

Resources for PREPARING FOR A DISASTER

Both the **RED CROSS** and **FEMA** offer free pamphlets for disaster preparation that are frequently available at home improvement, hardware stores and other places.

Helpful Resources Online

The **RED CROSS** has a wealth of helpful information about preparing for a disaster at <http://www.redcross.org/>

- The main page for full tutorial about **disaster preparation** can be found at: <http://www.redcross.org/flash/brr/English-flash/default.asp>
- There is also “**The Safe and Well**” Page: <https://disastersafe.redcross.org/>
“If you have been affected by a disaster, this website provides a way for you to register yourself as “safe and well.” From a list of standard messages, you can select those that you want to communicate to your family members, letting them know of your well-being.
Concerned family and friends can search the list of those who have registered themselves as “safe and well.” The results of a successful search will display a loved one’s First Name, Last Name, an “As of Date”, and the “safe and well” messages selected.”

FEMA (The Federal Emergency Management Agency) has much information at <http://www.fema.gov/>. There is particular info for planning for disasters at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtm>

UU PLANNING CHART FOR DISASTERS

[2006-07 from notes with Mississippi Planners + Eunice Benton & Nell Cobb]

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| INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES |
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BEFORE

- Use FEMA and Red Cross literature on preparations for disasters – and prepare! (These materials are free and available online and at many stores (like Lowes, Home Depot, Wal-Mart, etc.)
- Make a plan with family, friends, and home congregation about evacuation plans (see form, appended)
- Make a plan about how to communicate when most communications systems may be down. Get a battery-powered emergency radio!! *Text messages on cell

phones are often what work best, and cell phones will need to be charged with car charges when other power is out.

- Make a plan – food, shelter, medicines, etc. – that you and your family will follow in a disaster. One plan might assume you did not evacuate and another that you did.

DURING

- Follow the plan you have developed! This could include prep for extra fuel, water, food, emergency lights and heat, cell phone chargers, and more . . .
- Be in touch with family, friends, congregation and community to let them know where and how you are... to the extent you are able.
- Help others, share, be a good neighbor and community friend as you are able.
- Be alert and smart about where the unusual circumstances invite and allow people to take advantage of others and act inappropriately. Be a good citizen!
- Be aware that your own emotional health and that of family and friends needs extra care...

AFTER

- Be aware that in disasters people are traumatized... you included. Take good care, be patient, reach out to help and for help as you deem appropriate.
- Stay in touch with family, friends, congregation and community as you can. Staying in touch and being in healthy community is healthy behavior in these kinds of times.
- Help where you can. Ask for help where you need it.

CONGREGATIONS

BEFORE

- Set up a file to keep information about members of the congregation – what their cell phone numbers are, who their closest family and friends are, and where might evacuate if need be. (See appended form.)
- Designate some trusted members of the congregation to be ‘point people’ for ‘disaster management.’ These folks would help if the congregation were in the disaster area and/or if the congregation received those evacuating a disaster.
- Set up documents about ‘who to call for help’ that are readily accessible for the congregation. Be aware of having them in places where they could be found even in a tornado or fire....
- Keep these documents, in fact, in several places. A membership list for the congregation, its current leaders, and the designated ‘disaster management team’ should be among this information. (This information should also be on file with the district/UUA offices and could be kept in a secure environment on the internet.)
- Have understandings with neighboring congregations who might offer shelter ‘inland’ or in stable buildings or assistance in other ways. From hurricanes to ice storms to earthquakes and more, congregations can be good neighbors – but it is

important to establish the relationships before there is a crisis, if at all possible!
This is good 'cluster' conversation.

- Keep some 'disaster provisions' if possible... Water, emergency lights and radio, emergency food, blankets, etc.

DURING

- Follow the plans you have established, being aware that in crisis circumstances all are more prone to edginess and anxiety.
- Check in! Be in touch with your members, with your district office, the UUA office, and neighboring congregations as soon as you can.
- Ask for help when you need it. Give it where you can.
- Be a good community citizen as a congregation. Work with others to help as many as possible. Share what you can. Minister where you can.

AFTER

- Help where you can, ask for help and support where you need it.
- Be aware that disasters are exhausting and traumatic. Be patient and as helpful as you can be. Share where you can. Be a good neighbor.
- If you are a congregation 'receiving evacuees,' consider making a 'local resources' document to aid people who come to you for help. (see appended)

UUA DISTRICT OFFICES

BEFORE

- Encourage individuals and their congregations to collect information and make at least outline plans for a possible disaster. (See above)
- Have 'point people' in various geographic areas as touchstones for a disaster – and train and equip them (even over the internet) as you can. Be especially attentive to those areas most prone to natural disasters, but be alert to unusual crises, too.
- Learn and link with the UUA Headquarters plan for response. Be as ready as possible.
- When a disaster seems imminent (like with a hurricane), be in touch ahead of time with congregations who will likely be affected – the 'point people' and leaders of the congregations. Remind them of how you will be available and in touch. Offer to help in any ways that seem useful to them ahead of time.

DURING

- As soon as possible, be in touch with affected congregations, using the plans you have made – or anything that works!
- Be in touch with the UUA 'point people' to begin dialogue about how to help.
- Make a plan unique to *this* disaster, including pastoral care for UU congregations and people, emergency care where needed, on-site response where needed, and communications tools.
- Include in the plan care for district/regional staff and leaders, who get 'maxed out' in these situations.

AFTER

- Follow through on the plan. Let folks know the UU family is there for them.
- Be aware that trauma continues for those most affected by the disaster for a long time. Don't expect immediate recovery and energy or long-range vision and answers.
- 'Companion' those most affected – via various methods – as they recover.
- Offer special consultation and/or financial support and/or staff support as needs are discerned. Work with those who know the locale best to make these decisions.
- Celebrate those moments when 'recovery happens' – like when construction begins on a damaged facility or folks can move back into a damaged facility -- or other moments!

UUA HEADQUARTERS

BEFORE

- Make plans for disasters!
- Think through what the 'protocols' will be when a disaster strikes – and publish these to staff and board-level leadership across the denominational family. How are decisions made? Who will respond – and to whom? How can the response be both structured and flexible?
- Budget for responding to disasters, assuming that special contributions for the disaster will help underwrite the special costs.
- Assign a head-quarters-based staff person responsibility for 'crisis response' to UU congregations and individuals for disasters! This person's portfolio will include knowledge and responsibility for supporting congregations and district/regional staff when disasters strike. This person will understand (and have some experience with) the pieces of congregational polity that are both independent and interdependent.
- Train 'crisis response consultants' who will respond to congregations and to district/regional leaders in a disaster. These folks (similar to the current 'trauma response team) should be based in diverse geographic areas, have both training and experience in working with congregational systems and the UUA/UUSC system, and report to the staff person mentioned above. (Wayne Clark's system could be a model. But, we'll hope these folks have fewer opportunities for work!)
- Include in the planning various ways of communicating to district/regional leaders and congregational leaders. For example, what are the protocols for crisis communications when many communications systems may not be working? Include IT expertise in this planning!
- Have a grid of 'who will call whom' when a disaster is imminent or strikes unexpectedly. Be in touch with district/regional staff and leaders when there is a clear warning of a potential disaster (like a hurricane, which can be predicted to some extent).

DURING

- Work the plan that has been established!!
- Reach out to UUs affected . . .as soon as possible! This would include district/regional leaders and leaders in congregations directly affected. Talk about what would be most helpful – and not. Be in dialogue as soon as possible!
- Help... as indicated by the dialogue with affected folks. Some examples might be to send consultants to the directly-affected areas to ‘listen’ to the folks in trauma, to help create supporting community, to help connect people to aid. IT services might help get information onto lists and websites, and/or they might set up internet-based grids to help people affected or displaced by the disaster ‘check in’ (this kind of system was set up by newspapers in New Orleans after Katrina). District offices may need help – and information may need to be on or connected to their websites – but the response should be a joint response from headquarters and district/regional leaders.
- Make a plan unique to this disaster, including pastoral care for UU congregations and people, emergency care where needed, on-site response where needed, and communications tools.
- Work with UUSC to reach out to non-UUs who need assistance!!
- Work with district/regional systems and plans to deepen the assistance to folks.
- Raise money as appropriate.
- Have a plan for responding to people who want to volunteer their help.
- Communicate! Communicate!! Communicate!! Ask! Listen! Challenge! Affirm! Assist!

AFTER

- Follow through on the plan. .Let folks know the UU family is there for them.
- Be aware that trauma continues for those most affected by the disaster for a long time. Don’t expect immediate recovery and energy or long-range vision and answers.
- ‘Companion’ those most affected – via various methods – as they recover.
- Offer special consultation and/or financial support and/or staff support as needs are discerned. Work with those who know the locale best to make these decisions.
- Celebrate those moments when ‘recovery happens’ – like when construction begins on a damaged facility or folks can move back into a damaged facility -- or other moments!

[SAMPLE]

Emergency Contact Information for Congregation Members

(Your congregation's name here)

Names & relationship of all who are current residents in your home.

Your Physical Address: _____

Your email address: _____

Home Phone # _____ Cell Phone # _____

Your current mailing address if different from physical address:

Employer location and phone # _____

Name, relationship & phone # of nearest relative(s):

Name, relationship, city, & phone # of relative(s) not living in this area:

Name, address & phone # of close neighbor:

Please note with an asterisk which of the above friends or relatives you will most likely let know of your whereabouts and/or your condition in the event of a disaster or other breakdown in telecommunications.

Please note on back any other concerns you might have such as: electrical requirements for medicines (insulin) or oxygen, info about invalid neighbor or relatives, any pets, etc. .

This information will be used only to reach you or your relatives in the case of an emergency when the members of your congregation are concerned for your safety and wellbeing, such as in the aftermath of a hurricane, tornado, or other disaster. This information will not be published anywhere else or shared with anyone except designated staff and members of (your congregation) who are trying to find you or offer assistance to you

Classroom Safety

A primary resource for safety in our congregations is *The Safe Congregation Handbook: Nurturing Healthy Boundaries in Our Faith Communities* Edited By: Frederic Muir, Patricia Hoertdoerfer. It is available from the UUA Bookstore. Pat Hoertdoerfer's writing, *Classroom Safety*, outlines policies and procedures for a congregation that takes into account all aspects of child safety.

Have all of the RE Committee, Council or Ministry take part in reading and discussing *Classroom Safety*, by Pat Hoerdorfer, noting the points below:

1. Volunteers who work with the children and youth must have been participating members of the congregation for at least one year.
2. All volunteers who work with the children and youth, including staff, have background checks. Begin this process with a letter to the volunteers that says what the congregation is concerned about is violent crimes, pedophilia, or sexual harassment – not childhood indiscretions or civil disobedience. The findings will be kept in the strictest of confidence. The first people to be checked will be the Minister(s) and the Religious Education Professional(s). Background checks are repeated at least every other year. You keep track of the people you have checked and you run the checks on all the new volunteers as they come on board. Individuals who fail the background check (meaning that they have a history of violent crimes, pedophilia, and/or sexual harassment) or refuse to have a background check will not work with the children or youth.
3. There are two volunteers or staff members working with the children and youth at all times
4. Classrooms are high visibility areas with windows in the doors, open curtains etc.
5. Minors whose parents are nonmembers have a special registration form that is notarized. These parents have been contacted by staff and are receiving the newsletter and all other relevant mailings and information.
6. Classroom facilitator trainings include safe classroom practices. These workshops also allow time for the discussion of classroom issues and behaviors that are either disruptive or dangerous.
7. Every minor in the program has a notarized permission slip that includes medical information and is kept on file both in the Religious Education Office and in the individual classrooms.
8. There are special permission slips for outings that are also notarized and have medical information on them. These must be filled out for every minor or they are not taken off church property.
9. Updates of information on safe classrooms, both Unitarian and outside of UUism, are shared at quarterly classroom facilitator and staff meetings. There is also time at these meetings to discuss classroom issues and behaviors that are either disruptive or dangerous.
10. Each class has a behavioral covenant that they as a class wrote and say together before class starts.

11. The congregation has a behavioral covenant that they say together often. This is the beginning of the behavioral policy.
12. The congregation has a behavioral policy that has many steps in it and includes as the final step the removal of individuals for continued community-breaking behavior
13. All staff members are supported and encouraged by the congregation to belong to national and district professional organizations. These organizations are groups of their peers who will be supportive about personal and professional issues that arise in their ministries.
14. Individual staff members understand their roles and do not attempt to be friends with members of the congregations they serve.
15. Individual staff members maintain healthy boundaries.