

Disaster Preparedness for Churches

- **Post church signs with emergency information:** Many churches have visitors and host meetings for various community organizations, who may not know your church's address or local emergency numbers. Posting signs with this information around the church can help ensure that emergency response workers can arrive at the scene quickly.
- **Plan a fire drill on a Sunday:** Take the time on a Sunday to practice what to do in the event of an emergency. A basic building evacuation may be a helpful procedure for addressing a number of different hazards.
- **Build emergency kits as a congregation:** Include "[A Season of Resilience](#)" inserts in your weekly church bulletin. Each week, the inserts will walk you through building a disaster kit that is personalized for your household. If you already have an emergency kit, replace any items that have expired.
- **[Safeguard important church documents:](#)** Create backups of important church documents, such as marriage and baptismal registers, important financial files and insurance information for the church, and keep physical copies in a fireproof, waterproof lock box or safe. For more information, consult The Episcopal Church's [Archives Manual](#).
- **Create a church "Go Kit":** Create a kit containing items essential for holding worship: Communion silver, a Book of Common Prayer and a hymnal. Even if the church building is damaged or inaccessible, services may continue with these items. Include in the kit a backup of electronic church files, insurance information, a complete set of keys to the church and a list of usernames and passwords for church electronics.
- **Update existing church communication tools:** Do you have a church email list, Facebook group or phone tree? Using these tools regularly helps keep information up-to-date and gives members of your congregation an opportunity to practice communicating with the church before a disaster occurs.
- **[Put your church on the Map:](#)** The Episcopal Asset Map, a joint project between The Episcopal Church and Episcopal Relief & Development, is an online tool for highlighting the ministries of the Episcopal Church. Does your church have a kitchen, a food pantry ministry or something else that could help in a disaster? Take the survey on the [Episcopal Asset Map](#) to be a resource to your community in time of need!
- **Learn about an outreach ministry:** One of the reasons the Church is uniquely positioned to respond after disasters is that Church members are often already in relationship with people who may be vulnerable after a disaster. Outreach ministries may be scaled up to meet the needs of the community. If you are interested in the work being done, stick around and help out!
- **Help out during times of need:** There is no need to wait until a catastrophic event occurs. The Church can play a role in recovering from smaller emergencies like apartment complex

fires or medical emergencies. You don't need to spearhead every recovery effort, but small gestures such as cooking a meal or listening to those who are affected may help in rekindle a sense of normalcy after a traumatic event.

- **Connect with your insurance company or local first responders to identify potential hazards:** Many dioceses have someone appointed to do walk-throughs of church property. Reach out to your diocesan office to learn more, or contact your local police or fire station to inquire about building walk-throughs.
- **Connect with your local VOAD or COAD:** [Your local VOAD](#) (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) or COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) will have information about how you can partner and build relationships with other organizations both pre-and post-disaster.
- **[Partner with a church outside your area](#):** Consider partnering with a church in a different geographic area. [Print wallet cards](#) with the contact information of the other church. If a disaster occurs, have your parishioners leave a message with the other church letting you know they're okay.
- **[Make a map of your church members](#):** Google Maps makes it easy to create a custom map of your members. These lists can be used in a disaster to determine if church members are in an impacted area.
- **Connect with your Diocesan Disaster Coordinator:** Diocesan Disaster Coordinators have been designated by their bishops to help their dioceses prepare for disasters. Contact your coordinator to learn more about preparedness efforts in your area.
- **Host a spaghetti dinner for your first responders:** Invite local first responders to an event at your church. Building relationships with local fire, police and medical services builds connections that strengthen the resilience of the congregation.
- **Fill out a congregational preparedness guide:** Episcopal Relief & Development has created 3 levels of preparedness guides to help congregations prepare for and respond to disasters.
- **[The Comprehensive Preparedness Planning Guide For Congregations and Parishes](#):** Includes steps for inventorying, protecting and mobilizing physical and human assets; identifying vulnerable people; anticipating response activities, and testing the first steps of a response.
- **[Facilitator's Guide for the Comprehensive Planning Guide](#):** Packages the work of the comprehensive guide into four meetings, with suggested language for facilitators.
- **[Silver Level Preparedness Planning Guide](#):** A more abbreviated version that collects less information.
- **[Bronze Level Preparedness Planning Guide](#):** Gathers only the most basic information to use after a disaster.

<https://www.episcopalrelief.org/what-we-do/us-disaster-program/>