



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDE FOR LOCAL CHURCHES: A WORKBOOK



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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

This guide recognizes that all response to disaster happens locally. You are the experts in your local community, and this is intended to be used as a framework for creating your own disaster resources. This workbook has been designed to be placed in a 3-ring binder and was created as a Word Document so you can edit it as you see fit.

The intention of this workbook is to provide you with an overview of how to be prepared for disasters. There are some steps that all churches should be taking despite having limited resources, as those are crucial in the event of an emergency (**Steps 1-2**). Churches that are ready to be more prepared for disasters are encouraged to work through the additional sections in this workbook (**Step 3 - Step 5**).

One thing to keep in mind throughout this planning guide, you are not answering to the government, the conference or the national church. The key stakeholders in this process are those in your church community and your wider community who may be impacted by disasters. There is no right or wrong way to complete this planning workbook. Please adapt this tool as you see fit.

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

“Let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and lay grain under the authority of Pharoah for food in the cities, and let them keep it. That food shall be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine that are to be fall the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish through the famine.” Genesis 41:35-36.

Joseph was able to interpret Pharoah’s dream and saw that there would be a famine in the land of Egypt. With proper preparation the people of Egypt were able to thrive throughout the famine, and had enough to share with their neighbors.

Jesus calls us to “Love our neighbors as ourselves”. When disaster strikes, we turn to our neighbors. Preparing our churches and our communities are the best ways that we can care for our neighbors. It helps us to think about how we are caring for all of our neighbors when they need it the most.

DEFINITION OF DISASTER

A disaster is defined as an occurrence of an event that suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelms a community's ability to respond. Disasters occur when vulnerable people are affected by hazards that cause human suffering or create human needs that require spiritual, monetary, material or physical support. These can be due to weather or geological events, pandemics, technological disasters, or human-caused disasters.

The United Church of Christ acknowledges that a community's ability to respond is affected by socioeconomics, and it is important to keep these factors in mind when responding to disasters.

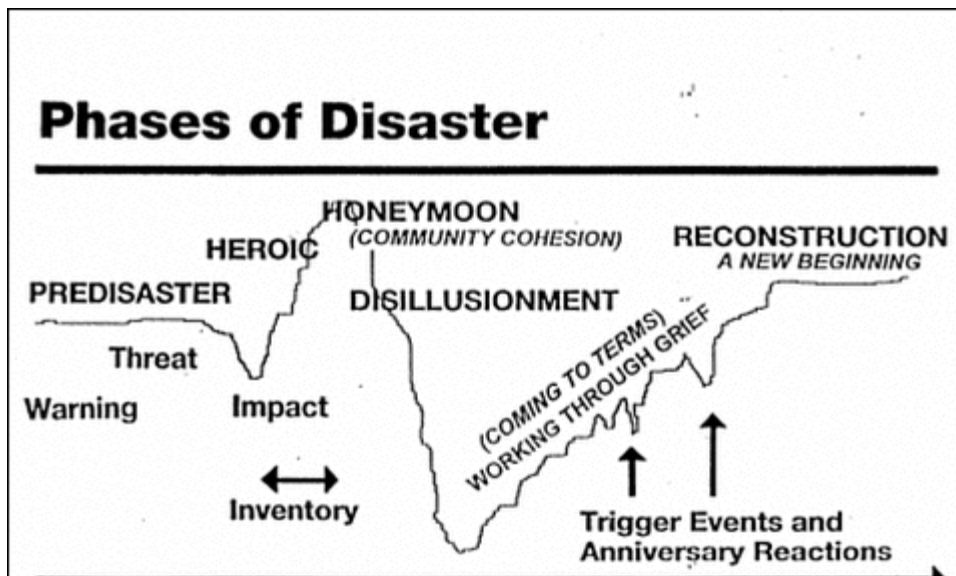
ALL HAZARDS APPROACH

This guide uses an *all-hazards* approach to disaster planning and response. There are specific "protective actions" that your church community can take to prepare for all types of disasters. Many disasters happen with little or no warning. The strategies contained in this workbook will help you prepare your church community, church building and wider community for all types of environmental, technological, human-caused and natural disasters.ⁱ

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO A DISASTER

We want to start by acknowledging that all disasters are unique. If you have seen one disaster, you have seen one disaster. Each disaster will present its own challenges with the communities that are impacted, and the scope of that impact in the community. In disaster work we often talk about phases of disasters and how they interact with an individual's emotional response to that disaster.

It is important to understand how people may be feeling to help support them emotionally and spiritually through various phases of the disaster. People may move through these phases at different times, but we use a standard framework to help us to understand the impact of the disaster in the community.



Immediately after the impact of a disaster there is often a period of heroic efforts. This is a time when emotions are running high and everyone is doing the most that they can to help individuals that have been impacted. This is often known as the *honeymoon phase*. The honeymoon phase often includes a sense of *community cohesion*, and an understanding that we are all in this together. Following this period there is often a sense of *disillusionment* where there is an emotional crash followed by a feeling of abandonment. As this abandonment phase continues people start working through much of the grief that they are experiencing. Grief is not a linear process and there are certain events, circumstances, or experiences that may lead an individual to experience more grief at a particular moment. Things that may be considered a *trigger event* and cause additional grief would be anniversaries, similar circumstances, or working through what happened for insurance claims or other reasons. ⁱⁱ

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

It is important that the plan is updated regularly to ensure that it is the best possible plan it can be in the event of a disaster.

To successfully implement the plan, it is recommended that there be one individual that is responsible for implementing the plan. This individual will not be implementing the plan themselves, but they will be responsible for ensuring that tasks are delegated appropriately in the event of a disaster.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

- a) Ensure documents (created in Steps 1-5 below) are accessible at all times
- b) Ensure all church leaders know where to find emergency information

STEP 1 – BASIC PREPAREDNESS

- a) Establish a Disaster Planning Team for your Church Community
- b) Collect contact information for all people in your congregation
- c) Create a binder with crucial information about your congregation, church leadership, and community
 - ☐ Church Leadership
 - ☐ Conference Disaster Response Coordinator
 - ☐ Conference Minister and/or Associate Conference Minister
 - ☐ City/Town Emergency Management
 - ☐ Insurance Information
 - ☐ Asset list of church property
 - ☐ Utility Information
 - ☐ Preferred Church Repair Contacts
 - ☐ Contact Information for Nearby Churches

STEP 2 – PREPARING YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

- a) Create a communications plan for your Church in the event of a disaster

STEP 3 – PREPARING YOUR CHURCH BUILDING

- a) Post Emergency Phone Numbers and the Church's address by each exit
- b) Church Infrastructure Assessment
- c) Make sure your building is prepared for storms
- d) Conduct a Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment
- e) Create a church evacuation plan and test it

STEP 4 – CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

- a) Make a list of the current ministries/activities your church has and determine if/how they will continue during a disaster

STEP 5 – FURTHER PLANNING

- a) Credentialing
- b) Install Solar Panels
- c) Encourage disaster planning team to take emergency response training, such as, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, first aid training, CPR, AED Training
- d) Compile a 3-day supply of sustainable foods, water and other emergency supplies
- e) Contact local American Red Cross chapter to get certified as a shelter
- f) Asset list of church inventory

PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS

a) Ensure documents (created in Steps 1-5 below) are accessible at all times

It is important to make sure that you have access to your church's disaster response plan at all times. It is important that it is accessible to people who are physically located inside the church building, as well as those who are not.

In the same way that you make multiple copies of your church keys, please make sure to keep multiple copies of your disaster plan. You could plan to exchange preparedness plans with another local church, so you each have access to the other's plan.

It is also recommended that you store a digital version of the plan in the cloud, this could be done in OneDrive, SharePoint, Google Drive, or a password protected part of the church's website depending on the software available to you and your church. It is important to keep in mind that there needs to be access to multiple people.

b) Ensure all church leaders know where to find the plan

Please make sure that all church leaders know where to find a copy of the disaster preparedness plan.

It may be helpful to dedicate a few minutes at an annual meeting to discuss the changes that have been made to the plan in the past year, as well as ensuring that those who are newly elected to church leadership know where to locate the plan.

STEP I – BASIC PREPAREDNESS

a) Develop a Disaster Planning Team for your Church Community.

Disaster planning requires the participation of the entire church community. This is not something that can be done alone. There are multiple components to this plan, some of which involve preparing the church community and congregation, preparing the physical church building and preparing the church to serve the wider community. Creating a “Disaster Planning Team” could involve representatives from existing committees.

If a disaster happens in your community, it is important to have one individual, the Chair of the Disaster Planning Team, who is familiar with the principals of disaster planning, and is responsible for implementing the plan. This does **NOT** mean that this individual is responsible for doing the work, but they should be comfortable enough with the plan to delegate tasks as appropriate. It is recommended that the church identify a second individual who will be responsible for implementing the plan in the event that the first individual is unavailable for any reason.

It is recommended that the Disaster Planning Team members should have an understanding of the Incident Command System. For more information, it is recommended that this individual take FEMA’s online course [IS-100.C: Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100](https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c&lang=en):
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c&lang=en>

The *Disaster Preparedness Plan* should be reviewed at least annually. The Disaster Planning Team will be responsible for ensuring this happens. It is recommended that this be integrated into an existing event in the lifecycle of the church. This would prompt the congregation to update it, and understand the importance of this work. Some recommendations would be to present this at the church’s annual meeting, or when the church discusses One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering (OGHS is one of the largest sources of funding for disaster ministries work).

Disaster Planning Team Members

Chair: _____

Deputy Chair: _____

Members:_____

Strategy for reviewing and updating plan regularly:

b) Collect Contact Information for Congregants

Having up-to-date contact information for all congregants is crucial during disaster response. In the event of a disaster, it will be important to contact congregants to disseminate critical information, as well as ensuring the well-being of all congregants after a disaster.

If you do not currently have a software to store this information it is recommended that you use a google form or survey monkey to collect this information. If you want to integrate this into an existing system, you may consider “internal fields” so key leaders have access to this information, but it is not accessible to all congregants.

By gathering information about people’s emergency contacts, and if they would need assistance during a disaster, then you can help them or identify other resources to help them.

Questions to consider when gathering this information:

- How is this information going to be collected?
- Where is this information going to be stored?
- Who will have access to all of the necessary information?
- What is our process for ensuring that this information is up-to-date?

Suggested Information to Collect - one form per house

- ☐ Name of all members of household
- ☐ Mobile Phone Number (may want to include multiple fields for multiple phone numbers)
 - Can we text you at this number?
- ☐ Land line Phone number
- ☐ E-mail Address (may want to include multiple fields for multiple e-mail addresses)
- ☐ Physical address and mailing address
- ☐ Emergency Contacts Name and Phone Number (you should include at least one individual who does not live with you)
- ☐ If a disaster required you to evacuate, would you be able to evacuate (e.g. wildfires, hurricanes)?
 - Yes, in my own car
 - Yes, with family or friends
 - I would rely on state/county/city sponsored transportation
 - I would need assistance to evacuate
 - Other (specify)
- ☐ If a disaster required you to shelter in place, would you be able to shelter in place (e.g. pandemics, tornadoes, winter storms)?
 - Yes
 - I would need assistance to shelter in place
 - Other (specify)
- ☐ Do you need support for medical equipment or medication in the event of an extended power outage?
 - Yes (please describe)
 - No
 - Other (specify)
- ☐ Do you have pets at home that you would need to consider in the event of an emergency?
 - How many dogs?
 - How many cats?
 - Other animals?
- ☐ What languages do you speak (check all that apply - use the languages most relevant to your context)

c) Create a binder with crucial information about your congregation and community

- ☐ Church leadership
 - This page has contact information for the pastor(s), the church disaster team, and other church leadership
- ☐ [Conference Disaster Response Coordinator \(CDRC\)](#)
 - This individual is the first point of contact after a disaster occurs in your community, and they should be aware of all disaster response activities
 - CDRCs work directly with the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters groups in their conferences, and they can help mobilize resources quickly.
- ☐ Conference Minister and/or associate conference minister
 - The Conference Staff should be alerted of disasters that occur in your community
- ☐ City/Town/County Emergency Management
 - In the event of an emergency there may be a need where the church can be of assistance. By connecting with the local emergency management staff prior to a disaster they will be able to help you, and you may be able to help them in the event of an emergency.
- ☐ Contact Information for any consistent renters of the building.
 - In the event of an emergency, it is important that you have handy the contact information for any consistent renters of the building
- ☐ Church Insurance Information
 - In the event of an emergency that includes building damage or loss, it will be important to contact the insurance company to discuss coverage and damage assessments.
- ☐ Asset list of church property
 - This list should include information about all of the property and land owned by the church.
- ☐ Utility Information
 - Quick reference information of where to find shut off switches for gas, electricity and water, including account numbers and emergency numbers
- ☐ Preferred Church Repair Contacts
 - If the church has a preferred contractor, electrician, plumber, or HVAC/heating/cooling repair person
- ☐ Contact Information for nearby churches.
 - In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary to connect with other churches in the local community. These could be other UCC Churches or ecumenical partners.
- ☐ Copy of W-9 for Church
- ☐ Copy of 501(c)3 status for your church

Our Church's Disaster Preparedness Plan Template

(this can be inserted in the front pocket of your binder)



Church Name:

Church Physical Address:

Church Phone Number:

Quick and Critical Information for Our Church

Pastor(s)

Name	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Emergency Contact Name	Emergency Contact Phone #	Key to Church Building? Y/N

Church Disaster Team

Name	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Emergency Contact Name	Emergency Contact Phone #	Key to Church Building? Y/N

Church Leadership

Role	Name	Phone Number	E-mail Address	Emergency Contact Name	Emergency Contact Phone #	Key to Church Building? Y/N
Sexton						
Church Administrator						
President						
Chair of Deacons						
Chair of Trustees						
Chair of Buildings and Grounds						
Chair of Safety and Security						
[insert title here]						

Conference Disaster Response Coordinator:

Name_____

E-mail Address_____

Phone Number_____

Conference Office:

Conference Minister_____

E-mail Address_____

Phone Number_____

Associate Conference Minister_____

E-mail Address_____

Phone Number_____

City/Town (or County) Emergency Manager:

Name:_____

Phone Number:_____

Website: _____

City/Town Emergency Website: _____

County Emergency Website:_____

**Call 2-1-1 for the most up-to-date information related to shelters, street closures, missing persons, water/electricity access and safety*

Renter Information

Organization Name: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Organization Name: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Organization Name: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Insurance Information

Name of Insurance Company:_____

Insurance Agent:

Name:_____

Phone:_____

E-mail: _____

Policy Number: _____

****if you have more than one policy you can copy and paste the above information as many times as necessary**

Church Properties

Building Name: _____

Building Address: _____

Building Name: _____

Building Address: _____

Building Name: _____

Building Address: _____

Building Name: _____

Building Address: _____

Think about if you have any of the following that could be utilized in the event of a disaster:

- ☐ Food Pantry
- ☐ Commercial Kitchen
- ☐ Showers
- ☐ Laundry Facilities
- ☐ Large meeting/community space (inside or outside)
- ☐ Temporary office space
- ☐ Other _____

Utility Information

Gas Company Name: _____

Gas Company Emergency Phone: _____

Gas Company Account Number: _____

Gas Shut Off Location: _____

Electric Company Name: _____

Electric Company Emergency Phone: _____

Electric Company Account Number: _____

Electric Shut Off Location: _____

Water Company Name: _____

Water Company Emergency Phone: _____

Water Company Account Number: _____

Water Shut Off Location: _____

Church Repair Contacts

Contractor:

Name_____

Company_____

Phone Number_____

Electrician:

Name_____

Company_____

Phone Number_____

HVAC/Heating/Cooling:

Name_____

Company_____

Phone Number_____

Plumber:

Name_____

Company_____

Phone Number_____

Locksmith:

Name_____

Company_____

Phone Number_____

Nearby Church Contact Information

Church Name	Church Office Phone Number	Address	City/Town	Primary Contact	Primary Contact Phone Number

STEP 2 – PREPARING YOUR CHURCH COMMUNITY

a) Create a communications plan for your church

When disaster strikes it is very important to be able to communicate with others. People will often turn to their faith leaders during times of crisis to determine next steps. Churches are uniquely positioned in that they have access to a large number of people to communicate with quickly. Your access to people's emergency contacts can also help locate congregants who may be missing after a disaster happens. Your ability to know who may need assistance to evacuate or shelter can help inform emergency management.

In the survey you issued during section 1, you captured spoken language. Keep in mind the languages spoken in your congregation, and if there are resources available in that language. It will help you determine if there are those in your congregation who may need additional linguistic support as well as understanding who is multi-lingual and can help with translation services if needed.

Many of today's communication methods require cell phone coverage, internet coverage and power, but depending on the size or scale of the disaster, these may not be readily available.

Apps such as the Red Cross' "EMERGENCY!" app or the FEMA App can provide real-time weather updates and alerts.

How are you planning to communicate with everyone if there is an urgent need?

Will you create a phone tree? Will this be a physical phone tree or integrated into an automated software?

Who will send an e-mail?

Who will manage the social media page?

Who will answer the telephone?

Who will be able to actively monitor information from the city/town/county/state or other news sources?

Will you post information at the church, or on the outside of the church if the church is closed?

How will you communicate if there is limited internet access, limited cell phone coverage, and limited power?

How will your communications plan change when people are in the building or when people are at home?

E-mail services such as [Constant Contact](#) or [MailChimp](#) can provide a dashboard with information on the message status and who has read/engaged with a message, indicating who may have received the message and who may not have seen it yet.

In the event of an emergency, texting can be more reliable than calls, as there may be diminished bandwidth. There are some programs that exist that can text a large number of people at once. Many of these programs can provide a dashboard with information on the message status and who has read/engaged with a message, indicating who may have received the message and who may not have seen it yet. Some examples include:

[One Call Now](#)

[Dial My Calls](#)

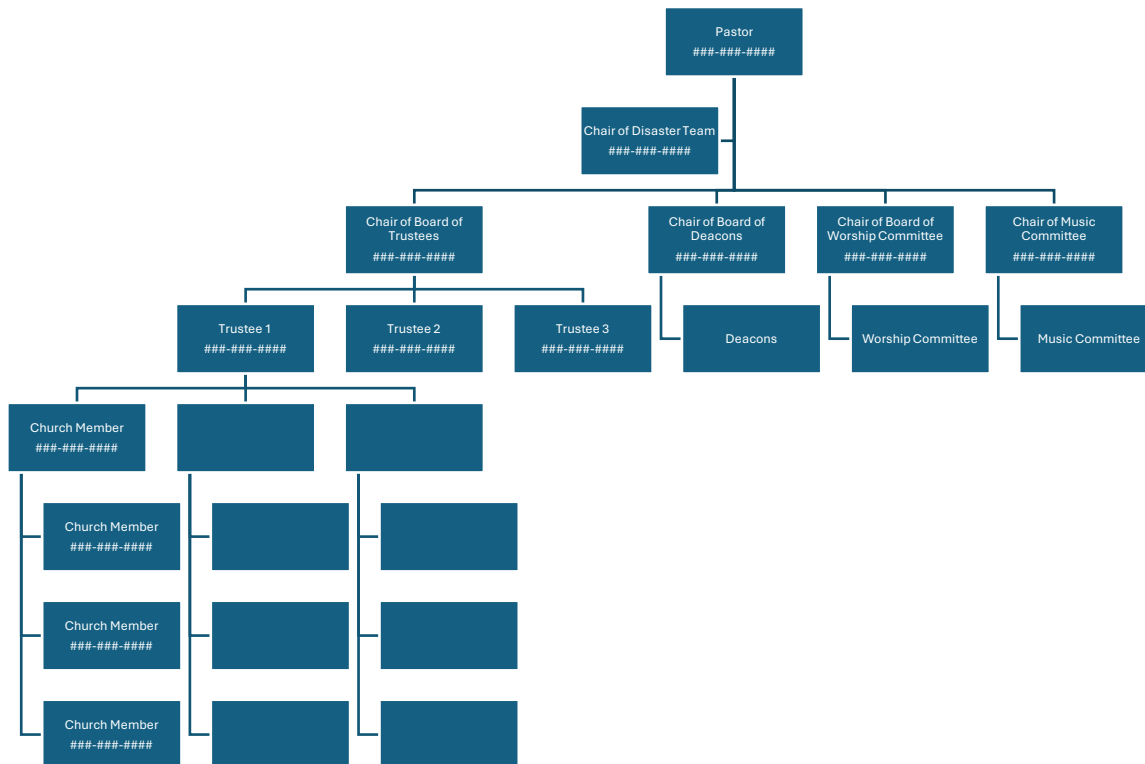
[text-em-all](#)

[Call Fire](#)

[SnapComms](#)

Whichever method you decide is best for your community, it is important that you test them before a disaster happens. For example, sending a reminder about an upcoming event at the church, or reminders about daylight savings etc.

Sample Physical Phone Tree



STEP 3 – PREPARING YOUR CHURCH BUILDING

a) Post Emergency Phone Numbers and the Church's address by each exit

In the event of an emergency, it is important that people know who to call. This is particularly important if community groups use your physical space. Here are some questions to consider when thinking about preparing your physical space.

Are exits clearly marked?

Are there doors that are not typically used? Or doors that do not open or are kept locked? Are these doors clearly marked from the outside and inside?

It is recommended by each emergency exit there is a sheet of paper with the following information:

- Alternative Emergency Exit (map of building - clearly indicating where each door is located, and “you are here”)
- Emergency Phone Number (in most cases this would be 9-1-1)
- Physical Address of the building (closest intersection)
- Contact information for Church's Emergency Response Coordinator
- Location of closest fire extinguishers
- Location of basic first aid kit
- Location of closest AED
- Location of Naloxone
- Location of closest hospital with an emergency department
- Location of closest urgent care facility
- Location of closest safe room (in the event of an active shooter)
- Where to go in the event of a tornado
- Where to find the complete emergency response plan

Place this form at all exits along with a map of the building

In Case of Emergency call: 9-1-1

Address: _____

Church Emergency Response Contact:

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Fire Extinguisher: _____

First Aid Kit: _____

AED (for sudden cardiac arrest): _____

Naloxone (for overdose reversal): _____

Hospital with Emergency Department:

Urgent Care Facility: _____

Safe Room (active shooter): _____

Tornado Shelter: _____

Complete Disaster Response Plan:

b) Church Infrastructure Evaluation

In the event of an emergency power may go out in many communities. Is the church positioned to provide cooling/heating/charging station in the event of an emergency.

Does your church building have a generator?

If yes, who knows how to operate it?

Is there an AED on-site? If not, do you want to consider adding one? You can contact your nearest Red Cross Chapter, Fire Department, or EMA Director, to inquire about where to find out how to add one and train your congregation.

[How to Purchase Automated External Defibrillators \(AEDs\) | Red Cross](#)

Do you have naloxone (the medication used to reverse an overdose) on-site? As we are doing our best to care for our neighbors, we want to make sure that we are considering the needs of those in our communities. We may be unaware of individuals in our communities that use substances, but having this life-saving medication on hand in the event of an emergency can save someone's life. It is recommended that this be co-located with an AED, so it is easy to find. For more information on where to find naloxone, you can contact your local health department.

Do you need emergency escape ladders for rooms on the second floor?

Does your church have a policy in place related to weapons on the premises?

We recommend that you reach out to your local Fire Department and/or Police Department as they will be able to help you figure out what tools/resources you may need to help bolster the existing infrastructure of your building to ensure the safety and security of all people.

c) Make sure your building is prepared for storms

If there is a risk of flooding, you may want to make sure that electronics and important documents are moved to a higher level or shelf. Think about if you have windows that may need to be boarded up, or doorways that need better weatherproofing.

d) Conduct a Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has created an online self-assessment that will evaluate the safety and security for houses of worship. The purpose of this self-assessment is to understand where our houses of worship may be vulnerable to threats, and how to address them. The intention is that this self-assessment can be the start of multiple-conversations about improving safety and security in the church. For more information on the CISA Self-Assessment visit: <https://www.cisa.gov/houses-worship-security-self-assessment>

e) Create a church evacuation plan and test it

In the event of an emergency where are people supposed to go? Are you going to have all the people assemble at the same point, or have children (who were in Sunday school) go to a different place, so their parents can come find them easier?

It is important that there is a central meeting point to ensure that those who may be located in a different part of the building are accounted for, and potentially reunited with their families.

This can be particularly important as we want to make sure people are aware of the closest/easiest way out of the building in the event of an emergency. This plan should be reviewed, discussed, and practiced annually.

Place maps with evacuation routes and assembly points at all exits to ensure people know where they need to go. Including information on handicapped accessible entrances/exits, and/or rescue or evacuation points if necessary.

It may feel a bit silly or even ridiculous to test an evacuation of a church building, but remember in an effort to love our neighbors the best that we can, we are called to engage in all aspects of preparedness even if they may make us feel uncomfortable.

You may want to consider warning your congregation at the beginning of the church service where you will do this, so that they are prepared for what is coming, and once everyone is safely outside you could deliver the benediction outside.

STEP 4 – CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

a) Make a list of the current ministries/activities your church has and determine if/how they will continue during a disaster

In March of 2020 many of our churches had to think about “*What is our Continuation of Operations Plan*”. Unfortunately, with limited warning and implementation of restrictions we were forced to rethink how we continue to be the church in a virtual world.

Part of good disaster planning is ensuring that you have a plan for all contingencies with the understanding that we cannot plan for every possible scenario.

As churches we serve some of the most vulnerable in our communities, so we must ensure that we continue to meet some of those needs despite the disaster that we have experienced.

Continuity of Operations is defined as the ability of an organization to continue its essential functions regardless of the operating and environmental conditions.

For more information on how to create a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), please watch this webinar from FEMA:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZBMDGxJFP8c>

Essential Functions: think about the essential functions of your organization, and what must be continued, as well as resources needed to complete these functions.

Order of Succession: who is in charge of each task? If that person is not available who can make decisions on their behalf?

Delegation of Authority: who can make what decisions? Are there certain things that an individual is authorized to do, but not others?

Communications: how are you going to communicate that your COOP plan needs to be activated, and how will you communicate the implications of that with the community?

Tests/Trainings/Exercises: decide how often you will review your plan, and make a schedule to test your plan with exercises

Continuation of Operations Plan Template

Essential Function/Ministries	Responsible Person	How can we modify this function in the event of a disaster?

Other Functions/Ministries	Responsible Person	How can we modify this function in the event of a disaster?

STEP 5 – FURTHER PLANNING

a) Credentialing

In the event of an emergency, some communities may be inaccessible to people who do not live/work there. Many pastors and staff do not receive an identification badge when they start a new position at a church. You may want to consider providing an ID badge to the pastor(s) and staff of the local church, as well as those on the Disaster Response Team. At a minimum the badges should have:

- Church Name and UCC logo
- First and Last Name
- Role
- Photo

These can be made inexpensively through websites such as Zazzle:

<https://www.zazzle.com/> or Office Depot: <https://www.officedepot.com/>

b) Install solar panels

As a result of the Inflation Reduction Act, churches can more affordably install solar panels. Many Congregations that own their own building can no longer afford to *no* go solar for five reasons:

1. The federal government will pay for at least 30% of the cost of a solar installation, if not 40 to 50%, depending upon where a church is located and whether domestically produced materials are used.
2. Solar will reduce one's electrical bill. This is especially true when a church maximizes the environmental and financial impact of going solar by increasing its energy efficiency and conservation.
3. Even if a congregation does not have the funds to pay for the upfront cost of going solar, the Cornerstone Fund can provide financing that enable a congregation to reduce its overall costs (The Creation Care Loan currently has a reduced interest rate of 5%).
4. Even if a congregation does not want to purchase or finance a solar system, it can still go solar by partnering with an investor who pays for the system and gives the congregation (and possibly low-income neighbors as well) a discount on electricity.
5. If a congregation has absolutely no interest in saving money on electricity, so that more money can be spent on ministry, going solar is one important way to reduce pollution and live out our first calling as Christians: to care for God's creation

In the event of a disaster situation churches that currently have solar panels, as well as battery storage may continue to have power despite power outages. This can be extremely important as the church could be used to serve the community including being used as a heating/cooling station, charging station, keeping medications cool, swapping out ice packs for those who are without power, or other needs that may arise.

For more information on *going solar* visit: <https://www.ucc.org/goingsolar/>

c) Encourage disaster planning team to take emergency response training, such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a training titled *Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)* training. CERT covers basic skills that are important to know in a disaster when emergency services are not available. This allows communities an opportunity to respond until they can access emergency services. To find out what training opportunities may be available in your community, speak to your town/city emergency management. FEMA also provides online courses which are a good foundation, but do not replace the in-person training.

IS-317.A: Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)

A pre-requisite for CERT Basic Classroom Training, or just to learn more about the program.

<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317.a&lang=en>

IS-315.A: CERT and the Incident Command System (ICS)

Educates participants on the relationship to the Incident Command System and potential roles CERTs play in a disaster or emergency situation.

<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-315.a&lang=en>

For more information on Community Emergency Response Teams visit:

https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessCommunity/s/about-cert?language=en_US

d) Compile a 3-day supply of sustainable foods, water and other emergency supplies

After an emergency you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having food, water, a flashlight, and other supplies to last for several days. A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items you may want to have in a centralized place in the event of an emergency. Be sure your plan is inclusive of all individuals accommodating for those with disabilities, service animals and seniors in your community.

These supplies are important for church communities to have in addition to individuals for their own homes.

For individuals, you could have a Sunday where individuals can bring in supplies to donate, and everyone creates their own kit.

For churches, you could consider compiling all of the supplies in a section of the church.

If you are including food in your disaster kits, it is important that it is checked regularly to ensure that the food remains fresh. It is important that food gets used before it expires, so as not to create additional waste. We encourage you to work with your local communities and be creative, as to how you may be able to replace the food in your disaster kits regularly to ensure we are using our resources the best we are able. This could include working with local social service agencies, or food pantries.

For information on what to include in a preparedness kit visit:

<https://www.ready.gov/kit>

e) Contact local American Red Cross chapter to get certified as a shelter

The American Red Cross responds to an emergency every 8 minutes from single-household fires to multi-state climate-related disasters. The American Red Cross ensures that everyone has clean water, safe shelter, and hot meals when they are in need.

This response can include a variety of types of responses from overnight sheltering to hot meal delivery.

The American Red Cross is often looking for places where they might be able to set up a shelter, particularly if the building has a generator, solar panels, and/or is handicapped accessible.

If your church is interested in learning more about working with the Red Cross, reach out to your local Red Cross Chapter:

<https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html>

f) Asset list of church inventory

Churches have a lot of material assets in addition to financial assets. You may want to consider having a list of inventory including furniture, hymnals, kitchen supplies, office supplies, cleaning supplies, outdoor tools etc. The combined value of these things may be important if you need to submit a claim for insurance purposes.

This can be done in a spreadsheet, on a notepad, or in whatever format is easier for you.

For more information and a template please visit:

<https://www.cpg.org/globalassets/documents/forms/cic-parish-inventory-workbook.pdf>

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUILDINGS WITH EDUCATION WINGS/SCHOOLS OR CHILD CARE FACILITIES ON SITE

If your church has a school, daycare, or childcare facility on-site these facilities will likely be required to comply with state standards in terms of safety and security.

If the school/daycare/childcare facility is in session then access to the building by others may be limited. It is important that you have a conversation with leadership to determine what you would be able to do, or not do in the event of a disaster based on whether or not the facility was closed. For example, would your space be available to use as a shelter/cooling/feeding station and/or would you be able to use the parking lot?

If your church does not have a formal facility associated with it, but there are education wings, we recommend that you reach out to your local Fire Department and/or Police Department as they will be able to help you figure out what tools/resources you may need to help bolster the existing infrastructure of your building to ensure the safety and security of all people.

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER

1. Ensure all members of the congregation are safe and accounted for. Some members may be staying with family or friends out of town, some may be in a shelter, some may be at home but may need some support
 - Remember in the event of a situation with limited cellular coverage, text messages often use the least amount of bandwidth and are the most reliable
2. Contact your Conference Disaster Response Coordinator to discuss your needs
 - These individuals are often connected to the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters in your area, and can help mobilize resources if needed
3. Apply for a Solidarity Grant
 - The Global HOPE team at the United Church of Christ provides \$3,000 grants to churches that have recently experienced a disaster and need some additional support, or are providing additional services in their community due to the disaster. Apply here:
<https://app.smarterselect.com/programs/94267-United-Church-Of-Christ>
4. If the disaster has received a Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Declaration refer to this page with information on how to access services:
<https://www.fema.gov/node/what-houses-worship-need-know-about-fema-disaster-aid-process>
5. If you are in need of a loan please be sure to contact

EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL CARE

The United Church of Christ has an Emotional and Spiritual Care Team that provides Emotional and Spiritual Care to UCC Clergy and their communities in the event of a disaster. If you, or your community need support please speak to your Conference Minister, and Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, and contact Katie Howe, Minister for Disaster Response and Recovery at howek@ucc.org

The National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters has created a resource titled *Light Our Way: A Guide for Spiritual Care in Times of Disaster*. To download a copy of it visit: https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pda/pdfs/light-our-way.pdf

It is also available in print. It is free for up to two copies or \$2/copy for more than two copies: <https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/2541218002/light-our-way.aspx>

When providing emotional and spiritual care after experiencing a disaster, it is important that individuals are familiar with trauma-informed approaches. One recommended training is Psychological First Aid offered online through the National

Child Traumatic Stress Network. This class is available online and expected to take five hours. <https://learn.nctsn.org/enrol/index.php?id=596>

VOLUNTEER HOUSING

After a disaster has occurred, many communities will start welcoming volunteers to do recovery and rebuilding work. Oftentimes, we will be looking to set up volunteer housing near communities that have been impacted. This is important work to start thinking about what assets your church may have prior to a disaster happening, if it could make a potential volunteer site.

Assets that make for a good potential host site:

- Showers
- Washer/Dryer
- Commercial Kitchen
- Large room for sleeping
- Sprinkler Systems

RECOMMENDED TRAININGS FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE

There are a variety of training courses from different organizations that may be helpful prior to a disaster. This list is not exhaustive, but meant to be a starting point for thinking about what might serve the needs of your community

FEMA Independent Study Trainings:

- IS-100.C: Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS 100
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-100.c&lang=en>
- IS-244.B: Developing and Managing Volunteers
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-244.b&lang=en>
- IS-288.A: The Role of Voluntary Organizations in Emergency Management
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-288.a&lang=en>
- IS-289: Voluntary Agency Overview
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-289&lang=en4>
- IS-315.A: CERT and the Incident Command System
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-315.a&lang=en>
- IS-317.A: Introduction to Community Emergency Response Team (CERTs)
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-317.a&lang=en>
- IS-505: Religious and Cultural Literacy and Competency in Disaster
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-505&lang=en>
- IS-700.B: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System
<https://training.fema.gov/is/courseoverview.aspx?code=IS-700.b&lang=en>

Talk to your local fire department or local red cross about AED or CPR training.

Talk to your local health department about Naloxone (medication for overdose reversal) training.

ⁱ <https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/are-you-ready-guide.pdf>

ⁱⁱ [emotional-life-cycle-of-a-disaster-explained.pdf \(episcopalrelief.org\)](#)