

Preparing Your Congregation For A Disaster

Presentation Outline June 11, 2005

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PRP Hurricane Task Force

Background Info.

Organize for Preparedness

Set up volunteer committees to address ALL aspects of emergency management.

Elect 3 Key Officers:

1. Director of Congregation Disaster Relief (Reports to Session...preferably an Elder).
 - Chair the overall effort
 - Schedule, plan meetings
 - Schedule, plan training
 - Recruit coordinators
 - Ensure team readiness
2. Disaster Volunteer Coordinator
 - Conduct skills, talent survey
 - Develop database of volunteers / skills
 - Develop telephone chain
 - Arrange for volunteer training
3. Disaster Resources Coordinator.
 - Conduct inventory of facilities, supplies, equipment.
 - Coordinate with Director the communication to the congregation regarding the use of facilities, equipment
 - Maintain supplies in good order. Replenish as necessary
 - Train volunteers in use of facilities, equipment.

- Develop leadership...passion
- Work on trust relationships....facilitate good communication.
- Have a representative active in community relief organization(s)
- Call meeting of people who have indicated willingness to be core volunteers...paint the picture. Design fun setting with snacks and mixed media.
- Identify talents and interests and match to needs.
- Develop mission statement.
- Conduct training. (Solicit training from Fire Dept., Law Enforcement, Salvation Army, etc.)
- Design and issue ID badges
- Keep disaster plan simple
- Develop Budget

Post congregation disaster preparedness / response plan on your web site.

- Simple
- Impactful
- Informative
- Remember 6 second window of attention

Outline key team tasks

- Assess hazard exposure risks of all kinds that could impact local area
 - Natural hazards
 - Human caused hazards
 - Sudden onset hazards
 - Slow onset hazards
- Detail the dangers that each disaster poses.
- Train Volunteers
- Anticipate and prepare for required response.
- Create contingency plans.

Prepare Thoroughly, Follow Through

- Develop up-to-date member roster with address and contact info including cell #s and e-mail addresses.
- Identify homebound, infirm, on oxygen, living alone, no personal transportation, institutionalized, etc. Know who have children, (ages, how many, gender)
- Identify who will get prescriptions to these people.
- Plot these people on a map.
- Copy multiple marked maps for distribution to canvassing team leaders.
- Advise infirm who will be calling on them to check on safety
- Assign persons to be a “buddy system” support link for these persons.
- Pre-assign volunteers to canvass (door to door) 4 – 5 members of the congregation following a disaster, regardless of their circumstances. Assign one person from each group as team leader. Account for EVERYONE. Know where to reassemble.
- Know who the seasonal people are and when they will be out of town. Have out-of-town contact info.
- Identify day-care opportunities. Can be very significant issue.

3.

- Identify physical relief resources such as generators, chain saws, shovels, axes, rakes, rope, wheelbarrows, trash bags, blankets, dry clothing, flashlights, gas, water, etc. that can be immediately transported to a disaster site. List who has what and where stored.
- Identify members with rebuilding, handyman skills, advise them they may be called. Keep contact numbers on separate response list.
- Identify persons willing to serve as clean-up crews. Confirm their willingness in writing. Keep contact numbers on separate response list.
- Develop emergency mobilization plan to contact / assist congregation members
- Identify a small group of volunteers to design and execute a plan to secure the church campus (inside and out) if time permits (have resources / materials available in storage).
- Make sure all critical records are in dry, fireproof location.
- Become acquainted with relief groups and what they offer (and WHEN) such as Red Cross, Salvation Army, VOAD, FEMA, area Interfaith response councils, Peace River Presbytery (PRP) Disaster Task Force, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), etc. Have list of contact numbers.
- Identify media contacts.
- Advise congregation of shelter locations and evacuation routes.
- Disseminate Home Emergency Planning Guides to all members of congregation. (1-248-879-7970.....item #401)
- Offer the purchase of a deluxe 72 hour Emergency Survival Kit....(item #101)
- Identify professionals in the congregation who have community contacts for immediate response.
- Identify immediate pastoral care needs following a disaster; use Pastor(s), Stevens Ministers, Deacons, etc.
- Do not necessarily take "I'm OK" as a definitive answer as to a member's circumstances. If there is ANY CHANCE they might be severely impacted go to the home and investigate.
- Report findings of persons in need to appropriate persons. Keep "situation" log.
- Set up plan for long term un-met needs follow up. Coordinate with PRP Disaster Task Force.

4.

- Identify professionals who would volunteer to serve as advocates for seniors with City, County, FEMA, SBA, Insurance, etc. Involve Parrish Nurse, if on staff.
- Identify monetary assistance needs for church property and (qualified) individuals.
- Help facilitate low cost loans.
- Recap lessons learned and adapt for potential future disaster planning.
- Present Emergency Organizational Plan to congregation annually. Publish emergency contact numbers.
- Communicate recovery stories in Congregation media. Keep on-going needs in forefront.