

Congregational Disaster Response Protocol:

How Congregational Leadership Communicates with the Northwestern Ohio Synod Disaster Coordinator

The senior pastor of an individual congregation or setting will be designated by the Northwestern Ohio Synod as the Primary Disaster Coordinator for that congregation or setting unless notified otherwise by the pastor and the individual assigned to coordination.

The congregation should appoint a Secondary Disaster Coordinator in the event the Primary is not available for immediate attention to disaster needs. These names along with “Congregational Disaster response Resource Inventory” results will be maintained in a Northwestern Ohio Synod Disaster response database for purposes of quick response in the event of a disaster.

Definition of a Disaster

Disasters may be natural or human caused. Natural disasters include hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, fires and explosions. Some fires and explosions may be human-made. These events or situations cause human suffering or create human needs that victims cannot alleviate without assistance. Lutheran Disaster Response - Ohio becomes involved when a disaster, affecting the Lutheran community, is greater than existing local resources.

The NWOS Disaster Coordinator is an active member of Lutheran Disaster Response – Ohio. The Congregation Primary Disaster Coordinator along with The Secondary Disaster Coordinator will follow Stage 1: The first 24-hour guidelines. Stage 1 is an attempt by the local congregation to determine what, where, when “ happened,” a personal assessment communicated with the NWOS Disaster Coordinator, sharing and agreeing on initial response/needs. The pastor will be the first to be involved with those experiencing loss. Stage 2 will be the time that personnel who work in disaster situations (Red Cross, FEMA, CEMA and others) will be at the disaster sites. These agencies will be at the beginning of an assessment process. Using these agencies as a source for information,, follow the steps of Stage 2. If the disaster is very large and meets Federal requirements, some areas may be eligible to receive federal aid that would be announced (approximately 7- 10 days). The Primary and Secondary Congregation Coordinators would be involved (or their appointees) as Stage 3 is implemented beginning about day 7 of the disaster. Involvement would be continued on through Stage 4 until recovery is complete.

Stage 1: The first 24 hours

- Event/Disaster Occurs
- Assess damage for self, congregation and community (See Assessment Tool below)
- Report/Consult with the district/synod disaster coordinator
- Provide initial review - Put on alert
- Ask for assistance
- Agree on initial response
- Visit and/or mobilize member visits to affected area and people

Stage 2: 24 to 72 hours

- Reassess scope of disaster -
 - 1) Visually
 - 2) Determine disaster status by gathering benchmark data (note the source of info)
 - Lives/fatalities
 - Homes/structural damage
 - Displaced families/individuals

- Level of disaster as per FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)
- Address immediate needs and assess resources of congregation and community
- Focus on material needs. Do not provide cash, but offer vouchers or items so as to not reduce cash assistance later
- Communicate with local agencies (i.e. County Emergency Management Agency, Red Cross)
- Report/Consult with the district/synod

Stage 3: Day 4 to 70

- Plan next steps
 - 1) Work with district/synod to communicate needs
 - 2) Participate in or help establish interfaith long-term recovery efforts
 - 3) NWOS Disaster Coordinator will access "Resource Inventory" to assess resources for long-term recovery
 - 4) LDR-Ohio will determine the need for a steering committee
 - 5) Develop and implement recovery plan ("unmet needs")

Stage 4: Day 71 to 700

- Monitor and continue implementation of recovery plan ("unmet needs")
 - 1) Communicate needs and advocate for resources to support efforts
 - 2) Remember recovery can take a long time

Congregational Disaster Response Assessment Tool

How is Your Congregation Affected?

- What kind of disaster has occurred?
- Identify status and needs of clergy and staff
- Identify damage to church property
- Contact congregational member
 - (1) Determine personal needs
 - (2) Identify/assess community damage
- Identify immediate congregational needs

How is Your Community Affected?

- Identify the geographic area affected
- Contact emergency management office or other local agency to determine the extent of the disaster (i. e. sheriff's office, Red Cross, FEMA)
- Identify potential for further damage

After you've identified congregational and community needs, contact your NWOS Synod Disaster Coordinator, Kathleen Lemmerbrock, for advisement and consultation.

NWOS Disaster Coordinator 1-419-423-3664 (Toll-Free – 866. 967-3522)