

The Disaster Lifecycle: Where Do Religious Leaders Fit In?

This checklist is designed to provide guidance as you develop your own disaster plans. The following “action steps” pertain to hurricanes, and they’ll take you from the mitigation and preparedness phases through short- and long-term recovery. Weather-related emergencies are some of the most common hazards facing communities.

TIP SHEET

02

See NDIN Disaster Tip Sheet “*Disaster Basics*” for disaster concepts, language and structures.

PHASES OF THE DISASTER LIFECYCLE

Emergency Management is best viewed as a cycle of phases. Although activities in each phase can occur simultaneously, each phase informs the next.

The phases are:

- **Mitigation** – Reducing or eliminating the future effects of all-hazards. Mitigation efforts provide value by creating safer communities and reducing loss of life and property.
- **Preparedness** – Establishing authorities and responsibilities for emergency actions, and ensuring necessary resources are available and coordinated to respond effectively to all-hazards. Building disaster-resilient communities.
- **Response** – Saving lives, protecting property, and providing for public welfare during the period immediately before, during, and following a crisis or disaster.
- **Recovery** – Helping communities heal and return to a state of self-sufficiency or a state similar to pre-disaster conditions. Typically divided into short-term and long-term, recovery generally implies a return to economic, emotional, and spiritual self-reliance of individuals and families.



MITIGATION

Emergency Management & Response Agencies (Flooding & Storm Case Study)

Purpose: Implementation of measures to mitigate potential damage during future flooding or storm hazards

- Develop new zoning and building code requirements (to withstand high winds or flooding, etc.)
- Analyze flood plain and other hazard-related data to determine appropriate rebuilding parameters
- Encourage homeowners to install shutters and roof straps and make other structural changes as needed
- Provide information about where flood zones and high hazard areas are located
- Develop new codes and ordinances regarding public health
- Develop legislative agendas to advocate for laws/programs that would enhance jurisdiction’s ability to plan for, respond to, and recover from disasters

Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

Purpose: Implement measures to lessen impact on houses of worship and their services

- Advocate measures for community safety & resilience—emotionally, physically, and spiritually
- Participate in poverty reduction, affordable housing, and economic development activities in your community
- Take measures to safeguard your house of worship—its records and sacred objects
- Have an emergency communication plan for your leaders and members—even if your community were to be destroyed or evacuated
- Plan for how you and your congregation will continue to provide vital social service programs post-disaster
- Educate yourself and your religious community on personal and home preparedness
- Educate yourself and your religious community on evacuation routes and planning
- Advocate for programs for the most vulnerable and under-served populations
- Advocate for mitigation funding for faith-based disaster initiatives

PREPAREDNESS**Emergency Management, Public Health & First Response Agencies**

Purpose: Response and recovery agencies incorporate best practices tools, training, and exercises into planning amongst themselves and community-based/faith-based organizations. This must include pre-disaster partnership building and risk communication planning. Encourage leaders to also incorporate lessons learned into response plans and systems which involve faith-based networks.

- Ensure all aspects of response and recovery are reviewed and discussed with relevant agencies/organizations
- Engage all potential partners, including faith communities and their social service programs, in every level of planning
- Launch a public education campaign specific to your community's hazard vulnerabilities
- Exercise various parts of your community's evacuation, response, and recovery plans for human service providers
- Provide various volunteer trainings to response and recovery partner agencies and organizations

Religious Leaders & Faith Communities Purpose: Take all measures necessary to ensure your house of worship incorporates best practices and lessons learned into plans/systems; regularly re-assess roles, training needs, and volunteer capacity for future disasters based on all-hazards.

- Join or help lead a Citizen Corps Council, disaster interfaith, VOAD or other community-based consortiums
 - Get training in disaster spiritual care and mental health assessment and referral.
 - Register your house of worship with the American Red Cross as a potential shelter
 - Register your house of worship with your local Medical Reserve Corps as a potential POD (Point of Dispensing)
 - Get involved in your denomination or faith community's national recovery organization as a training site or source of volunteers and planning for national and regional response or recovery initiatives.
 - Write and or regularly update your congregation's disaster plan.
- See NDIN Disaster Tip Sheet “Continuity of Operations Planning: Ministry & Services Post-Disaster”**
- Provide training to your faith community to enable you to execute your plan. Take advantage of trainings offered through your local Citizen Corps, VOAD, or other partners.
 - Work regularly with emergency managers and public health officials to do outreach within under-resourced and vulnerable populations to insure they get access to appropriate training and information.

RESPONSE (Individuals, families and organizations can be “on your own” for up to 72 hours.)

BEFORE THE CRISIS IF WARNINGS ARE ISSUED, OR AFTER AN UNFORESEEN EVENT

Emergency Management, Public Health & First Response Agencies

Purpose: Save lives and property, provide crisis information and emergency assistance to victims, and reduce further damage

- Emergency communications systems established, such as 211, TV, radio, computer alerts, agency call downs
- Evacuation decisions made and orders executed (traffic control, support of critical facilities, shelters)
- Protective measures taken to secure public property and critical infrastructure

Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

Purpose: Establish communication with your family, congregation (particularly vulnerable members), staff, and other networks

- #1 - Ensure you and your family are safe. Then instruct others to do the same. Hazards often include a secondary risk.
- Link to public information. Encourage congregants to listen to public warnings and follow directions
- If possible assist with evacuation of vulnerable congregants and the community
- Secure personal and congregational property
- Make and communicate decisions regarding closing/canceling of congregational events, activities, and social services
- Take other actions detailed in your house of worship's disaster plan

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CRISIS IS OVER/THE HAZARD HAS PASSED

Emergency Management, Public Health & First Response Agencies

- Public safety activities conducted: search and rescue, security and law enforcement, emergency medical care
- Provision of Mass Care support: sheltering, food & water, other emergency items as available
- Damage assessment begins - requiring communication with building departments, utilities and insurance companies
- Restoration of essential infrastructure begins

Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

- Augment agency response by providing **hope, basic support and emergency information**
- Request assistance from state and federal sources (or from your denomination or national recovery organization)
- Follow self-care best practices for you, your family and your staff and volunteers
- Open your house of worship as a spontaneous relief station or Emergency Rest Center if appropriate and safe
- Execute disaster response plans; stay connected with your networks for information/assistance, share resources

SHORT TERM RECOVERY (3 to 6 Months)

(Many of these activities often begin simultaneously with response activities)

Emergency Management & Response Agencies

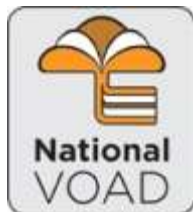
Purpose: Provide temporary/sustainable solutions to community needs; begin planning for long term recovery

- Debris removal & infrastructure restoration continues.
- Re-entry into damaged areas may begin.
- Clean up of homes begins.
- Mobile and fixed feeding begins to support clean-up.
- FEMA and National VOAD set up field offices.
- Shelters are still open, and transitioning into longer-term temporary housing begins.
- Public Health issues emerge (food spoilage, contaminated water, hazardous materials, mold).
- Department of Health works with OEM to coordinate mental health response networks and fatality management issues.
- Disaster interfaiths and VOAD networks begin coordinating and deploying trained and spontaneous volunteer chaplains to work with victims and recovery workers at recovery sites.
- Emergency Assistance to individuals is provided through individual agencies/organizations.

Primary providers:

- American Red Cross (www.redcross.org),
- The Salvation Army (www.salvationarmy.org)
- Local human services administration
- State OEM and FEMA (www.fema.gov)

- Multi-agency Disaster Assistance Centers are established by Mental Health, OEM and FEMA that include multiple non-profits and government agencies
- Community & Faith-based Organizations provide: food, clothing, housing stipend, disaster unemployment, crisis counseling, emotional/spiritual care, etc.
- “Cash is Best” - In spite of public information efforts to discourage unsolicited donations, donations/volunteer offers typically overwhelm communities. Discourage unsolicited material donations, establish warehouses, distribution systems and mechanisms for the public to make offers. Also make cash donations the highest priority.
- Managing spontaneous volunteers is a vital task which requires coordination with faith communities.
- Long-Term Recovery Organizations (LTROs) activate or begin to form if not already established, providing casework coordination systems working with NVOAD, CAN (the Coordinated Assistance Network) and Health & Human Services. Senior-level social service community leaders must plug in here and advocate for their needs.
- Various agencies develop resource guides for affected populations.

**Religious Leaders & Faith Communities**

Purpose: Continue routines as much as possible; care for self, congregants, and immediate community

- Assess your wellness and that of your family, and assess your ability to support yourself, your family and congregation
- Practice and support others in self-care
- When permitted by officials, begin assessing damage to your house of worship's facilities and other assets
- Work to restore house of worship routines and programs
- Document damage and keep records of your recovery work
- Find out what activities your denomination or faith community's national recovery organization is engaged in, e.g. setting up local disaster operations headquarters
- Work with your local experts, VOAD and partners to assess the disaster needs of your congregation and community
- Expand existing vital services (soup kitchen, day care) if you are able and services are needed—do not start new programs where you lack expertise and experience
- Work with a disaster interfaith or VOAD and/or other neighboring faith communities to ensure adequate pastoral care resources for your community
- Ensure pastoral care providers are trained and have knowledge to make mental health referrals for those individuals with severe symptoms of disaster-related trauma, and/or in need of material assistance.

Training should include:

- FEMA IS 100 (Incident Command)
- Mental Health Assessment & Referral
- National VOAD Points of Consensus
- Self-Care - Care for the Caregiver
- Spiritual Care Best Practices & Interventions
- Trauma & Mental Health

- Conduct special “hope and healing” worship services
- Assess and re-assess the needs of elderly and vulnerable congregants and help them access disaster services
- Advocate for better allocation of resources (i.e. financial donations) for unmet needs & long-term recovery efforts
- Connect with your state's donations system-nationally known as AidMatrix; encourage material goods donors to use this system of donations coordination



- Encourage monetary donations; check with your national religious organization to see if they have established a specific relief fund; or donate through your state recovery fund or your local community foundation's recovery fund.
- Work with your local volunteer center and encourage your congregation and community to affiliate with a recognized volunteer program for service opportunities
- Stay connected to recovery efforts through your networks to share information on your community's long term needs

LONG TERM RECOVERY (6 Months to 10+ Years)

(This is a long process that can take anywhere from a few month to several years.)

Emergency Management & Response Agencies

Purpose: Coordinate the long process of recovery. Focus rebuilding community infrastructure and lives. Address more complex needs: economic revitalization (housing, employment), individuals with complex recovery issues, mental health, etc.

- General public and media are losing interest in the “story.”
- Long-term mental health programs may continue.
- Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other “Emergency” Assistance programs close down; some agencies develop longer term programs based on current needs; transfer of some cases to local social services programs.
- Long-term recovery coordination groups may include:
 - Unmet Needs Roundtable
 - Casework/services coordination by local entity
 - Government-led economic recovery organizations
- Individual recovery issues, such as housing and unemployment, compound and become more complex
- Harder-to-reach populations, including rescue workers and undocumented individuals, may have only just begun requesting assistance.
- Fewer agencies are able to support casework as funding becomes scarce.

Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

Purpose: Continue to help your congregation and community heal, matching resources with unmet needs. Advocate for effective long-term recovery programs that achieve sustainable self-sufficiency. Be aware of trauma “triggers” such as anniversaries.

- Find ways to recognize, support, and educate others on the long and challenging road to sustainable recovery
- Stay aware of your own and your family’s emotional, spiritual and physical recovery needs
- Continually assess and advocate for unmet needs in your congregation and community
- Focus on documenting and reporting needs to sustain fundraising efforts for long-term recovery
- Stay connected with human service delivery and coordination Efforts; resist the “get back to normal” urge
- Create or join community-based coordination mechanisms
- Support Unmet Needs Committee/Roundtable, a forum for providing financial assistance to disaster survivors with the greatest need and the least access to entitlements
- Continue to provide emotional support and pastoral care for those affected over the long-term
- Address new mental health issues that continue to emerge

Term: **Networks** could include local CERT teams, Citizen Corps Councils, disaster interfaiths, faith communities, grassroots organizations, Medical Reserve Corps, volunteer center, or your state or local VOADs.

NDIN DISASTER TIP SHEETS FOR U.S. RELIGIOUS LEADERS

- **Disaster Basics for Faith Communities**
- **The Disaster Lifecycle: Where Do Religious Leaders Fit In?**
- **The Role of Faith Communities in Disasters**
- **How to Use Your House of Worship in a Disaster**
- **Disaster Backlash: Bias Crimes & Mitigation**
- **Continuity of Operations Planning**
- **Self-Care for Religious Leaders**
- **Disaster Spiritual Care**
- **Faith Communities and Disaster Mental Health**
- **Trauma Resilience & Harm Reduction in the Community**
- **Faith Communities and Evacuation Planning**
- **Faith Communities and Disaster Sheltering**
- **Faith Communities & Disaster Volunteerism**
- **Faith Communities & Donation Management**
- **National Faith-Based Disaster Service Organizations**

OTHER RESOURCES

- **Church World Service: Community Arise Curriculum — www.communityarise.com**
- **Citizen Corps Council — www.citizen corps.gov**
- **FEMA: Federal disaster recovery assistance portal — www.disasterassistance.gov**
- **FEMA: Disaster preparedness best practices — www.ready.gov**
- **National Disaster Interfaiths Network - Training & Tip Sheets for U.S. Religious Leaders — www.n-din.org**
- **National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) — www.nvoad.org**