

BEFORE A DISASTER STRIKES

If your faith community determines that meeting human need in a disaster is part of your mission, you need a specific plan of action. This list of suggestions is basic, brief, concise, and do-able.

- Join a local and/or state-wide VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster)
- Contact the American Red Cross to see if your meeting facility might qualify as a disaster shelter. Take their training appropriate to the services you will provide.
- Request disaster preparedness and response training from your denomination.
- Train your religious leadership to recognize and appreciate the differences between disaster ministry and pastoral ministry. Leaders determine *before the disaster* the roles they will assume, and, if necessary, seek additional specialized training
- Identify the vulnerable people in your faith community; disabled, elderly, young, those living alone or in isolated areas, those lacking transportation/mobility (particularly in disasters involving evacuation), other special needs.
- Sponsor training for families in disaster preparation and planning.
- Identify the types of disasters predictable for your area.
- Prepare your people theologically to deal with disaster with special emphasis on intentional and human-caused disasters.

*For additional and expanded recommendations, an excellent resource is **Guide to Disaster Ministry in Your Congregation** from the Prepare to Care Series of Church World Service Emergency Response Program (www.cwserp.org)*

Rev. Robert H. Barnes

Grace Unlimited, July 2005