



Episcopal
Relief & Development

U.S. Disaster Program

Preparedness Planning Guide For Congregations and Parishes

(Silver Level Version)



From the Director

Dear Episcopal Church Leaders,

Though we don't always want to think about it, one of our roles as a church in the community is to be prepared to be of assistance after a disaster. We plan for four basic reasons:

- To mitigate the damage to our church community's buildings and belongings;
- To be able to resume the business of the church as soon as possible post-disaster;
- To support our parishioners in times of crisis;
- To assist to our vulnerable neighbors after an emergency.

The role of Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program is to inspire, connect and equip leaders of the US Episcopal Church to prepare for hazards that might affect their communities, as well as mitigate the impact of those disasters and help the vulnerable make a full and sustained recovery.

The Preparedness Planning Guide for Congregations and Parishes is designed to help a congregation plan for a disaster, from taking inventory of physical and human assets to determining its niche in assisting vulnerable people in the larger community. The “**Comprehensive Version**” if the guide takes about 10 to 15 hours to complete. But we recognize some congregations might not yet be ready for the full process. So we have created this “**Silver Level**” version, which includes necessary basic information to protect parishioners and church property in times of disaster, and also lays the foundation for congregations interested in responding to their most vulnerable neighbors after a disaster.

A “**Bronze Level**” version that gathers the most basic information needed in times of disaster is also available. All three versions of the planning guide can be downloaded from the Resource Library of our website, www.episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary. An index that cross-references the sections of all three guides can be found at the end of this resource.

Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program is working with dioceses around the country to help them be better prepared for emergencies. That includes training and supporting Diocesan Disaster Coordinators, who have been appointed by their bishops. A list of Diocesan Disaster Coordinators can be found on our website at www.episcopalrelief.org/usdisasterprogram. These coordinators should be your first support and resource through this planning process.

The Preparedness Planning Guide for Congregations and Parishes comes from the collected wisdom of the Church. To compile this guide, we gathered examples of parish and diocesan disaster preparedness guides from around the country as well as from other denominations. We utilized the most important elements from each, while trying to stay as simple as possible. Please let us know if there's anything in this guide that you think should be changed, added or eliminated, and feel free to edit according to your local context.

Thanks for all you do in this important work,

Katie Mears
Director, US Disaster Program
Episcopal Relief & Development

Thank-you

This guide is not the creation of Episcopal Relief & Development's U.S. Disaster Program; it is a compilation of the great work of:

Province IV Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission
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The Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee
The Episcopal Diocese of Florida
The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas
The Episcopal Diocese of Louisiana
The Episcopal Diocese of Rio Grande
The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina
The Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida
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Our Congregation's Disaster Plan

<input type="checkbox"/> Congregation/Church:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Congregational Disaster Coordinator	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell-phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Landline:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Diocesan Disaster Coordinator:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell-phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Landline:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Date of Completion:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled Review:	



Disaster Leadership Team:

Contact Information

Instructions: Fill out the following form with contact information for your Congregational Disaster Coordinator and the Disaster Leadership Team. Even if your team consists of two people, capture their contact information.

Congregational Disaster Coordinator:	<input type="checkbox"/> Landline:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline/Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	Role/Designated Tasks:	
	Address:	
	Landline:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	

Preparedness Goals

In putting together this guide and talking with church leaders around the country, we have realized that all preparedness, response, recovery and hazard mitigation work can be categorized into four goals:

Resume congregational life as quickly and smoothly as possible

Protect the church's assets

Support impacted parishioners to recover

Reach out to vulnerable neighbors

If your congregation is prepared, it will be able to achieve these goals more quickly and efficiently after an emergency.

Congregational Goals

This is an exercise to think of who you are as a congregation and what you want to accomplish after a disaster. This is a definition of what you will strive to accomplish after a disaster, the specific steps to accomplish these goals will be defined later in the guide.

Examples of goals may include:

- ☐ Ensure the safety of older and disabled members of the congregation
- ☐ Provide an effective relief ministry to the local community after a disaster
- ☐ Protect valuable liturgical assets
- ☐ Reestablish Sunday services as soon as possible post-disaster

1)	<i>(Example) Reestablish Sunday services as soon as possible. You don't need to identify the specifics of how that will be done (i.e.- worship will be held at St. Luke's Lutheran Church)</i>
2)	
3)	
4)	
5)	

Brainstorm Likely Disasters and Emergencies

Make a list of all potential disasters/emergencies. Examples of common emergencies may include: weather and fire-related events, vulnerable adults, lost and missing children, medical emergencies, intruders, etc. Also consider even the most extreme possibilities: chemical spill, fire, mass violence, etc.

After you have created the lists, go through and rank the top 5 that you think are most likely. We will return to these in the final section of this guide, “Developing Templates for Initial Response.”

Major Disasters

Local Emergencies

<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Flood</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Ice Storm</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hurricane</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Apartment fire in the neighborhood</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consider whether your top five events in both columns would be the type that occur with some warning, such as a hurricane or spring river flood, or would happen suddenly, such as a chemical spill. Place them in the appropriate box below.

Major Disaster with Warning	Major Disaster with No Warning	Local Emergency With Warning	Local Emergency with No Warning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Identifying Groups that Include or Serve Vulnerable People

People with special needs will be at higher risk during a disaster. Take the time to identify those people within your congregation, and brainstorm what problems they may face and how you could help with those problems as a congregation.

Instructions: List the groups in the parish that are either comprised of or serve people who might be especially vulnerable after a disaster. These might include senior citizens' groups, groups for new mothers, and religious education programs that include children with special needs. List the contacts for each group, so that they can be contacted after a disaster to help assess needs and facilitate the response.

Group	Contact	Types of needs members might have.
<i>The Senior Citizens Club is comprised of parishioners aged 65 and older.</i>	Betty Jones	<i>Difficulty evacuating. Medical conditions.</i>
<i>The Lay Eucharistic Visitors have a current list of people who are home-bound or who are in the hospital.</i>	Deacon Williams	<i>Difficulty evacuating. Medical conditions.</i>

Inventories of Property-Related Assets

The three first steps to protecting your property are:

1) Identify what you have

- ☐ Make a list of your major assets.

2) Record the details of this property

- ☐ Make a written inventory of any property, buildings and building contents (you can use the form on the next page). It should list what you have and provide appraisals when possible.
- ☐ Make a visual record with a camera and/or a handheld video camera: lay out your valuables – vestments, silver, artwork, historical items, etc. Take photos of each or, with a camcorder, pan slowly across each. Continue the visual record by walking through buildings/properties, stopping at specific points for more detail as needed.
- ☐ Keep one copy of the written and visual inventories in a protected place at the church, and keep a second copy of each in a remote location or provide them to the diocesan archives. You may have this already if you've completed one for insurance purposes; if so, make sure it's up to date and that the diocesan archives has a copy.

3) Determine what needs to be removed or protected

- ☐ Identify what should be protected or removed. This may include protecting the organ, piano, windows, or archives; quake-proofing furniture, etc.
- ☐ Decide and record what will be protected, by whom, when, where, and how. Buy any supplies needed to protect those objects, and have them readily accessible.
- ☐ Draw a simple floor plan of your building/s, showing the location of the organ, piano, paper records, archives, etc. and file it with your local fire department.
- ☐ Make sure copies of your insurance information are kept in a safe on site and in a safe place off-site.

General Inventory Information:

Annual Inventory Date:	
<input type="checkbox"/> List Only (m/d/y)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Photos (m/d/y)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Video (m/d/y)	
Person(s) Responsible for Conducting Annual Inventory:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name:	
Locations of Inventory Records:	
<input type="checkbox"/> On-Site:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Off-Site:	

Insurance Information

Make a list of all your insurance information and contacts. Be sure to have a copy of this information in a **secure place off-site** and have another copy that someone can take with them if your community is evacuated. Note: if your church is insured through Church Insurance Company, you can call 800-223-5707 to report claims immediately.

<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Number:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy is with:	
Phone:	
Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Agent:	
Phone:	
Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Original Policy is kept:	
Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of policy is kept offsite:	
Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy Type:	<i>(Example – Replacement value type)</i>
Total Value:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy covers:	<i>Earthquake, hurricane, robbery, fire, breakage, etc.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Other policies:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Policy review:	
When:	
By who:	

Be sure to note where off-site copies are kept and who can access them.

Off-site Copies	
<input type="checkbox"/> Where:	<i>(Ex: Diocese has a copy)</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Who:	<i>Susan Wu</i>
Phone:	<i>xxx-xxx-xxxx</i>
Cell:	

Secure Storage of Archives and Records (print and electronic)

Appropriate protection of records is essential. If your paper files are charred or water-damaged, or your computer files are lost, you may need to hire professional recovery companies in addition to rebuilding the data. Archival items by nature are irreplaceable.

Refer to the “Records Manual for Congregations” published by the Archives of the Episcopal Church for a list of records to retain and the time to retain them. You can also find this information at: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/Records_Manual_for_Congregations.pdf

- a) Every congregation needs a fireproof, waterproof, quake-proof lockable box or safe¹ (or safety deposit box). Seldom-used/historical items, valuables and the following should be kept in the safe:
 - ☐ Parish registers and service books – at all times when not in use
 - ☐ Confidential records: personnel files, documents displaying social security numbers, and confidential counseling records.
 - ☐ Contracts, mortgage or loan papers, titles and deeds, other legal documents, etc.
 - ☐ Routine back-ups for computer files on a CD, DVD or USB
- b) Paper records and files
 - ☐ These could include your administrative, financial, and ministry files, and copies of print newsletters or bulletins. Store them in metal file cabinets, preferably not on opposite walls from windows. Photocopy irreplaceable files to store offsite.
- c) Archives
 - ☐ These are best stored in temperatures between 65-68 degrees, with 45% humidity, in metal cabinetry or shelved in acid-free boxes, in a closed room with no windows. If the room is fireproofed, even better. After fire, water and mildew are the worst enemies.
 - ☐ Inventory your archives carefully and keep a copy offsite.
- d) Software and electronic files
 - ☐ Keep anti-virus and spyware protection up to date, establish protocols for office computer use including password protection, and use a surge protector
 - ☐ Back-up your office files regularly and keep back-ups in your safe or another secure location off-site. Place a copy in the “Go Kit.”
 - ☐ Keep your original software CDs in the safe.
 - ☐ Make backups of your website. Make sure your web-hosting provider regularly backs up their servers and protects the data. Consider a web-hosting service with multiple servers in various locations nationally.
 - ☐ Keep lists of passwords and usernames for all computers in the church safe/safety deposit box/off-site. Make sure passwords are kept in at least 2 places, and there is a copy in your “Go Kit.” This will help to ensure access to them after a disaster
- e) Diocesan archive storage
 - ☐ Provide copies of your architectural drawings and asset inventories to the diocesan archives.

¹ The safe should have a rating of 4 to 5. If the safe is on a basement floor, it's recommended that you keep it 6-8 inches above the floor on a concrete or durable slab.

Congregational Resources

Identify what facilities or resources your congregation can offer fellow parishioners or to the broader community in the event of an emergency – do you have vehicles? Do you have a space that could be used as a shelter? Do you have a commercial kitchen?

Congregational Property Resources for Use Post-Disaster

Instructions: Make a list of property assets that can be used for response activities in case of an emergency.

List your buildings – include approximate capacity and accessibility

Building	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

Do you have:

Yes/No	Facility	Description/Quantity
	<input type="checkbox"/> Storage Capacity	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Kitchen Capacity	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Refrigerator/freezer	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Space to Shelter	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Exterior Grounds	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	

Are you certified:

Yes/No	Certification
	<input type="checkbox"/> American Red Cross Disaster Feeding
	<input type="checkbox"/> American Red Cross Mass Care
	<input type="checkbox"/> American Red Cross Shelter Care
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

What equipment/resources do you have to offer the wider community?

Yes/No	Equipment/Resources	Description/Quantity
	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Boat	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Bus	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Generator	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Bed/Cot	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Tent	

	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	
--	---------------------------------	--

Congregational Activities Resources

Make a list of important activities and services already provided by the congregation. What do you know how to do? What outreach programs does your congregation already run? What vulnerable communities might be associated with those programs? Because you already have the experience and infrastructure in place, these programs may be a good starting point for providing services to the greater community after a disaster.

Activities:

<input type="checkbox"/> (Example) Food pantry - frequented by homeless	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> (Example) Vacation Bible School for parish children and their friends	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> (Example) Alcoholics Anonymous meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Congregational Human Resource Assets

Primary Languages:		
Groups that could be of service:		
<input type="checkbox"/> (Example) Brotherhood of St. Andrew	Contact Person:	
	Email:	
	Phone:	
	Resources they can provide:	
	Skills they can provide:	
<input type="checkbox"/> (Example) ECW	Contact Person:	
	Email:	
	Phone:	
	Resources they can provide:	
	Skills they can provide:	
<input type="checkbox"/> (Example) Youth Group	Contact Person:	
	Email:	
	Phone:	
	Resources they can provide:	
	Skills they can provide:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Person:	
	Email:	
	Phone:	
	Resources they can provide:	
	Skills they can provide:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Person:	
	Email:	

	Phone:	
	Resources they can provide:	
	Skills they can provide:	

Goals and Response

This is a good moment to revisit the goals defined on pg. 9 and identify the necessary steps and resources to ensure that those goals are met. This is the moment to decide what activities are needed to accomplish those goals, what preparation is needed before a disaster, who shall lead each activity and what is needed to do so.

Goal	Preparation	Person Responsible	Activities Post-Disaster
<i>(Example) Reestablish Sunday services as soon as possible after a disaster</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Put together "Go Kit"</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Establish relationship with St. Luke's Lutheran Church – ask if they will offer space for alternate worship site</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inform congregation: in case church is affected by emergency, services will be held at alternate site</i>	<i>Paula Shriver (Senior Warden) and Rev. Smith</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Communicate with St. Luke's</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inform parishioners via email, phone and note at our parish that services will be held at alternate site</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide priest with the implements for service from the "Go Kit"</i>

Diocesan Contact Information

Instructions: Change, remove and add titles as relevant to your diocese.

<input type="checkbox"/> Bishop Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Canon for Stewardship/Administration Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assistant to the Bishop Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Assistant to the Canon Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Diocesan Disaster Coordinator Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications Director Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Name:	Address:	
	Office Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Home Phone:	
	Email:	

Church Staff Contact Information

Instructions: Make this contact information available to your parishioners.

<input type="checkbox"/> Role/Job Title: Name:	Address:	
	Home Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
	Emergency Contact:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Role/Job Title: Name:	Address:	
	Home Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
	Emergency Contact:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Role/Job Title: Name:	Address:	
	Home Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
	Emergency Contact:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Role/Job Title: Name:	Address:	
	Home Phone:	
	Cell Phone:	
	Email:	
	Emergency Contact:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship: <input type="checkbox"/> Phone:	

People with Financial Authorization Approval

Instructions: Keep a copy of this information in a safe place off-site.

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Phone:	
	Email:	
	Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Phone:	
	Email:	
	Address:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Phone:	
	Email:	
	Address:	

Congregation's Emergency Contacts

Partner congregations can serve as a center for communications, an evacuation site, or a source of relief volunteers, among other things. Partnering with another congregation within the Diocese provides an opportunity to both serve others and receive services in an emergency. A relationship with a congregation located in a separate region not susceptible to the same emergencies at the same time as your congregation should also be established as a possible evacuation site.

It may also be a good idea to keep a complete set of keys to the church at one of these locations, or at your diocesan offices – in case yours are lost.

Partner Congregation – Local

Partner Congregation:	
Contact Person	
<input type="checkbox"/> Landline:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone:	
Address:	

Partner Congregation – Outside the Diocese

Partner Congregation:	
Contact Person	
<input type="checkbox"/> Landline:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone:	
Address:	