DIOCESE OF EAST CAROLINA
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS
AND RESPONSE INFORMATION

May 2020
INTRODUCTION

Each parish in the deanery should have a plan for action in the event of a disaster so that people, property, and assets can be protected and parishes resume operations as quickly as possible. These guidelines are primarily written to accommodate the threat of hurricanes. Prior preparation will also assist in response to situations which give no warning such as: terrorist, toxic materials, fire and flood damage.

INDIVIDUAL PARISHES WILL HAVE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

1. Focus Area One: Buildings and Grounds

Supply Availability

- Heavy plastic for wrapping electronics and other sensitive equipment.
- Strong containers for use when packing and evacuating items from the church building

Administrative

Prepare and box up all materials necessary to establish the parish office at another location. This should include: computers; financial records (including pledge and payment records); all parish documents (including articles of incorporation, by-laws, insurance policies, etc.). Computers should be backed up often and copies kept on and off-site.

Plant and Property

- Draw and post a chart of the facilities to show hook-up and shut-off points for all utilities.
- Create an instruction sheet of directions to isolate buildings from external utilities.
- Build a file of still photographs and video recordings of property, buildings, and valuable contents with several copies and keep off-site. Inventory music.
- Prepare designated packing containers and contents list for each container ready for rapid evacuation.
- Steps to protect immovable items of church property as feasible.

Important Contact Information Listing

Every member of the Committee should hold a copy of a list containing the following contact information with telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, and email addresses. Send this list to the Diocese as well.

- Senior Warden
• Junior Warden
• Vestry Members
• Leaders of organizations meeting in parish facilities
• Diocesan Office
• Police Department, non-emergency number
• Fire Department, non-emergency number
• Rescue Squad, non-emergency number
• Insurance Company
• Electric Utility Company
• Water Utility Company
• County Emergency Operations Center.

**Communication Issues**

• Phone recordings, parish websites and email addresses will usually remain active when hosted on out-of-town servers. Keep the information current and place a notice on the website immediately before the storm and as soon afterward as possible.

**COUNT-DOWN TO WEATHER-RELATED DISASTERS**

Establish a count-down sequence to make timely decisions and complete work no later than the following schedule of deadlines:

72 hours: Declare and activate the plan. Notify committee members and parish of activation.
48 hours: Back-up all computers with several copies. Have a copy to travel off-site with the Rector and Wardens. Bring all possible outside equipment into buildings.
24 hours: Rector or designated alternate makes the firm decision to evacuate or remain.
           Communicate the evacuation decision to the Diocesan Office.
           Notify leaders of event cancellations.
           Set thermostats on refrigerators and freezers as cold as possible.
           Wrap all vulnerable equipment in plastic.
           Place special notices on the telephone voicemail and website home page.
           If evacuating, pack essential and valuable items in designated containers.
           Remove reserve sacrament materials.
18 hours: Disconnect all utilities and thoroughly shut down buildings.
12 hours: If evacuating, leave no later than the 12 hour point. **All readiness plans should be complete.**

**RECOVERY PRIORITIES FOLLOWING THE DISASTER**

• Reestablish communications access and availability for parishioners reporting in as a first priority.
• Walk through the property to assess damage and immediate needs for security.
• Contact the Diocesan Office directly.
• Begin contacting parishioners to assess short-term and long-term needs.
• Contact the insurance carrier, utility providers, and government agencies as needed.
• Reestablish the parish routine and schedule.
• Begin cleaning up to reestablish minimal operations.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Emergencies during Church Services or Parish Events

Remain calm, gather information, and call the Police, Fire Department, and Ambulance Squad as appropriate. Render first aid if you can or locate somebody who can do so.

Off-Site Pastoral Care

Clergy and licensed individuals bringing the Holy Eucharist to shut-ins and members under nursing or hospital care should follow the use of hand sanitizers both before arrival and at departure. The communion kit will require a thorough cleaning after every visit.

On-Site Parish Activities in Parish Buildings

Parish hall buildings, classrooms, and offices are other venues where a wide variety of people pass through and can bring or contract infectious disease. Hand sanitizer dispensers at all entrances and their use both arriving and departing can minimize the risks for passing disease. All persons will need to be instructed to use them.

Sanitation in all food service areas is more important than ever. Rest rooms need careful cleaning. Outside groups meeting in parish facilities need to be informed and trained.

Supply Availability

The most commonly needed supply during an infectious disease outbreak will be hand sanitizer products. It is wise to prepare by stocking an adequate supply.

PROPERTY PROTECTION CHECKLISTS

Designate certain individual(s) for each area.

Church Sanctuary

____ Remove all unattached sanctuary equipment and store it in enclosed rooms.
____ Disconnect electronic organs; bag connectors in protective bubble wrap.
____ Cover the Organ Console in plastic wrap.
____ Cover the Altar in plastic wrap.

____ Wrap audio equipment and control room equipment in plastic wrap.

____ Wrap projection equipment in plastic and stow equipment that is not tied down.

____ Remove sacramental reserve elements.

**Kitchens and Parish Halls**

____ Set refrigerators and freezers at coldest settings; turn them off if evacuating.

____ Move all loose items into cabinets or drawers.

**Safecopy**

____ Altar Guild moves all vestments and loose items into closed cabinets or closets.

____ Altar Guild locks up particularly valuable sanctuary equipment.

____ In case of evacuation, Altar Guild packs valuable sanctuary equipment for transportation.

____ Altar Guild prepares a transportable kit of minimum equipment and vestments to support potential temporary relocation of worship to another site.

____ Stow or pack for transport the Church Services register book.

**Church Office**

____ Prepare back-up media for transport off-site and send a copy to a responsible party outside of the area for additional safety.

____ Disconnect all computer equipment; bag all connectors in protective bubble wrap.

____ Disconnect all electronic equipment; wrap in protective plastic wrap.

____ Place all critical parish records in the safe unless they are being packed to evacuate.

____ Stow all loose items in cabinets or drawers.

____ Wrap the Secretary’s desk, other work desks, copier, and printer in protective plastic.

____ Change recorded telephone message to give instructions to members that they should contact the Parish after the storm or emergency passes and how to do so with an alternate method in case the Office cannot reopen.

____ Place a message on the Website with emergency contact instructions and how to reach the Office after the storm and an alternate method in case the Office cannot reopen.
___ Cover bookshelves in plastic.

**INVENTORY FOR THE EMERGENCY RELOCATION BOX**

___ Administrative office relocation kit, prepackaged

___ Copies of all computer back-up media

___ Parish record books and service attendance records, all volumes

___ Church Roster

___ Vestry and Annual Meeting minutes for recent years

___ Financial records, contracts, leases, monthly bills and assessment statements, discretionary fund checkbook, church credit cards, and most recent bank statements

___ Archival materials about the church: incorporation papers, consecration certificate

___ Stewardship files, pledge cards and other essential parish files

___ Communion set of equipment and Home Communion kit

___ Complete set of keys

**PLANNING BEST PRACTICES**

Prepare a photographic and videotape inventory of all parish grounds, buildings, and equipment; keep at least one copy at an off-site location and ideally out of the area.

Back-up copies of vital church records should be kept off-site at a secure location such as a bank safety box.

The Disaster Response Committee should become and remain an ongoing activity in the life of the Parish. Procedures should be reviewed annually.

Anticipate following all evacuation orders issued by your County Office of Emergency Management.

Keep parish rosters up to date and give copies to all members of the parish leadership.

Prepare and keep ready the minimum necessities for moving the worship site and offices to a temporary location away from the parish.
Coordinate with other worshipping communities in the immediate area to arrange for temporary use of their facilities if needed and make your parish facilities available to them if they suffer disaster. Discuss other ways to support each other’s operations if disaster strikes any ecumenical neighbor.

Become sufficiently prepared for eventualities where action can be taken quickly according to plans and with a minimum of decision making or invention.

II. **Focus Area Two: Parishioners**

*Note: Each parish needs to customize the information to fit its special circumstances and an addendum to this focus area would be deemed appropriate.*

**Preparedness:**

- **Congregational Safety and Monitoring:** 1. Parish membership and participant rosters need to be kept current and accurate. 2. A simple reporting system needs to be created for members to report their condition, location and safety if an infectious outbreak occurs. 3. A separate roster of members with specialized talents and skills needs to be developed, including individuals with health care expertise.
- **Identify those parishioners who are most vulnerable with special needs or are home bound.**
  a) ____________________________ will contact each parishioner identified to find out if planning has been done to meet special needs or how unmet needs can be resolved.
  b) Who are those who may need electricity for health care? Are these parishioners registered through the local Department of Social Services to help address special needs in times of a disaster?
- **Guidelines to consider for “getting the word out” to people about how to prepare for hurricanes.**
  a) One to two months prior to the official start of hurricane season (June 1), notify parishioners via church newsletter, weekly bulletin messages, e-mails or texts to start preparations. Provide disaster preparedness materials/pamphlets from FEMA, the American Red Cross, and local disaster preparedness centers (if applicable).
  b) Send out reminder to prepare a couple of weeks prior to June 1.
  c) Church should consider storing small bottles of water for staff or parishioner needs, as well as potential needs in the community. Water should be obtained around 10 days prior to the onset of a hurricane/disaster. Remember to rotate the water if not all used and additional water purchased for another event.
  d) All parishioners should have a designated phone contact number to report their status following a disaster, including an alternate emergency number.

*The following list of tasks and items is suggested for thorough review and follow-up in order to be best prepared. It is important to have your “emergency evacuation box” packed and ready to put into your vehicle in the event evacuation is ordered.*

- [ ] car/truck gas tank filled
- [ ] gas grill tank filled
- [ ] bottled water available in residence – one gallon per person per day
- [ ] ice bags in freezer
- [ ] cell phones charged (pre-paid emergency cell phones available)
- [ ] food for at least 3-5 days
- [ ] battery powered radio with extra batteries
- [ ] more than one flashlight available with extra batteries
___ adequate medications for several days to a week
___ first aid kit
___ persons on oxygen, should have extra filled tanks available
___ manual can opener
___ plastic sheets and duct tape
___ garbage bags
___ fill bathtub with water or washing machine for back-up
___ have a plan for care of your pet(s) if evacuation occurs and you go to a shelter
___ supplies for pets (food, water, ID tag with shot information, transport carrier)
___ home and automobile insurance policies; car titles; maps; passports
___ cash available ($100 various denominations)
___ if evacuated, notify a relative or friend out of your immediate area; have a plan for housing; if evacuation is indicated; have a plan for housing; and get information about where and when local shelters will be open
___ if any vehicles are being left behind with an evacuation, then these should be moved to higher ground
___ if forecast indicates a potential storm landfall, lawn furniture and hazardous objects should be moved inside the house or any adjacent buildings
___ boats should be secured to their docks with extra storm moorings

• Coordinate a list of mental health professionals and Stephen Ministry persons who are church parishioners, who have agreed to provide listening, emotional support, direction and linkage to community resources should the needs be present.

Response:
• Implement efforts to check on the status of those listed as vulnerable.
• Parish should have a list of who might be able to house someone in need and time frame for housing.
• Parish should have a list of parishioners who would be willing to help with clean-up tasks for fellow parishioners and/or community-at-large.
• Call upon persons on the church’s list of mental health professionals or Stephen Ministry volunteers to help assist the rector, assistant rector or deacon if needed.
• Who owns a chainsaw, a pick-up truck or other appropriate equipment and is willing to assist with clean-up efforts?

III. **Focus Area Three: Community Functions**

(It is recommended that each parish designate a Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator)

The purpose of this section is to provide suggestions and ideas for every parish, regardless of size or location, as well as inform them of tasks to help prepare the parish and its members for any potential disaster. Each parish should identify its own special needs and determine modifications to this information in order to fit individual circumstances.

In the areas encompassing the Pamlico Deanery, the first disaster which comes to mind is a hurricane. There are other occurrences though not as frequent, such as tornadoes, ice storms and large fires. When a hurricane is
approaching, there is generally enough time to prepare for personal, parish and community needs. With other disasters, it is recommended to have some kind of a plan with detailed information in place so parishes can respond efficiently and effectively at the time indicated.

1. **Make an assessment of your parish and list its assets and liabilities.**

   A. **Assets:**
   1. Standby generator _____ yes _____no
   2. Ability to prepare and distribute food _____yes _____no
   3. Ability to serve as a shelter _____yes _____no
   4. Ability to serve as a clearinghouse for info. for parish and community _____yes _____no
   5. Other _________________________________ _____yes _____no

   B. **Liabilities:**
   1. No standby generator
   2. No shower facilities
   3. No ability to assemble a workforce for clean-up due to age of parish members
   4. Other _________________________________

2. **Connection with key community resources**

   Each parish is encouraged to contact its local county and/or community Emergency Management Services (EMS) Director to facilitate the possibility of the Director making a presentation to the parish and/or vestry on preparation and response as a community. Perhaps this presentation could be delivered during a regular Wednesday evening gathering (if parish has one). This is best done for any type of disaster, well ahead of an event and not under impending notice. It is recommended that this type of program be done on an annual basis, versus a one-time presentation and filing the information away without regular review. The DPRC can ask the EMS Director to be invited to any pre-disaster planning meetings the EMS Director may schedule.

   It is helpful for the parish coordinator (and priests) to know the latest information from the county’s Department of Social Services about the location of shelters. After the event, it is important to find out whether there is a local Disaster Center identified for response needs. This would be especially important regarding FEMA and Red Cross services for those who may be displaced or have experienced damages in general.

3. **Vestry members**

   The Senior and Junior Wardens are encouraged to establish a committee to handle the activities needing to be addressed. In many situations, the Junior Warden is responsible for overseeing the church properties.

   Items to be considered include:
   1. Securing parish property
   2. Needs of parishioners, especially those identified as having special needs
   3. Needs of the community – identify names and addresses (perhaps phone numbers) of local food pantries
   4. A parish office manager or building and grounds chair person may coordinate preparation and response tasks.
4. **Rector is encouraged to join interfaith clergy in community to determine:**
   A. Mutual assistance capabilities from/with other churches who are preparing
   B. Identification of potential needs for small church communities who may have few or no resources.

5. **Following meeting (or consultation) with EMS Director and potential needs are identified by EMS and Parish Staff/Parishioners, then gather resource information.**
   A. Who is interested in becoming a volunteer for a Disaster Center? This would require some training.
   B. Who can shelter volunteers?
   C. Who can help prepare meals for volunteers?

   The needs will vary by county and community. Always remember that the “one size fits all” statement **does not work here.**

6. **The Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator (DPRC) should determine the best way to obtain and disseminate information which affects its parish and community.**
   For the vast majority of parishes in the deanery, reports issued by local radio and television stations are the best. Likewise, this type of information is readily available on “smart phones and tablets” for immediate use.

   For others in certain locations, discussion should occur with local EMS Staff to assure both parish and EMS Staff are informed and working from the same page.

7. **Emergency Shelters**
   To serve as a shelter, there are numerous rules and guidelines required. The large majority of the parishes do not meet the requirements. In most instances, shelters are coordinated by the local EMS and Red Cross, in conjunction with the Department of Social Services. If any parish wants to be considered as a shelter, please contact the local/county EMS office. It is vital to be sanctioned as a shelter way ahead of any anticipated event, since the parish must be able to handle needs at a moment’s notice. The space required for shelter purposes may be utilized for an extended period of time 24/7. Events which may have been scheduled in the parish hall, will have to wait.

8. **The Parish DPRC should consider if the parish is able to provide the following services either to parish members or in some capacity to the community.**
   A. Food delivery:
      Establish a committee who will deliver groceries to parish members unable to get to a local grocery store. This may entail either taking the person to the store and/or doing the shopping for the individual. Consider supplies from local food pantries.
   B. Labor Work Force:
      It seems very simple to say, “Let’s get together and go out and help our fellow parishioners/neighbors who have downed trees/limbs on their properties or even on church property”. However, this can be very dangerous and an expensive venture if something goes wrong in the process. **PLEASE CHECK WITH THE PARISH’S INSURANCE CARRIER FIRST.**
      Find out if the church’s policy will cover this group “goodwill activity” should any damage arise or
any injuries to those persons doing the work. It is key to have qualified and trained persons doing this kind of work, as well as having the proper equipment and the safety equipment.

9. **Communication**

   A. Once again, each parish will have its own system, but it is vital that a parish inform its parishioners about the name and contact number of the person(s) who will receive the phone calls for assistance. When receiving parishioner calls about their needs, it is very important to listen closely and share accurate information with the appropriate organizations or persons who can assist.

   B. Be informed about the nature of communication services provided by the local EMS providers. In emergency times, it is not helpful to duplicate the taking of information. Some pieces of information may get lost in the translation. Most people are not prepared to obtain critical information 24/7. Affected persons may be able to contact a designated Disaster Center which would then do assessments and linkage to the appropriate community resources. Phone numbers can be obtained through local EMS offices.

   C. During times of a disaster, there is a high probability for power and telephone interruptions. These may last a few hours or could a couple of days. In most cases, cell phones are able to work. Should power go out in your home, cell phones can be kept charged by using your car charger. *(Note: It is a good idea to remember to have the car running when charging the cell phone so as not to run down the car battery.)*

   D. Generally, the local HAM Radio operators are tied up with the local EMS operations. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to check in the local community for persons available to assist with communication.

   E. For communities on or near the coast, portable marine radios utilizing little used marine channels may be available.

   F. Communication should be maintained with the Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator, ________________________________, to identify mutual assistance plans, especially if the exact location of the storm hitting landfall has not yet been determined. Contact information for the Diocesan DPRC should be kept available.

*All of these suggestions and ideas are subject to modification depending upon the location and nature of each parish. These are guidelines. It takes time and planning to be prepared and not be caught off guard. Remember the value of having a parish work session to try out the parish plan and determine ahead of a disaster if there are any glitches needing correction!*