

The success of all local disaster response efforts rests in the hands of local pastors and congregations who must prepare for a disaster long before the threat of an event occurs.

According to our Conference Disaster Plan, following a disaster, it is the local church pastor who must relay valuable information to their congregation and likewise to the District Superintendent, the District Disaster Response Team, and Conference Disaster Response Team so that the people in their community receive the best possible care.

This brochure provides basic information on local church preparations and responsibilities. You can find the entire Conference Disaster Plan on the Virginia Conference website by going to www.vaumc.org, selecting "Ministries," then "Disaster Response."

DIRECT CONTACTS DURING TIMES OF DISASTER

Disaster Toll Free Phone Line:
1 (866) 264-8488

E-mail:
DisasterInfo@vaumc.org

ALL OTHER TIMES:

**VIRGINIA CONFERENCE
OF
THE UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH
CONFERENCE DISASTER
RESPONSE TEAM
PO BOX 5606
10330 STAPLES MILL ROAD
GLEN ALLEN, VA 23060
PHONE: 800-768-6040 OR
804-521-1100 EXT. 144
FAX: 804-521-1179**

www.vaumc.org



BEFORE A DISASTER HAPPENS...

*Disaster Preparation
and Responsibilities
of the Local Church
in the Event of a
Disaster*

**Virginia
Conference
Disaster
Response Team**

DEVELOP A DISASTER PLAN FOR YOUR CHURCH

Every church needs to have a disaster plan in place well before anything happens—be it fire, tornado, flood, or other event. This plan should be developed by a group from the local church which includes the Pastor. Use these Disaster Prep Top 10 questions developed by the Mississippi Conference to start your discussions.

IN THE EVENT OF A NATURAL DISASTER...

1. How will you contact your membership, particularly if power or phone service is disrupted?
2. How will you help yourself and your congregation evacuate or prepare if a disaster threatens your area?
3. How will you secure and back up your church records?
4. How will your church be a "mission station"?
5. How will you partner with neighboring churches?
6. How will you tell your story?
7. Do you have adequate insurance for all church facilities, including parsonage, and do you know how to contact your insurance carrier?

8. Clergy, is your personal emergency contact information (including your cell number and your e-mail address) up-to-date with the conference and your district office?
9. Do you know the list of emergency items and essential supplies to request/collect before and following a disaster? (Hint: No clothes!)
10. How are you and your congregation preparing for the next disaster? For information on making disaster kits and other ways to prepare, visit: www.ready.gov

When you have answered these 10 questions, you're well on your way to forming your local church disaster response plan!

PRIOR TO A DISASTER

- Name a Local Church Coordinator and make sure the person knows their responsibilities according to your plan. Develop a committee to work with that person. You can use the position descriptions for the District and Conference Disaster plan to form your local group.
- Have an effective calling/contact tree to each church family. The calling tree should be used to send and receive information. We strongly suggest a geographic process so it can still be used in absence of power and telephone service.
- If no evacuation is expected, the Pastor should enlist the help of the congregation to assist people in preparing for the disaster, which can include structural

preparation and stockpiling of needed supplies etc.

- *Set the proper example.* If there is an evacuation, the Pastor should leave and urge all the congregation and community to do the same.

FOLLOWING A DISASTER

- The Pastor needs to report to the District Superintendent **ASAP** as much of the following information as possible:
 - ⇒ Status of congregation (including yourself and your family)
 - ⇒ Damage to church and parsonage
 - ⇒ General condition of neighborhood
 - ⇒ The Pastor's ability to minister to the congregation if the Pastor's family is also affected by the disaster.
- Use a calling/contact tree to check on church families.
- Relay information to the congregation and community about federal, state and conference relief options, locations of shelters, food, supplies, filing centers for financial assistance, pastoral care and counseling and other vital information which will be supplied to you by the District Disaster Response Team Communications Coordinator.
- *Worship on Sunday.* If the church is damaged, find an alternate location or worship outside.