

District Superintendent Actions

A. DISASTER IS IMMINENT

1. Monitoring - Listen to news reports of any impending storm activity or other event that could lead to a disaster.
2. Communications - Contact your Conference and/or District Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator and prepare for possible action should a disaster strike. Make certain that you both know each other's locations and remain available to each other.
3. Emergency Operations Centers - If Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) have been established for counties in your District, find out their locations. Usually the main center will be close to the county courthouse or a police station. A field EOC may be set up closer to the affected area.
4. Evacuation - If your immediate area is likely to be affected and evacuation is recommended, move out of the area, but be certain that your pastors and the Bishop know where you will be. A temporary District office might be in a church that is away from the danger zone.

B. RESCUE OR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PHASE

1. Personal Assessment - Assess your own damage first. See if anyone in your household is injured. Unless it is unsafe to remain, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you.
2. Personal Judgment - If you are a victim, do not rely upon your own judgment. Do not rely upon the judgment of other victims, either. Listen to the emergency personnel and follow their instructions.
3. Monitoring - Monitor the damage to your District by listening to news reports. Do not interfere with any ongoing relief efforts. Stay at home until the danger is past. It will be easier for pastors to reach you if you remain at home during this phase.
4. Contacts - Contact the churches in the damaged areas. Provide pastoral care to the affected pastors and obtain a preliminary damage assessment of church owned property. This preliminary assessment should be shared with the Conference Office for insurance purposes.
 - i. Share of the names of pastors who have had their own private homes damaged with the Pastoral Care Coordinator of the Conference Disaster Preparedness and Response Team.

C. RELIEF PHASE

1. Damage Assessment Tour
 - i. As soon as possible, when it is safe, go to the affected area with your District and/or Conference Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator. You are the "awesome presence." It is particularly

important for you to visit damaged church property to reassure the pastor.

- A. If the damage is widespread, you may want to divide your efforts. Check with local law enforcement first. Very often they will provide you with a tour of damaged sites and help you to gain entry to controlled or restricted zones.
 - B. If you cannot tour the area, make a telephone preliminary assessment of the damage and report that information to the Conference Office for insurance purposes.
- ii. Expect you and others to be in shock at what you see. Victims and near victims will want to tell their stories over and over again. Be prepared to do a lot of listening. Listen carefully to the affected pastors. Assess whether they are truly functional. Be prepared to ask other pastors to help when a pastor is a victim. Consider a substitute pastor or pulpit supply for a period of time.
 - iii. Look for damage in terms of areas hit. Do not try to count the number of homes destroyed. Leave that job to the American Red Cross, County Emergency Management and FEMA. They will have an accurate count within a couple of days. Try to gain a general sense of the magnitude and severity.
 - iv. If shelters are open, tour the shelters. Check to see if the church has a presence there. Is pastoral care available in the shelter? Do you expect an evacuated pastor to provide this? He/she will have enough to do looking after the needs of his/her own family.
 - v. Compile your estimates with those of the Conference and/or District Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator. This information should go to the Conference Office for insurance purposes.
 - vi. Inform the Bishop of your situation. If you are not a victim yourself, let the Bishop know that you are all right. If there is damage in your District, be prepared to take the Bishop on a tour.
2. Organizing the District
- i. Review clergy and church action sections of the Disaster Plan so that you will know what your pastors and churches should be doing.
 - ii. Call a meeting of the pastors in the affected area. Have your Conference and/or District Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator explain how they can respond to the crisis and the resources that are at their disposal.
 - iii. Identify a specific church or location for coordinating the effort. Be certain that both the pastor and the church are willing to serve in this role.

- iv. Encourage your pastors to work ecumenically in the relief effort. Encourage them to spearhead such a joint response.
- v. Remind them that the Conference/District Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinator will be happy to be of assistance to their community in organizing a response effort.
- vi. Take the initiative to marshal the resources of the District to respond to the disaster and to assist the affected local churches. This may include (but need not be limited to):
 - A. United Methodist Men - Work teams to help with clean up.
 - B. United Methodist Women - Child Care work, feeding stations, etc.
 - C. United Methodist Volunteers in Mission - Professional medical services, counseling plus other specialty services.
 - D. Early Response Teams - Trained in clean-up and personal property preservation.
 - E. United Methodist Youth - Food drives (but only if these are called for), and help with clean up.
 - F. Health and Welfare groups - work with persons with disabling conditions.
 - G. District Worship leadership - provide special services for those who have suffered loss or fill in for pastors who have suffered loss themselves.
 - H. District Christian Education - help provide care for children and youth affected by the disaster. The trained Children and Youth in Disaster workers of the District will need additional volunteer helpers. As volunteers for this type of work become available, your trained District people will be able to train the new volunteers in a matter of hours.
- vii. Look after the well-being of your pastors. Don't allow them to "burn-out." Monitor the more heavily involved frequently; don't expect them to call you.
- viii. If a pastor needs help, be sure to get him/her and the family away from the affected area for a while, or provide them time to see to their own needs. Be ready to supply a substitute pastor to fill their pulpit until they can recover from their loss.
- ix. If a pastor(s) suffer loss, make certain that the local church (es) respond with sensitivity. Check to see how much of their loss is covered by church insurance. If the parsonage is uninhabitable, be certain that the local church is providing the parsonage family with a decent place to stay. The Red Cross may be able to furnish some initial

living expense money.

If the disaster receives a Presidential Declaration, make certain the pastor registers with FEMA at 1-800-621-3362.

- x. See if the pastor needs financial help.
 - xi. Your direct involvement during the crisis will have a tremendous impact on the pastor and his/her family. Be insistent on helping even if they resist. Most victims, especially those in the helping professions, will downplay their own needs during a crisis. Use your own best judgment, not the victims.
3. Keep a journal - Keep an accounting of everything you do or that happens to you in the course of the disaster. The journal will be invaluable to you and to others both during and after the disaster.

D. RECOVERY PHASE

1. Pastoral Support - The most likely period for clergy "burnout" is during the recovery phase. While pastors may function well in the early stages of a crisis with long hours and heavy responsibilities, after a while it becomes clear that most of their efforts will take place when the obvious urgency is past. Therefore, local congregations may be less understanding of the time required to help victims four to six months after the event. Several things can be done to avoid problems for the local pastor:
 - i. Let the congregation know how much the pastor's work is appreciated.
 - ii. Don't let a local pastor "burnout." If the workload is excessive, see if there is some way a person could be hired part-time to handle parts of the program.
 - iii. If a local pastor has reached his/her limit, work with the Pastor (Staff) Parish Relations Committee to provide some time away.
 - iv. See if there is a retired pastor who could help with some of the pastoral duties and fill in temporarily.
 - v. Keep in touch. Don't assume things are going well if you don't hear to the contrary.
 - vi. Check on the conditions of the pastor's family. Make certain they are not neglected as a result of the increased workload. If they are victims, this becomes all the more important. Pastors may have difficulty accepting the fact that they are victims. Focusing on the needs of others may be a form of denying their own needs.
2. Use the System - Stay in touch with the Conference and/or District Disaster Preparedness and Response Coordinators. Don't let problems fester. If there are problems with the system, let someone know right away.

3. THE AFTERMATH - Take some time to assess yourself and others' performance during and after the disaster using the "Assessment Form" found in the Appendix.