

The recovery of a congregation following a disaster will be much more rapid if the congregation is able to convene for prayer, liturgy, and all other congregational functions as soon as possible.

The continuation or quick resumption of worship following a disaster is the highest priority, along with routine and special congregational activities. Doing so helps in several ways: it maintains the feeling of community and communal support, sustains continuity in parishioners' lives in a world that has seemingly been turned upside down, and enables the congregation to preserve its identity.

The purpose of this brochure is to assist your congregation in its preparation for a disaster by urging you to begin developing a plan to soften the negative impact a disaster can present. The following preparedness tips can serve as the basis for your own congregation's disaster safety plan.

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

Department of Health and Human Services
www.hhs.gov

Department of Homeland and Security
www.ready.gov

FEMA Publications

The following publications are available by calling 1-800-480-2520 or online at www.fema.gov

- *Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness (IS-22)*
- *Helping Children Cope with Disaster (FEMA 478)*
- *Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and other Special Needs (FEMA 476)*
- *Food and Water in an Emergency (FEMA 477)*

Humane Society of the United States
www.hsus.org/disaster

Institute for Business and Home Safety
www.ibhs.org

National Weather Service
www.nws.noaa.gov

FaithfulResponse
PROVIDING COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR ALL

1294 Bellmore Avenue
North Bellmore, New York 11710
Phone: 516.679.0080
Fax: 516.409.5184
email: help@faithfulresponse.org
website: faithfulresponse.org

Your House of Worship

DEVELOPING A DISASTER PLAN



“Readiness is all.”
- William Shakespeare -

FaithfulResponse
PROVIDING COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR ALL

DEVELOPING A DISASTER PLAN

Church records are the most vital part of your church organization. Maintenance and preparedness should become part of church routine.

1 PHYSICAL PLANT

- Check that your insurance policy meets the minimum requirements of your mortgage holder.
- Is there a current estimate on the value of the church property? If not, get one.
- Arrange for an alternate facility in the event your church is severely damaged.
- Arrange for an alternate facility for housing of religious and clergy.
- Ensure that you have a phone list of current parishioners—set a schedule to update the list regularly and highlight important information, such as parishioners with special needs or special skills.
- Maintain a list of all supplies needed to keep the church operational.
- Designate one remote phone number where an emergency message can be recorded and be sure that all parishioners know that number and understand its use.
- Provide CPR and first aid training to key employees and make all employees aware which individuals have been trained.
- Know where the utilities main shutoff is located.
- Move large heavy boxes, binders, etc. to lower shelves.
- Secure heavy items to the floor.
- Have an emergency lighting system that will illuminate when power goes out.

- Trim any large overhanging trees that could fall and damage property.
- Maintain a storage container of emergency supplies:
 - ✓ Flashlights with extra batteries
 - ✓ First aid kit
 - ✓ Basic tool kit
 - ✓ Non-perishable food and water for unexpected confines (*replace every six months*)
 - ✓ Weather radio (*battery operated*)

2 EQUIPMENT AND RECORDS MAINTENANCE

- Make at least two backup copies of your computer / network files regularly.
- Keep one copy of backup files offsite.
- Use UL listed surge protectors and battery backup systems.
- Consider where business equipment is located, for example, near a hot water tank or pipes that could burst, or on the floor where things could fall on it.
- Maintain an inventory of assets so losses can be documented for insurance.
- Identify hardware and software critical to recover the business functions.

- When there is a change in hardware, software, or a process that might impact the parish, update your disaster safety plan immediately.
- Line up alternate vendors for essential supplies and equipment.
- If vital records are not computerized, ensure that deeds, insurance papers, mortgages, and other vital records not needed regularly are kept offsite, e.g., in a safe deposit box.
- Develop and maintain a written parish disaster plan and provide copies to parish leaders.

3 PARTNER WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

- Decide if your church can be used as a shelter.
- Identify special needs in the community and develop the capacity to build a corps of volunteers and facilities in preparation for a disaster.
- Develop a special ministry to assist different groups in your community, for example, to aid the elderly and disabled or to care for young children separated from parents.
- Maintain an updated list of parishioners and their phone numbers willing to volunteer their time and effort during a disaster.