

Emergency Response Task Force

Organization/structure:

The organization and oversight of the Emergency Response Task Force should be fully lay led and under the jurisdiction of and accountable to the Session. To ensure synergy with relevant groups within the church, the assistant chair of the Local Missions Committee and the vice-moderator of the Deacons should automatically serve on the Task Force. Because it takes an act of Session to make some of the decisions related to an emergency situation, it makes sense to have the Task Force as an ongoing committee affiliated with the session. The Task Force could meet quarterly when an emergency situation is not in effect and as often as necessary once disaster strikes. Each member of the Task Force would have authority to appoint his/her own subcommittee during a disaster/emergency to facilitate the needs of that function of the Task Force.

Task Force Members:

The Task Force director and assistant director ideally would be members of Session, and the various Task Force members would be drawn from the congregation at large based upon specific gifts/skills. Between emergencies, each Task Force member would be responsible for being familiar his/her job/task so that once an emergency strikes there is advance preparedness by being informed and familiar with various agencies and their roles in disaster response. Each of the following areas represents a Task Force member and information area of coverage:

Director: Responsible for the overall organization of the Task Force and the primary contact point during a disaster. All members noted below report directly to the Task Force Director. The Director also oversees finances; including the allocation of funds donated by FPC members to assist with the disaster. Therefore, the financial person maintains an awareness of the relevant options to recommend to session (e.g. how Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is helping with emergency response and funds needed for various PC-USA churches impacted).

Assistant Director serves as the "PAO" (public affairs officer) during the disaster to coordinate the massive amount of information. This person distills incoming information for members of the Task Force and coordinates outgoing information through official FPC channels (i.e. Bob and Judson).

National Government Agencies: A liaison to the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, FEMA, and United Way pre-disaster to maintain an awareness of services offered and policies/procedures necessary for those services. This person would attend interagency meetings and/or conference calls during the disaster.

Local Government Agencies: A liaison to state and local government agencies including the mayor's office, the S.A. Community of Churches, Food Bank, and the Volunteer Operations Center. In-between emergencies this person would develop awareness of these programs and maintain current contact about disaster policies and procedures.

Mission Presbytery and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Contact: Coordinate FPC efforts with local PC-USA churches in the greater San Antonio area, and maintain a liaison and general awareness of how PDA in Louisville is assisting with any given disaster, with daily contact/updates during a particular crisis that activates the Task Force to daily and/or weekly meetings. Task force member would maintain communication with Mission Presbytery and maintain a contact with other PC-USA churches to pool volunteers and coordinate disaster assistance.

Spiritual Ministry: Serve as liaison with all the other religious, faith-based, and church/ecumenical bodies in the city (especially the Baptists) both between and during disasters. Coordinate counselors, lay pastors/chaplains to minister to disaster victims within FPC, including knowledge about possible training to prepare lay ministers (i.e. Stephens Ministry and/or "crash course" training offered by the American Red Cross when disaster hits). This coordinator should also anticipate how to help with ongoing spiritual needs after the initial disaster.

Medical: Someone to coordinate FPC members with medical skills including doctors, dentists, nurses, and licensed practical nurses. This person will maintain a current listing of medical professionals on FPC staff and develop an emergency implantation plan.

Volunteer Coordinator: Maintains contact with Pat O'Neill (FPC staff member for lay volunteers) to develop complete awareness of various gifts/talents/skills among FPC members. Will coordinate a subcommittee of volunteers needed during an actual disaster to organize volunteers for food preparation, transportation needs, staffing of shelters (FPC and otherwise), organizing donations of material goods, etc.