. This includes both first aid and use of the defibrillator. Otherwise, this may become one of the first actions to be taken under Phase 3.

Phase 3. Aftermath/Inventory

This phase begins as soon as the actual disaster has ended, (i.e. hurricane, tornado, fire, etc.) People come out, look around, and realize that they are not alone. Initial rescues are completed, the first, often unsolicited volunteers, arrive, and initial damage assessments are completed. Primary communications are restored if possible. Use the Checklists developed in Phase I above to insure that all items are covered. The items covered below in Preparing your People and Preparing your Property should be used to develop that checklist.

Phase 3. Preparing your People

1. If necessary, call appropriate authorities, (i.e. police, fire, etc.).
2. If necessary and/or feasible, parishioners need to be able to assist in immediate rescue/first aid activities for those injured nearby. Otherwise, follow instructions of the authorities.
3. Implement the phone/visitation chain ASAP to determine immediate, post disaster health/needs of congregation. (See Phase 1 Preparing your People Item 3) Report results to the appropriate disaster committee member.
4. Based upon needs determined in Item 3, begin to help each other as needed. Be especially careful to identify and assist those (a) with special needs, or (b) having difficulty dealing with the immediate stress of events.
5. Assign volunteer groups as needed to assist parishioners. (See Phase 1 Item 4 above) This activity might well extend into Phase 4, depending on the extent of the damage and the needs of your people.
6. Make sure that the pastor or other approved contact person contacts the UCC Conference office ASAP to provide an initial assessment of local conditions.

Phase 3. Preparing your Property

1. If not already done, take any emergency action necessary to prevent additional damage. (i.e. shut off power, gas, water, etc.)
2. Survey property to complete an initial assessment of damage. (See Phase 1 Preparing your Property Item 11)
3. Contact church insurance carrier ASAP. Committee members identified in Phase 1 Item 11 above should accompany the insurance adjustor during his/her initial tour of the facility. Contact UCC Conference office to inform of action.
4. Complete immediate emergency repairs necessary to prevent further damage. If necessary, such repairs should be initiated even before the insurance carrier is reached. (See Phase 1 Preparing Your Property Item 11)
5. If church facility is usable and previously designated, work with local authorities to open the facility as a shelter, emergency supplies distribution center, etc.

Phase 4. Relief/Remedy

Here the community tends to medical and survival needs. Temporary housing issues arise, while temporary repairs are made to homes, businesses. Public works crews swing into action; electricity and telephone service is restored. More volunteers begin to arrive, along with various local, state and national agencies (i.e. Red Cross, Salvation Army, FEMA) This phase can last up to ten times the length of Phase 3.

Phase 4. Preparing your People

1. Assign volunteer groups as needed to assist parishioners. This activity may begin during Phase 3 but will occur primarily during Phase 4, depending on the wider extent of the damage and the needs of your people. Someone needs to take charge of this activity so that it can be carefully organized and monitored. Pay special attention to the elderly and special needs groups who may need help but be reluctant to ask for it.
2. If not needed to assist the immediate church family, determine how local volunteer groups can be of service to other members of the community or beyond. Pre-disaster planning contacts with local/county agencies will be helpful in creating volunteer networks that can be put into use here. The Conference office may also be helpful in coordinating such efforts.
3. Assist members of your congregation as they interact with various relief agencies, (i.e. the Red Cross, FEMA) and other outside agencies. If possible, have the church facility used as a registration site so that volunteers can provide congregation members with transportation, assist with completion of forms, etc. If parishioners must travel to other sites, have church volunteers ready to offer rides, assistance etc. as needed.
4. Utilize members identified in initial survey that could assist members in need.
5. Have a person or committee identified in advance to oversee all donations that might come from the congregation, both to assure that they are appropriate, and that they are distributed in timely fashion. Utilize your current church committee structure as much as possible.

Phase 4. Preparing your Property

1. If not already completed, committee members identified in Phase 1 Item 11 above need to accompany the insurance adjustor during his/her initial tour of the facility. Members also need to be present during any/all subsequent adjustor visits necessary to identify and/or inspect further damage discovered over time or during repairs.
2. Identify a general contractor who will oversee all repairs/reconstruction and serve as direct link between church and insurance adjustor.
3. Let contracts for needed repairs and begin the repairs.
4. If necessary, implement plans to move the church office and/or church activities to off site location/s. (See Phase 1 Prepare Your Property Items 13 and 15)
5. Contact outside agencies for recovery assistance if necessary (i.e. Church World Service, United Church of Christ National Disaster Ministries).
6. If church facilities are intact and the need is present, offer the use of your facilities to other groups, relief agencies, etc. The facility might be used as a temporary shelter, distribution center, community meeting place, or focal point for outside relief agencies. Use of members'

trailers, motor homes, parked on site, can offer self-contained facilities and AC if building is otherwise intact but lacking power.

Phase 5. Recovery/Reconstruction

This is the long-term rebuilding phase. As it continues, local agencies begin to take over, along with continued help from agencies such as CWS or FEMA. The community begins to look ahead and plan carefully for reconstruction and rebirth. This phase can often take from several months to several years, depending upon the scope of the disaster. Since it is impossible to plan for all types of situations faced after a disaster, your team will need to make an assessment to determine what needs to be done.

Phase 5. Preparing your People

1. Small group leaders need to maintain ongoing communication with their disaster group in order to spot problems and offer assistance as needed. Often, problems do not arise immediately but appear or build during the recovery phase.
2. Make sure that group leaders are ready and able to pass problems identified in Item 1 above to the appropriate parties. They are not trained, nor should they attempt, to solve all problems themselves.
3. If possible, use qualified parishioners to serve as advocates to assist other members with problems that may arise with insurance companies, contractors, etc.
4. Work in conjunction with other outside groups (i.e. community, faith-based, etc) to coordinate recovery efforts.
5. As soon as possible within Phase 5, review the entire disaster plan as it affected the congregation. Determine what worked, what did not, etc. and revise the plan to be better prepared for the next time.

Phase 5. Preparing your Property

1. Committee members identified in Phase 1 Preparing Your Property Item 11 need to accompany the insurance adjustor during any/all subsequent adjustor visits necessary to identify or inspect further damage discovered over time or during initial repairs.
2. As soon as possible within Phase 5, review the entire disaster plan as it affected the facility. Determine what worked, what did not, etc. and revise the plan to be better prepared for the next time.
3. Review property damage to identify areas where modifications/improvements can be made to mitigate damage from future storms. These can be built into repairs or completed separately.