

PROTECTING THE CHURCH

PREPARING A PLAN BEFORE DISASTER STRIKES

**A PLAN DESIGNED TO HELP THE CHURCH
IDENTIFY NEED AND CREATE A CUSTOM PLAN
SPECIFIC TO THE CHURCH**

The local church, in addition to being the central worship center and gathering place, will become a feeding station, a work assignment station, a center for strategic development, a pastoral care center and many other physical centers in the days after a disaster. Churches within an impacted area will be the point of contact for response teams. Churches in non-impacted areas will become centers of mission coordination, funding and warehousing and shipping.

- • Other than the pastor, who is responsible for securing the doors and windows and shutting off the gas, water and electricity?
- • Who is responsible for gathering records or valuables?
- • Who is responsible for keeping inventory and insurance up to date?
- • Who will check for damages after a storm? If the church is damaged, where will you meet for worship?
- • Can you evacuate your people?
- • How will you take care of yourself?
- • How will you take care of others?
- • What do you have to work with?
- • How will you communicate?
- • Who do you tell what you need?
- • How do you know what you need?
- • How do you get organized?

There are a lot of tough questions to answer when everything around you is either in a state of destruction or you are left without normal, necessary services. The key is preparation. Being prepared for an emergency or disaster is a simple task that can save much time and frustration in the days and weeks after the onset of the disaster. If you are well prepared, you can accomplish much with less frustration and anxiety.

INDIVIDUAL CHURCH DISASTER PLAN

and

METHODS OF PROTECTING CHURCH PROPERTY AND RECORDS

Every church in each of our communities needs to have some type of emergency action plan and guidelines to go by, if they intend to be effective in caring for the victims of any type of disaster. When a church is able to take stock of itself, know where it's members are and what their status is and then look after the surrounding community, that church has put into action the first steps of emergency response. When a church can relay information to Emergency response personnel and damage assessors of who has needs, where the needs are and what the needs are in a particular area, outside relief agencies can be more efficient in the early stages of their response.

The church is not just four walls and a roof. The church is the community. People may never attend a church but, in a disaster or times of loss, they immediately turn to the church for help. In a disaster situation, the church, when willing, can become not only the spiritual, but the resource hub of the community.

Both large and small churches will face the dilemma in about the same way.

- • The large church has more people, more resources, and a heavier concentration of the population immediately surrounding the church.
- • The smaller and rural church has less people, less resources and the people are less concentrated. There may be some moderate concentration of population close to the church but, the small church must reach out much further than the immediate community to provide comfort and aid to victims of disaster.
- • The cities will have more sophisticated equipment, but the small community and agricultural areas, the individual households and farms will have an abundance of everyday tools and equipment.
- • The rural areas are, by nature, more self sufficient. Rural areas often go without electricity and can survive longer without the benefit of a grocery store.

The church should gear itself to caring for the community according to it's individual abilities. For example:

- • in the case of a church that is predominately elderly, these folks may be better used with cooking, serving, transportation, administration and other less rigorous tasks. There is a job for everyone and not one of those jobs is considered menial.

- • be attentive of your seniors, the physically handicapped and youth. These groups will provide you with a wealth of experience, leadership, organization and energy. Even if they can't participate in the physical aspect, they can benefit you with their knowledge. There is a wealth of information in bodies that are old and no longer work so well, and the youth can be your energy source if they feel that they are a vital part of the response effort.

The plan that you enact as a church will enable the church to better prepare for a disaster resulting in the ability to protect the church and care for the community in the event of a disaster. Your individual church plan will put you into action quickly and efficiently and that will create an abundant resource for the community as a whole.

DEVELOPING YOUR CHURCH PLAN

The first step in developing a plan is to decide that you want to have a plan.

- • take inventory of your resources
- • decide on the scale of your response according to your resources and abilities.
- • be diligent in reminding yourself not to over estimate nor to under estimate resources.
- • keep your plan and resource list as realistic as possible.

Remember that there are often many hidden resources in your church. The person who worked in a grocery store would know how to operate a food bank. The person who worked in retailing could help with accounting or warehousing. The school teacher could help with planning and the waitress could help establish a feeding station. Then there are the carpenters, plumbers, mechanics, farmers, loggers and the list can go on and on. Those resources are there, all you need do is recognize them and use them.

Your church may be so small that you think you can do nothing to help but, you can help. However, you must be able to help yourself before others can help you. If your church feels it can not implement a plan alone, enlist the aid of other churches in the area and covenant with those other churches to create a plan that will demonstrate an even stronger response to the community. This action will help create and/or intensify the bond within the community.

PEOPLE AND RESOURCE LISTS

Identify the people in the church and in the community. When you identify them, you know more than name and street address. You know their ability to help, their needs and frailties rather than just where they live and whether or not they go to your church. You know how much of a resource they can be. As you make your lists and addresses, have a city street map or a county road map handy and use a numerical or alphabetical code that matches your list to mark their residences or places of business.

Know and list the resources that the people on your list have and are willing to share during times of emergency or need. List things like 4 wheel drive vehicles, tractors, heavy equipment, chain saws, food supply, generators, water supplies, hand and power tools, commercial and/or HAM radio equipment, technical skills, mechanical skills and other various professional skills such as those who can provide basic labor.

Knowing these resources will make your immediate and longterm response much more effective and successful. Response times will be quicker and better managed with smaller workforces with good organization of information.

- • Be sure to include all information available;
- • correct addresses
- • directions to residence and business
- • any health problems
- • telephone and cellular numbers
- • radio frequencies and call signs
- • blood types
- • eye, organ or blood donor
- • allergies
- • who is an insulin dependent diabetic
- • sort your information several different ways
- • have a master list sorted by last name
- • by address
- • by resources
- • by skills
- • by medical needs
- • by donor status

REMEMBER, THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.

Example:

Jim Jones

1112 Billabong Road

Single, 43

Mechanic/Logger

4WD Pickup, chain saws, welder, 1000 gal. water tank, generator

Billy Bob and Betty Boone Barnstormer

Billy 27, Betty 34

2 children - BB Jr. 4 and Beth 5

Billy - project foreman for B&B Builders

Betty - computer programmer

Generator, access to heavy equipment, trucks and trailers, several barns for storage

Sam & Sally Spade

Sam 68, Sally 62

Sam - retail grocery, Sally - elder care nurse

15 passenger van, motor home

Humane Society, Wildlife Rehabilitation experience, amateur radio

The information you list will be a valuable resource in itself. It will be bound only by your imagination of possible future need. List individuals with businesses and farms listing the resources they could help you with. Know that they are willing to help when the need arises.

SHEPHERDING LIST

Create a "Shepherding List" within your church and community.

- • Include anyone confined to their bed or restricted by a wheelchair or walker
- • include anyone who would need assistance in providing more than basic care for themselves
- • assign them a shepherd and an alternate from a volunteer list you have created
- • their shepherd will look after them in times of crisis or need
- • tasks may be as simple as changing a light bulb or as serious as seeing that they are evacuated to where they can be cared for during a disaster
- • shepherds can help with grocery shopping, doctor visits, medicine management, keeping the home clean and safe and any other tasks that the person can no longer do for themselves.

The Shepherding List is valuable all the time and not just an emergency list for evacuation. The list does take a certain amount of responsibility off of the pastor and emergency coordinator by knowing that a responsible person is looking after those who will need caring for until family members can take over or aid in evacuation.

Example:

Agnes Apple

1212 Whale Street

87, lives alone, uses walker, hard of hearing, very alert

Sister Beulah, 93, resides at Old Oaks Nursing Home

Daughter Susie visits often and will assume responsibility for evacuation/care when needed.

Notify Susie & Bubba Cartwheel, 1234 Handsome Lane, Phone 999-555-1111 in case of emergency or other needs.

Shepherds: Billy and Bonny Bugle

Alternate: Jim and Jane Jones

Albert & Inez Walkabout

Albert, 74, partial paralysis left side from stroke,

Inez, 75, very poor eyesight,

son Rodney in Denver no other family. Both will need assistance with evacuation. Recommend weekly visit by 2 or 3 members

Shepherds: Pat and Paul Pushup

Alternates: Sam Jackson and Petunia Blossom

PHONE LIST/CALLING TREE

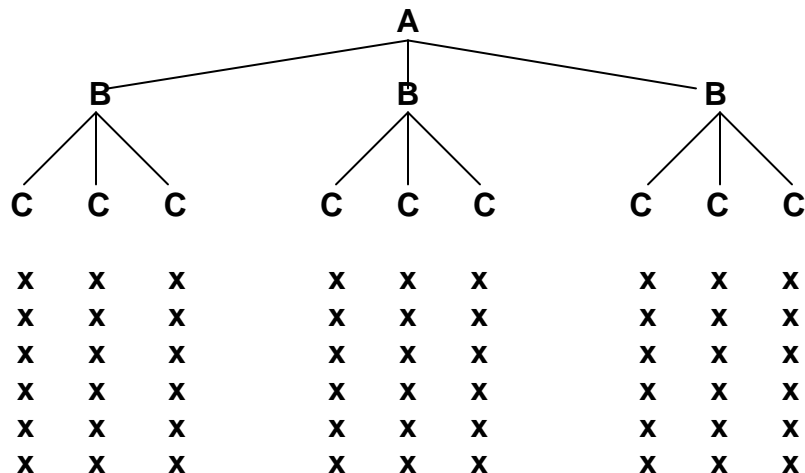
A calling list of church members will enable the church to keep up with it's members for any reason or occasion. If you have warning that a storm is coming, the calling list will enable you to notify or track your members. Knowing whether they evacuated or decided to ride it out is valuable information. After a storm or other disaster you don't need to spend time on searching for and accounting for persons you know are not there and this will enable you to concentrate your scope of responsibility.

You can then plan your operation more efficiently. In the event of a sudden disaster that strikes with no warning, your list will be extremely valuable in helping you to account for people in your area of assumed responsibility. This list also works well as a prayer chain and information hotline. If you decide to use a prayer chain list that is already established, go over it and make sure everyone, including people who are not members of your church but you consider your assumed responsibility, is included on the list and that all information is up to date. All information changes should be noted immediately and then scrutinized and updated quarterly so that records are as correct as possible. Each person is responsible for calling the next person in line. If the person called does not answer, do not break the chain by stopping. Call until you reach someone or the list is complete. Wait a while and then try again to reach those who did not answer. If you call someone who you know should definitely be at home and there is no answer, go check on them.

The person who has information to pass calls A

- A calls Bs
- Bs call Cs
- Cs call xs
- If A cannot be reached, then information person calls Bs
- If a B cannot be reached, then information person calls Cs
- If a C cannot be reached then information person calls xs until someone on that chain is reached.

The important part of the tree is that you need to call till you reach someone. This list will work as well as you make it work. It can easily be made larger or smaller according to the need.



PROTECTING THE CHURCH

Protection of the church is imperative. You can not bodily protect every board and window of the church building. But, you can take steps to protect important records and items within the building. As for protecting the building, unless your church is the only structure left standing or there is some well defined strategic reason to designate it as such, one of the most important rules you can follow is that *your church should not be designated as an evacuation shelter or relocation center.*

If you do decide that you want to have your church designated as an emergency shelter, an approved agency, such as the American Red Cross, will inspect your building and facilities and either accept or reject it as a shelter. If your church is accepted as a shelter and if there is a disaster in the area the approving agency will take control of your church. After the imminent danger has passed, volunteers will take over and they will operate as they need to out of the church.

It is possible that the pews will be removed from the sanctuary for conversion to a warehouse, a hospital, a clinic, administrative facilities or even an emergency nursing home. You will no longer have control of anything until the controlling agency decides to close up or move on to other facilities. Be very cautious about letting any agency have any control over the church building and grounds under your sphere of responsibility.

The church is seen as the central point of the community by everyone. This will be true of those who do not attend and who do not profess to believe. Regardless of the emergency, the church will be where everyone turns for help and information. If the church is a reliably strong building if it has not suffered serious damage and if it is not in danger of suffering major damage, then the church may be used as an *emergency* shelter. Emergency shelter is for people who are caught out in the storm, are suffering damage to the building they are in and can get to the church or if they do not know where else they can go.

Records must be protected if there is a warning which gives time for gathering certain items.

- • computerized records should be backed up each time they are updated
- • at least three copies of the backed up files should be maintained by three different people.
- • if a lap top computer is available and has adequate memory, download files and records so that you will have an active record system that can be set up in a remote site.

If your system is destroyed, you will appreciate the importance of this simple protective measure. Some disasters give no warning and no area is exempt from possible destruction. This stands true even if you live in an area that has never been affected. Natural disasters know no direction or boundaries.

If you have prior warning of hurricane and flooding, you can take steps to protect more than just your files.

- • Place important books and records that are too bulky to remove on top of the highest furniture available that will not easily float or upset in high water.
- • Put computers and other movable electronics on the highest object that is sturdy and will not float easily if you can not evacuate them. This will give you a marginal chance of saving them if the water does not get over 2 or 3 feet deep.
- • Cover every thing that you have placed for protection with 6-8 mil plastic. Use several layers in case one or two are pierced or torn. Use duct tape to seal and secure the plastic.
- • As a last measure, place a tarp over your protected items to add one last measure of protection in case the roof is lost or windows break.
- • Raise anything of value as high off the floor as possible. This includes furniture, pew pads, Bibles, hymnals and anything you value that is easily movable.
- • The altar cross, candles, chalice and paten should be evacuated with the pastor or other designated person. These items will be handy in setting up a worship center if the church is destroyed or heavily damaged.

DO NOT take chances in occupying a damaged building until it has been inspected and you have written verification that it is safe to occupy the building. Remember, the building is only a church house. The people, the Body of Christ, are the church.

Insurance policies on the building, contents and property should be reviewed and updated annually. Many items of definite value are purchased and never added to inventory lists or covered by insurance. Make an inventory of every thing in your church that has any value. Make a photographic inventory with still or video camera. Make three copies and give them to three different responsible persons.

KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE AND AVAILABLE

If the church is not heavily damaged and is safe to occupy, it must remain open as a spiritual center. Even if the whole area is demolished, there will be a need to conduct some sort of Sunday Service. It may be for prayer, for gathering to see who and what is left standing, for information passing and for just what ever is necessary. But, the service must be held in the face of all odds, the people will need it and they will depend on it.

The church will become the local spiritual center as well as the focal point of any response/recovery efforts. The churches outside the affected area will be the rallying point for volunteers,

supplies, administration and prayer vigils. Keep the doors open to the spiritual refuge.

If the church should fall victim to the disaster and not be safe for occupancy or remain only as a pile of holy rubble, find a tree, tent or awning to gather under. Set up a homemade altar and make a cross to adorn it. The pastor and the victims will need this Holy Ground to turn to.

Take the time before an emergency or some disaster strikes to covenant with other churches, including other denominations, so that you may enjoy that cooperative atmosphere in the wake of some disaster. The covenant with other churches will make your program stronger and more efficient especially when outside help is days or weeks away.

DEVELOPING AND EQUIPPING A CHURCH TEAM AND SELF SUFFICIENCY

In developing an efficient means of self- sufficiency, your organizations within the church administrative structure will need to decide how much is enough. Do not over extend your means when planning on the equipment you want to have available. It takes a lot of people to keep a cook site or defined work site in continuous operation. The work is hard and will have to be performed in the worst of conditions. Protect your people, don't sacrifice them. You may want to covenant with other churches in the area to accomplish storage, service and work functions.

Each district has a need to have two or three small cook trailers in well stocked and maintained condition and at least three United Methodist Men and/or United Methodist Women teams dedicated to each trailer. These trailers could be quickly moved into disaster areas to set up feeding stations with a minimum of difficulty and travel. Once set up and operational, other volunteer groups could be brought in to operate the feeding stations. Trailers from surrounding districts could easily be brought in to assist. The trailers could be used for fund raising and other projects by the group assuming responsibility for upkeep and maintenance. Efficiency of operation could be easily maintained. The units would more easily be kept in proper operating order by using them often.

It is also desirable that different UMM and other church groups maintain tools, work trailers, supplies of tarps and nails, generators, mud pumps, sump pumps, ladders and various other items that will be necessary for and emergency response. Like the cooking and feeding stations, the tool and supply trailers would be very useful for local projects. This situation would build skill levels, promote teamwork and provide a service to the community surrounding any church maintaining one of these mobile facilities.

For absolute minimum preparation, you should have on hand:

20 each 16' X 20' tarps

20 each 10' X 12' tarps

4 large boxes of button cap nails

- 1000' of 1/4" nylon rope
- 6 claw hammers
- 2 wrecking bars
- 2 sledgehammers
- 2 each 4lb. Hammers
- 4 rough cut saws
- 4 wedges
- 2 each 8' step ladders
- 2 each 14' extension ladders

All ladders should be made of fiberglass for safety reasons. All this should be divided and stored in a minimum of two different sites and kept in a constant state of availability. Enough canned, non-perishable food and bottled water for ten people for ten days should be stored in each of a minimum of two different sites. This would be considered a minimum amount of food and water just to care for work teams.

It Won't Happen To Me!!!!

Even in the aftermath of storms like Hurricanes Andrew, Hugo, Fran and Floyd; after numerous Tornadoes, Nor'Easters, Winter Storms and the devastation of the Flood of 99 that accompanied Hurricane Floyd, people still have an attitude of complacency and "Not Me." Historical documents are laden with accounts of such storms from about the mid 16th century until now.

In February of 1698 an earthquake struck Charles Towne (Charleston) in South Carolina destroying one third of the town. A dozen more shocks were recorded by 1876. In August of 1885 a hurricane of about 125 miles per hour in strength struck Charleston and destroyed or damaged Ninety percent of the homes. Twenty five percent of the remaining homes had lost their roofs and most had suffered three to six feet of seawater flowing through their first floor. The Cooper River waterfront boasted many piers wharves and offices of which most was destroyed by being smashed to pieces as were the vessels moored there.

In June of 1886 minor tremors hit Charleston and Summerville and then again on August 27 and 28. On August 31, 1886 at 9:51 pm, a major shock hit Charleston, SC. Four more shocks quickly followed. From 1886 to 1913, 351 shocks were recorded in the Charleston-Summerville area. The area disturbed in the major shock was 2,800,000 square miles. There were two epicenters. One half way between Charleston and Summerville and one about 15 miles west of Charleston. The city was destroyed and at that point in history it suffered over \$5,000,000 in damage. The shock was so strong that it rang the church bells in Wilmington, NC.

We are not invulnerable to disaster. Depending on our geographical location, we can suffer from snow, ice, flood, extreme heat, hurricane, tornado, tsunami, earthquake, fire and strong wind. We must also consider the possibility of bus, rail, aircraft, hazardous materials and nuclear accidents, electrical blackouts, droughts and other disasters such as layoffs, plant closings, loss of wages due to disasters and also bombings and school shootings.

This program is not just about hurricanes and storing up some batteries, a radio, some water and a few cans of beans. This program is about preparing yourself to respond to your neighborhood and community when some disaster strikes. It makes no difference if the disaster affects 10 people or a million people, the basic preparatory methods and initial response and information gathering are the same.

This has not been a public service announcement, but it is a quiet urging for you and your church or group to take action to prepare for an emergency or disaster. It doesn't hurt, it takes only a little planning and work and it is a mission that provides a way to spend some of the money you had stashed away to buy new dishes for the fellowship hall.

Take the time to read this document again and if you feel that your church or group just can't commit to the plan, at least take the time to prepare the calling tree and the Shepherding List.

Just a little more data: Wind pressure

Wind speed (mph)	Pressure per square foot (lbs)
60	15
80	26
100	45
125	78
150	112

To estimate what 15 pounds of pressure per square foot feels like, hold your hand out the car window at 60 miles per hour. An average person 6' tall standing in a 100 MPH wind would feel about 500 lbs total pressure or 150 times that pressure you felt on your hand.

Hurricane force:	Barometric pressure	Wind velocity	Surge expectation	Storm damage
Category 1	28.94 or more	74 – 95 mph	4 - 5 ft	minimal
Category 2	28.50 - 28.93	96 – 110 mph	6 - 8 ft	moderate
Category 3	27.91 - 28.49	111 – 130 mph	9 - 12 ft	extensive
Category 4	27.17 - 27.90	131 – 155 mph	13 - 18 ft	extreme
Category 5	27.17 or less	160 mph or more	18 ft +	catastrophic

A sample action plan

Your Church Action Plan

1 General:

- a The church will be the point of contact for assistance after any disaster either natural, environmental, man made or economic as long as it is structurally safe and out of danger

from other influences of the disaster.

- b The church Disaster Preparedness Team and the pastor will coordinate with the Conference Disaster Structure and local agencies to provide aid and other resources.
- c Pre-disaster training and organization efforts will be solicited from the Conference Disaster Structure.

2 Planning:

- a The church will select a Disaster Preparedness Coordinator. The Coordinator will select two assistants and these three will select other team members.
- b Disaster and Administrative Coordinators will prepare Disaster Plans and review them each winter and after any emergency activation of the plan.
- c Disaster planners will coordinate with the Conference Structure and local authorities.
- d Disaster team members may be required to attend training seminars in order to maintain a constant state of readiness.
- e The church will immediately reopen for prayer, services and special needs or counseling as long as the area is deemed safe by local authorities.
- f In the event that the church facilities are declared unsafe for any reason, the pastor and available members of the Board of Directors and or Trustees will select a site where worship can be held.
- g The church may operate as a feeding station, a staging area for volunteers, a supply point, a Disaster Application Center or a coordination site.
- h Suggested support teams within the church:
Administration, Pastoral Care, Food/Supplies, Crisis Intervention, Clean Up/Salvage, Communications Control, Training, Pastor Parish Relations, Support

3 Pastor:

The Pastor Parish Relations Team will insure the safety of the pastor and family. The team will provide and insist on days off and time away for pastor and family for personal recovery and to guard against burnout.

4 Notes:

- a Most of the time you will not have the luxury of knowing that a disaster is going to strike nor where it will strike. Hurricanes, possibly some snow storms and on rare occasion a flood can be predicted. Even those predictions have questionable accuracy as to direction of travel and intensity.
- b If an evacuation order is given, by all means, heed it. Too many innocent lives have been lost because someone decided to have a hurricane party. Some were exceedingly brave, or

rather stupid, and wanted to “ride the storm out” like some hero of the silver screen. It is very likely you will face some older person who has lived in that same place for all their life and never had to leave for a storm and they aren’t leaving now. In a situation like this, all you can do is try to get them to give you the name and means to contact their next of kin. Every person who remains in a danger zone and becomes a victim ties up a rescue team to look for and care for them.

- c Two very important items you will want to keep handy are; a journal which you can purchase now to keep ready and a check list of things you need to do. Make your check list as you develop your plan. This way you do not have to go back through everything trying to figure out what it is you need to do and in what order. Keep a copy of the checklist in several places so there is one handy wherever you are and so others can take over if you are not available. Each team member should develop their own checklist of things they are responsible for.
- d Keep your plan, your check lists, membership and attendance rosters, shepherding list, phone list and inventory up to date. This will save a lot of confusion and maybe some frustration or heartache later.
- e Remember that each emergency event will be very different and take on a personality of it’s own. Make your plan, your checklist and your thinking flexible. If you run into a roadblock, handle it or hand it off to someone who can handle it. You are not the Savior, you are not some super hero. You are human and will make mistakes. Learn from them and get on with your job of helping people. You must, without a doubt, get rest and take time off. If you do not, you will fall and you will not be able to complete your task. Be kind to yourself for the sake of those who love you.

Some sample check lists of duties. Make yours as detailed as you need to.

Emergency Coordinator:

- • Notify pastor and teams of Emergency situation.
- • Coordinate with all assistants and teams available.
- • Coordinate with all local government and enforcement agencies.
- • Keep pastor informed.
- • Insure shepherds have seen to their flock and oversee administrative evacuation.
- • Provide a clearinghouse for information.

- • Provide guidance and support to all teams and pastor during event.
- • If there is prior notice of an event, secure your home and the church.
- • Evacuate if the order is given and do it without question.

Administrative Coordinators and team:

- • Ensure a smooth as possible operation at all times.
- • Prepare and keep up to date preplans in adequate supply.
- • Keep a journal of all activities.
- • Help manage financial records and see to availability of funds.
- • See to safekeeping of church records.
- • Maintain member and shepherd records.
- • Maintain video record of church and all related property inside and outside.
- • Provide immediate post disaster video for insurance, historical record and public relations or call for aid.
- • See to church security.
- • Ensure safety of pastor and family.

Supplies:

- • Maintain pre-disaster supplies and storage for food and supplies.
- • Manage incoming supply trucks post disaster.
- • Implement a system of distributing goods and services.
- • Guard against scams and rip offs.
- • Keep a journal.

Clean up and salvage:

- • Assemble teams to clean up and put back in use all church facilities.
- • Assemble teams to help clean up the community paying close attention to the elderly.
- • Coordinate work teams with local agencies.
- • Report any dangerous or emergency situations that arise.
- • Utilize youth to gather up injured wildlife and stray pets.

Support:

- • Setup for cooking and food distribution.
- • Setup water and sanitation.
- • Setup area for rest and recuperation.
- • Setup other areas as needed.

There are many agencies available to help during times of disaster. However, churches can be the focal point of the activity in a community because they are more flexible in their operations. Churches often do not have to contend with the “red tape” that agencies do and they are able to meet the needs of many who might otherwise be overlooked and “fall through the cracks.” This planning guide is designed to be organized before a disaster strikes, but it is flexible enough to be implemented at any point in any emergency.

Follow the guidelines and directives of all local authorities. They will be most grateful for your help if you remember that you are there to serve and help as you can and not to show them how to run things. Keep a journal of everything you do. Take as many picture and videos as possible. These will be important documentation of the disaster and may get you more help and materials when you need them. Most of this is common sense operations. Don't try to be the “Boss”, the “Hero” or get in your own way of doing a good job. Follow the lead of the Holy Spirit.