

A Pastor's Guide for Disaster Preparedness and Response

I. When You Know a Disaster Is Imminent

A. Monitoring

Listen to the radio/television and follow any instructions issued by your County Emergency Management Agency. If they advise evacuation, GO. If you stay you risk not only your own life but the lives of emergency personnel who might have to go to save you.

B. Evacuation

If you must evacuate, first take only what you need to survive. If you can take more, focus on small personal items such as photographs, insurance papers, wills, etc. If going to a shelter, take your own bedding. **Notify your district office or district superintendent that you are evacuating - and where you expect to go!** Provide him or her with a contact phone number. It is also good to notify one or two key people from your congregation that you are evacuating.

C. Personal Safety

Important: See to the needs of your family first! Whatever your level of involvement with disaster response or your congregation, you will not be effective if you are uncertain of the safety of your household. What you do is an example for others regarding their own families.

D. Shut-ins

If you know of shut-ins who need to be evacuated, notify law enforcement or rescue workers and let them handle the actual evacuation.

E. Interim Ministry

If time permits, gather a pocket-sized Bible, church directory, maps, disaster plans, portable communication set, and other items to help you respond to pastoral care and/or disaster-related ministry.

II. During the Emergency Phase of the Disaster

A. Personal Assessment

See if anyone in your household is injured. Unless it is unsafe to remain, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you.

B. Personal Judgment

If you are a victim do not rely on your judgment or that of other victims. Listen to emergency personnel and follow their instructions.

C. Stay Alert

Monitor the damage to your community by listening to news reports, and do not interfere with rescue efforts for which you have not been previously trained. It may be easier for the district superintendent and/or parishioners to contact you at home or your evacuation location during this phase.

III. During the Relief Phase of the Disaster

A. Parish Assessment

Check to see if anyone in your church(es) is a victim. Notify other clergy if you discover any of their parishioners as victims. Work with law enforcement personnel to get a tour of the damaged area, but **do not interfere** with any ongoing relief efforts. Don't gawk. If a parishioner is a victim, be a presence to that family as you would in any other emergency. Your presence will provide some comfort.

B. Damage Assessment

Informally, determine the amount of damage in your area. Do not be surprised if you are in shock

at what you see, and expect to see others in shock as well. Victims and near-victims will want to tell their stories over and over. Use your training as a listener - this is an important function you can fill.

C. Communication

Inform your District Superintendent about your situation, that of your church's physical plant, and that of your community. If you are a victim it is important that you let the DS know. If there is damage in your area be prepared to take your DS and/or a Disaster Response Team representative on a tour. If your area is not damaged, offer your services to assist clergy who may be victims or who have victims in their parish. If you are unable to contact your District Superintendent, please call the Office of Connectional Ministries (888-266-7642) to report disaster-related damage to the Conference Disaster Response Team. Do not assume the Conference knows your status or level of need. If the disaster is on the weekend or after normal working hours, please feel free to contact the Director of Connectional Ministries at 912-270-0851; or the Director of Communications at 912-270-6172; or the Associate Director of Connectional Ministries at 912-269-4250. Your information will help the Conference Disaster Response Team respond in a timely manner.