

Name of Church _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Social Media _____

Goal Date for completion _____

DISASTER PLAN

Date Updated: _____

This plan (or portions thereof) is to be activated in the event of a disaster or warning of potential disaster.

- Section 1: Contacts and Staff Responsibilities
- Section 2: Facilities Evacuation Plan
- Section 3: Alternate Facilities and General Communication
- Section 4: Documentation of Property
- Section 5: Protection of Property
- Section 6: Caring for the Congregation
- Section 7: Immediate Response Protocol

Overview

This document is a template to help churches work through designing a disaster preparedness plan. It is not exhaustive and should be expanded upon, taking into consideration the many variables in found in church facilities, congregations and disasters. Add, delete, and make it your own.

SECTION 1

Contacts and Staff Responsibilities

CONTACTS - Cell phone numbers are essential because disasters don't happen during office hours.

List all church staff, clerk of session, disaster team members, etc.

Church Contacts:

Position:

Name:

Phone: (mobile/text, home)

Email Address:

Home address:

Position:

Name:

Phone: (mobile/text, home)

Email Address:

Home address:

Add others as necessary.

Local Community Contacts:

Emergency: 911

Police:

Sheriff:

Fire Rescue:

Emergency Management:

Insurance Agent:

Presbytery Contacts:

Presbytery Office Address:

Phone:

Email:

Website Address:

Position: Executive/Presbytery Leader

Name:

Phone: (mobile/text, home)

Email Address:

Position: Stated Clerk
Name:
Phone: (mobile/text, home)
Email Address:

Position: Administrative
Name:
Phone: (mobile/text, home)
Email Address:

Add others as necessary.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS DUTIES

Assign duties to staff and disaster team members to perform if adequate warning is provided (hurricane, etc.). Also, make a list of who does what if no warning is provided (tornado, etc.) Plan for someone to act as “back up” in case a staff member is out of town.

Provide brief but clear descriptions of their responsibilities so everyone understands ahead of time what is expected of them.

Make sure staff is briefed on alternate plans and post-disaster operating procedure.

Examples:

Administrator – Make back up of all important computer files and see that they are stored off site.

Building Maintenance Staff – Prepare and secure equipment, buildings and grounds for the emergency.

Ushers/Greeters – Follow protocol for evacuating the building (fire, bomb threat, etc.). Should be trained in AED, CPR and First Aid.

List everything that needs to be done in checklist form for each person and include in this plan. Add or remove as needed.

Congregational Preparedness Checklist

_____ Develop a communication system within the congregation (i.e. phone tree, Shepherds, etc.)

_____ List of congregational members with special needs noted and updated annually

_____ Congregational Directory updated at least quarterly. (Including e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers.)

_____ Insurance Policies reviewed annually and saved in multiple locations.

_____ Financial and Session records saved electronically and stored in multiple locations monthly.

_____ Inventory of physical plant made and updated annually. Video record recommended for insurance purposes.

_____ Determine if the physical plant can be used as an emergency shelter, point of distribution, etc.

_____ Consult with local American Red Cross and Emergency Management Agency regarding possible shelters in the area.

_____ Share plan with Emergency Management Agency, first responders and presbytery.

SECTION 2

Facilities Evacuation Plan

The evacuation plan should be in a presentation format and placed on the walls in strategic locations so staff, members and visitors will know where to go in an emergency. This plan should also designate a safe room where a large group of people could weather a storm if necessary and a location to gather outside of the building that would be clear of emergency vehicles.

1. Make a floor plan of each of your buildings. On it, mark the exit doors to the outside, location of fire alarm pulls, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and AED unit. Post the plan throughout the building, marking “you are here” at the appropriate location. Show how to get to the nearest two exits
2. Attach your evacuation plan to this document
3. At staff meeting at least once a year, talk about what everyone should do in case of an emergency. Discuss both evacuation and maintaining a safe area. Make this part of your Usher/Greeter training. If your facility already has evacuation plans posted, check them yearly for updates.
4. Conduct a congregational fire drill once a year. Include staff, session, deacons, ushers and greeters and as many congregation members as possible, ensuring that there are plans for evacuating vulnerable people.

SECTION 3

Alternate Facilities and General Communication

A disaster may render portions of your facility uninhabitable. You should have a plan for alternative work/worship space.

- 1. Determine if there is an accessible location, perhaps another church, for an alternate office that can be used in an emergency situation (e.g. offices damaged, no power, etc.). Develop an agreement with that site that you will offer your facilities to them for emergency use if they will reciprocate. Decide what systems, procedures, and records should be available in an emergency, and make plans accordingly.*
- 2. Plan for an off-site worship location should your building become uninhabitable. If safe to do so, meeting for worship in the church parking lot the Sunday following the disaster can be a time of great healing. **If at all possible and safety is not compromised, Do not cancel worship services.***
- 3. Determine who will be the Media Spokesperson.*
- 4. Keep the website and social media current.*

Name of Alternate Facility:

Address:

Contact Person(s):

Phone/Text:

Email:

Name of Media Spokesperson/Alternate:

Phone/Text:

Email:

Name of Social Media/Website Communicator:

Phone/Text:

Email:

SECTION 4

Documentation of Property

FACILITIES INVENTORY

Complete a facilities inventory of your property. Document the inventory with a written description listing the items, including serial number, cost, and the date purchased if possible. Also, take digital pictures or a room-by-room video/DVD (a great project for the youth). Make copies and store this inventory in a couple of safe places off site. Update your inventory annually. Check your insurance policy yearly and update as necessary.

CHURCH RECORDS

Determine what records need to be protected and copied. List those records below.

1. Membership records including Church Directory
2. Financial records
3. Session minutes
4. Historical documents
5. *Other?*
 - a. Back-up Electronic Records on a routine basis (at least monthly) and store off site or to the cloud.
 - b. Put irreplaceable hardcopy files in a waterproof/fireproof container and store off the floor, above expected flooding levels (or move off site). These tasks should be included on one of the staff preparedness checklists, as noted in Section 1.

SECTION 5

Protection of Property

Equipment and supplies such as plastic bags, plastic sheeting, tarps, duct tape, rope and waterproof containers are needed to cover equipment and protect items, etc. These supplies should be purchased ahead of time and stored ready for use. Upon notification of a pending disaster event, each area of all buildings should be secured if time allows. Items that will need special protection should be listed accordingly. Equipment that requires special procedures (tie down, gas and electrical shut-off, etc.) should also have instructions included with the checklist.

PROPERTY CHECKLIST

1. Place plastic bags or sheet plastic over electronic equipment.
 2. Disconnect electricity to all electronic equipment.
 3. Cover large items with tarps.
 4. Position equipment in hallways if feasible or move away from windows.
 5. Check each room after it is secured to insure all items are properly secured.
 6. Turn off electrical breakers, shut of gas and water mains if deemed necessary.
- Add other tasks.*

SECTION 6

Caring for the Congregation

Plan ways the church can assist congregation members and members of the community. Implement the following ideas if possible.

1. Remind your congregation to be prepared for disasters. See resources lists.
2. Identify those within your congregation who may need assistance with disaster preparation. Are there vulnerable members who may need help (i.e. preparing to shelter in place, shopping for supplies, transportation if they have to evacuate)? Are there vulnerable non-members whom the church could assist? Assemble a team who will assist those who need help.
3. Develop a system to check on members and neighbors post-disaster. Remember that phone lines may be down and cell phones may not work. Text messaging often works when other communication does not.
4. If your church is not damaged and it's safe to do so, open your facility to the community and responders (e.g., get water, charge cell phones, etc.).

SECTION 7

Immediate Response Protocol

Adjust the following to fit your particular situation.

IF YOU HAVE PRIOR NOTIFICATION

1. Contact staff and volunteers. Distribute/email the written protocol to be sure everyone has the latest update.
2. Activate your preparedness plan to protect facility and contents.
3. Staff should share personal shelter location arrangements (where will they go if unable to stay at home).

DURING THE EVENT

TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO BE SAFE!

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING AN EVENT

1. Initial contacts are made to all staff.
2. Staff / disaster team contact each other to confirm initial response actions.
3. Staff / assigned personnel should begin to assess building as soon as it is safe to do so. Do not turn utilities on unless safe to do so.
4. Activate protocol for checking on congregation members.
5. Contact your presbytery office and ask the presbytery to advise PDA of the disaster.
6. Hold a staff meeting as soon as possible.
7. Worship together.

Adapted from resources prepared by Florida Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Network (FLAPDAN)

Contact Presbyterian Disaster Assistance pda.pcusa.org