



# Disaster Plan



**Metropolitan New York Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

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## **Metropolitan New York Synod**

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*Prepared in 2014*



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**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

# I. Message from the Bishop

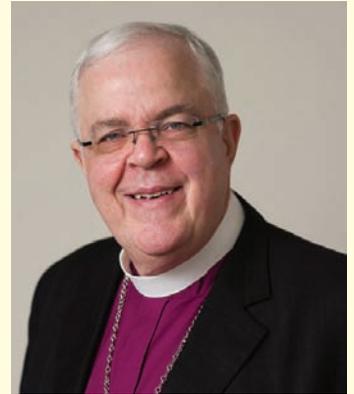
This Disaster Plan is a wonderful resource. I hope we will not have to use it.

But the reality is, with the forces of nature and the presence of evil and the simple reality of life, the chances are we will, indeed, have to use it. And this time, because of the fine work of many, including our “Disaster Pastor” Craig Miller, we will be better prepared.

The text of the sermon, though, is the stunning reminder posted on the sign at St. James, Gerritsen Beach, seen in this photo. Rather than blaming God when we face disaster, like the good people at St. James we will rely on God to be our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.



I am convinced that one of the ways in which God will continue to help us is through the resources in this plan. I invite you to read it, study it, use it



in your congregations and even in your homes, as we will use it in our synod office. We want to be ready to respond to any tragedy from the stance of strength presented here.

God has been with us in the past and has promised to continue to be with us. We rely on that promise even as we work together to be ready and able to respond and help.

The peace of Christ be with you.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Alan Rimbo  
Bishop

## II. Mission and Purpose

### For such a time as this

Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are **claimed, gathered, and sent** for the sake of the world.

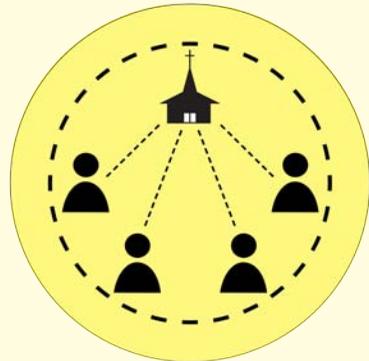
### Vision Statement

*Claimed: by God's grace for the sake of the world, we are a new creation through God's living Word by the power of the Holy Spirit;*

*Gathered: by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will live among God's faithful people, hear God's Word and share Christ's supper;*

*Sent: by God's grace for the sake of the world, we will proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, serve all people following the example of our Lord Jesus and strive for justice and peace in the world.*

The Metropolitan New York Synod, claimed, gathered, and sent, for the sake of the world, adopts this plan in an effort to fulfill its call for such a time as this. With increased awareness of threats from natural and human events, the synod wishes to put forth a plan that defines and describes those threats and spells out our intent to respond. Our response includes our call to help our neighbors in need as well as to maintain word and sacrament ministries especially in the midst of difficult circumstances.



### III. Introduction

Whenever a commercial flight prepares to take off, the flight attendants go through a routine that includes a description of the safety features of the airplane. They demonstrate use of seatbelts, emergency exits, flotation devices, and oxygen masks. Seldom are these instructions needed because most flights begin and end without incident. However, in those few times when something happens, knowing how to react can mean the difference between life and death.

Every day we face the possibility of disaster. Risks include natural phenomena such as epidemics, hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, as well as human-caused dangers such as accidents and acts of terrorism. While we cannot predict what will happen at any given time we can, through careful planning, mitigate the risks we face, and when disaster strikes, we can be prepared to respond with godly love and care.

*The church's response to disasters begins with congregations;* therefore, this plan calls on congregations to develop their own disaster plans in order that they might be better able to respond. Pastors, leaders and members each have a role to play when disasters occur. Similarly, the synod—bishop, staff, and other leaders—plays a part in disaster response that varies depending on the nature and size of the disaster.

Congregations are the local presence of Christ in communities and, therefore, have the greatest opportunity to bring comfort and hope in times of disaster. The synod provides coordination, communication, and financial management when congregations need additional resources to respond. Through the presence of the bishop, staff, and other leaders, the synod supports congregations when additional resources are needed.



Additional resources and assistance may be provided by Lutheran Disaster Response of New York and, through Lutheran Social Services of New York, Lutheran Disaster Response, the ELCA disaster ministry, when the size and scope of a disaster warrants their response. These organizations support and carry out long-term response ministries.

This plan is an organic document and, as such, will be adapted and revised to incorporate new learning and as conditions warrant. A Disaster Response Task Force will bear responsibility for keeping the plan current.

## IV. Disaster Defined

*Disasters vary in scope and cause. They can be the work of humans or triggered by natural disasters.*

*Disasters might be caused by natural events like floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and epidemics. Disasters change and redefine communities in positive and negative ways. (from Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guidebook, Lutheran Disaster Response, 2014)*

The American Red Cross defines a disaster as an emergency that causes the loss of life or property and a disruption in which survivors cannot manage without spiritual, monetary, or physical assistance. A disaster can bring injuries and loss of life; the destruction of property including housing, hospitals, critical facilities, transportation capabilities, and businesses; and civic disorder.



Disasters and other crises include, for example, fire—whether in a building or a wildfire; a hazardous materials spill or other transportation accident; a chemical or biological threat; pandemic; a nuclear incident; an earthquake; a terrorist attack; or a riot or other civil unrest. Weather-related crises could strike in the form of extreme heat; drought or water shortage; severe winter weather; tornado; hurricane or flood. *Appendix A contains definitions of many types of disasters.*

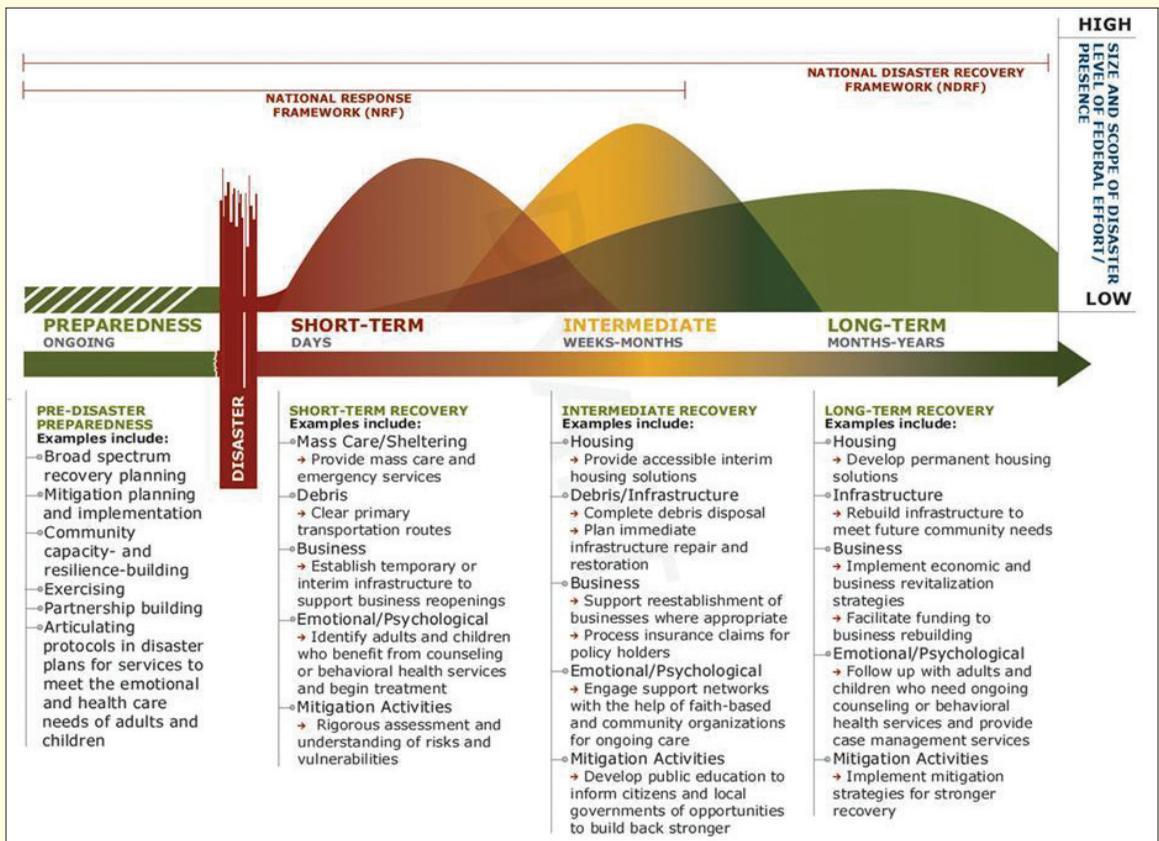
A disaster creates particularly hazardous conditions for vulnerable people and communities, and the location of a disaster can demand special handling. The American Red Cross has defined the life cycle of a disaster as years, not months, over which time a community progresses through phases of rescue, relief, and recovery.

### **A. Stages of disaster (Response, relief, long-term recovery)**

1. **Short-Term (Response):** In the immediate days or weeks following a disaster, first-responders take the lead. In larger disasters FEMA and Red Cross join with local offices of Emergency Management (OEM), police, EMT, and fire departments to make sure services reach those who need them. If necessary, temporary shelter is established. Search and rescue operations may take place at this time.

2. **Intermediate (Relief):** Once the initial response has addressed the immediate needs of survivors and relative safety is established, cleanup operations may begin. Survivors are provided with temporary housing, if necessary, and assessment of the damage begins. Local and national organizations establish operations to assist with recovery. During this phase, fundraising takes place to enable the recovery. Emotional and spiritual crisis counseling can help survivors with their feelings directly related to the disaster.

3. **Long-Term Recovery:** Rebuilding and repair after a disaster can take months, for smaller events, to years in the event of a large disaster. The time it takes to recover exacts a significant toll on survivors and caregivers both emotionally and spiritually. In this phase, communities often begin to plan for future disasters in order to lessen their impact.



## V. Definition of Terms

### A. Acronyms used in this plan

DRTF	Disaster Response Task Force: a team of representatives from various parts of the synod and Lutheran Social Services of New York responsible for implementing this plan.
LDR	<a href="#">Lutheran Disaster Response</a> : the disaster response ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
SMO	Social Ministry Organization
LDRNY	<a href="#">Lutheran Disaster Response of New York</a> (an association of Lutheran agencies responding to disaster, led by Lutheran Social Services of New York): provides Disaster Case Management, construction management, counseling, and chaplaincy.
NYDIS	<a href="#">New York Disaster Interfaith Services</a>
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
ARC	American Red Cross
VOAD	Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster: a membership-based organization that builds resiliency in communities nationwide. It serves as the forum where organizations share knowledge and resources throughout the disaster cycle—preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation—to help disaster survivors and their communities. ( <a href="#">NVOAD</a> : National VOAD)
COAD	Community Organizations Active in Disaster: composed of representatives from public, private and not-for-profit agencies, organizes and deploys community resources, in an effective and timely manner, in response to the needs of community disaster survivors
LTRG/O	Long Term Recovery Group/Organization: a cooperative body that is made up of representatives from faith-based, non-profit, government, business, and other organizations working within a community to assist individuals and families as they recover from disaster.

## **B. Undeclared disaster**

Recovering from most disasters in the United States does not require the assistance of the state or federal government. Communities deal with smaller disasters with the help of emergency responders and local non-profit organizations, using locally-identified resources. (NVOAD Long Term Recovery Guide, 2012)

## **C. State declared disasters**

Beyond the local community, state government has a responsibility to respond to the emergency needs of its citizens. To do this, each state works in concert with local governments, voluntary agencies, business/industry, and others in the community to develop an all hazards Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Should the severity of an emergency or disaster be at a level that will require a coordination of state as well as local government resources, the governor of a state will declare a state of emergency, activating the state's EOP. Once a state of emergency has been declared, the full resources of the state can be accessed in order to respond to the incident. (NVOAD Long Term Recovery Guide, 2012)

## **D. Federally declared disaster**

Local and state governments share the responsibility for protecting their citizens from disasters, and for helping them to recover when a disaster strikes. In some cases, a disaster is beyond the capabilities of the state and local governments to respond.

In 1988, the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42

U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206, was enacted to support state and local governments and their citizens when disasters overwhelm them. This law, as amended, establishes a process for requesting and obtaining a Presidential disaster declaration, defines the type and scope of assistance available from the federal government, and sets the conditions for obtaining that assistance. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), now part of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security, is tasked with coordinating the response. (from FEMA document: [A Guide to the Disaster Declaration Process and Federal Disaster Assistance](#))



## VI. Church in Response

Christ calls the church to witness to hope and healing, bringing help to our neighbors in need. As the local expression of the church, congregations are the primary vehicle of the church's response through which we proclaim hope and the promise of new life in the midst of devastation. Lutheran Disaster Response, a ministry of the ELCA, helps the church to fulfill that role when larger disasters strike. Through partnerships with synods and local affiliates, LDR strives to help the church continue to be the church in time of disaster.

Not all disasters require the same level of response. Size and scope of disasters, as well as location, determine how the church will respond. This plan attempts to define the various ways in which our church might respond to a disaster. Because each disaster is unique, this plan cannot prescribe response.

### A. Congregations

All disasters are local. Individuals and communities are affected by disasters in different ways because of their unique circumstances. Resources, community resiliency and ability to cope with disaster vary from one locality to another and from one time to another. Congregations, being located in communities, are the first line of the church's response to disaster.



Once the congregational leadership has assessed the scope of a disaster and the available resources in the community, including those of the congregation, they may decide to call upon the synod for additional support and resources. The congregation should immediately notify the synod of a disaster occurring on or affecting congregational property or that impacts on a significant number of congregation members.

Disasters (especially state or federally declared disasters) may lead to formation of Long Term Recovery Groups that bring together organizations and agencies focused on response to the disaster. Congregations can play vital roles in LTRG/Os, helping them to bring emotional and spiritual care to affected communities and enabling them to offer other services they might have to help survivors of disasters.

## 1. Pastor

As soon as possible after a disaster, *after seeing to his or her own personal and household needs*, the pastor should begin to assess the needs of congregation members and communicate with the property committee to determine whether any damage has occurred to church property. She or he will contact the bishop, assistant to bishop, or dean to inform them of the disaster and what immediate needs, if any, the congregation might have. The pastor may call on other congregational leaders to assist in the assessment and communication but should make sure that these roles are clearly defined (see Section VII)

The pastor's primary role is to provide emotional and spiritual support to members and neighbors in the affected areas. Pastors are encouraged to participate in local response and recovery efforts. In the event that a LTRG/O is established, pastors can play a role of leadership by joining the group or encouraging congregational leaders to join and work on committees of the LTRG/O.

Throughout the disaster response and long-term recovery, the pastor should attend to self-care. If the pastor begins to feel overwhelmed or burned out, she or he should contact the bishop or the synod's designated Disaster Response Coordinator to ask for assistance.

## 2. Congregation Council

As leaders responsible for the life of the congregation, council members and other leaders should assist the pastor and, in consultation with the pastor, determine whether and how the congregation can respond to help their neighbors. When a congregation has a disaster plan, the congregation council is most often responsible for ensuring the plan is implemented.

## 3. Members

Members of the congregation have responsibility for one another. They share with the pastor the duty to respond to needs of members and neighbors as they are able. Whenever possible, members can look in on neighbors, especially those who are more vulnerable, and if they discover a need, they cannot address themselves they may communicate that need to the pastor or designated congregational leader who will take action appropriate to the need.





## B. Synod

The synod responds to disaster *primarily through its congregations*. However, the synod has additional resources and contacts that it can bring to bear in time of disaster. Especially for state and federally declared disasters, and those that affect several congregations, the synod may take on a coordinating and fundraising role to assist congregational response.

Communication, coordination, and support are the roles for the synod after a disaster. When several congregations are active in response to disaster, the synod may provide funds through synodical reserves and fundraising or by obtaining grant funding from LDR and other sources. Through its ecumenical relationships, the synod may also draw resources from other denominations to assist with response. All synod response relies on the local congregations to determine appropriate actions; therefore, communication is critical to the synod's response.

## 1. Bishop

Following a large-scale disaster that impacts one or more congregations, pastoral care from the bishop is critical. The bishop's first responsibility is to care for the rostered leaders who have been impacted by the disaster or who may be responding to the disaster. Upon learning of a disaster, the bishop will attempt to communicate with rostered leaders in the area in order to assess its impact and determine the appropriate synod response.

For disasters that directly impact congregations or rostered leaders, the bishop will visit the disaster area as soon as practical. Included in the visit will be appropriate staff or members of the Disaster Response Task Force (further defined below); when a disaster leads to response from LDRNY, the bishop will seek to include representatives of the agency on the visit. Until such time, the bishop will communicate with pastors or deans. If the bishop cannot visit immediately after the disaster, s/he will reach out by telephone to the rostered leader(s) in the affected area(s). The bishop may call on the Disaster Response Task Force to make a recommendation for synod response.

As the response and recovery continues, the bishop will continue to monitor congregation activities and the well-being of leaders and congregations directly or through deans, a designated staff member, or Disaster Response Coordinator.

The bishop will maintain communication with ecumenical and interfaith partners in order to coordinate response. This role may be assigned to a Disaster Response Coordinator if one is appointed.

The bishop will maintain communication with rostered leaders responding to the disaster and encourage attention to self-care among those leaders. When appropriate, the bishop will recommend respite care for leaders, including retreats, workshops, counseling, and respite visits from other pastors/leaders.

It is important to remember that not every disaster requires the bishop's participation in response. Whether and how the bishop responds will depend on the extent of the disaster and the particular needs of congregations and rostered leaders.

## **2. Disaster Response Task Force**

The Disaster Response Task Force, at the request of the bishop, meets to assess the nature and extent of a disaster and recommends to the bishop the appropriate response. The recommendations may include fundraising and distribution of funds to affected congregations and congregations responding to the disaster, emotional and spiritual care to congregations and pastors, appointment of a Disaster Response Coordinator, etc.

The DRTF will monitor announcements from the local and state Offices of Emergency Management and FEMA to ascertain whether the disaster is a federally or state declared disaster and what government measures are being implemented. The DRTF will also attempt to determine whether local VOADs, COADs, or LTRG/Os have been activated and encourage congregations to participate in their response.

## **3. Staff**

Synod staff works closely with the bishop to provide care to congregations and rostered leaders after a disaster. The bishop may call on staff members to reach out to congregations in affected areas or to visit those areas until such time as the bishop can visit. Staff will maintain communication with the bishop and help to make assessment of the congregations and rostered leaders affected.



#### 4. Deans

The bishop may call on the dean(s) of conferences in which a disaster occurs to provide for care to affected congregations and communities and to communicate needs of impacted individuals and communities to the bishop.

Deans share responsibility for ensuring information about the disaster is communicated to the bishop or synod staff. They can ensure congregational and rostered leader needs are assessed in a timely manner. To the extent they are able, deans will provide emotional and spiritual support to rostered leaders in the affected area(s).

#### 5. Synod Council

The Synod Council bears responsibility to monitor the response of the synod (bishop, staff, DRTE, and Disaster Response Coordinator) to ensure any expenditures of time or money are made appropriately. The Synod Council should receive reports from the bishop and other synod leaders regarding their response activities.

#### C. Lutheran Disaster Response & Lutheran Disaster Response of New York

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) recognizes that every disaster is local. Because of this, we believe every response needs to be rooted in the community; we work to accompany that community from immediate relief through long-term recovery. LDR works through an extensive affiliate network and other partners to ensure that local needs are being addressed and met.

In the Metropolitan New York area, the LDR affiliate is Lutheran Social Services of New York. During and after a disaster, LSSNY may activate LDRNY to provide for community and individual needs through Disaster Case Management and other services. The decision to activate LDRNY is made by LSSNY in consultation with the synod and with LDR.

LSSNY provides volunteer and donations management. Through its participation in NYDIS and other networks, they can direct volunteers and donations to appropriate areas.



Throughout the disaster and recovery, the bishop will maintain communication with LDR and LSSNY or assign an assistant to the bishop or other designee, such as a Disaster Response Coordinator, to do so.

#### **D. Other Social Ministry Organizations**

SMOs not actively affiliated with LDRNY may be called upon by the government, the synod, or the community to respond to a disaster. These SMOs are encouraged to work with LDRNY in order to coordinate their response efforts and, through LDRNY, apply for LDR grants for disaster relief when appropriate.

#### **E. Ecumenical and interfaith partnerships**

The synod maintains relationships with other church bodies, such as our full-communion partners, and with other religious groups. Whenever possible, the synod will strive to work in close coordination with these groups through enabling organizations such as New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS) and NYC VOAD. When appropriate, the bishop will contact leaders of other church bodies and faith groups to compare assessments of the disaster and recovery efforts. Such communication may become the responsibility of the Disaster Response Coordinator if one is appointed.



## VII. Preparedness

Being prepared for a disaster is an important pastoral obligation. By preparing for a disaster, a congregation demonstrates God's love for its own members and for the surrounding community. Just as parishes should give thought to what preparations are necessary while the weather is fair and the world hums along normally, so too must the broader church consider what is needed.

### A. Synod

The synod will maintain this Disaster Plan and ensure that this plan is kept current and that it is communicated to congregations and other constituents. Information about disaster response and preparedness, including this plan, will be maintained on a dedicated page of the synod's website.

#### 1. Recovery Plan

The synod will develop and implement a synod office recovery plan that includes the following:

- a chain of command with clear responsibilities and roles
- a communications plan
- securing property and records, including off-site storage of physical records and cloud-based backup of electronic records
- guidance and training for staff
- a place of assembly in the event office evacuation is necessary
- up-to-date records of historical and other valuable items, with photographs or video, for insurance claims

#### 2. Bishop and Staff

The bishop and the synod staff will familiarize themselves with this Disaster Plan and with the synod office recovery plan. At least once each year, the staff will review the Disaster Plan. The staff will participate in drills of the synod office recovery plan and the Disaster Plan.

##### a. Media Plan

- Good communications are a necessity of crisis management. Effective internal communications will enable the synod to connect with its staff, membership, and the larger church, while a plan to communicate externally with media will enable the synod to control the story and its telling.
- The bishop (or designee) will prepare short answers to questions that might be asked immediately following a disaster. These answers will be provided to any staff or representative who may be authorized to respond to media queries. The following questions will form the basis of the response: What happened? Who was involved? When did it occur? Where did it occur?
- The bishop will designate those who are authorized to respond to media inquiry and inform staff and congregations of that designation. All queries should be directed to the bishop's designee(s).



### 3. Disaster Response Task Force

The synod Disaster Response Task Force (DRTF) will meet at least twice each year. Members of the Task Force will provide for annual review of this plan and make recommendations to the synod council for revisions. Members of the DRTF will include representatives from synod staff, synod council, the quadrants of the synod and LSSNY.

The DRTF will ensure that resources and information on the synod Disaster Response web page are up-to-date.

In the event of a disaster, the bishop may call upon the DRTF to determine the appropriate response measures to be taken by the synod. Members of the DRTF may serve as advisors to the bishop and, if one is appointed, Disaster Response Coordinator.

### 4. Rostered Leaders

Rostered leaders are encouraged to seek training as disaster chaplains. Training is offered by organizations in collaboration with local and state Offices of Emergency Management. Those trained and certified as disaster chaplains may be called upon to respond to disasters by their local OEM. For urgent and compelling reasons of safety, it is synod policy, as well as that of the local emergency management authorities, that *no clergy are to deploy themselves to the scene of a disaster without proper training and as part of a coordinated disaster response.*

### B. Congregation

In response to disasters, congregations have three areas of responsibility: care for church property, care for members, care for communities. Congregations are encouraged to develop plans for all three of these responsibilities. A congregation's disaster plan should include each of the following. (See appendix B for resources useful for preparing congregation disaster plans.)

## 1. Care for church property

- Back up important data and store off-site
- Photograph or make a video of church property
- Review insurance coverage
- Develop a plan for continuity of operation including evacuation and relocation of worship and other services, if necessary

## 2. Care for members

- Encourage congregational members to develop their own household preparations by using the resources found at [ReadyAmerica](#) or other sources.
- Consider offering disaster preparedness training in the congregation. Such training might be open to congregation and community members.
- Create and maintain a database of members identifying both members with special needs and with skills and tools members can bring to bear in case of a disaster
- Create a plan for rapidly communicating accurate information (e.g. phone tree) to members in case of a disaster



## 3. Care for community

- Create a list of physical and human resources (including facilities and ability to serve meals) that the congregation can offer in response to a disaster
- Communicate your congregation's assets to your county's Emergency Management Coordinator.
- Congregations may consider upgrading facilities in order to provide food, shelter or other services in the event of a disaster.
- Establish a disaster response team that will review the congregation's disaster plan and provide for communication and coordination in a disaster.
- Clergy and lay leaders may be called on to provide emotional and spiritual care to survivors. Leaders should consider training to be disaster chaplains.
- Develop liturgies that can be used for public worship in a time of disaster.

## C. Pastors

Pastors often bear a unique burden for spiritual care in disaster response. In a disaster response environment, a pastor's self-care is especially important. Preparation for disasters includes developing healthy habits now. Prayer, exercise, diet all play important roles in individual health. (See healthy living resources at Portico Benefit Services.)

As community leaders, pastors are encouraged to receive training as disaster chaplains and CERT (see below D.) Founded in 2001, [Disaster Chaplaincy Services](#) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-sectarian organization whose purpose is to assure skilled and appropriate interdisciplinary spiritual care for all people affected by disasters in the New York tri-state area. DCS does this by recruiting, screening, orienting, training, educating, deploying, and supervising chaplains on behalf of the religious communities of the tri-state region.

The pastor also leads congregational disaster planning. By setting the tone, the pastor helps the congregation to understand the importance of planning and preparation. Pastors should model for the congregation by having a disaster plan for themselves and their families.

## D. Individual/Family

Individuals and families are encouraged to have their own disaster plan. Resources at [ReadyAmerica](#) and other sources are available.

The synod encourages individuals to receive training in their local Community Emergency Response through the local OEM. CERT is a training program that prepares you to help yourself, your family, and your neighbors in the event of a disaster or emergency. A Community Emergency Response Team is a team of individuals who receive special training that enhances their ability to recognize, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a major emergency or disaster. During an incident, emergency service personnel may not be able to reach everyone right away. By getting trained in CERT, you will have the skills to help emergency responders save lives and protect property.



## VIII. Appendices

### A. Types of Disaster

The following descriptions have been adapted from *Disasters: Prepare and Respond*, a resource manual developed by Province IV of the Episcopal Church (2009). The manual contains greater detail and description. A disaster risk assessment (see LDR Congregational Disaster Preparedness Guide, p.19) can help to determine the likelihood of any of these disasters striking in a given area.

1. **Winter Weather:** Snowfall and extreme cold can immobilize an entire region. Even areas that normally experience mild winters can be hit with a major snowstorm or extreme cold. The impacts include flooding, storm surge, closed highways, blocked roads, downed power lines, and hypothermia victims. Protect the household from the many hazards of winter by planning ahead.

2. **Extreme Heat:** A prolonged period of excessive heat, often combined with excessive humidity, is called a heat wave. The heat index is a number in degrees Fahrenheit that tells how hot it feels when relative humidity is added to the air temperature. Exposure to full sunshine can increase the heat index by 15 degrees.

Heat kills by pushing the human body beyond its limits. Under normal conditions, the body's internal thermostat produces perspiration that evaporates and cools the body. However, in extreme heat and high humidity, evaporation is slowed, and the body must work extra hard to maintain a normal temperature.

Conditions that can induce heat-related illnesses include stagnant atmospheric

conditions and poor air quality. Consequently, people living in urban areas may be at greater risk from the effects of a prolonged heat wave than those living in rural areas. Also, asphalt and concrete store heat longer and gradually release heat at night, which can produce higher nighttime temperatures, known as the "urban heat island effect."

Most heat disorders occur because the victim has been overexposed to heat or has over-exercised for his or her age and physical condition. The elderly, young children, and those who are ill or overweight are more likely to succumb to extreme heat.

3. **Fire:** The National Fire Protection Agency has found that the age group most likely to die in house fires are those 75 and older.

Approximately 2.4 million burn injuries are reported in the United States each year.

Burns and fires are the leading cause of accidental death in the home for children 14 and under and are second only to motor vehicle crashes in causing accidental deaths.

4. **Flood:** Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. River floods develop slowly, sometimes over days. Flash floods can develop in a few minutes in rural, suburban, and urban areas, sometimes without any sign of rain. The first sign of a flash flood may be a dangerous wall of roaring water carrying rocks, mud and other debris. Flooding from a dam break can produce effects similar to flash floods.

If a building is in a low-lying area, near a body of water or downstream from a dam, it is particularly susceptible to flooding. However, culverts, dry streambeds, low-lying ground, small streams, gullies, or creeks that appear harmless in dry weather still can flood.

- 5. Drought or Water Shortage:** An emergency water shortage can be caused by prolonged drought, poor water supply management, or contamination of a surface water supply source or aquifer. The contamination of ground water or an aquifer also may disrupt the use of well water.

A drought is a period of abnormally dry weather that persists long enough to produce serious effects including crop damage and water shortages.

Drought is a silent but very damaging phenomenon that is rarely lethal but enormously destructive. It can ruin local and regional economies that are agricultural and tourism based, and it creates environmental conditions that increase risk of other hazards such as fire, flash flood, and landslides.

During water-shortage emergencies, action is important at all levels of society. Individuals can practice water-saving measures to reduce consumption. Cities and towns can ration water. Farmers can change irrigation practices or plant crops that use less water. Factories can alter manufacturing methods.

- 6. Hurricane:** A hurricane is an intense tropical weather system of strong thunderstorms with a well-defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or higher. They form and cause the greatest damage in the Atlantic and Gulf Coast areas from June through November, although the stronger ones can sustain strong winds and heavy rain as they travel over land into the northern regions.

Hurricanes can spawn tornadoes and microbursts, and flooding and landslides or mudslides are a concern in mountainous regions for several days or more after the storm passes.

When a watch is posted, hurricane/tropical storm conditions are possible in the specified area, usually within 36 hours. A warning indicates a hurricane or tropical storm is expected in the specified area, usually within 24 hours. These alerts are widely given via broadcast and cable TV, radio, and Internet weather sites.

- 7. Terrorism or Civil Unrest:** Terrorism and acts of civil disobedience use force or violence against people or property in violation of criminal laws in order to intimidate, coerce, or seek ransom. Perpetrators use threats to create widespread fear, to try to convince citizens that governments are powerless, and to get immediate publicity for their causes.

Acts of terrorism and civil unrest may include assassinations; kidnappings; hijackings; bomb scares and bombings; computer-based or “cyber” attacks; and possibly the use of chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological weapons.

High-risk targets include military and civilian government facilities, airports, large cities, high-profile landmarks, large public gatherings, water and food supplies, utilities, and corporate centers. With its financial, historical, and political significance in the world, New York remains an attractive target for terrorist attack.

a) **Chemical or Hazardous Materials Attack:** A chemical attack is the deliberate release of a toxic material that can poison people and the environment.

b) **Biological Attack:** A biological attack is the release of germs or other biological substances. Many agents must be inhaled, enter through a cut in the skin or be eaten to make the body ill.

A biological attack may or may not be immediately obvious. The danger may only become known via radio or TV after local health care workers report a worrisome pattern of illness.

8. **Tornado:** Tornadoes have been reported in every state. They can occur at any time, though spring and summer have higher frequency. A funnel cloud of wind swirling at 200 miles an hour or more can destroy anything in its path. Though warning systems have improved, it's best to prepare when the skies are clear so that quick reaction is possible.

A tornado watch is issued when conditions are favorable for a tornado to develop. Stay tuned to local news stations for more information. If a tornado warning is issued, a tornado has been sighted in the area; take shelter right away.

Tornado danger signs include a dark, often greenish sky; large hail; a massive, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotation is visible)—and if a loud roar similar to the sound of a freight train is heard, take shelter immediately!

9. **Earthquake:** An earthquake is a phenomenon that is powered by the sudden release of stored energy from the earth, which radiates seismic waves. At the surface, earthquakes may manifest in shaking or displacement of the ground. Earthquakes may occur naturally or as a result of human activities. In its most generic sense, the word “earthquake” is used to describe any seismic event.

While rare in Metropolitan New York, earthquakes have occurred in the region in the past. A magnitude 5 earthquake centered around Manhattan struck in 1884. Several earthquakes in the magnitude 1.5-3 occurred around New York in 2014. The [US Geological Survey](#) shows the highest potential for earthquake in our area centered around New York City. Although this potential is comparatively low, we should remain aware of this hazard.

10. **Pandemic:** According to the World Health Organization, a pandemic can occur when a new virus appears against which the human population has no immunity, resulting in several, simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illnesses.

Given the high level of global traffic, a virus may spread rapidly, leaving little or no time to prepare. Vaccines, antiviral agents, and antibiotics to treat secondary infections could be in short supply and unequally distributed. Widespread illness could result in sudden and potentially significant shortages of personnel to provide essential community services. Medical facilities could be overwhelmed.

In the past, new strains of influenza have generated pandemics causing high death rates and great social disruption. Influenza's effect also is relatively prolonged throughout a community when compared to other natural disasters, because outbreaks can reoccur.

During the past few years, the world has faced several threats with pandemic potential, making the occurrence of the next pandemic a matter of time. Well-prepared communities will have plans that include public and private cooperation. Individuals and church communities can do their part by keeping up with the facts as reported through reliable sources such as [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov) (or the agency's hotline at 1-800-232-4636).

**11. Hazardous Materials Incident (Chemical, nuclear, biological):** Many communities have Local Emergency Planning Committees whose responsibilities include collecting information about hazardous materials releases in the community, such as an oil spill, freight train derailment, or over-the-road trucking accident. They generally make this information available to the public upon request. They also develop emergency plans to prepare for and respond to such emergencies.

**1. Hazardous Materials Spill:** In a major chemical emergency, a hazardous amount of a chemical is released into the environment. Accidents sometimes result in a fire or explosion, or small animals such as fish or birds may die suddenly, but many times there are no signs of a chemical release.

Household chemical also can cause emergencies and must be handled with care.

**12. Nuclear Incident (Explosion or Meltdown):** Metropolitan New York is home to the Indian Point Nuclear Reactor. Although the construction and operation of this nuclear facility is closely monitored and regulated by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, an accident could result in dangerous levels of radiation that could affect the health and safety of people living nearby.

Local and state governments, federal agencies, and the electric utilities have emergency response plans in the event of a nuclear power plant incident. The plans define two "emergency planning zones." One covers an area within a 10-mile radius, where it is possible that people could be harmed by direct radiation exposure. The second zone covers up to a 50-mile radius from the plant, where radioactive materials could contaminate water supplies, food crops and livestock. If residing within 10 miles of the plant, state or local governments should provide public emergency information annually.

## B. Resources

For a current list of resources and links, see the [Metropolitan New York Synod Disaster Relief webpage](#).

### 1. **Lutheran Disaster Response Congregational Preparedness Guide**

(resources under tab ‘General’)

### 2. **Federal Emergency Management Agency:**

The FEMA web site offers an overwhelming volume of information about disasters to which it has responded, as well as helpful information about specific types of disasters. FEMA also offers [independent study courses in a number of disaster-related areas](#). FEMA-produced print resources are available through the FEMA Distribution Center (1-800-480-2520 or Federal Emergency Management Agency, P.O. Box 2012, Jessup, MS 20794-2012) They include:

1. “Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship”
2. “Are You Ready? An In-depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness”
3. “Preparing for Disaster”
4. “Preparing for Disaster for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs”
5. “Food and Water in an Emergency”
6. “Helping Children Cope with Disaster”

3. **ReadyAmerica:** A governmental site that targets private citizens, ReadyAmerica focuses on three primary areas: emergency kits, family plans in the event of a disaster, and information about specific threats. This site offers some of the best information available for individual and family preparedness.

4. **Church World Service:** CWS has disaster response curriculum and resources as well as webinars on disaster response topics. CWS also collects Disaster Response Kits from participating organizations and deploys them during the rescue and relief phases of a disaster.

5. **New York Disaster Interfaith Services:** Following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, organizations in New York mobilized for preparedness. Several of those organizations came together to form NYDIS. The NYDIS website “disaster resource library” offers extensive databases of articles searchable by keyword and/or category.

6. **World Cares Center:** Provides resources and training for preparing and responding to disasters.

7. **American Red Cross:** Provides resources and trainings including CPR, individual and community readiness.

## 8. **National Volunteer Organizations Active**

**in Disaster:** NVOAD has resources, including points of consensus, for organizations responding to disaster. See also local VOADs.

1. [NYC VOAD](#)
2. [Long Island VOAD](#)

## 9. **Offices of Emergency Management:** City and county OEM have resources and information regarding preparedness and disaster response. Individuals can sign up for CERT training. You can also sign up to receive emergency notifications.

1. In the [City of New York](#)
  - [Ready New York:](#) The Ready New York campaign encourages New Yorkers to be ready for all types of emergencies. Develop a disaster plan and decide where you and your family will meet in the event of an emergency.
  - [Know Your Zone](#) is your destination for everything you need to know about hurricanes in New York City. You'll find information about the city's hurricane evacuation zones, the hazards you may face from a hurricane, and what to do to prepare.
2. [Nassau County OEM](#)
3. [Suffolk County OEM](#)
4. [Westchester County OEM](#)
5. [Dutchess County OEM](#)
6. [Rockland County OEM](#)
7. [Orange County DEM](#)
8. [Ulster County OEM](#)
9. [Sullivan County OEM](#)

# IX. LINKS

## Section V

Lutheran Disaster Response: [www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response](http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response)

Lutheran Disaster Response of New York: [www.lssny.org/main/ldrny](http://www.lssny.org/main/ldrny)

New York Disaster Interfaith Services: [www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org)

NVOAD: [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org)

NVOAD Long Term Recovery Guide: [www.nvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/long\\_term\\_recovery\\_guide\\_-\\_final\\_2012.pdf](http://www.nvoad.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/long_term_recovery_guide_-_final_2012.pdf)

A Guide to the Disaster Declaration Process and Federal Disaster Assistance: [www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/6094](http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/6094)

## Section VII

ReadyAmerica: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Disaster Chaplaincy Services: [www.disasterchaplaincy.org](http://www.disasterchaplaincy.org)

ReadyAmerica: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

## Section VIII

*Disasters: Prepare and Respond:* [www.provinceiv.org/Content/Disaster\\_Relief\\_Manual.asp](http://www.provinceiv.org/Content/Disaster_Relief_Manual.asp)

US Geological Survey: [www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Metropolitan New York Synod Disaster Relief webpage: [www.mnys.org/disaster\\_relief](http://www.mnys.org/disaster_relief)

Lutheran Disaster Response Congregational Preparedness Guide: [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Congregational\\_Disaster\\_Preparedness\\_Guide\\_Lutheran\\_Disaster\\_Response.pdf?\\_ga=1.56469164.606489182.1394723072](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Congregational_Disaster_Preparedness_Guide_Lutheran_Disaster_Response.pdf?_ga=1.56469164.606489182.1394723072)

Federal Emergency Management Agency: [www.fema.gov/resource-document-library](http://www.fema.gov/resource-document-library)

FEMA independent study courses: [training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp](http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp)

ReadyAmerica: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

Church World Service: [www.cwsglobal.org/erp](http://www.cwsglobal.org/erp)

New York Disaster Interfaith Services: [www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org)

World Cares Center: [www.worldcares.org](http://www.worldcares.org)

American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster: [www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org)

NYC VOAD: [sites.google.com/site/nycvoad/](https://sites.google.com/site/nycvoad/)

Long Island VOAD: [www.hwcli.com](http://www.hwcli.com)

City of New York OEM: [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem)

Ready New York: [www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get\\_prepared/ready.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get_prepared/ready.shtml)

Know Your Zone: [www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get\\_prepared/know\\_your\\_zone/knowyourzone.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/get_prepared/know_your_zone/knowyourzone.html)

Nassau County OEM: [www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/oem/](http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/oem/)

Suffolk County OEM: [www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/FireRescueandEmergencyServices/OfficeofEmergencyManagement.aspx](http://www.suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/FireRescueandEmergencyServices/OfficeofEmergencyManagement.aspx)

Westchester County OEM: [emergencyserives.westchestergov.com/divisions/office-of-emergency-management](http://emergencyserives.westchestergov.com/divisions/office-of-emergency-management)

Dutchess County OEM: [www.co.dutchess.ny.us/countygov/Departments/Emergencyresponse/Erindex.htm](http://www.co.dutchess.ny.us/countygov/Departments/Emergencyresponse/Erindex.htm)

Rockland County OEM: [rocklandgov.com/departments/fire-and-emergency/emergency-preparedness/](http://rocklandgov.com/departments/fire-and-emergency/emergency-preparedness/)

Orange County OEM: [www.orangecountygov.com/content/1162/975/2095/default.aspx](http://www.orangecountygov.com/content/1162/975/2095/default.aspx)

Ulster County OEM: [ulstercountyny.gov/emergency-services/management/index.html](http://ulstercountyny.gov/emergency-services/management/index.html)

Sullivan County OEM: [www.co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/EmergencyManagementHomelandSecurity/tabid/3204/default.aspx](http://www.co.sullivan.ny.us/Departments/EmergencyManagementHomelandSecurity/tabid/3204/default.aspx)



**Metropolitan New York Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

[www.mnys.org](http://www.mnys.org)