

Shenandoah Presbytery

A Community of Christ for Worship, Nurture, and Mission

Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans

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Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans - Overview

A. Background

This plan defines roles and responsibilities across the Presbytery for response to disasters. It recognizes our relationships with local and national disaster assistance organizations and develops an organization structure and communication paths within the Presbytery. These response protocols will facilitate the flow of information to bring appropriate resources to those most in need. This plan is tailored around several unique characteristics of our Presbytery, but also is based on training and materials provided by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), a ministry of the PC(USA), supported primarily by One Great Hour of Sharing.

This plan serves as a beginning of an evolutionary and expanding system of connecting members of our Presbytery to resources and needs both inside and outside of our boundaries. It is hoped that future iterations of this plan can serve as a model for congregations to develop their own specific disaster plans.

There are many volunteers in the Presbytery who have experience with disaster response efforts in Florida, the Gulf Coast, and in more local emergencies. This plan is designed to focus this experience in an organized manner to prepare and respond to future disasters both within the Presbytery and reaching out to other parts of the nation and the world. It recognizes that all disasters are local. Therefore, pastors play a key leadership role in disaster situations and often require an extra measure of emotional and spiritual support.

B. Rational

Shenandoah Presbytery, as a collection of church families, characterizes itself as a *community of Christ for worship, nurture, and mission*. As such, it is important to us to be a part of the healing love of Christ by caring for communities adversely affected by crises and catastrophic events – both natural and human-caused. From PDA's perspective presbyteries are gateways for an organized response to disaster. To be effective in this ministry, we recognize the need for careful preparation, communication, and mobilization plans that reach across our many churches and can be activated in a timely manner.

Presbyteries and congregations need to have good communication plans in place in the event of a disaster. Often without reporting from the local community, the Presbytery (and Synod) is dependent on news accounts rather than first-hand information, which could lead to an uneven or inadequate response.

C. Scope

Disaster response addressed by this plan moves in two directions. It reaches inward to churches and communities experiencing disaster events within the boundaries of Shenandoah Presbytery. It also includes reaching out to areas in need beyond our Presbytery. It encompasses not only a disaster response plan, but also addresses protection and recovery of the Presbytery office facility, a training plan and model disaster plan for congregations, and a list of disaster response resources.

The nature of disasters covered by this plan is purposely left unspecified. This plan is not tied to a specific class of disasters. Disasters are events that cause human suffering or create human needs that survivors cannot alleviate without spiritual, monetary, material, and/or physical assistance. **However, because Shenandoah Presbytery is in the unique position of being west of Washington, D.C., it may assume a role of providing sheltering for National Capital Region evacuees that should be addressed in disaster planning.**

Disaster planning covers three distinct phases: preparation, immediate response, and recovery. Our response philosophy includes offering a ministry of presence, assessing need, and coordinating a response. An adequate response meets physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Special attention must be paid to care of pastors who often bear a tremendous leadership role in local disasters. We will address these phases by:

- Identifying experienced individuals and congregational resources within the Presbytery that can respond to a disaster,
- Developing a response organization and communication protocols that can be activated as needed,
- Managing donated material and financial resources,
- Training teams and collecting resources for response, and
- Linking our resources among:
 - Presbytery churches
 - Community-based and ecumenical response organizations
 - National and international relief agencies.

We remain especially attentive to responding to those of our communities with limited personal options and resources to overcome the chaos often delivered by disasters.

Although this plan focuses primarily on responding to disasters within the Presbytery, guidelines for responding to national situations are included. We recommend using the resources and connections provided by PDA for response to national and international disasters.

D. Plan Contents

This disaster preparedness and response plan organizes its contents in appendices to facilitate future plan expansion and revision. It is the responsibility of the Shenandoah Presbytery Disaster Response Team to review and coordinate development of the entire Plan content **and to report to Presbytery Council on an annual basis.**

Here is a description of each appendix.

Appendix A - Disaster Response Plan: Describes the organization structure for disaster response for both disasters within the Presbytery and for responding to events in other parts of the country. Includes roles and responsibilities for the Presbytery Disaster Response Team (DRT) and Mission Community DRTs. Outlines a communication plan and protocols for disaster response actions.

Appendix B – Administration Office Disaster Plan: Covers two scenarios: 1) using the Presbytery Center as a shelter, work camp, or material distribution site; and 2) protecting Presbytery resources and developing contingency operating and staffing plans.

Appendix C – Presbytery Disaster Response Education Plan: Develop and deliver training to mission communities and congregations about disaster preparedness and response.

Appendix D – Disaster Preparedness and Response Resources: Lists materials developed by PDA and other organizations regarding disaster planning, work team coordination, volunteer management, spiritual care, and long-term recovery.

Appendix E –Sample Congregation Disaster Plan: Provides an outline of a local disaster plan with checklists of items to consider for disaster preparation.

Appendix A

Presbytery Disaster Response Plan

Appendix B

Administrative Office Disaster Plan

Appendix C

Presbytery Disaster Response Education Plan

Appendix D

Disaster Preparedness & Response Resources

Appendix E

Sample Congregation Disaster Plan