

CHAPTER I





Getting Organized

The information in this chapter will assist the reader with the following activities:

- Gaining information on the disaster preparation process;
- Appointing committee members to serve on the Parish Disaster Committee;
- Determining the scope of the committee by examining strengths and weaknesses in responses to previous disaster events;
- Understanding basic responsibilities before, during, and after a disaster; and
- Scheduling a tabletop exercise and full scale drills at least annually to review and update the disaster plan.

SECTION ONE

Establishing a Disaster Planning Committee

SECTION KEY	
	<u>Committee Members</u>
	<u>Scope of the Committee</u>
	<u>Goal Setting</u>
	<u>Disseminating and Documenting Information</u>

Hint: Read through this entire workbook section before beginning to work through and answer questions as a group.

The Bishop has asked each pastor to appoint a Disaster Planning Committee. Each pastor may approach this step differently depending on the makeup of his parish. Some pastors may appoint only a disaster coordinator, relying on this coordinator to identify and appoint the other committee members, while other pastors may appoint several key persons to the committee, allowing the committee members to appoint a coordinator.

This section is designed to help the pastor and/or the designated disaster coordinator work through the steps of setting up a disaster committee in each parish, school, or institution¹. It will help them make decisions such as who should be involved in preparing the parish for different types of disasters and how to tap already existing resources in the parish. It also will help them determine what role a parish should play in serving the community after a disaster has occurred.



Appointing Committee Members

The first step in developing a Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan is to establish a Disaster Planning Committee.

The pastor and/or the disaster coordinator may either create an entirely new committee composed of parishioners having disaster response planning experience and specially chosen parish staff members, or they may want to utilize existing committees such as a

¹ Although hereafter the plan will refer to a “parish” creating a disaster plan, this manual also refers to setting up disaster planning in schools and institutions as well.

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Building and Grounds Committee, Parish Social Ministry, Community Outreach, or Respect Life Committee.

It is useful to recognize that many parishes have historically participated in disaster relief activities (i.e. cleaning out homes after floods, cooking food for disaster victims, distributing donated goods, providing for emergency expenses, etc.) in informal ways. Therefore, a good place to begin the committee process is to recognize which activities are already taking place at the parish, assess their utility, and include them in the formal plan.

LIST ANY ACTIVITIES OCCURRING NOW IN THE PARISH THAT COULD BE INCORPORATED IN THE DISASTER PLAN

ACTIVITY

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Although a large group may want to participate in disaster preparedness and response planning, larger groups tend to lose focus. Keep the initial disaster committee to approximately 6-10 persons, since the group will be initially functioning as a steering committee. Later, once goals are established, including more members of the parish may be necessary. Form 1-A on the next page and in the List of Resources at the back of this manual may be helpful in this exercise.

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LIST THE PRIMARY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Including representatives from the following groups may enhance your parish's ability to prepare for and respond to disasters:

- Youth Group Leaders
- Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
- Spanish-speaking Representatives
- Knights of Columbus Councils
- Knights of Peter Claver
- Catholic Daughters or DCCW chapter
- Saint Vincent DePaul Society
- Parish Social Ministry
- Parent/Teacher Organizations

LIST ADDITIONAL PARISH LEADERS WHOSE PARTICIPATION ON THE COMMITTEE WOULD ENHANCE PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS

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Members of the Disaster Planning Committee

Team Leader

Name

Address

Tel. # (Home or Cell)

Email

Special Role

Name

Address

Tel. # (Home or Cell)

Email

Special Role

Name

Address

Tel. # (Home or Cell)

Email

Special Role

Name

Address

Tel. #

Email

Special Role

Name

Address

Tel. # (Home or Cell)

Email

Special Role

Name

Address

Tel. # (Home or Cell)

Email

Special Role



Scope of the Committee

Once the pastor and/or the disaster coordinator have determined committee membership, decisions such as the length of membership, the roles of committee members, and the basic goals of the committees will need to be decided upon.

HOW LONG WILL MEMBERS SERVE ON THIS COMMITTEE?

(For example, one year, two years, rotating membership, etc.)

Although the committee may not yet have determined its specific disaster-related activities, committee members may want to assign preliminary roles. For example, they may want to elect a chair, a vice chair, a donations manager, a volunteer coordinator, and/or a fundraising coordinator. While these roles may be assigned at a later date, the Diocesan Disaster Committee recommends that the Parish Disaster Committee decide on a Volunteer Coordinator at this time.

The Importance of Having a Volunteer Coordinator

When establishing basic roles for the committee members, it is important that the key position of Volunteer Coordinator is appointed early on. Parishioners' hidden talents are a goldmine of potential for aiding the community after a disaster. The parish may have doctors, nurses, crisis counselors, childcare workers, skilled contractors, boat owners, etc. All of these areas of expertise can be utilized after a disaster.

The role of the Volunteer Coordinator is crucial for collaboration with neighboring parishes. A small disaster that may affect either one or two parishes can be better addressed when two parishes join forces to help the community recover.

The Volunteer Coordinator also can be responsible for setting up activities such as canvassing neighborhoods for vulnerable parishioners or assembling baby care kits to give to families who have lost everything in a flood.

Appointing a person to and determining the scope of this position prior to a disaster is a critical step. Without a Volunteer Coordinator it will be nearly impossible to coordinate a parish-wide effort to help those in need.

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LIST THE CONTACT FOR THE PARISH STAFF

Parish Staff Member: _____
Position: _____
Other: _____
Home Phone # _____
Cell # _____

Disasters tend to ignore geographical boundaries, as was demonstrated during recent floods and hurricanes.

Will the committee and volunteers respond to other areas outside of the geographical boundaries of the parish? Is the parish willing to partner with another parish or even work in collaboration with the parishes in its deanery for mutual disaster support?

IS THE PARISH WILLING TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER PARISHES TO HELP WITH DISASTER PLANNING?

NAME OF PARTNER PARISH: _____
NAME OF PASTOR: _____
NAME OF DEANERY: _____

It is recommended that the committee meet several times a year - more frequently prior to and during peak disaster seasons - in order to update and test the disaster plan. In the Central Texas region we can be affected by flood or tornados associated with hurricanes. It is recommended that the frequency of the committee meetings increase in the spring and continue through the end of hurricane season.

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Goal Setting

It is important to set realistic goals in planning for and protecting the parish from disasters, as well as when responding to the community's needs after a disaster. It is impossible for one parish to "do it all" during a disaster. Use this section to explore the programs the parish might already have in place that are related to disaster response as well as to determine the most important disaster response activities that the parish needs to address.

WHAT PROGRAMS DOES THE PARISH HAVE THAT COULD BE USED TO HELP THE COMMUNITY DURING DISASTERS?

(For example: a home repair program for senior citizens, a clothing drive, etc...)

Recently, the central Texas area has been affected by severe floods. Many also remember the devastation from the tornado in Jarrell a decade ago. Using these disasters as a guide, examine the parish's current level of preparedness and ability to provide community outreach. This will aid the committee in determining the most important steps to be taken before, during, and after a disaster occurs as well as in determining what types of community outreach the parish could provide after future disasters.

Start by examining your preparedness before the disasters. For example, does the parish school or RE program have procedures in place to alert parents if the school/parish would release their children early due to storms? Does the parish take any measure to protect precious church documents from being damaged by floodwaters?

BEFORE PREVIOUS DISASTERS, WERE THERE ANY ACTIONS TAKEN THAT FACILITATED THE PARISH IN MAKING DISASTER PREPARATIONS? (For example, the parish may have moved computers off the floor to protect them from being damaged during flooding).

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BEFORE PREVIOUS DISASTERS, WHAT ACTIONS COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO ADEQUATELY PREPARE THE PARISH FOR THE DISASTERS? (For example, parish computer records are copied and stored in a safe, watertight environment.)

Now examine the parish's ability to respond during a disaster. Examine what actions would make "surviving the storms" easier. For instance, has the parish functioned as a shelter during flooding? In what ways is the parish prepared if staff/parishioners are unable to get home as a result of flooding? Are staff members prepared to offer prayer opportunities in the event of a sudden tragedy?

DISCUSS THE ACTIVITIES THAT TOOK PLACE AT THE PARISH DURING PREVIOUS DISASTERS THAT ALLOWED FOR THE PARISH TO ADEQUATELY HANDLE THE SITUATIONS. (For example, the parish had an adequate supply of food, water, and blankets for stranded staff/volunteers to remain at the parish for at least 3 days after the floods).

DISCUSS PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AT THE PARISH DURING THESE DISASTERS THAT COULD BE ADDRESSED BY THIS COMMITTEE. (For example, during the terrorist attacks, no prayer services were available and many of the parishes were not open for people who came to pray).

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Now examine the parish's ability to respond after a disaster occurred. Was the pastor adequately able to contact parish staff after these events to make sure that they were ok? How long did it take the parish to re-establish its normal routine? Was the parish able to provide community outreach immediately after these events?

DISCUSS ANY ACTION TAKEN THAT FACILITATED A QUICK RESPONSE TO THE DISASTER BY THE PARISH. (For example, because the parish had an updated phone tree, the pastor was able to contact parish staff to tell them to stay home for a few days).

LIST THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED THAT MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE PARISH TO EITHER RE-ESTABLISH ITS NORMAL ROUTINE OR RESPOND TO THE COMMUNITY. (For example, parishioners came to the church hoping to volunteer after Hurricane Katrina, but the parish could not coordinate volunteers and sent them home).

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LIST OUTREACH ACTIVITIES THAT THE PARISH UNDERTOOK AFTER DISASTERS TO HELP THE COMMUNITY.

LIST THE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES THAT WERE NEEDED AFTER DISASTERS.

Using the lessons learned that are listed above, identify the areas that the committee needs to address first as part of its disaster planning tasks.

LIST THE THINGS THAT THE COMMITTEE WOULD MOST LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH IN ORDER TO PREPARE THE PARISH HELP THE COMMUNITY AFTER A DISASTER.



Disseminating and Documenting Information

It is important to make sure the parish community is informed of the activities of the Disaster Planning Committee. Parishes with active disaster preparedness and response planning have often lamented that with each disaster they are “reinventing the wheel” because of a lack of documenting what was done during past disasters, making it difficult to learn from past mistakes and successes.

In order to keep the parish informed and up-to-date on disaster planning, consider distributing a copy of the committee’s goals to the pastor, parish council, and parishioners. Some recommendations include putting the minutes in a weekly bulletin, making announcements on Sunday, or posting notices on a bulletin board.

HOW WILL THE COMMITTEE DISSEMINATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISASTER PLAN TO THE PASTOR, PARISH LEADERS, AND PARISHIONERS?

During this entire disaster planning process it is important to keep records of the committee’s activities since the roles and responsibilities of the committee and its members may evolve over time. Information should include (but may not be limited to) types of activities undertaken (what type of assistance was provided, who was helped, etc.) and not undertaken, and why. It is especially critical to keep a concise record of activities during and after a disaster so that future disaster relief efforts don’t need to be organized from scratch. Appointing a secretary or a record keeper will facilitate this important step.

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WHAT TYPES OF RECORDS SHOULD BE KEPT?

Once the committee is established, it is important to validate its existence by announcing to the parish that the committee is formed and ready for action. This could be done in the form of a commissioning service, announcement of the parish committee in the bulletin, or posting on a church information board.

HOW WILL THE PARISH FORMALLY RECOGNIZE THE COMMITTEE?

SECTION TWO

Overview of Disaster Planning – Before, During and After

SECTION KEY	
	<u>Before a Disaster</u>
	<u>During a Disaster</u>
	<u>After a Disaster</u>

Hint: This section will assist you in gathering basic information about Disaster Planning in the parish. Detailed disaster planning steps are found in Section II.



Before A Disaster – Thinking About Disaster Preparedness

Disaster preparation activities include two paths. First, how can we, as a committee, help prepare the church/parish property for potential disasters? Second, how can we help the families in our parish to be better prepared for a disaster in their home?

This section of the guide provides questions that will prompt the committee to think about preparation activities that can be undertaken to make their parish and their community more disaster resistant. Chapter II of this manual will walk the committee step-by-step towards developing a plan to protect the parish facility, and will provide disaster education material that can be given to parishioners to aid them in creating and writing personal family disaster preparation plan.

Protecting the Facility

As part of standard building services procedures, most parishes have plans in place to protect church property. Does the parish have plans in place that could be used for general planning purposes? Is there a plan in place to secure records in the event of a disaster? Start basic disaster planning by identifying and documenting the types of plans that currently exist at the parish.

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DOES THE PARISH ALREADY HAVE A DISASTER PLAN?

HOW DOES THE PARISH PROTECT ITS RECORDS?

Protecting the Parish Staff

It is important that the parish ensure that its staff members are prepared for different disasters. Are there plans in place to prepare parish staff for a disaster? Does the parish keep track of its activities on a daily basis? How often does the parish participate in disaster drills?

IS THERE A MASTER LIST OF PARISH ACTIVITIES MADE ON A DAILY, WEEKLY, OR MONTHLY BASIS?

DOES THE PARISH HAVE DRILL/EVACUATION PROCEDURES?

Protecting Parishioners

Recent disaster events like flooding in Marble Falls demonstrated how little the community knows about its susceptibility to disasters. Although agencies such as local emergency management departments, the American Red Cross, and other groups try to teach the community about disasters, information does not reach a large portion of the community.

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WOULD THIS COMMITTEE CONSIDER HOLDING DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SESSIONS FOR PARISHIONERS? (Agencies like the American Red Cross and local emergency management departments may provide disaster-training sessions).

CONSIDER WAYS OF DISTRIBUTING RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS TO PARISHIONERS, SCHOOLS, ETC...



During a Disaster

This section provides some basic evacuation information and will assist the parish disaster committee in making decisions now about who is responsible for responding to disasters and where and how disaster notification may be obtained.

Basic Concepts of Operation

The Disaster Planning Committee will need to determine who is going to be the point person during all disasters. This person could be the chair for the disaster committee, the building services representative, or the pastor, and should be an independent decision maker with the authority to make quick decisions in the event of a disaster.

LIST THE NAME OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN CHARGE DURING AN EMERGENCY.

Name: _____

Position: _____

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Office Phone: _____
Cell Phone/Pager: _____
Home Phone: _____

LIST THE ALTERNATE INDIVIDUAL IN CHARGE DURING AN EMERGENCY.

Name: _____
Position: _____
Office Phone: _____
Cell Phone/Pager: _____
Home Phone: _____

Once this point person is identified, it is time to begin to assign overall roles and responsibilities to committee members and parish staff members. For example, the building manager could be assigned supervision of all facility preparation before a disaster strikes. This does not mean that he/she will perform all necessary tasks; instead, this person will serve as the lead contact for those types of activities in an emergency. Additionally, staff should be assigned to operate the phones to inform parents/parish visitors about emergency situations, evacuation of the building, protection of archival records, backing up of hardware/software, etc. Later on in this manual, parishes will be guided through developing a calling tree and emergency list of their own.

LIST THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

Facility Preparation _____
Notification of Staff _____
Preparation of Staff _____
Protection of Archival Records _____
Back-up/Protection of Computer Equipment _____
Other: _____

In the event a key staff member is unavailable to report for duty in an emergency, the Pastor will be responsible for re-assigning any and all roles and responsibilities of that key staff member to other staff members. Specific roles for all staff members during times of emergencies or disasters are detailed in the appropriate Hazard Sections in the form of check lists and task assignment sheets.

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Determining On and Off-site Meeting Locations

It is important to decide before a disaster strikes which parish room will serve as a central area of decision-making and where to meet if the parish is inaccessible during a disaster.

LIST THE LOCATION OF “DISASTER CENTRAL” AT THE PARISH.

Building: _____

Room: _____

LIST THE OFF-SITE LOCATION WHERE THE COMMITTEE WILL TO MEET IF THE PARISH IS INACCESSIBLE. (Ideally, this site should be the partner parish).

Location Address: _____

BE SURE TO INFORM THE DIOCESAN OFFICE OF THE PARISH'S ALTERNATIVE LOCATION.

The Basics of Evacuating

Most disaster plans provide information about how to prepare for the disaster but fall short of providing basic information about evacuation procedures. Below are some recommendations to help you develop an evacuation plan for your parish.

- Inform Diocese of intention to evacuate the facility.
- Examine emergency supply list, make sure that all supplies needed are packed in boxes and ready to transport.
- Make sure that transportation is available to successfully evacuate everyone.
- Make sure that all vehicles being used for transportation have money for tolls and maps to the destination, and that the drivers have cell phones.
- Determine the order of evacuation; try to keep floors/wings/ etc. of people together to make determining a headcount easier.
- Determine if some of the staff/residents have relatives that could come and pick them up. This will help shelter victims feel more comfortable than they would as strangers in a Red Cross Shelter.

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- If you are evacuating a residential facility such as a shelter, be sure to tell each resident to take the following:
 - Two to three changes of clothing
 - One pillow
 - Two blankets
 - All toiletry articles needed
 - Glasses, hearing aids, medicines, etc.

- Be sure that the alternative receiving facility has been notified.

- Be sure to notify the authorities of imminent evacuation.



After a Disaster

This section focuses on basic information about helping the parish recover after a disaster. There is information in Chapters III and IV about recovery specific to each type of disaster. Chapter VI discusses how the parish can help their community in need.

Re-entry into the Facility

The Pastor should be the individual responsible for authorizing re-entry into the parish. Only AFTER the Pastor has been assured by local authorities and the Diocesan insurance carrier and/or local contractors that the safety of the parish has been restored should re-entry occur.

Designated staff members and/or parish volunteers should form a damage assessment team to (a) survey the parish after a disaster, (b) report findings to the Pastor, and (c) ensure that timely and accurate data is received.

IDENTIFY THE MEMBERS OF YOUR DAMAGE ASSESSMENT TEAM NOW.

Damage and needs assessments as well as injury reports should be compiled by the team and the Facilities Planning Department as soon as possible after a disaster has occurred. Copies of forms are available in this manual

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Relocation

With severe damage, repairs or reconstruction may be required. In this case, plans will have to be developed to address the relocation of parish staff and services to alternate facilities until repairs are made or the parish is rebuilt.

If you have agreed to partner with another parish, include arrangements with this parish for the use of facilities during a disaster. You may have to work on merging social services, scaling down services, or suspending services until facility is repaired.

IN THE EVENT THAT THE PARISH HAS SUSTAINED SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE AND MUST BE RELOCATED, WHERE WILL YOU GO?



Training and Exercises

Disaster preparedness and planning is not a one-time event or exercise. It is a process that must constantly be reviewed and updated. Upon request the Diocese of Austin with Catholic Charities of Central Texas, will assist in providing training for all parish staff and volunteers for emergency situations. Parishes are encouraged to begin training their staff immediately and during their “New Employee Orientation” and continue to offer training to staff through their tenure with the parish.

Key parish members should do the following:

1. Become thoroughly familiar with the parish’s Disaster Plan.
2. Attend Disaster Preparedness Training as requested by Pastor.

New parish staff members should receive training beginning with orientation regarding their disaster related roles. They should be required to become familiar with the parish’s disaster and response plan as well as their specific job function during times of disaster.

The Disaster Plan should be exercised regularly as both a tabletop exercise and a full-scale exercise.

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Tabletop Exercise

Key staff should review the plan. They should verify information with suppliers and emergency contacts to insure all information is correct and current. Ideally, this exercise should be scheduled during the 1st Quarter of each year.

Full Scale Exercise

Parishes are encouraged to schedule one full-scale exercise specific to one disaster annually. Most communities have a VOAD group (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters) in their area. Contact the nearest VOAD for assistance in organizing a drill or participating in one of their drills. Upon completion of this exercise, submit the report (addressing any deficiencies) to the Pastor.