

## Some Useful Websites

Diocese of Southwestern Virginia  
[www.dioswva.org/programs/disaster](http://www.dioswva.org/programs/disaster)

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

Federal Emergency Management Agency  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home!

--Isaac Watts



Virginia Department of Emergency Management  
[www.vdem.state.va.us](http://www.vdem.state.va.us)

Lutheran Church Disaster Response  
[www.elca.org/disaster/prepared](http://www.elca.org/disaster/prepared)

Office of the Bishop Suffragan for Chaplaincies,  
The Episcopal Church USA  
[www.ecusa-chaplain.org](http://www.ecusa-chaplain.org)

Episcopal Relief and Development  
[www.er-d.org](http://www.er-d.org)

The diocesan representative is Nick Moga;  
email [nickmoga@aol.com](mailto:nickmoga@aol.com)

Official federal government website for  
information about pandemic flu for faith  
communities  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/faithcomchecklist.html>

Voluntary Organizations Assisting in Disaster  
(VOAD)  
[www.voad.org](http://www.voad.org)

Community Arise: Online training for the Faith  
Community  
[www.communityarise.com](http://www.communityarise.com)



## Contact Information

For a copy of the complete Disaster  
Preparedness Planning Guide, contact  
Bill Lindsay at Evans House:  
[blindsay@dioswva.org](mailto:blindsay@dioswva.org)

The Episcopal Diocese of Southwestern Virginia  
1002 First Street, Roanoke, VA 24016  
1-800-DIO-SWVA  
[www.dioswva.org](http://www.dioswva.org)



## Disaster Preparedness For Parishes

*After the disaster is not the time to get organized.*

# Preparedness

*The most important part of the plan is to recruit, organize, and provide for the training of an Emergency Response Team comprising volunteer members of the congregation.*



## Develop the Emergency Response Team

The clergy and the vestry should appoint an individual or a small committee to prepare the parish Disaster Preparedness Plan.

As many volunteer members of the congregation as possible should be asked to serve, to ensure that an adequate number will be able to respond in a given emergency. Designate a leader of the team and several deputies or alternates to assure continuity of leadership throughout the crisis.

## Logical Steps for the Team to Follow.

### 1. Assess the situation and adopt an operation plan suited to the specific emergency, assigning members to appropriate roles.

For instance, there should be an office team to answer phones and send emails, a kitchen team, etc.

### 2. Check on the clergy.

Find out how they are doing and what the team can do to assist them as they carry out their pastoral duties during the crisis.

### 3. Secure the property.

If there is any chance the church properties have been damaged, conduct a thorough inspection and take necessary action, such as declaring areas off limits. If the entire structure is in a dangerous condition, work with the clergy to relocate the parish office.

### 4. Establish lines of communication.

If the diocesan emergency response team has not called you, contact Evans House and report the condition you have found, the help that you need, and the assistance you may offer to the diocese, other parishes, or the community.



### 5. Open the sanctuary.

If instructed by the clergy, open the sanctuary and maintain a presence there so that parishioners and others, such as rescue workers, can find a place to pray, meditate, and rest.

### 6. Open the parish hall and kitchen.

In addition to the sanctuary, the parish hall is a logical place for people to find shelter from what may be a chaotic scene outside. Team members can furnish water, coffee, snacks, and possibly meals if the situation permits.

### 7. Manage unsolicited volunteers.

It is very likely that members of the parish and possibly the neighborhood will call or come to the church to see if they can help. One or more team members should be tasked to talk to or meet with these people and find tasks that they can perform. Team members will find the situation very stressful, and new volunteers (after a briefing) can spell them.

### 8. Manage information flow.

Emergency authorities and regular news sources will be giving out current information as the crisis develops. (This is why it is important to have battery-operated radios.) One or more team members should follow this news and transmit it to everyone there. Try to squelch rumors as quickly as possible!

### 9. Provide volunteers to other organizations.

If requested by the diocese, other churches, or relief organizations, you may be able to send some volunteers from your parish to help them.