

# CONGREGATION DISASTER PLAN

A GUIDE TO HELP CONGREGATIONS PREPARE FOR DISASTERS

CONGREGATION: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY / ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR EMERGENCY PLANNING:

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

PAGER: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

NAME1: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

NAME2: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

NAME3: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

NAME4: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE (S): \_\_\_\_\_

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## I. PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DISASTERS

1. Utility services may be unavailable for extended periods (i.e., electricity, water, and gas).
2. Telephone service may be interrupted.
3. Police, fire, paramedics, and 911 response will be overrun the first 3 to 5 days after a major disaster. Do not expect their help, initially.
4. There will be serious problems with transportation. Road closures will occur.
5. People will largely be "on their own" in the initial days following a major disaster.
6. Your congregation may be limited to working only with the resources within your immediate neighborhood.

## II. DESIGNATE AN EMERGENCY COORDINATOR & TEAM

*The Emergency Services Coordinator may put together a planning team or disaster preparedness committee. The following are areas of possible responsibility for the planning team.*

1. Prepare the facility to survive a disaster.
2. Ensure the continuity of pastoral services or care.
3. Assist congregation members in their preparation for and recovery from disasters.
4. Decide what roles congregation leadership will play in response to disasters.
5. Consider how the congregation might help meet needs in the community after a disaster.

## III. DEFINE THE CONGREGATION'S DISASTER MISSION

Examples include:

1. To ensure the continuation or quick resumption of worship services.
2. To provide pastoral care and support to disaster victims (from congregants to community members).
3. To provide services/resources to help in the community's recovery from disaster (consider what services/resources you plan to provide).

Write a short a statement below that summarizes the disaster mission.

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## IV. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Provide some basic building data (information that may be helpful to emergency services personnel).

1. Occupancy type (i.e., Office Building, School, Church, Temple, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
2. Total square footage of your facility:  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Year building was built: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of most recent renovation: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of stories: \_\_\_\_\_ Is there a basement? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
5. Type of construction (i.e., wood frame, metal, concrete, masonry, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_
6. Describe any unique features about the building or surrounding grounds that may be pertinent to emergency service personnel:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Attach a floor plan(s) of the facility to the appendix of the Disaster Plan.

## V. FACILITY SAFETY MEASURES & EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

### A. Basic Safety Mitigation:

- |  | DATE DONE |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Do a hazard hunt and mitigate any obvious problems (e.g., move heavy items from top to lower shelves and secure items that might topple).                               | _____     |
| 2. Check cabinet doors to ensure secure closure.   | _____     |
| 3. Properly store chemical and flammable materials.  | _____     |
| 4. Trim any large overhanging trees that could fall and damage property.   | _____     |
| 5. Clearly mark gas and water shut-off valves with instructions for shut off.<br>(Turn off utilities only if there is a leak or if you suspect damage to the lines)        | _____     |
| 6. Ensure working status of fire extinguisher(s) and smoke detectors.  | _____     |
| 7. Take photographs documenting the interior and exterior of your facility to help later in recovering costs due to facility damage or equipment loss.                     | _____     |
| 8. Post facility evacuation plan (with exit and assembly information).<br>(Plan to account for staff and onsite participants in evacuation, and conduct evacuation drills) | _____     |

### B. The following emergency supplies and equipment are located as follows:

1. Portable radio(s) and extra batteries: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Emergency first aid supplies: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Flashlights and extra batteries:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(In case of no electricity, consider also a supply of light sticks that light for up to 12 hours)

4. Fire extinguisher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

5. Stored drinking water (more is better): \_\_\_\_\_

(In addition, use water purification tablets to treat water from other facility sources, such as the water heater)

6. Emergency (3-day) food supply: \_\_\_\_\_

(Emergency food and water is necessary for unexpected confines)

7. Basic tool kit: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Fire Alarm System (include the following):

- Location of fire alarm (and fire panel or fire control & command room if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

- Sound of the fire alarm (i.e., loud bell, whooping horn, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

- If the system is monitored by an outside agency, identify name and contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

- Indicate the location of smoke detectors: \_\_\_\_\_

- Indicate the location of fire alarm pull stations: \_\_\_\_\_

- If a sprinkler system is installed, indicate the location of sprinkler water flow valves & standpipes: \_\_\_\_\_

- Indicate also the location of tamper alarms for standpipes: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Exits (include the following):

- Provide information on fire escapes (i.e., type & location): \_\_\_\_\_

- Provide information on fire doors and fire door hardware, if applicable (i.e., type & location): \_\_\_\_\_

C. The following utility shut-offs & tools are located as follows (if applicable for your building):

1. Main gas valve: \_\_\_\_\_

(Only shut-off the gas if you smell gas or hear a hissing sound; then open exterior doors & windows)

2. Crescent wrench or gas shut-off tools: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Main water valve: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Electrical fuse box / circuit breaker: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Shut off electricity if electrical wires are shorting or sparking)
5. Emergency or portable generator (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

*D. Take an inventory of neighborhood resources that can assist with your emergency response:*  
(Identify where to go for emergency help, especially if telephone service is unavailable immediately after a disaster)

1. Where can you rent or borrow a generator if necessary?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Where is the nearest medical treatment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Where is the nearest fire station? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Where is the nearest police station? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Where can you go for additional water? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Where can you go for additional food supplies? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Where can you get additional medical supplies, medicines and special equipment? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*E. Other Safety Measures:*

1. First Aid / CPR Training -- Arrange for a First Aid / CPR class to be held at your facility (contact the American Red Cross Bay Area, 415-427-8000, or <http://www.bayarea-redcross.org>). Encourage ushers, lay leadership, youth leaders and teachers to attend.
2. NERT -- Become involved with your local NERT Program; training in areas of disaster first aid, light search and rescue and fire suppression. Contact the NERT program office at 415-970-2022, or go to the NERT website [http://www.sfgov.org/site/sfnert\\_index.asp](http://www.sfgov.org/site/sfnert_index.asp).

<b>VI. EVACUATION PLANNING</b>
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*Some Evacuation Planning Tips:*

1. Designate where people should go or stand, once they are outside the facility: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Post clear directions on how to evacuate the facility (post in central facility locations).
3. If it is possible and safe to do so upon exiting, staff should shutoff any electrical equipment that may be running in their area and close all doors behind them.

4. After evacuating, take a head count to ensure all staff and clients have exited.
5. Consider people with disabilities (cognitive, hearing, visual, or mobility) who may need assistance.
6. Ensure that usher's are trained in the evacuation plan.
7. Practice evacuation/fire drills (use Appendix 1 to indicate most recent drill dates).

<b>VII. COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING</b>
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*It is suggested that the congregation have a post-disaster plan for disseminating information to staff, lay leadership, constituents, affiliates, members, and parents.*

- |  | DATE DONE |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Develop a list of emergency contact numbers (See Appendix 2 – Phone List).  | _____     |
| 2. Setup a telephone tree for notifying staff and leadership (especially if the disaster happens after hours).   | _____     |
| 3. Setup a telephone tree or system to check on the condition/needs of congregation members when disaster strikes (especially older or disabled members).          | _____     |
| 4. Designate one remote phone number where an emergency message can be recorded and be sure that all congregation members know that number and understand its use. | _____     |
| 5. Identify the names of persons who shall be notified in an emergency in order of priority.   | _____     |
| 6. Plan for connecting with key denomination or community leadership to report status information and for emergency response coordination/assistance.              | _____     |
| 7. Plan for interacting with the media during and after a disaster (identify media contact information and develop scripts for possible scenarios).                | _____     |
| 8. Develop a plan for alternate communications (see tips below).   | _____     |

Given a disruption to telephone service following a major disaster, consider these tips:

- a. Have access to a standard telephone, as cordless telephones do not operate without power.
- b. Use cell phones from different communication providers or in different area codes.
- c. Use walkie-talkies (or Nextel system) for communications within facility grounds.
- d. Know the location of the nearest pay phones. (A pay phone may operate sooner than a normal business phone; hence keep a roll of quarters with your emergency supplies).
- e. Identify local amateur radio operators; each fire station will have ham radio capacity.
- f. Prepare to use runners (messengers on foot or bicycle).

**VIII. ENCOURAGE PERSONAL DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

DATE DONE \_\_\_\_\_

1. Encourage staff and congregants to develop family/home emergency plans. \_\_\_\_\_  
At a minimum, individual/family preparedness requires the following:
  - a. Enough emergency supplies to last 3-days (need to be prepared to function without the normal utility, supply and transportation infrastructure).
  - b. Identification of an Out-of-Area Contact Person.  
Note: A response following any emergency is concern for the welfare of family and home. Staff persons who are worried about their families will not be effective until they have reassurance. Therefore, staff emergency plans should include the identification of an out of state telephone contact (relative) for family check-in. Connecting out-of-area calls is quicker as local circuits are initially overwhelmed after disaster.
  - c. An Evacuation Plan (i.e., identify a reunification spot and determine what you will need to take if evacuating your home; include a plan for pets).
2. Contact the American Red Cross for an on-site presentation (see below). \_\_\_\_\_  
Note: Given a minimum of 20 participants, the American Red Cross will come on site to conduct a one-hour free class on personal disaster preparedness for staff or members. Classes are available in English, Spanish, and Cantonese. Contact the American Red Cross Bay Area, Preparedness Services at 510-595-4459.
3. Review your disaster plan with all staff. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Train staff in how & when to shut off utilities (if applicable to your facility). \_\_\_\_\_
5. Train staff in how to use fire extinguishers (call Fire Extinguisher Company). \_\_\_\_\_
6. Pre-assign immediate response tasks (see Appendix 3 – Immediate Response). \_\_\_\_\_
7. Train staff about their emergency responsibilities to congregants/community. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Make a realistic plan for staff coverage in emergencies. \_\_\_\_\_

**IX. RECOVERY & SERVICE CONTINUITY PLANNING**

*It is suggested that the congregation have a plan to ensure it can continue providing services after a disaster?*

1. List the supplies/resources needed to keep your congregation operating (then think about alternative vendors or sources for obtaining those items).

Supply or Resource Need	Alternative Source for Obtaining Resource
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Identify the congregation's plan of succession (i.e., the list – by position name or title – that determines which staff or lay person is next in line to assume overall authority).

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

3. List of signatories on bank accounts (in the event that the primary signatory is unavailable).

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Identify how you might backup key staff positions (assume some key staff will be unavailable).

Staff Position	Possible Backup Source
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Identify an offsite location for the backup of vital records and duplicate copies of important documents: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Include as an appendix to this plan, or at the location above, an inventory of facility assets so losses can be documented for insurance (insurance policies should be reviewed annually).

7. What neighboring congregations or other community agencies can you join with to share resources in emergencies? (Create mutual aid agreements as appropriate)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

8. What are some of the areas in which you can work cooperatively to support each other's recovery following a disaster?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_

## X. NEIGHBORHOOD /COMMUNITY PLANNING

Consider additional roles for community involvement following a disaster – areas in which the congregation might provide services to congregants or community members affected by the disaster. It is suggested this planning be done with other neighborhood congregations and organizations for a more coordinated disaster response. Summarize this plan in the space below.

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### Possible areas for involvement:

1. To provide pastoral care and support to disaster victims (especially outreach and support to more vulnerable congregation members).
2. To use facility space to provide emergency shelter for neighborhood residents.
3. To use facility space (i.e., meeting rooms & offices) for organizations forced to relocate.
4. To use facility resources for the preparation of food for mass feeding.
5. To use the facility as a storage/distribution center (for disaster relief supplies).
6. To use any owned vehicles for transporting people to recovery services sites.
7. In addition, teams of volunteers may be organized to provide the following services.

<input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Outreach & support to vulnerable populations
<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Visits/Care	<input type="checkbox"/> Organizing/Leading Volunteer Groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Assisting at Disaster Help Centers	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral Services (Spiritual Care)
<input type="checkbox"/> Casework	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Translation	<input type="checkbox"/> Rebuilding / Repair / Restoration
<input type="checkbox"/> Child Care Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Relocation or Moving Assistance
<input type="checkbox"/> Cleanup (homes/neighborhoods)	<input type="checkbox"/> Listening	<input type="checkbox"/> Resource Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Support / Telephoning	<input type="checkbox"/> Shelter Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Driving/Providing Transport	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Worship Services
<input type="checkbox"/> Food Services (cooking, feeding & distribution including home delivery)	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing Volunteers and Donations	<input type="checkbox"/> Warehousing and distribution of relief supplies

8. If your congregation has a national denominational disaster response program (i.e., Episcopal Relief and Development, United Jewish Communities, United Methodist Committee on Relief, etc.), consider partnering or working with that entity to provide disaster relief.

Go to the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters website (<http://www.nvoad.org/members.php>) and search on “National Members” for a list of the various denominational and community-based programs.

**APPENDIX 1 - UPDATES TO THE PLAN**

1. Date most recent earthquake drill was held:

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2. Date most recent fire drill was held:

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3. Date of most recent staff training in basic emergency preparedness:

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4. Date your most recent staff home phone list was compiled/updated:

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**APPENDIX 2 - EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS LIST**

Call 9-1-1 for most emergencies. If 9-1-1 is overloaded, then refer to the following:

- Police Department \_\_\_\_\_
- Fire Department \_\_\_\_\_
- Ambulance \_\_\_\_\_
- Water Department \_\_\_\_\_
- PG&E \_\_\_\_\_
- Hazardous Material Spill \_\_\_\_\_
- Poison Control Center \_\_\_\_\_
- California Highway Patrol \_\_\_\_\_
- Local Hospital \_\_\_\_\_
- Insurance Agent \_\_\_\_\_
- American Red Cross \_\_\_\_\_
- Salvation Army \_\_\_\_\_
- Office of Emergency Service \_\_\_\_\_
- Congregation District/Regional Disaster Contact \_\_\_\_\_
- Interfaith Coalition \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3 – IMMEDIATE RESPONSE IN EMERGENCIES

The following response functions follow the government's Incident Command System (ICS). Given a small organization, the same staff person or volunteers may assume these functions.

1. **Incident Command** - *the person who will lead and make decisions.* This function manages the overall response and recovery to an emergency and directs the other functions below.

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Operations** - *the person who will do the work.* Has responsibility for whatever the agency does to respond to client or disaster needs. Initial response operations include the following:

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. **Site Security:** *Responsible for utilities in an emergency (gas, electricity and water).*

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- b. **Fire Suppression:** *Checks for and suppresses small fires; notifies the fire department.*

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- c. **Search and Rescue:** *If evacuation is required, ensures everyone has evacuated safely.*

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- d. **First Aid:** *Administers first aid to injured persons.*

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Planning** - *keeps everyone in the know.* Monitors the news; comes up with short (i.e., what are we going to do in the next 24-hours), and long-term plans for the congregation's recovery.

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Logistics** - *the person to get the resources.* Responsible for getting everything operations (above) needs to function to ensure the health and safety of staff, congregants and other persons.

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

5. **Finance** - *the person who will track all activities and costs.* This person must also ensure there are safe backup copies for the following agency documents: 1. Articles of Incorporation (e.g., verification of tax exempt status); 2. Recent photographs documenting the interior and exterior of your facility; 3. Insurance documentation; 4. Licensing documentation, if appropriate.

Person assigned: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_