

South GA Annual Conference The United Methodist Church

Disaster Response Team First Response Plan

**Prepared by the Disaster Response Team – South Georgia Conference
Updated 09/02/08**

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Disaster Response Committee

First-Response Plan

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Phase 1: Readiness

The Director of Connectional Ministries is the Annual Conference staff person charged with the responsibility of maintaining our conference's readiness to respond in any disaster. The Director will work directly with the Conference Disaster Response Team to prepare the United Methodist response to any major incident. The Director will coordinate a meeting of the Disaster Response Team at least each spring (prior to Hurricane season) to revisit the Conference Disaster Response Plan, to recruit and train volunteers for possible deployment.

Phase 2: Alert

The Disaster Response Plan will move to an "Alert" status during hurricane season as weather reports forecast the possibility of a storm affecting the South Georgia area. The Conference Crisis Team and Disaster Response Team leadership will be in communication determining the best course of action depending on the circumstances.

Part of the "Alert" response will include multiple communications about storm preparations and the Annual Conference's initial disaster response plan. All media inquiring about the South Georgia United Methodist response should be referred to the Director of Communications (1-888-266-7642).

In some cases, the Assessment Team may decide to establish a staging area for possible deployment of themselves and the Disaster Response Core Team.

If the forecasts indicate that the hurricane may be heading toward St. Simons Island or the surrounding area, the Office of Connectional Ministries will be closed and initial disaster-related communications will need to be directed to the Macon office (1-800-535-4224). Such a shift in communications will be shared through the Internet.

Phase 3: Action

The Conference Leaders will move into an Assessment phase after being notified of a specific incident. Each local United Methodist Pastor and District Superintendent is asked to notify the Office of Connectional Ministries

immediately after a natural or other disaster strikes their community. This notification is particularly important when an unexpected disaster (i.e. tornado, flooding, etc.) occurs.

Important Phone Numbers

Office of Connectional Ministries	888-266-7642 (toll-free)
Lowery Brantley's cell phone	912-270-0851
Kelly Roberson's cell phone	912-270-6172
Denise Walton's cell phone	912-269-4250

The Conference's Crisis Team and Disaster Response Team will gather additional information and initiate a response as soon as possible (ideally, within 60 minutes of the first-call.)

One of the first components of the initial response will be the activation of a phone team to answer calls coming into the Conference office regarding the disaster. Conference staff may handle this workload for the initial period. Volunteers may be recruited to assist as the situation dictates.

Phase 4: Assessment

An Assessment Team will respond to the area affected by disaster as soon as possible after receiving notification of the incident.

Barry Giddens, Disaster Response Committee Chairperson
Lowery Brantley, Connectional Ministries Director
Kelly Roberson, Communications Director
Charles Cravey, United Methodist Volunteers in Mission Chair

As many of the above persons will respond as possible. Other designees may be assigned in place of one or more of these persons depending on their own availability.

The District Superintendent and the United Methodist Pastors of the affected area will be invited to join the Assessment Team for the initial assessment of need.

The Director of Connectional Ministries or the Director of Communications will notify the Bishop immediately of the Assessment Team's deployment. The Bishop will respond to the affected area as the circumstance dictates.

The immediate tasks of this Assessment Team are:

- Connecting with local area United Methodists to care and show concern.
- Assessing the damage.
- Offering care and concern to the other affected persons, as

appropriate.

- Connecting with Governmental Agencies and Faith-Based Groups.
- Adjusting the SGA UMC Action Plan to this particular incident.
- Sharing initial information with Conference constituencies.
- Beginning implementation of Action Plan, which will include notification to the national UMCOR office.

The Assessment Team will report findings and make recommendations to the South Georgia Conference Disaster Response Executive Team. This team is composed of the Conference Disaster Response Chairperson, the Director of Connectional Ministries, the Bishop, the Director of Administrative Services, the Director of Communications, the dean of the Cabinet (or designated District Superintendent), Conference Mission Secretary, and the South GA UMVIM chair.

This Executive Team will be responsible for the decisions shaping the South Georgia Annual Conference's plan of response to this specific incident. Decisions about financial matters and protocols (such as, financial appeals, operational budget, etc.), personnel deployment and relief, and other operational policies will be handled by the Executive Team.

Phase 5: Relief

A Disaster Response Core Team of 6 to 8 trained persons will be deployed as soon as practical to organize and coordinate the initial relief efforts of the United Methodist Church. This deployment may be simultaneous to the Assessment Team's activation depending on the information gathered about the scope of the incident.

The job assignments for these team members will vary depending on the incident, but the following tasks will need attention by members of this Disaster Response Core Team or from local United Methodist volunteers.

A. Incident Coordination (IC)

The Assessment Team will provide initial incident coordination of the United Methodist Response until such time as a single person is assigned that responsibility.

The Incident Coordinator (IC) will be concerned with:

- adjusting, implementing and giving general oversight to the SGA UMC action plan for this particular incident. Initially, the attention will be on the immediate relief of human need. Soon thereafter, the attention will turn to planning for the long-term recovery. This long-term response may include

working with community leaders and other faith-based groups to establish a Community Faith-Based Recovery Organization.

- developing and maintaining relationships with the local United Methodist leadership, the Governmental Agencies and Faith-based groups. The IC will attend the daily briefing held by GEMA and share this information back with other Disaster Response Core Team members.

- supervising the work of the Disaster Response Core Team and maintaining communication with the Conference Disaster Response Executive Team.

- conducting a daily or twice-daily briefing for all coordinators and key local United Methodist leaders.

B. Logistics Coordinator

The Logistics Coordinator will be concerned with:

- Locating, providing and organizing facilities, materials and services for the Disaster Response Core Team and the overall Disaster Relief Operation.
- Establishing a communications system for the Disaster Response Core Team.
- Establishing, training and coordinating a telephone team to receive calls from those willing to assist with volunteer work teams or those wanting to provide materials for the relief/recovery efforts.
- Working in conjunction with the Jobs Coordinator and others to establish a materials needed list and to find a means of securing these materials. (The securing of materials may be in coordination with the centralized materials center established by the Seventh Day Adventists.)
- Establishing an administrative organization to maintain information gathered throughout the process in an appropriate manner.
- Working with the Conference Treasurer and the local United Methodist Church to establish a means for receiving donated funds and for paying necessary expenses. In the short-term it may be best to establish a process for receiving and disbursing funds through the local church's regular checking account while maintaining appropriate documentation of all transactions. Later, a special checking account may be established for the long-term recovery

organization. Important Note: Funds sent from United Methodist sources that are not spent for the disaster must be returned to the Conference Treasurer in a timely fashion after the disaster response operation is closed-out. This expectation, along with other financial policies about the distribution of funds, should be communicated up-front with the local United Methodist Church leaders.

C. Intake Coordinator

The Intake Coordinator will be concerned with:

- Establishing a process for receiving information on those needing an Early Response Team (ERT) to assist with initial clean-up and/or other unmet needs with which we may assist or refer to another organization that is providing that assistance.
NOTE: This process may be in conjunction with other Governmental Agencies or faith-based organizations; or on the affected United Methodists; or on those under-served families/individuals in the community. This may take the form of being at the Community Disaster Relief Center; or by personal survey of the community. The local situation will determine the means used.
- Develop work order requests and pass them along to the Jobs Coordinator.

D. Jobs Coordinator

The Jobs Coordinator will be concerned with:

- Receiving work order requests.
- Making an on-site visit to clarify job assignment, materials needed, location directions and any special instructions prior to assigning this work order to an Early Response Team. A release to work agreement must be signed by the property owner prior to the assignment of a work team.
- Preparing Work Orders for assignment including a materials needed list. This list of needed materials will be referred to the Logistics Coordinator.
- Following-up on ERT when they are on-scene and after the work is completed to make sure everything is done in a satisfactory manner.

E. Volunteer Coordinator

The Volunteer Coordinator will be concerned with:

- Recruiting Early Response Teams for deployment by following-up with those who have called or e-mailed expressions of their availability. Work with the Communications Director to help get the word out about the need for additional teams as necessary.
- Working with Logistics Coordinator to determine what (if any) housing is available for ERTs so these details can be communicated with teams for their planning.
- Reviewing the “ready” work orders to determine what tasks the team will be assigned and what tools the team may need to bring with them to the site.
- Gathering information from IC regarding any special instructions for volunteers coming into the area (i.e., the need for tetanus shots, bottled water, or safety precautions.) Conveying this information to teams coming into the area. It would be our goal to develop a special instruction sheet with all basic information can be e-mailed or sent to teams prior to their departure to the affected area.
- Scheduling the teams for deployment, receiving and orienting the teams. Issuing t-shirts, vehicle signs, or any other needed identification for United Methodist ERTs. Securing a signed release form from each volunteer.
- For disasters inside the bounds of the South GA Conference, it is likely that someone from the UMVIM organization will be assigned the task as Volunteer Coordinator during the early clean-up phase. The Conference UMVIM chair will request Early Response Teams first from within the bounds of the conference. If the Disaster Response Executive Team determines that we need Early Response Teams from outside our Annual Conference, the UMVIM chair will be authorized to request assistance from the Southeast Jurisdiction’s UMVIM office.

F. Caring Ministry Coordinator

The Caring Ministry Coordinator will be concerned with:

- Offering care to locally affected persons and relief workers. The Coordinator will determine the scope of immediate need and recruit the needed number of clergy or lay persons from the Annual Conference to be deployed to the affected community. These

volunteers should be asked to meet at a specific location (possibly the local United Methodist Church) for orientation, assignment and prayer. T-shirts and/or other forms of identification as a United Methodist disaster response volunteer will be issued as needed.

G. Communications Coordinator

Initially, the Conference Director of Communications will fill the role as Communications Coordinator. As the response continues these functions may remain with the Director of Communications (though the Director will not remain on-site for the full duration of the relief and recovery process). If determined best, a local communications coordinator or the long-term IC may assume these responsibilities locally, while remaining in close contact with the Director of Communications.

The Communications Coordinator will be concerned with:

- Communicating with the Conference constituents about the needs of the affected people, about the South GA Conference's response to the area, and about the specific ways local churches can help with money, materials, and volunteers.
- Assisting the local United Methodist churches to communicate the Disaster Team's response of care and concern, the action plan presently being implemented, and other such information as deemed helpful by the local United Methodist leaders and/or the IC.
- Coordinating contacts with local media outlets to communicate the United Methodist response as deemed appropriate by the local United Methodist leaders and/or the IC.

Phase 6: Recovery

The Assessment Team, in conjunction with local and conference United Methodist leaders, will begin developing a long-term recovery plan for this particular incident with other community leaders and faith-based organizations.

The Long-Term Recovery plan will depend on the nature and extent of the disaster. Generally, we will work in a way that empowers the local community to self-determine the best plan of action, rather than being told what to do by outsiders.

Ultimately, we will be seeking to help the local religious community to organize a Long Term Recovery (LTR) organization. The LTR group will develop and implement a plan for the rebuilding phase. The Incident Coordinator (IC) will work with the local ministerial association or through direct contact with local church leaders to call together a group that can take responsibility for long term recovery.

Our conference disaster response team members have experience in helping local communities get their LTR organized. We can also call in additional resources from UMCOR, GA-VOAD, or Church World Service to facilitate the development of the organization, to train case workers, and expedite the LTR's launching of services to those affected by the disaster.

In cases where the disaster's scope is larger than what a local community can handle on its own, the Conference Disaster Response Team will work with other GA-VOAD members and national UMCOR to implement an appropriate Long Term Recovery plan and organization.

Glossary of Terms

Assessment Team is the initial group of South Georgia Conference leaders who go to the area affected by a disaster. The Assessment Team is composed of the Conference Chairperson of the Disaster Response Team, the Director of Connectional Ministries and the Director of Communications.

Caring Ministry Coordinator is the core team member who insures that those affected by the disaster and those assisting with recovery receive appropriate Christian care.

Church World Service (CWS) is part of the National Council of Churches and it has a disaster response arm, which helps tremendously by helping form and support Long Term Recovery organizations. Church World Service is a member of the national Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster recovery (VOAD).

Communications Coordinator is the core team member who coordinates the flow of accurate and timely information to conference constituents, local United Methodists affected by the disaster, and local media outlets.

Conference Crisis Team is comprised of the Bishop, Director of Connectional Ministries and Director of Communications. These three persons convene upon first report of disaster threat, or report of a major incident affecting the United Methodist Church within the bounds of the South Georgia Annual Conference. The three principal members may include others in gathering facts and establishing the South Georgia United Methodist response to the incident.

Conference Disaster Response Team is a sub-committee of the Outreach Discipleship Team charged with planning and implementing the South Georgia disaster response to incidents within the conference bounds. This team is our conference's UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief).

Disaster Response Executive Team is composed of the Conference Disaster Response Chairperson, the Director of Connectional Ministries, the Bishop, the Director of Administrative Services, the Director of Communications, the dean of the Cabinet (or designated District Superintendent), Conference Mission Secretary, and the South GA UMVIM chair. This Executive Team will be responsible for the decisions shaping the South Georgia Annual Conference's plan of response to this specific incident. Decisions about financial matters and protocols (such as, financial appeals, operational budget, etc.), personnel deployment and relief, and other operational policies will be handled by the Executive Team.

Disaster Response Core Team is a group of six to ten (6-10) people who will be activated as necessary to a disaster relief location. A pool of fifteen to twenty (15-20) people will be trained and ready for immediate assignment or to relieve the first core team members after several days. These team members will be cross-trained so the needed job skills will be available at any time.

Early Response Teams (ERT) are groups of eight to twelve (8-12) volunteers who are assigned the task of helping those affected by the disaster to clean-up their homes and make them safe, secure and sanitary. The ERT does not do repair work.

Faith-based Groups are the various religious groups active in disaster recovery. The United Methodist Church is one of many denominations who respond during times of disaster relief and recovery.

GA-VOAD (Volunteers Active in Disaster) is a state organization comprised of all volunteer groups active during disaster response and recovery. The North and South Georgia United Methodist Conferences are members of GA-VOAD, and serve as UMCOR's representatives at these meetings. VOAD is a networking group that seeks to work cooperatively during disaster response.

Incident Coordinator (IC) is the lead person for the South Georgia Annual Conference's response to the particular disaster. This leadership role may rotate among several persons, but there is only one Incident Coordinator at any given time.

Intake Coordinator is the core team member who coordinates the receipt of work order requests for initial clean-up of damaged homes or property by Early Response Teams.

Jobs Coordinator is the core team member who follows-up on work order requests seeking to clarify the specific needs of the property owner and securing the necessary release for work to proceed.

Logistics Coordinator is the core team member who coordinates the many operational/ administrative details for the team and for the overall UM disaster response to this incident.

Long Term Recovery (LTR) is the phase of disaster response that follows the initial clean-up and is when homes are repaired and rebuilt and people are restored in their homes. The LTR organization coordinates the rebuilding phase. This organization is typically a community faith-based group.

Volunteer Coordinator is the core team member who coordinates the recruitment, assignment and training of volunteer work teams and individuals.

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is the organization within the United Methodist Church that works in disaster relief and recovery. Each Annual Conference has a group such as South Georgia's Disaster Response Team that is the primary UMCOR presence within the bounds of the conference. The national UMCOR office offers support and expertise to Annual Conference teams, but each annual conference is expected to manage its own disaster response.

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) is a movement within the United Methodist Church that promotes and facilitates opportunities for laity and clergy to volunteer in short-term domestic and international mission service. The Early Response Team training and coordination is a function of UMVIM under the supervision of the Disaster Response Executive Team (on the conference level) and UMCOR (on a national level).