



Diocese of Southeast Florida

PARISH DISASTER PREPARATION AND RESPONSE GUIDELINES

A parish's disaster response plan should encompass all disasters, i.e. weather-related, toxin-related, transportation-related, terrorist-related, health-related, etc.

Each parish should have the following:

- A Disaster Response Committee. Members should include the rector or director of the facility, the head of maintenance, the senior warden or another vestry member, and a representative of the staff (or parish administrator) and any others deemed appropriate.
- A laminated copy of the Disaster Preparation and Response plan for each member of the Committee. It should also be located off site, as well as in several convenient places within the buildings.

The Disaster Preparation and Response Plan should address the following areas and be regularly updated:

Keeping Track of Your Congregation

- A digital and hard copy list of parishioner's names, address, phone numbers and their evacuation address with particular emphasis on at-risk members, i.e. elderly, single mothers, and disabled.
- A Communication Plan to contact parishioners before and after a disaster strikes.
- List of members with talents to help, i.e., first responders, doctors, nurses, carpenters, electricians, etc.

Files/Records - Back-up and Off-Site Storage

- Computer data backed up regularly (at least once a week).
- Computer back-up disc of parish financial records.
- Copies of following documents:
 - Insurance Papers
 - By-Laws
 - Key Files
 - Burial Records
 - Articles of Incorporation
 - Parish Directory
 - Computer Passwords
 - Emergency Numbers
- Location of all Documents/Back-up Discs described above:
 - Parish Office copy location
 - Off-Site copy location

Your Property and Buildings

- Check that your buildings are properly insured.
- Maps showing the major hook-ups in all the parish buildings.
 - Water
 - Electricity
 - Phone
 - Gas
 - Security System
- Maps of the immediate community or city.
- Video recordings and still photographs of the property, buildings and the contents stored inside and outside of the buildings.
- An inventory of important and valuable items with digital photos.
- Properly stocked First Aid Kits.
- Fire Plan: Fire Extinguishers/Alarms/Smoke Detectors are in working order and inspected annually.
- Supplies: Tarps, plastic sheeting, tape, hammer, nails, flashlights, batteries, face masks, generators, chain saws, etc.
- A list of instructions detailing the necessary steps to secure and shut down the buildings/offices.
- A list of what you will take with you (if there is time) if you have to evacuate. You should have available some type of water tight and fire proof containers in which to pack these items. Even clean garbage pails with tight fitting lids will work.

Important Contact Information

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rector | <input type="checkbox"/> Parish Staff |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sr. Warden | <input type="checkbox"/> Jr. Warden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vestry Members | <input type="checkbox"/> Diocesan Contact |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance Personnel | <input type="checkbox"/> Disaster Response Committee Members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police Non-Emergency | <input type="checkbox"/> Fire-Rescue Non-Emergency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance Company | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Utility Company | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Company |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Company | <input type="checkbox"/> FEMA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County Emergency Manager | |

Media Response may become necessary. Every parish will have members with public relations skills. The parish may want to consider developing some generic press releases to be used for any number of occasions or crises that might develop.

EACH PARISH SHOULD CONTACT THE DIOCESAN OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE after a disaster strikes or any back-up sister parishes that have been designated.

FOR WEATHER REALTED EMERGENCIES

- Contact “at-risk” parishioners who may need assistance to prepare/evacuate.
- Put up necessary shutters or window barriers. Secure all doors.
- Cover equipment/items (i.e. organ, video/sound equipment, computers, copiers, file cabinets, desks, books, etc.).
- Do visual check for loose items and move indoors.
- Locate and turn off all utilities, as deemed appropriate.

RECOVERY PLAN - As Soon as Safety Allows

- Walk-through of property. Assess damage.
- Contact Diocese.
- Contact parishioners: assess short-term and long-term needs.
- Contact insurance carrier, utility companies, government agencies (i.e. FEMA).
- Begin clean up if possible.

FOR TERRORIST RELATED OR BOMB THREATS

CONTACT THE POLICE IMMEDIATELY. If a threat is received by phone, try to get as much information (i.e. who, what, why, where, when) without antagonizing the caller. A specific plan should be developed for your parish as to who is contacted and how.

CRISIS DURING SERVICES OR OTHER GATHERINGS

THE FIRST RESPONSE, IF POSSIBLE, SHOULD BE TO CONTACT THE AUTHORITIES. REMAINING CALM IS CRITICAL TO A RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM AND TO PREVENT PANIC. The priest is the leader of the parish and parishioners will look to see his/her reaction to the incident and how to handle it. Designate ushers or others to take care of emergencies and calling appropriate emergency assistance. (During a service, the priest should not be expected to stop the worship unless the emergency is extreme. The same goes for a parish program and the program leader. Others need to be at hand for responding).

PACKING ON SHORT NOTICE

Should the day come when you need to evacuate on short notice – what would you take from your parish? Rev. Edward F. O'Connor, rector of St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Gulfport, Mississippi offers the following suggestions: (Vestry Papers, March/April 2006).

- Bible
- Church service record book
- Church or parish records – all volumes
- Crucial staff CPU's and back-up discs
- Relevant office documents and supplies – church letterhead, folding/stapling devices, phone book, pens, pencils, church address and bank deposit stamp, calculator, etc.
- Relevant files – clergy files, secretary/administrator's office
- Financial records- especially insurance policies, monthly bills/asset statements, leases, any outside checkbook, etc.
- Vestry information – minutes on paper and disc, by-laws, annual reports
- Stewardship files/pledge cards
- Communion set – chalice, paten, corporal, purificators, cruets, missal, etc.
- Home Communion set
- Vestments – minimally current season and upcoming season
- Library – essential books for ministry such as commentaries, manuals, etc.
- Any archive materials that are important to the church

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