



OREGON-IDAHO ANNUAL CONFERENCE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN

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Abstract

Provides a guide for disaster and continuity of ministry planning at the local church and ministry, district, and conference levels in the Oregon – Idaho Annual Conference

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Why Plan and Prepare

No individual, home, church, or region is immune to natural or human-caused disaster. The Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference is HUGE! We are exposed to a full range of potential natural and man-made disasters.

Everything in effective disaster response depends upon planning and preparation at the local church level. When a disaster strikes, the pastor and members of the local churches closest or within the disaster area will be the eyes and ears of the conference and the hands and feet of Christ in their community. It is the local churches responsibility to be in communication with the District Office, the District Disaster Response Coordinator, and the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator.

Disaster preparedness and response should be a continuous process that includes planning for action throughout the phases of disaster: **Readiness, Rescue, Relief, Recovery** and **Review**. In smaller disasters, these phases can move quickly, in larger ones, they can span several months or even years. Typically each phase takes ten times longer than the previous phase.



When disaster strikes, it is local churches that provide the first opportunity to respond to the physical and spiritual needs of their communities. This basic understanding—that disaster response is local—forms the foundation for the United Methodist Committee on

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Relief (UMCOR) disaster training and response. First and foremost, preparation is our responsibility. UMCOR is a resource for our conference's preparation and response.

Having had no problems in the past gives little assurance for the future. Likelihood of disaster is greater than most imagine. And there's a critical problem with the attitude that says "If it happens, we'll deal with it." Too many times those regularly involved in disaster response have seen well-intentioned Christians delay, complicate, and confuse recovery efforts because they operate by impulse rather than understanding of how disaster response works. "Flying by the seat of their pants," with no pre-planning, training, or coordination, they duplicate aid to some victims while overlooking genuine need in others. Worse yet, sometimes their "good doing" inflicts additional harm.

Without training, well-intentioned volunteers can:

- Imperil a survivor's health, and
- Eligibility for financial assistance from insurance and the government.

Additional harm most often happens as helpers rush to do home repairs. They frequently carry the work too far. Untrained volunteers don't understand the law, insurance assessment procedures, or how certain repairs made too hastily can jeopardize a survivor's health (such as when flood damage is covered over before interior segments of walls and floors dry completely).

Partnering with local churches, Districts and Conferences, UMCOR provides the following:

- **Training.** UMCOR trains teams of volunteers.
- **Financial Assistance.** If the bishop contacts UMCOR for support, an emergency grant may be sent.
- **Expertise.** UMCOR's disaster-response experience and knowledge are made available to those in need.
- **Networking.** Getting connected with NGOs, volunteers, experts, local government, and other organizations can help communities recover from disaster.

There are moral and legal reasons to be prepared. If we take seriously our ministry to relieve suffering, then we Christians must be prepared to do all we can to prevent further victimization of already hurting people. Every area in our Conference is vulnerable to threats such as fire, flooding, windstorm, airplane crash, toxic spill, nuclear accident, civil

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unrest, and now, sadly, terrorism. Earthquake and tsunami are special threats to many areas of our conference.

It is never a matter of if disaster strikes, but when!

If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail!

Local Church and other Ministry Responsibilities

Each local church and other ministry location is responsible for their planning and training to respond to disaster. Their planning and response should provide for:

- Continuity of ministry in their community.
- Continuity of the business of the church or other ministry, to include care for members and restoration of church property.
- Developing trained leaders for specialized roles such as early response, employing United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) response teams, and case management during long term recovery.

Each local congregation and other ministry should develop their own plan and designate a Disaster Response Coordinator. The pastor should not be expected to fill this role. This person may be the lay leader or other person intimately familiar with the congregation and the community. The contact information for this person is to be provided to the District Office for use by the District Disaster Response Coordinator..

Pastor

In the event of a potential disaster, the pastor should notify the District Superintendent as soon as possible that a crisis situation exists, and assess any damage to your household. If they are a victim, set aside their duties, request relief from the district superintendent, and work on their own recovery. Pastors in crisis should not rely on your their judgment. Listen to others.

Disaster Response Coordinator

The coordinator responsibilities are to:

- Establish contact with the director or pastor and other church leaders.
- Work with the staff and leadership to verify and update the status of all members and those affiliated with the church or ministry. Particular attention must be paid to the disabled, homebound, and updating contact information for those who may have evacuated.
- Work with the director or pastor to establish contact with the District Superintendent and/or the District Disaster Response Coordinator in order to provide the status of your ministry or congregation and church property, and any urgent needs in your community. Separate ministries should contact their appropriate Conference supervisor.
- Establish contact with the local emergency management system in order to identify needs and provide assistance as requested.
- Provide specific needs assessments of any damage to church, parsonage, and other church property within 24 hours, if possible. This information is required by the Conference and UMCOR personnel.

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- Work with other churches and volunteer organizations toward long-term recovery.
- Refer all media requests regarding the bishop's or the annual conference's responses to the Conference Director of Communications. Contact the conference Director of Communications for information on working with local media, developing key talking points, and coaching for local leaders during the crisis.

Emergency Shelter Planning

Your church or other ministry may be requested by the Red Cross to provide emergency shelter. Red Cross-approved shelters, whether in churches or schools, are covered by Red Cross liability and damage insurance. If you believe your church or ministry might serve as an emergency shelter, you should work with the Red Cross in advance to make certain you meet all applicable rules and regulations. Upon request, the Red Cross will inspect your facility to determine if it is suitable for use as an emergency shelter. To determine capacity, they look at a number of different criteria including: square footage of potential sleeping area, number of toilets, number of shower heads, space available for feeding, and accessibility. As a minimum they are looking for the following characteristics in an ideal shelter facility:

- Dormitory area of at least 1000 sq. feet.
- Eating area for at least 25 people
- 3-4 toilets
- 2-3 showers
- ADA accessible
- An indoor entry area that registration can occur
- A small room or two that can be used by disaster health or mental health services to provide assistance.

If a facility falls short in some area (e.g., showers), but is otherwise suitable, they look for a nearby facility (e.g., rec center) to fill the shortfall. If they determine your facility is suitable, an agreement will be signed specifying the terms and condition of its use by the Red Cross.

Your church should not open your own shelter unless you meet local building codes, are requested, you are willing to assume the costs of repair and liability, and you understand you will be fully responsible for any harm to residents or damage to the facility.

District Responsibilities

The district is the link between the local congregations and the conference.

District Superintendent

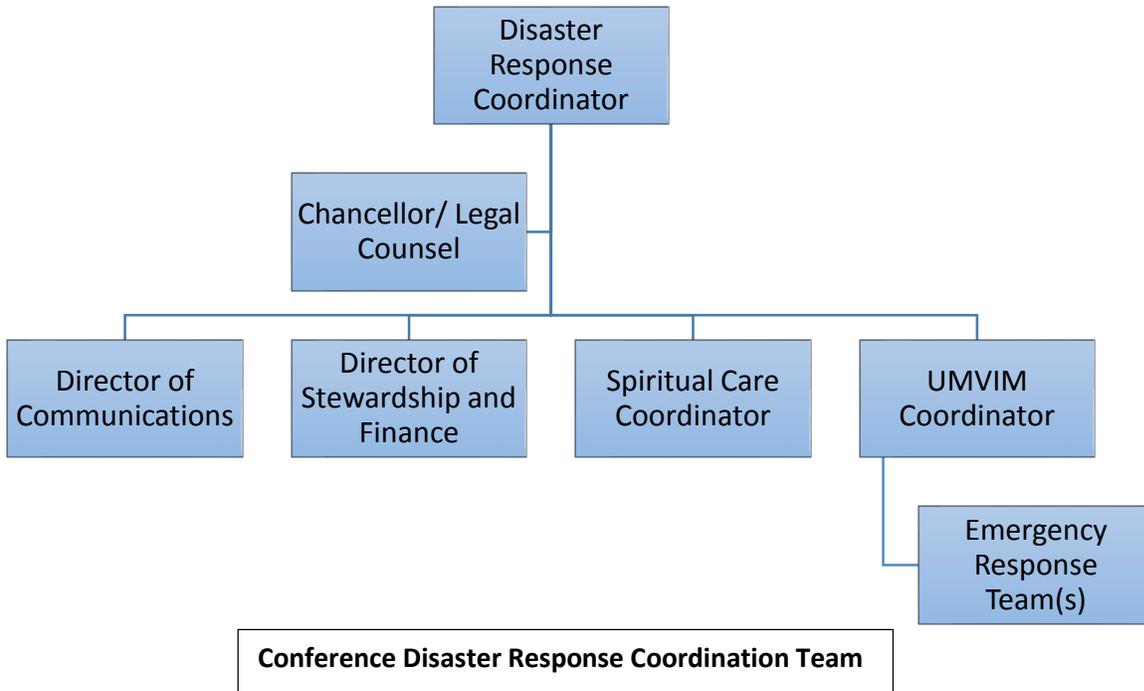
- Notify the bishop and Conference and District Disaster Response Coordinators.
- Notify Conference Director of Communications. All persons involved will be informed that the Conference Director of Communications is the office which will handle all official press inquiries and releases.
- Assess any damage to your household. If you are a victim, set aside your duties and work on your own recovery. Do not rely on your own judgment. Listen to others.
- Obtain extra office help for yourself or for your staff person assigned with the disaster portfolio. Temporarily transfer normal day-to-day duties to other lay or clergy or another district office.
- As soon as possible, visit the affected area.
- Get pastoral caregivers into the community immediately if there has been loss of life or destruction of church property. (Crisis intervention is crucial.) Remember they are there to assist the local pastor. [NOTE: We need to clarify who this is in the OR-ID conference - GN]
- If a pastor is a victim, a supply pastor must be appointed immediately. The appointment must be for a minimum of one or two months and the purpose explained to the membership. If the pastor must relocate, take the initiative to recruit volunteers to help cleanup, pack, and take items to storage. (But do it in such a loving way that the family can remain in charge of their affairs.) Disaster funds may be used for this purpose.
- If pastors are likely to be overwhelmed by church and community duties during the disaster response, appoint a temporary assisting pastor to provide an extra pair of hands. The congregation will need an explanation. This person should be in residence in the disaster area for one or two months, and then available to the pastor-in-charge for telephone consultation and/or to come back into the area. Disaster funds may be used for this purpose. (The right person from among the retired clergy would represent no threat to an active pastor.)
- If you are likely to be overwhelmed by the scope of a disaster, find an assistant as well as a trusted counselor for yourself. Be aware of the length of time recovery takes. Since you need to be very involved and highly visible, you cannot conduct business as usual for some time. Again, disaster funds may be used.
- Encourage unaffected churches near the disaster to share their resources.
- Watch for "burnout" in the lay and pastoral leadership. Set up a "buddy" system.
- Use the authority of your office to ask people to do certain tasks.

District Disaster Response Coordinator

- Contact the District Superintendent if not already in contact.
- Notify other District Coordinators if needed.
- Share the responsibility for contacting and verifying the status of churches in the affected area.
- Establish contact with the local Emergency Management Coordinator. The purpose of this action is to give the local government a church contact person.
- Provide the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator with the information gathered.
- District Volunteers in Mission Coordinator
- Consult with District and Conference Disaster Response Coordinators to advise or find out where resources are most needed.
- Coordinate the deployment of UMVIM Early Response Team(s) within the district, if requested.
- Maintain and make contact with persons and churches who are willing to assist in disaster work.

Conference Responsibilities

If the level of damage requires resources be beyond what the local church and district can provide, or if requested by the district, the Conference shall dispatch a team to evaluate the damage. This should include the Bishop (or an assigned representative), Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, the Conference VIM Coordinator, and the Conference Director of Communications. If the scope of a disaster exceeds the capability of a district to respond, the Conference Disaster Response Coordination Team should be activated to assist coordinating response to the disaster.



Bishop

- Assess any damage to your household. If you are a victim, set aside your duties and work on your own recovery. Do not rely on your own judgment. Listen to others.
- Obtain extra office help for yourself or for your staff person assigned with the disaster portfolio. Temporarily transfer normal day-to-day duties to other lay or clergy.
- If key staff are victims, make certain they set aside their duties and work on their own recovery. Identify, with the assistance of the Cabinet, other lay or clergy to take over their day-to-day duties until they are able to resume.
- As soon as possible, visit the affected area.
- Consult with Conference Disaster Response Coordinator to determine the need for UMCOR involvement.
- Request Bishop’s appeal and/or UMCOR assistance as appropriate
- Assist in preparation of statement through the Director of Communications

Cabinet

Director of Connectional Ministries:

The Director of Connectional Ministries acts to:

- Assist the bishop and District Superintendents in any way possible.
- Assist the Conference Disaster Coordinator and Conference Disaster Response Coordination Team in any way possible.
- Assist the Director of Communications in any way possible.

Conference Staff Responsibilities

Director of Communications

- Gather information about the event.
- Coordinate releases both externally and internally, prepare public statements for release by the Bishop.
- Prepare media kits or the press.
- Prepare info on how to give resources and funds to the project.
- Train support staff on how to handle calls by those manning telephones, maintain files and media information on the event.

Director of Stewardship and Finance

- Write necessary policies and procedures for financial accounting of Disaster funds and expenses. Such financial policies are for internal financial management and need not meet General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP)
 - Maintain adequate records of the disaster response income and expenditures.
 - The existing Conference voucher system will be used to record and track expenditures for audit trail purposes.
 - Designate a person or persons to sign vouchers as required.
- Disaster Donations
 - All money sent to the Conference Treasurer following a disaster shall be held in a Specific Disaster Fund.
 - All money in the Specific Disaster Fund shall be spent specifically for that disaster or at the direction of the Ministry Leadership Team/CFA
 - Disaster funds collected by the Conference for a specific disaster shall not be co-mingled with UMCOR funds or General Disaster funds.
 - All requests for expenditures from the Specific Disaster Fund shall be submitted first to the Conference Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator or Ministry Leadership Team, who shall forward it to the Conference Treasurer for payment.

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- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator or Dean of the Cabinet shall mail, email, or submit in writing the expense requests to the Conference Treasurer for payment.
- The expense requests shall include the amount requested, the name and address of the recipient of the check, and what the request seeks to accomplish.
- Normally all recipients will be either a United Methodist Church, a Long Term Recovery Organization, an inter-faith organization or a case worker.
- Care should be taken not to send checks directly to clients.
- Money remaining in the Specific Disaster Fund following closing of all specific disaster related requests may be moved, with the approval of CFA, to the General Disaster Account for use for other disaster related needs.
- UMCOR Expenditure Policies
 - UMCOR money shall not be spent to repair vacation homes.
 - UMCOR money shall not be spent to repair conference owned church property unless approved by the Ministry Leadership Team.
 - UMCOR money shall not be spent to repair business owned property.
 - Disaster money may be used to replace or repair personal property owned in conjunction with a business such as farm houses.
 - Disaster money spent to repair rental property shall have a specific owner's agreement for continued occupancy of the renter of the property after completion of the repairs without raising the rent for a given period of time.
 - Disaster money shall not be spent in a way that would duplicate federal or state benefits.

Chancellor/Legal Counsel

- Provide information on liability and legal issues related to the crisis.
- Review statements and releases for legal implications.
- Provide a list of other lawyers to be contacted if s/he cannot be contacted or is out of the area.

Spiritual Care Coordinator

[Note: This is a critical functions that needs further discussion with pastors experienced in crisis intervention and pastoral care to determine how best to provide]

Spirituality is an essential part of humanity and as such, every person has a need for spiritual care in time of disaster. The spiritual care coordinator primary responsibility is to:

- Offer a listening presence that says the church cares.
- Attempt to reduce the terrible aloneness survivors and first responders may feel, and
- Connect survivors with long-term disaster recovery systems.

Conference Disaster Response Coordinator Responsibilities

The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator is the chair of the Conference Disaster Response Team. He/she is:

- The point of contact for coordinating disaster response and disaster-related efforts at the conference level.
- Responsible for coordinating training for disaster response coordinators and others involved in disaster response work.
- Maintain a disaster coordinators list for use by each district superintendent, and disaster response coordinator.

Conference Volunteers in Mission Coordinator Responsibilities

- Supervise staff and District staff to oversee the Administrative Support for the incident.
- Consult with District and Conference Disaster Coordinators to find out where resources are most needed.
- Coordinate the deployment of Early Response Teams (ERTs) and UMVIM teams as requested.
- Encourage teams and individuals to include insurance consideration in their planning. Particularly in disaster response and recovery work, the environment can be austere and high-level care may not be readily available. Medical evacuation to emergency care and return home can be very expensive. Work with Director of Communications to assist with press releases on how and any way volunteer and resources will be needed.
- Maintain and make contact with persons who are willing to assist in disaster work.

Early Response Team(s)

ERTs fill a specific need in the early days after a disaster to clean out flood-damaged homes, remove debris, place tarps on homes, and otherwise help to prevent further damage, while providing a caring Christian presence.

Case Manager(s) - This will be a Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG) function which may be filled by, but not limited to, United Methodist persons. UMCOR's current

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position is that these managers will be trained as requested when a LTRG is established. This training is not limited to any specific faith group. They assist individuals and families who may have lost their homes and other family members. Ideal candidates include social workers and Stephen Ministers.