



Great Plains
UNITED METHODISTS

Local Church Disaster Planning Guide

Great Plains United Methodist Conference
Disaster Response Ministry
1207 SW Executive Drive
Topeka, Kansas 66615
785.272.9111

Disaster Guide for:

Facility Name: _____

Facility Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Emergency Phone Numbers:

ANY EMERGENCY: 911

Electric: _____

Water: _____

Gas: _____

Emergency Manager: _____

Emergency Personnel Names and Phone Numbers:

Designated Responsible Official:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Church Disaster Leader:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

District Superintendent:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Conference Disaster Response Coordinator:

Name: Rev. Hollie Tapley Phone: 904.468.0529 (cell)

PLANNING:**A. Considerations**

- 1) All property
- 2) Insurance
- 3) Church records
- 4) Communication
- 5) Role of staff, trustees, others
- 6) Worship services
- 7) Ministries of the church
- 8) Pictures of facilities
- 9) Items of value

B. Property Protection

- Survey facility – inventory all equipment by room, make photos of each room.
- Regularly back up computers, financials, etc. to a Cloud Service.
- Fire/waterproof safe on site.
- Bank safe deposit box.
- Secure a contractor prior to a disaster.

C. Insurance

- Is facility structured covered sufficiently with insurance?
- When was the policy last reviewed?
- Additional coverage for issues such as flooding? Sewer back-up?
- Contents of facilities sufficiently insured.
- Does insurance cover replacement cost?
- Do you know where the facilities blueprints are?

C. Evacuation Routes:

Evacuation route maps have been posted in each room by the door. The following information is marked on the maps:

- Emergency Exits

- Primary and secondary evacuation routes
- Locations of fire extinguishers
- Fire alarm pull station locations
- AED locations
- First Aid Kit locations
- Assembly points for evacuation

D. Congregation Planning

- Shelter in place at Home
- Preparedness Kit for 168 hrs. (7days)
- Neighborhood Group Planning

DISASTER PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

1. Police, fire, paramedics, and 911 response may be overrun the first 2-5 days after a major disaster – plan to have to wait extended time for them to get to you.
2. People may be on their own for the first few days. Always plan to care for yourself and family for up to 7 days.
3. Utilities may be unavailable for extended periods (electricity, water, and gas.
4. Telephone, cell service, internet, ATM's, and other communications/electrical system may be down for an extended time.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

- If known Cardiac Event:
 - Trained CPR individual to access with ABC (airway, breathing, chest rise)
 - Begin CPR
 - Send one person to get the A.E.D.
 - Call 911
 - Provide the following information:
 - Nature of the emergency.
 - Location of the emergency, address of the facility, which door to enter.
 - Follow the instructions provided over the phone.
- Do NOT move the individual unless absolutely necessary.
- Clear those sitting nearby to another location.
- Locate the individual's immediate family and provide information.
- One person stays with the individual/family until first responders arrive and take over.

FIRE EMERGENCY

In case of fire, smell of smoke and/or visible smoke:

- If internal alarm has not sounded, activate the nearest fire alarm.
- Call 911.
- Activate Children's Response Team
- Everyone evacuates the facility moving away from the fire or smoke.
- Leave personal belongings behind – your personal safety is more important.
- Move to designated area across the street.

Fight the fire ONLY if:

- It is SAFE.
- 911 has been called.
- The fire is small and not spreading or near to chemicals or electricity.

Evacuation:

- Position designated disaster individuals at each designated evacuation exits to take a head count as individuals leave the building.
- All assemble at the designated location safely away from the facility.
- Those same designated individuals take another head count – if numbers are not the same, report it to the Local Church Disaster Leader, who will report to the First Responders.
- Remain outside, and away safely away from the facility, until First Responders give the “all clear.”

Local Church Disaster Leader:

- Coordinate the evacuation.
- Provide First Responders with floor plan of the facility.
- Be available to assist First Responders as they may request.

Designated Disaster Individuals:

- Ensure that all individuals have evacuated the facility, yet do not put yourself at harm.
- Report any problems to the Local Church Disaster Leader.
- Assist any individual needing assistance during the evacuation.

WILDFIRE PREPARATION

1. Clear off pine needles, dead leaves, and anything else that can burn from the roof, gutters, decks, porches, patios, and along fence lines.
2. Screen and seal: wind borne embers can get into facilities easily through vents and other openings and burn the facility from the inside out.
3. Trim back any shrubs or tree branches that come closer than 5 feet to the facility. Also trim back any overhanging branches.

4. Store away furniture, playground equipment what includes cushions or mats. Those items can catch embers and ignite.
5. Keep any mulch and flowers at least 5 feet away from the facility.
6. Remove anything within 30 feet of the facility that could burn, such as woodpiles, spare lumber, etc.

EXTENDED POWER LOSS

In the event of extended power loss to the facility, certain precautionary measures should be taken depending on the building environment of the facility (underground electric, location of plumbing, etc.):

- Unnecessary electrical equipment and appliances should be turned off and unplugged in the event that power restoration would surge causing damage to electronics and effecting sensitive equipment and appliances.
- Facilities with freezing temperatures should turn off and drain the following lines in the event of a long-term power loss:
 - Fire sprinkler system
 - Potable water lines
 - Toilets
 - Water fountains
 - Irrigation systems
- Equipment that contains fluids that may freeze due to long term exposure to freezing temperatures should be moved to heated areas, drained of liquids if possible, or provided with auxiliary heat sources – if and ONLY if it is SAFE.

Upon Restoration of Power and Heat:

- Electronic equipment should be brought up to ambient temperatures before energizing to prevent over heating of the equipment.
- Fire sprinkler system, potable water lines, plumbing lines should be checked for leaks from freeze damage after the heat has been restored to the facility and before those systems are put back into use.

CHEMICAL SPILL

When a Large or Small hazardous chemical spill has occurred:

- Call 911
- Immediately notify the Local Church Disaster Leader.
- Contain the spill with available equipment (pads, brooms, towels, absorbent powder, etc.) – IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.
- Secure the area and evacuate nearby individuals, if needed.
- Cut off the air supply to the facility.
- Follow the directions of the Fire Department and other First Responders as to clean-up procedures.

When a Large or Small nonhazardous chemical spill has occurred:

- Notify the Local Church Disaster Leader.
- If fumes are present, secure the area to prevent others from entering. If in a secured room, open windows.
- Cut off the air supply to the whole facility.
- Evacuate nearby individuals to a safe area outside.
- Deal with the spill in accordance with the instructions on the chemical bottle.
- Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

SEVERE WEATHER AND NATURAL DISASTERS

Tornado Warning:

- When a warning is issued by sirens, text messages, or other means, seek inside shelter.
- Have a weather radio available also.
- Activate Children's Response Team
- Consider the following:
 - Small interior rooms on the lowest floor and without windows.
 - Hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows.
 - Rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick, or block with no windows.
- Stay away from outside walls, windows, and doors.
- Do not allow individuals to leave the facility during a tornado warning.
- Remain sheltered in place until the tornado threat is over and announced by public or weather officials.

Earthquake:

- Evacuate the building if objects are falling from walls and/or ceilings, moving far away from the facility and out in the open (not under trees, etc.).
- For small tremors, hide under tables, pews, etc., staying away from overhead fixtures, windows, filing cabinets, wall hangings like TV's, mirrors, crosses, or other heavy objects.
- Able bodied individuals designated to assist individuals with disabilities or others needing help.

Flood:

Indoors:

- Designated individual to cut power off at the main switch immediately.
- Evacuate the facility, if needed. Move to higher level if flooding is in lower level.
- Move away from the water, do NOT attempt to walk through rising water alone. If needed to evacuate, form a human chain to assist individuals to higher ground.

Outdoors:

- Move to higher ground and stay there.
- Do not walk or drive through flood water. It only takes 6” of water to wash a car off the road. Never walk, play, or swim in flood waters – sewage, other bacteria, debris, and reptiles will be in the water.
- If your call stalls, water is rising, climb to the top of your vehicle. If the water is not rising, stay put, turn on flashers and blow the horn when others are in sight. Hang a white towel, flag, or shirt out of the window, and close the window.

Blizzard/Ice Storm:

If a blizzard or ice event is predicted, be proactive for the safety of your church family and cancel all services and events, advising individuals to stay home and safe.

- If an unexpected blizzard or ice storm begins during a service or event, do not wait for the service or event to end – act immediately.
- Local Church Disaster Leader will contact law enforcement on road conditions and safety of travel.
- If safe to leave, cancel the rest of the service and events, and allow individuals to go home.
- If not safe to leave:
 - All move into one room, downstairs if there is a lower level, no windows if possible.
 - Close off any unneeded rooms or other areas.
 - Stuff towels or rags in cracks under and around doors to help keep bitter cold out.
 - If electricity is on, keep the lights on in the one room where all are gathered. Keep lights on at night also – very little heat is produced.
 - If electricity is off:
 - Battery powered camp lights are the best option. Back up batteries.
 - If the use of candles – be mindful of placement of those, keep a close eye on them to prevent objects from catching fire.
 - Kerosene heaters/lamps – monitor use very closely, as fumes can accumulate. Watch for individuals complaining of headaches. Ventilate the room, if possible, to allow fresh air to circulate.
 - Have unused light sticks on hand to use.
- Make sure all individuals eat and drink. Consider storing some “cold weather” foods (be mindful you may not have electricity!). Have bottled water on hand.
- Have several blankets stored for the cold weather for individuals to use.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

Decide before an incident on how you will respond. Run – Hide – Fight

1. Respond quickly.
2. IF safe to do so, activate Children’s Response Team.

3. When safe, call 911.
4. Run away from the shooter and/or sounds of good shots. Run as far from the facility as you can, as a group. Leave all personal belongings behind.
5. Hide in a room, away from windows. Barricade the door with heavy furniture, cut off all the lights.
6. Cut off cell phones and remain silent.
7. Fight by throwing any type of object at the shooter(s) to distract him/her. After incapacitating the shooter(s), obtain them by sitting on them, holding them down etc. until first responders arrive. Be sure to kick the weapon(s) away from the reach of the shooter.
8. When safe to do so, aid the wounded.

BOMB THREAT

Bomb threats are most commonly received via phone, but are also made in person, via email, written note, or other means. Every bomb threat is unique and should be handled in the context of the facility or environment in which it occurs.

**** See Bomb Threat Procedures as separate attachment.**

OTHER AREAS/NEEDS TO CONSIDER

Designate someone: for a known event

- Secure and cover computers
- Secure and cover instruments
- Make sure windows are locked
- Cut off utilities
- Secure outside fixtures, playground equipment, flying objects
- Secure valuable files
- Secure valuable items
- Secure church vehicles
- Shut off gas
- Call 911
- Contact the District Superintendent
- Contact the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator

Keeping Everyone Safe

How many people may be in your building(s) in a disaster?

- Weekday(s) _____ (location in facility)
- Weeknight(s) _____ (location in facility)
- Sunday:

- Morning _____ (location in facility and time(s))
- Afternoon _____ (location in facility and time(s))
- Night _____ (location in facility and time(s))

Questions to Ponder and Make Plans for:

1. What is the plan to mobilize staff located offsite in a disaster?
 - a. How to contact staff.
 - b. What roles will they carry out?
2. What community services does your congregation support at your facility?
 - a. How will you educate them to emergency procedures?
 - b. How will you aid in safely evacuating people from various programs and areas of the facility?
 - c. How may you use some of these trained individuals to help in a time of disaster?
3. Can you anticipate special needs of people using your facilities in advance and prepare to assist them with wheelchairs, walkers, personal assistance?
4. Do you have a system in place to check on congregation members who have special needs, are shut-in, are in nursing homes, and assisted living?
 - a. A contact-tree or volunteer outreach system.
 - b. Designate a remote phone number where an emergency message can be recorded and be sure all congregation members know the number and understand its use.
 - c. Have listing of extended family for your congregation, so in case of an evacuation, you will be able to contact family to check on their status.
 - d. Those on life saving equipment (insulin pump, oxygen, etc.)

Evacuation Planning:

- Post clear evacuation maps, showing escape route, at each exit of the facility(s).
- Ensure greeters/ushers are trained in how and where to evacuate individuals.
- Locate and secure a temporary shelter to be used (other nearby churches, community centers, schools, etc.). Consider developing a mutual aid agreement with these sites.
 - Temporary Shelter Name _____
 - Address _____
- Create a phone list and system for letting authorities, friends and loved ones know where the temporary shelter is located.
- Designate alternative transportation for moving people to the temporary shelter. Be sure to check with your church insurance carrier on rules/laws about transportation. With children/youth/vulnerable adults follow Safe Gatherings Policies.

Communication Planning

To Do Items:

- Develop a list of emergency contact numbers.
- Develop a contact-tree for notifying staff, leadership, and church attendees.
- Have attendees fill out (before a disaster) a “Contact List” – extended family members names and phone numbers.
- For community disaster events:
 - Preliminary damage assessment
 - Services offered: cooling/warming; charging stations, etc.
 - One designated individual to speak with the media
- For large church disaster events (active shooter, tornado), Conference Communication Department will speak to the media. The District Superintendent and/or Conference Disaster Response Coordinator can provide a preliminary statement.

Financial Resources

Have multiple copies of important documents!

- Insurance policies
- Deed or lease of facilities
- Bank information, including all account numbers
- List of signatories on accounts
- Legal identification, evidence of tax-exempt status
- All Memoranda of Understanding (MOU’s) – agreement with another worship facility, school, etc.
- Way to obtain immediate funding

Community Planning

Places of worship can be key role models after a disaster. Residents know that you provide a host of community services and will seek you out when it is safe to do so. They may be requesting help or offering their services as volunteers. Advance planning along with community collaborations may provide for a more coordinated disaster response.

Areas for involvement:

- Pastoral care, counseling, and support to disaster clients
- Emergency shelter for congregation members, attendees, and neighborhood individuals
- Facility space for other congregations forced to relocate
- Facility for information resources

*** GPDR would like to use facilities for our “hub” – set up office, volunteer gathering/staying, etc. (Red Cross)

Pastor's Actions after a Disaster

1. **First** – assess the damage to your own household. If your home was damaged, stay home with your family. Your family comes first. This is not the time to be a Hero and attempt to take care of others.
2. Call your District Superintendent and Conference Disaster Response Coordinator – we will pastor your church family.
3. If your home was not damaged, wait until first responders say it is safe for individuals to be out and on the streets. Begin to check on your congregation and see who needs help from our Disaster Response Volunteers.

Facility Mitigation

1. Secure bookshelves, file cabinets, etc. to walls.
2. Secure TV's that might be on a cart.
3. Remove heavy objects from high to low areas.
4. Place mechanisms on cabinet doors to insure secure closure.
5. Clear hallways & stairs of stored items and clear out storage areas of items no longer needed.
6. Properly store or dispose of hazardous chemicals and flammables.
7. Secure water heaters and boilers.
8. Ensure operation/inspection of fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, AED's (automated external defibrillator), etc. Insure proper signage of location.
9. Clearly mark gas, water, boiler, electrical shutoffs with instructions.
10. Trim overhanging trees that may fall and damage property.
11. Post facility evacuation plans in public areas (include exit and assembly instructions, utilities, gas, water, boiler shutoff locations, emergency supply's location, evacuation sites).

**** PLEASE DO NOT get into donation management!!!**

Be a Ready Congregation

Draft a "Continuity of Operation Plan" for how the business, ministries, and worship will begin in a few short days (3-4).

- Where will you office from?
- Communication – phone service
- Mail service
- Wi-fi
- Where will ministries and worship be held?
 - These need to resume as soon as possible!!
 - Alternative location?
 - Reciprocal agreement with another church?
 - School?

- Park?
- Church lawn or parking lot?

The presence of the Church immediately after and in the days, weeks, months, and years after a disaster is extremely important. Your presence is a sign of Hope and Healing to your community.