



DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN



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DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN FOR SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

(This is a dynamic document that will be modified as regulations and organizations change)

INTRODUCTION

A disaster is the tragedy of a natural or human event that negatively affects society or the environment. Disasters happen every day in people's lives. Some of them are small and can be handled on a personal or one on one basis. Other disasters happen on a larger scale. The things we call disasters vary from person to person and place to place.

In the event of a disaster, resources available to the local church (i.e. volunteers, money, and expertise) are oftentimes limited. This is where the connectional system of the United Methodist Church can provide support and resources to the local church to respond effectively and appropriately. When the resources of a church are overwhelmed, the church needs to seek help from the District. And when District Resources are overwhelmed, the Susquehanna Conference Disaster Response Plan needs to be put into practice.

Because of the diverse geography of the Susquehanna Conference, we are subject to floods, hurricanes, tornados, subsidence from old mines, and even terrorist attacks. We are also subject to severe snow and ice storms. Many critical roadways and rail lines, which haul vast amounts of hazardous materials, crisscross our conference. We are also home to nuclear and coal fired power plants, army and naval supply depots, the state capitol and several airports.

While it is our hope that we will never have to use this plan, the primary purpose is to be able to mobilize our resources as efficiently and effectively as possible when a disaster does occur. The church is not just four walls and a roof. People may never attend church but, in a disaster or time of loss, they immediately turn to the church for help. In a disaster situation the church can become not only a spiritual but also a resource hub of the community. The United Methodist Church will deliver aid to people without regard to race, religion, politics, or gender. We seek input from local communities in identifying needs.

The Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church shares in a partnership with United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). UMCOR responds to natural or civil disasters that are interruptions of such magnitude that they overwhelm a community's ability to recover on its own. UMCOR's work on behalf of United Methodists is global and not only serves in long term disaster recovery in the US but also in countries throughout the world.

The mission of UMCOR - grounded in the teaching of Jesus Christ, is to alleviate human suffering – whether caused by war, conflict, or natural disaster – with open minds and hearts to all people. By Discipline, UMCOR's purpose is to:

- 1) Provide immediate relief of human need and suffering.
- 2) Work cooperatively with the conference and others ... (in) disaster response.
- 3) Initiate printed, audiovisual, electronic, and other resources...and to
- 4) Assist and train conference coordinators

The goal of the Conference's disaster response is to address the physical, social, spiritual and emotional needs of individuals and families through caring ministries. The Conference embraces UMCOR's values for disaster ministry:

- We affirm the dignity and worth of persons by involving them in their own recovery, enabling those affected by disasters to take responsibility for relief and recovery work.
- We honor cultural differences.
- We deliver aid to people without regard to race, religion, politics, or gender.
- Wherever possible, the Conference seeks to work with other religious and secular organizations to pool resources and avoid duplicating efforts.
- We avoid tying the promise of its relief and development activity to any religious or political viewpoint.
- We welcome the good efforts of countless volunteers, individuals and churches who support us through gifts and prayers and service.

The Susquehanna Conference provides long term recovery as well as immediate relief. Recognizing that disasters cause disruptions that can last for years and often create permanent changes in people's lives, the Conference works within a community to address these long term effects and assist people in rebuilding and adjusting to change.

The Disaster Response Plan of the Susquehanna Conference United Methodist Church is a bottom up plan that addresses the needs and responsibilities of the local church, the district and the conference. The first calls a pastor will make in the event of a disaster should be to the District Disaster Response Coordinator and the District Superintendent.

A list of all principle persons involved in the disaster response hierarchy will be provided to every church in the conference. This list will include the District Disaster Response Coordinators, Conference Disaster Response Coordinator and the Conference Volunteers In Mission Council Chairperson. The list of contacts will also be published in the district handbooks and on the conference web site.

GOAL

The goal of the Conference Disaster Response Committee (CDRC) is to have a functional network of volunteers for service projects and response to disasters, building on the strengths of the United Methodist connection.

The goal of this plan is to provide assistance and guidance to the leaders of the Susquehanna Conference churches, districts and agencies in preparation for and response to disasters so that lives may be saved and suffering alleviated.

THE FOUR LEVELS OF DISASTER

Geography and amount of devastation determine the extent of response.

Level I. A small local disaster affecting one to roughly thirty households. It is within the ability of the local church(s) to respond to with little or no Conference assistance.

Relief: Initially, the local community will need some help from the district and perhaps from the conference. Someone from the conference disaster relief group should be dispatched to local clergy for assessment and consultation on disaster management functions. Volunteers come from within the community and from nearby churches to assist with crisis counseling, cleanup and emergency repairs. The conference may want to request that its churches take a special offering. One or two conference UMVIM –Early Response” teams might be deployed to work alongside local volunteers.

Recovery: Along with other community leaders, one or two persons from the local United Methodist community could perform all the management functions (i.e. provide ministry of caring, manage cases, and coordinate volunteer management, donations, and networking resources).

Level II. A medium-sized disaster (affecting 40—150 homes), which is beyond the ability of the local congregations and community to respond. If conference resources are needed, then consider this disaster at least a Level II.

Relief: Local churches must have assistance. The conference should solicit an offering from its churches as soon as possible. A segment of the conference disaster relief group is mobilized for assessment and management. Site management of volunteers must be in place as soon as possible for crisis counseling, cleanup, and emergency repairs. This requires that case management strategies are in place early on to determine who has genuine need that will not be met by other agencies. VIM Early Response Teams are deployed when site is safe.

Recovery: An interfaith or United Methodist recovery team is necessary, with a paid director. The team will administer the operation, assisted by volunteers and a paid case manager. **Active local clergy cannot take on the long-term management of a Level II disaster.**

Level III. These large disasters, in terms of geography and severity, are usually eligible to receive a presidential declaration with government help. Examples include widespread and/or long-term flooding, severe earthquake, tornado or hurricane with significant damage. A disaster this size requires full mobilization of the conference disaster relief group.

Relief: Resources from the conference and UMCOR are essential. All personnel will perform operational functions described in the ICS section of this manual. A conference-wide appeal must be made for funds, appropriate in-kind donations and volunteers. UMCOR money will also be needed, as well as UMVIM Early Response Teams and Information and Referral (I&R) workers.

Recovery: Paid staff for community-based recovery organizations and conference-wide coordination of volunteers is necessary. Information and Referral (I&R) workers will probably be required at various times. A part-time bookkeeper is essential. Numerous teams of short-term volunteers for repair and rebuilding are important and will be needed for a year or more.

Level IV. A Catastrophic Disaster is defined by Public Law 93-288: *“An event resulting in a large number of deaths and injuries; extensive damage or destruction of facilities that place an overwhelming demand on State and local response resources and mechanisms; a severe impact on national security facilities and infrastructures that sustain them; a severe long-term effect on general economic activity and severe effects on State, local and private sector initiatives to begin and sustain initial response activities.”*

Martial law will be declared and access to the area severely limited. A number of people in conference leadership positions will probably be victims themselves.

Relief: The entire conference response organization must be mobilized. A number of people in conference leadership positions will probably be victims themselves. UMCOR Mentors may be necessary to fill slots of those in conference disaster response leadership who are unable to function. A conference-wide appeal for funds, appropriate in-kind donations, and volunteers is necessary. UMCOR money will be required. UMVIM –Early Response Teams” are necessary, as are I&R workers. Many volunteers will come from outside the conference. Perhaps a denomination-wide special appeal will be made.

Recovery: As in Level III, hired staff for leadership positions is needed rather than utilizing long-term volunteers. Again, I&R workers would be necessary. Numerous teams of short-term volunteers are required over a period of several years.

PURPOSE

1. To resource and equip local United Methodist churches as they assist their communities and individuals to prepare, respond and recover from disaster.
2. To provide immediate relief for acute human need and to respond to the suffering of persons in our communities caused by natural or manmade disaster.
3. To work cooperatively with the appropriate conference units, ecumenical bodies, advocacy for, and assistance with ministries for disaster recovery.
4. To provide direct communication from the conference to the national offices of the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) and United Methodist Volunteers in Mission to obtain needed resources and assistance for disaster-stricken areas inside the conference, or to provide available resources and assistance to areas in need outside of the conference.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN: *(See Who to Contact Flow Chart on page 9)*

LOCAL CHURCH RESPONSIBILITIES:

Each local congregation should have a Church Disaster Response Coordinator. This person would be responsible for the church and implementing church policies when a disaster strikes. Each church should also have a Deputy Disaster Response Coordinator; this can be SPRC chair, Mission Chair, or the Ad Council chair. The contact information for this person is to be sent through the District Office with a copy forward to the District Disaster Coordinator.

- Assess the general situation and physical needs of the people in the affected area
- Notify the District Superintendent and/or the District Disaster Response Coordinator
- Provide specific needs assessments of any damage to churches or parsonages within 24 hours is possible
- Refer all media requests regarding the bishop's or the annual conference's responses to the Director of Communications.

DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Notify Conference and District Disaster Response Coordinators.
- Notify Conference Director of Communications.
- Notify the Director of Connectional Ministries.

Should resources be beyond what the church and district can provide the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator shall dispatch a team to evaluate the damage. This should include the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, the District Disaster Response Coordinator, the Conference VIM Coordinator, Bishop, District Superintendents, pastors or designees of the effected churches and the Conference Director of Communications.

DISTRICT DISASTER RESPONSE COORDINATORS RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Notify other District Coordinator if needed.
- Share the responsibility for contacting churches in the affected area.
- Contact Conference Disaster Coordinator with the information gathered.
- Notify the VIM Council Chairperson with information gathered.
- Notify contact with the local township, municipal, borough, or city Emergency Management Coordinator. Each municipality in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is required to have a local coordinator. The purpose of this action is to give the local government a contact person for the church the church.
- Notify the Conference Director of Communications. All persons involved will be informed that the Conference Director of Communications is the office which will handle all official press releases.

CONFERENCE DISASTER RESPONSE COORDINATOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Contact the bishop
- Contact the District Superintendent.
- Coordinate an assessment team to physically review the disaster area as soon as safety permits. Coordinator should also know at that time to what extent resources for the church are going to be available.
- Notify the Conference VIM Council Chairperson, particularly if assistance from VIM teams can be utilized.
- Contact the Conference Communications Director.

If the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator is a clergyperson, the bishop may relieve the pastor of her/his local church duties, with pay, and arrange for a temporary substitute to fill in until s/he returns.

BISHOP RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Will consult with Conference Disaster Response Coordinator to determine the need for UMCOR involvement.
- Request Bishop's appeal and/or UMCOR assistance as appropriate
- Assist in preparation of statement through the Director of Communications

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CONFERENCE DISASTER RESPONSE COMMITTEE (CDRC) AND CONFERENCE STAFF

COMMITTEE CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator is the chair of the CDRC. He/she is the point of contact for coordinating disaster response and disaster-related efforts at the conference level.
- It will be the responsibility of the Susquehanna Conference to make annual training available to disaster response coordinators and others who would be involved in disaster work.
- A copy of a disaster coordinators list will be update regularly and distributed to each district superintendent, and disaster response coordinator.

DIRECTOR OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Assist the Conference Disaster Coordinator in any way possible.
- Assist the bishop and District Superintendents in any way possible.
- Assist the Director of Communications in any way possible.

CONFERENCE VOLUNTEER IN MISSIONS CHAIRPERSON

- Supervise staff and District staff to oversee the Administrative Support for the incident.
- Maintain and make contact with persons who are willing to assist in disaster work.
- Consult with District and Conference Disaster Coordinators to find out where resources are most needed.
- Work with Director of Communications to assist with press releases on how and any way volunteer and resources will be needed.

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

- Gather information about the event.
- Coordinate releases both externally and internally, prepare public statements for release by the Bishop.
- Prepare media kits or the press.
- Prepare info on how to give resources and funds to the project.
- Train and advise support staff on how to handle calls by those manning telephones, maintain files and media information on the event.

SPIRITUAL CARE COORDINATOR

- Spirituality is an essential part of humanity and as such, every person can benefit for spiritual care in time of disaster.
- The spiritual care coordinator primary responsibility is to offer a listening presence that says the church cares.
- Attempt to reduce the terrible aloneness survivors feel and to connect survivors with long-term disaster recovery systems.
- Gather information and providing support and information about the recovery process and available services.

FINANCE DIRECTOR

- Maintain adequate records of the disaster response income and expenditures.
- The existing Conference voucher system will be used to record and track expenditures.
- The Finance Director has the authority to designate a person or persons to sign vouchers.
- The CDRC will also keep adequate records of purchases and expenditures for audit trail purposes.
- The Finance Director is ultimately responsible for the record keeping.

MISSION CENTRAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Provide centrally located warehousing and logistical support for receiving and distribution of donated and purchased supplies.
- Provide coordination of disbursements and receiving of supplies with ecumenical and government agencies.
- Provide office space for a communications center with the assistance of the Communications Director.

{The services of the Conference Chancellor generally not needed in an immediate disaster. Nonetheless, Assessment Team members should be alert to situations where the Chancellor’s counsel would be advisable or helpful, particularly if a team member suspects there might be legal implications.}

CONFERENCE CHANCELLOR/LEGAL COUNSEL

- Provide information on liability and legal issues related to the crisis.
- Review statements and releases for legal implications.
- Provide a list of other lawyers to be contacted if s/he cannot be contacted or is out of the area.

REMEMBER:

- The Conference disaster response team members are not First Responders. They do not rescue or engage in lifesaving work requiring specialized training and certifications.**
- The community ~~owns~~ “owns” the disaster.
- However, it is important to establish a United Methodist Presence, to continually assess needs and to have a coordinated response to the disaster.
- The Bishop and/or the Director of Communications are the only persons authorized to speak to the media regarding the annual conference’s damages from or responses to a disaster. If a reporter asks about district or annual conference damages or responses, **DO NOT SAY —a comment.**”
- Do say something like:
 - o “We are looking into the situation. I understand you have a job to do and I understand that you have to get the facts. I don’t believe I know enough information at this time to tell you. As soon as we have information, we will have someone call you immediately. **Or**
 - o ~~I~~want to make sure we give you the most accurate and up-to-date information. Our Director of Communications can best help you. If you give me your contact information, deadline and topic you are calling about, I will have him return you call as soon as possible.”
- Complete a Media Inquiry sheet and contact the Director of Communications, District Superintendent or District Disaster Response Coordinator as soon as possible.

Contact Information Quick Guide

For local church use:	Office Phone	Home Phone
Our Church’s Disaster Response Coordinator: Name:		
District Superintendent Name:		
District Disaster Coordinator Name:		
Mission Central	717-766-1533	

When the information in the above box is complete, leave a copy of the plan in a prominent place in the church. Additional copies may be obtained by clicking on the “Disaster Response” tab of the annual conference web-site (www.susumc.org) or at the conference office.

A; Glossary of Disaster-Related Acronyms and Terms

ARC-American Red Cross

CDRC – Conference Disaster Response Committee

CWS - Church World Service, the relief arm of the National Council of Churches, also an umbrella for the disaster work of participating denominations. CWS provides some emergency supplies and trained volunteer consultants to assist in the formation of interfaith recovery agencies.

DDRC – District Disaster Response Coordination

EOC – Emergency Operations Center

ERT – Emergency Response Team

FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency.

LTRC - Long-Term Recovery Committee - this is a gathering of representatives, usually case managers of the various recognized agencies on site, to share resources and prevent duplication. The FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison (*VAL*) often calls this group together.

Mass Care -A sheltering service for a large number of persons displaced by the disaster provided by the Red Cross. Mass care involves feeding and emergency health care of victims. Often in a large-scale disaster, food is prepared and transported to shelters or distributed by mobile feeding vans. Southern Baptists have contracted with the Red Cross to provide food. The Salvation Army and Seventh-Day Adventists also do feeding. *(United Methodists should not open their own shelter unless the local congregation is willing to assume the costs of repair and liability and understand they will be fully responsible for any harm to residents or damage to the facility. Red Cross-approved shelters whether in churches or schools carry liability and damage insurance and will assume liability.)*

Mitigation -Reducing the hazard of future damage. Mitigation refers to any attempt to reduce future damage and/or bodily harm by such means as relocating or elevating homes, building infrastructure to reduce flooding. FEMA usually encourages participation of local government, business, nonprofits, and citizens to build disaster-resistant communities to help reduce the high cost of recovery.

OES – Office of Emergency Services (state and local government)

PEMA- Pennsylvania Emergency Response Agency

REACT - Radio Emergency Associated Communications Team. These are citizen's hand radio operators interested in assisting with disaster response.

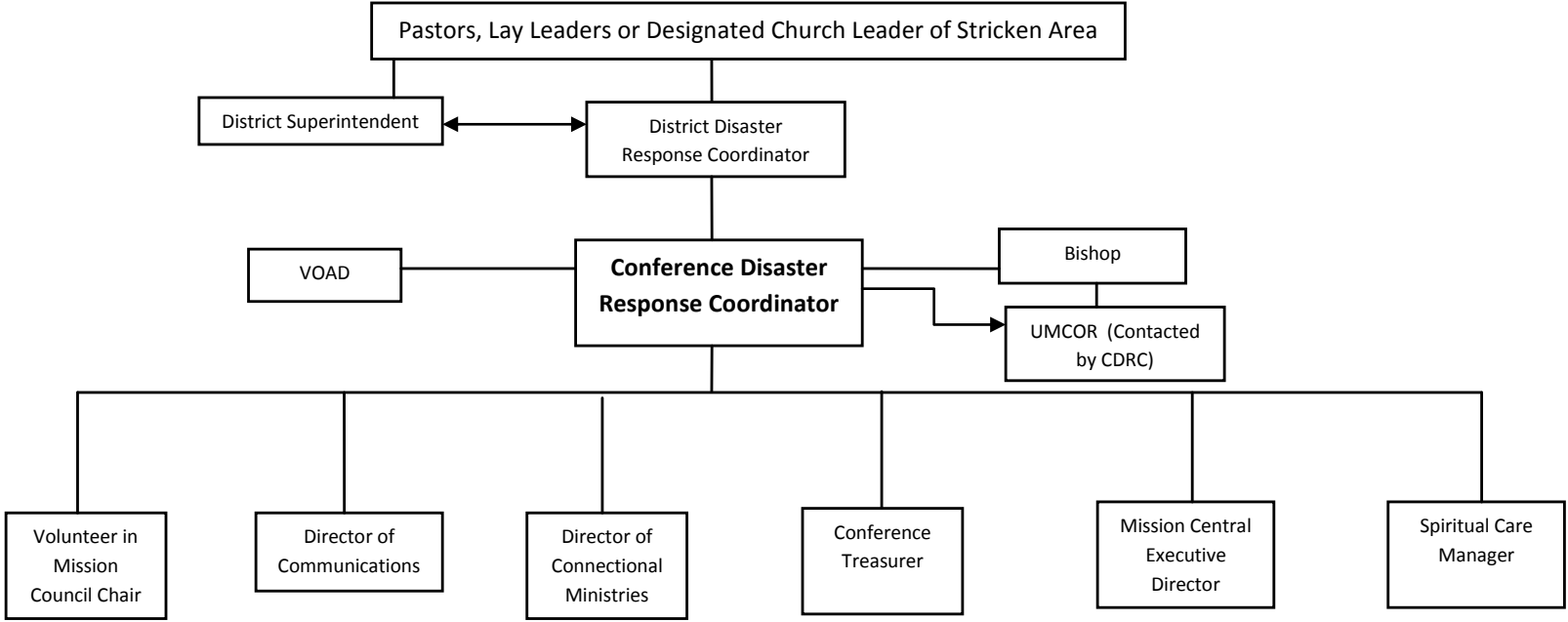
SBA - Small Business Administration, an arm of the federal government charged with providing low-interest disaster loans to businesses and homeowners. Most governmental disaster assistance to individuals and families is in the form of a loan. Applicants must apply for a loan and be turned down before they are eligible for many federal benefits.

SVOAD - State Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. This is the umbrella group for all the heads of recognized nonprofit agencies that have a national presence in disaster response. It is not an operational entity but a coordinating, communicating, educational coalition. NVOAD is linked by agreements to the state VOADs and to FEMA.

UMCOR -United Methodist Committee on Relief

UMVIM (*also VIM*) .United Methodist Volunteers in Mission

VOAD -Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster



Susquehanna Conference Disaster Response Organization Chart