

Mission Presbytery, are you ready for a disaster during a pandemic?

Hurricane season has started. The summer months are also known for fires and flash floods. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot expect outside groups to come in and help our area after a natural disaster. We must rely on local volunteers and resources to respond, which means pre-planning is more important than ever.

Mission Presbytery's Disaster Preparedness & Assistance Committee (DPAC) has created extensive disaster planning guidelines. The link to the guidelines is at the bottom of this page. We urge each church to form a disaster preparedness committee and work through the guidelines to form their church's disaster plan.

However, given the pandemic and the urgency to have a plan in place, DPAC has identified **priorities** for churches to consider:

- Make sure you have updated phone numbers and contact information for all church members. Establish an alternative communication setup such as WhatsApp in case telephones fail, and for emergency group communications.
- Encourage members to create their family disaster plan and assemble emergency supply kits for their households. See ready.gov for help.
- Determine what your church can/will do to respond after a disaster. Create and distribute clean-up buckets? Distribute food?
- Once you have decided how your church will respond after a disaster, create a safety and sanitation plan to keep volunteers safe. Consider how you will maintain social distance while providing relief services. Because of the pandemic we cannot run disaster relief efforts as we have before.
- Stockpile supplies that you may need as a church to respond to a disaster. A sample list is provided in this document. Supplies must include personal protection equipment, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant. Remember that these supplies are already hard to come by so stock up now.
- Consider where volunteers and displaced people will stay in your community and how people can be housed and fed safely – including social distancing.

A synopsis of the Mission Presbytery Disaster Preparedness Guidelines are available here: <https://www.mission-presbytery.org/disaster-preparedness>

Sample Supply List

Supplies for Church Disaster Response:

- Water & Gatorade or similar electrolyte drinks for volunteers
- Personal protective equipment (PPE) such as masks & gloves
- Hand sanitizer & hand soap
- Paper goods such as toilet paper & paper towels, napkins, paper plates
- Disinfectant - cleaner, wipes, spray bottles
- Trash bags
- Thermometers for health screenings

A basic emergency kit includes the following:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Prescription medications
- External battery for charging cell phones
- Extra batteries
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air
- Plastic sheeting to shelter-in-place
- Duct tape & glue for emergency repairs/patching
- Moist towelettes
- Garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food
- Local maps
- Matches or mechanical fire starter kit
- Cash
- Keep at least ½ tank of gas in your vehicle

More information on emergency kit preparation is available at Ready.gov.