

# **Southern Baptist**



# **Associational Preparedness for Disaster Relief**

**North American Mission Board, SBC**

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Prayer .....	1
Baptist Associations.....	1
Research .....	1
Physical Resources in the Community .....	2
Human Resources in the Churches.....	2
Information Resources in the Churches .....	2
Gathering Information and Determining How It Will Be Used .....	3
Enlisting Leadership .....	3
When the Disaster Strikes .....	3
Check on the Churches and Staff.....	3
Notify State Convention Personnel.....	4
Notifying Neighboring Associations.....	4
Assisting During a Disaster Response.....	4
Notification Protocols.....	4
Local Church .....	4
Association .....	5
State .....	5
Autonomy and Cooperation.....	5
Appendices	
Appendix One: Church Member Disaster Relief Interest and Skills Survey .....	6
Appendix Two: Church Potential for Disaster Response .....	7
Appendix Three: Inventory of Key People in the State, Country, City, and Community .....	8

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# **Associational Preparedness for Disaster Relief**

## **Introduction**

The goal of the Associational Preparedness manual is to help associational leadership learn about disaster relief needs and resources in their area, evaluate their disaster relief possibilities, and develop plans and protocols to assist churches in responding to the community following a disaster.

**A disaster is defined as anything that causes human suffering or creates human needs that the victims cannot alleviate themselves.**

## **Prayer**

Everything a Christian, a church, or an association does should be bathed in prayer. Begin with prayer, conduct your research with prayer, study options in prayer, develop organization and structure with prayer, and build relationships with prayer. Prayer is essential to finding God's will in this and all other matters.

## **Baptist Associations**

Southern Baptist associations have a rich history and heritage of providing churches the opportunity to work together to accomplish more than they could accomplish individually. Churches within a local association also have the ability to assist one another by sharing resources and leadership. By working together they can accomplish tasks too large for any one church. The churches in an association can accomplish kingdom purposes by working together.

Because churches in an association have worked together in the past, church leaders already know one another. They are already positioned to share volunteers and resources and help one another in a variety of ways following a disaster. The association is the only group positioned to effectively marshal the resources and volunteers of area Baptist churches during times of disaster. They also have valuable knowledge and information about their communities that will assist the leadership and resources that are deployed into an area affected by a disaster.

Churches (even very small churches in economically deprived areas) have many physical resources such as buildings, busses, vans, volunteers, and parking lots that can be used with little effort to assist victims during a time of disaster.

Baptists understand that each church is independent and autonomous. Associations do not direct the work of churches. Conventions do not direct the work of churches or associations. Each church and each association, following its own structure, determines what it will do in times of disaster. Each entity has the ability to determine how they will fit into the Southern Baptist Convention disaster relief ministry.

## **Research**

No ministry should be considered without sufficient research. Enlist leaders that mirror the diversity of the association. They should be selected as a study group or enlisted as an ad hoc group for the purpose of identifying the disaster hazards that have the potential of affecting the communities in the association. This group should also learn what is being done around the state, particularly in the neighboring associations.

One of the first contacts should be with the coordinator of disaster relief in the state convention. Before you consider building a disaster relief unit, consult with the state Baptist convention disaster relief director. He will assist you in knowing how a new unit will fit into the state and national disaster relief organization.

Learn what other disaster relief organizations such as the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, and the local emergency management agency in your area are doing. Ask them about disaster relief needs in the area that are not being met by any disaster relief group. Ask governmental leaders what they see as the greatest need in the area. You may learn something right away that your association can do to complement the work of an existing disaster relief organization.

The group charged to research the association for potential volunteers, resources, and facilities that may be used in a disaster response should also encourage churches to develop their own disaster response plans by conducting a church disaster preparedness workshop. Additionally, the association should encourage churches to provide family disaster preparedness workshops to their congregations and communities.

### **Physical Resources in the Community**

Most associational directors of missions/associational missionaries and some of the associational staff have a personal knowledge of the churches in the association. They will have a mental picture of the layout of the buildings, the size of the parking lots, etc. Most often that information is not stored where it can be accessed by other people. The checklist in Appendix One is designed to guide a church in inventorying resources that could be used for disaster relief ministries.

An association could encourage the churches to complete such an inventory and provide a copy to the associational office. Alternatively, the association could appoint or elect a group of people to complete an inventory of all of the churches in the association. All of the churches within the association should be contacted and inventoried to discover the resources and plans for disaster response in their community.

### **Human Resources in the Churches**

Appendix Two is an inventory that a church can use to survey the gifts and abilities of their membership. Churches should be encouraged to complete these inventories with a view toward finding a place of service for every member. If the church does not have a ministry that fits the gifts of some of its members, a list of those names and gifts could be sent to the association to see if they could serve in an associational ministry.

### **Information Resources in the Churches**

Appendix Three is an inventory of key people and agencies in the community, county, and state. These individuals are great resources to assist the association in planning and training their leadership and responders. Do not expect favoritism from these leaders. However, a good working relationship will be helpful during a crisis.

## **Gathering Information and Determining How It Will Be Used**

Before gathering information, determine how it will be used. Then determine which format will best facilitate that use of the information. Doing so will direct you to the kinds of information and the format for gathering the information. Make sure your information is assessable to association, church and Southern Baptist disaster relief leadership during a crisis.

### **Enlisting Leadership**

Each association must determine what works best for it. Just as you enlist other types of leadership in your association, you should insure that the people who are asked to serve have a real passion for the work they are being asked to do. Prepare realistic job descriptions. Enlist people from a wide cross section of the association so multiple churches are involved in the decision making and are actively involved in disaster relief efforts.

You might consider asking each church to elect one person to serve on the associational disaster relief committee. Leadership of an association disaster relief committee should include a chairperson with overall responsibility for coordination of the disaster relief work and two vice-chairpersons. One of the vice-chairs could bear responsibility for volunteers and publicity and the other could be responsible for equipment and training.

Each person in the leadership of the associational disaster relief ministry should receive training from the state Baptist convention disaster relief director.

### **When the Disaster Strikes**

It is not a question of whether a disaster will occur in your association—it is a question of when it will strike. Disasters don't always occur on a weekday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The pastors should know how to contact the associational director of missions, his associate, the associational secretary, and the association disaster relief chairman at any time of day or night. Likewise, the associational director of missions should know how to contact the pastor, disaster relief coordinator, or chairman of the deacons of every church outside of normal office hours.

The association should take whatever action is appropriate to authorize the use of associational space or equipment that might be used in a disaster. In like manner, churches should be encouraged to be prepared to respond to a disaster by taking any necessary church action in advance of the event.

### **Check on the Churches and Staff**

A system should be developed to check on the churches and staff families when a disaster occurs. This system should also check to determine if any of the church buildings were damaged. The enormity of the task may be such that delegating some of the responsibilities may be appropriate. The director of missions or the disaster committee chairman should coordinate this activity. Pastors, staff, and disaster relief volunteers or units from the state convention can be called to augment the associational staff.

### **Notify State Convention Personnel**

State conventions often have resources set aside for disaster relief. Such assistance may come from different sections within the convention and may be allocated for different needs. Some state conventions may have certain monies set aside for assistance to the general population in one area, assistance for pastors and staff losses in another area, and assistance for church building damage in another. Directors of missions should know how to request resources from the state convention.

### **Notifying Neighboring Associations**

The work load for the associational staff actively involved in disaster relief is tremendous. In a large disaster, an association that attempts to do what is needed without additional assistance will be stretched thin and seriously overloaded. Enlisting volunteers from some of the unaffected churches will help, but in a very large disaster an associational director of missions might request some help from a neighboring association. The fellowship among directors of missions is such that when a disaster strikes, the affected association will often receive calls from other associations all over the state. Other associational director of missions will ask, "What can I do to help?"

Associational director of missions should learn to accept the fact that their fellow associational directors of missions really do want to help. For example, during some flooding that exceeded the 500-year flood projections, one DOM and his wife left their own association for a couple of days and volunteered to work as the associate to the DOM in the affected area. There are probably dozens of associational directors of missions who would volunteer to help in this way if asked. Sometimes we don't avail ourselves of all the resources at our disposal.

### **Assisting During a Disaster Response**

Directors of missions are extremely helpful to disaster relief personnel from outside the association who respond to needs within the area of that association. The DOM can contact disaster relief leaders/teams to share information about churches that will help the disaster relief personnel determine where to locate various disaster relief units. He can encourage churches to support disaster relief efforts and provide a central point of contact for much of the disaster relief effort in the area. The associational director of missions and the disaster relief incident commander can provide mutual assistance to one another.

As the incident commander makes decisions about the placement of various disaster relief units, the director of missions should be available to assist by providing needed information and insight into the needs of the churches and impacted communities. The associational director of missions can also provide needed information about resources and their availability within the association.

### **Notification Protocols**

**Local Church** - Pastors and other church leaders are encouraged to notify the associational director of missions when a disaster or other event occurs in the area or is expected to occur that will require more resources than the church can provide.

**Association** - The director of missions should notify state convention disaster relief leadership when a disaster or other event occurs in their area or is expected to occur that will require more resources than the combined churches of the association will be able to provide. This notification should be made as early as possible to allow units to be placed on alert prior to the actual call to service.

**State** - State convention disaster relief groups have working agreements with the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and, in some cases, state emergency management entities. Therefore, Baptist disaster relief units may respond to work with those entities during times of disaster. In such cases, the director of missions or other associational leadership will be notified as soon as possible. The unit director or incident commander will look for opportunities to involve local Baptist churches and/or associations even when working closely with other disaster relief organizations.

### **Autonomy and Cooperation**

Baptist churches are noted for both autonomy and cooperation. These terms are not mutually exclusive. While we cooperate very closely at all times, each church still maintains its autonomy. During a disaster, cooperation is most critical. We must all work together to insure that the victim receives the very best care possible.

When a disaster is handled by a church, it is handled under the structure determined by that church.

When a disaster can be dealt with by the churches of one association, the structure determined by the association will be followed. This does not mean that a church has given up its autonomy. It simply means that the churches are cooperating together to get the work done.

When resources from outside the association respond, they are coordinated by the disaster relief personnel assigned by the state convention. State disaster relief personnel will work closely with associational staff to insure the best use of the resources to match the needs.

**Appendix One**

**Church Member Disaster Relief Interest and Skills Survey**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Church \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Would you be interested in assisting with a disaster relief project by our church:  
\_\_\_\_\_ In this community      \_\_\_\_\_ In this county      \_\_\_\_\_ In this state  
\_\_\_\_\_ In the USA      \_\_\_\_\_ Internationally

How much lead-time would you need to get ready to participate in a project?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Interest/Experience/Training**

Check the types of disaster ministries that interest you. Place two checks by areas where you are experienced.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Advisory/advocacy            | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Interpreter:               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Bulk distribution            | Language _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Casework                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Legal aid                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Chainsaw crew/tree removal   | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Literacy                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Child care                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Medical emergency team     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Cleanup crew                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Mud-outs                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Communications (Ham Radios)  | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Reconstruction team        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Counseling                   | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. Repair (emergency)         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Crisis closet                | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. Salvage                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Damage assessment           | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. Sanitation                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Elder care (or handicapped) | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. Security                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Employment assistance       | <input type="checkbox"/> 25. Shelter management or care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Evacuation of persons       | <input type="checkbox"/> 26. Transportation             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Feeding                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 27. Other _____                |

Check if you have training in the following:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Involving Southern Baptists in<br>Disaster Relief | <input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Disaster<br>Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> State disaster relief manual                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Mass Feeding                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on training with unit                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced first aid and CPR           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary emergency child care                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis counseling                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other disaster relief training       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Red Cross                                |   |

## Appendix Two

### Church Potential for Disaster Response

The following may be used in a disaster response in or near our community.

#### A. Church Facilities

- classrooms
- clothes bank
- dining room
- dumpster
- fellowship hall
- food bank
- gymnasium
- kitchen
- nursery
- outside electric hookup
- outside swage
- outside water hookup
- rest rooms
- showers
- storage building
- vacant building
- other \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Equipment

- air compressor
- chainsaws, etc.
- generator
- high volume pump
- oxygen tank
- portable stoves
- sanitation equipment and supplies
- submersible pump
- other \_\_\_\_\_

#### C. Vehicles

- 4x4's
- aircraft
- ATV
- boats
- buses
- campers
- tractor-trailer
- trailers
- trucks
- van
- other \_\_\_\_\_

#### D. Tools and Supplies

- wheelchair
- brooms
- cots
- crutches
- electric cords
- first-aid kit
- garden hose
- hand tools
- mops
- power tools
- shop vacuum
- shovels
- other \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix Three**

**Inventory of Key People in the State, County, City, and Community**

After listing the officials, list any church members or friends who may work in a particular office or agency. Sometimes, the personal contact is helpful.

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
<b>State Baptist Convention</b>		
State Disaster Relief Director		
Disaster Relief Region/Area Coordinator		
Disaster Relief Unit Director		
• Feeding		
• Recovery		
• Childcare		
• Communication		
• Other Type of Unit		
<b>State Government</b>		
Governor		
Lt. Governor		
State Representative and/or Senator		
State Office of Public Safety or Emergency Management		
Area Coordinator for Public Safety		
Who else do we know that is involved in state government?		
<b>County Officials</b>		
Emergency Management Director		
County Commission Chairman or County Mayor		
County Sheriff		
County Fire Marshal		
County Commissioners		
Who else do we know that is involved in county government?		
<b>City Officials</b>		
Emergency Management Director		
Mayor		
Police Chief		
Fire Chief		
Fire Marshal		
City Council Chairman		
City Council Members		

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Who else do we know that is involved in city government?		
<b>Local or Area Disaster Relief Agencies</b>		
American Red Cross Chapter		
The Salvation Army		
VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters)		
<b>Other Churches in the Community</b>		