

Disaster Preparation Checklist

Here's a checklist of actions church leaders and members should take when hurricanes, tornadoes, floods or other natural disasters threaten:

Preparation

- Ground all actions in prayer for strength, calm and focus. We don't need to panic. God will provide.
- Church members should get their homes and those of their neighbors ready. Steps include:
 - ✓ Protecting property—boarding up or taping windows, tying down items, moving things that could be flooded.
 - ✓ Securing or removing valuables—key documents, jewelry, pictures and other personal treasures.
 - ✓ Stocking up on survival supplies—food, water, medications, batteries, flashlights, candles, first-aid items—that can be used if power and water services are lost.
- Churches leaders should:
 - ✓ Check on the status of all church families, especially shut-ins, people with special needs or others who might be vulnerable. Make sure they are ready for the storm.
 - ✓ Protect the church building and parsonage—boarding up or taping windows, tying down items, moving things that could be flooded.
 - ✓ Secure key church records or remove them to an alternate site (It is always wise to keep backup records at a different location.) These records should include an inventory of all church and parsonage property, financial and membership documents, and archival materials.
 - ✓ Secure or remove sacred vessels, altar furniture, etc.

Evacuation

- If public safety authorities order an evacuation, everyone—including pastors and their families—should leave. No one should remain in harm's way.
- Church leaders should ensure the continued witness of the church in spite of the disaster. Church leaders should prepare for ministry with church members and others in the community while they are displaced and when they return.
- Families should turn off utilities before leaving, take supplies for the trip. (blankets, medications, food, water), decide on a destination and select a meeting point there.
- Church leaders should make sure shut-ins, people with special needs and others who might be vulnerable have a way to evacuate.

Return

- Determine what church and community resources are available to help with recovery.
- Help victims. Our first priority after a disaster is to rescue and provide aid to people affected, minimize further damage or injuries, and prevent further losses of lives or property.
- Inventory property losses—personal and church. Report damage assessments to the district office and the conference Communications and Public Witness Office (888-349-4191). Make damage claims to Church Mutual Insurance (800-554-2642/Option 2—claims).

Response, short-term relief, long-term recovery

- Determine how the congregation will continue its Christian witness in the community and help with disaster relief and recovery.
- Consider special needs for ministry after a disaster with children, older members, people with disabilities. Stokes, heart attacks and divorces often increase after a major disaster.
- Contact Don Jones, disaster-recovery coordinator (210-695-9384), for help with recovery efforts or Susan Hellums, Volunteers in Mission coordinator (956-661-9771), to schedule recovery work teams. The United Methodist Church will support people affected by the disaster with prayers, presence and gifts for as long as is necessary to help them recover.

