

East Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

(revised April 2021)

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My District Superintendent _____

Emergency contact #'s _____

Alternate to District Superintendent _____

Emergency contact #'s _____

My District Disaster Response Coordinator _____

Emergency contact #'s _____

East Ohio Conf. Disaster Response Coordinator _____

Emergency contact #'s _____

Attach lists of relevant persons to your capacity. This will give you a quick reference when preparing for or acting when a disaster strikes.

Disaster Response Plan of the East Ohio Conference Of The United Methodist Church (approved 2021)

Purpose

This Disaster Response Plan is to assist the leaders of the East Ohio churches and Districts alleviate suffering through **preparation for** and **response to** disasters. The Disaster Response Committee (DRC) builds on the strengths of local churches, lay people, pastors, District Superintendents, District Coordinators, United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) & Disaster Response Committees, and the resident Bishop. Fundamental is cooperation with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), other churches, ministerial/clergy organizations, and the Ohio Council of Churches.

Disaster which is the scope of this response plan is one that has one or both impacts:

- A) The disaster incident renders the church and/or its pastor unable to operate and serve;
- B) The disaster results in the evacuation of multiple households, loss of many lives, and/or substantial damage to multiple homes within a community or area within the ministry of a United Methodist church. Once declared a "Disaster", by County, State or Federal government having reached a specific impact threshold, the disaster declaration activates organizations including Emergency Management Agencies and the Red Cross providing coordinated response.

Theological Perspective of Disaster Response.

Survivors of disaster will ask many difficult questions, some of which we may have no ready answer. They may ask questions such as: Why did this occur? Is this God's judgment on us? Are we to blame? It is best to counsel people not to blame themselves, other people, or God. A disaster, as a phenomenon of nature, is not thereby an "Act of God." A response that may be most fitting is one made by a minister who simply said: "These things happen."

...now there was a great wind so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 1 Kings 19:11-12

It seems to be much healthier to accept the fact that it happened. We believe that God is faithful and will be with us; that nothing can separate us from the love of God; that God can bring good out of evil and work through those who are responding to the disaster; that God can make the valley of trouble a door of hope and its aftermath a fountain of blessing.

Following a disaster, our response is the important thing: people need to express their emotional response to someone who can listen with understanding. People who have experienced loss will be involved in grief work, and others will begin putting their lives back in order. Spiritual and emotional healing needs to begin with understanding, patience, and prayer.

Disaster Response Simply

Disaster response is simply attempting to assist the survivors of a disaster as they journey through phases of **Rescue**, **Relief**, and **Recovery**. Coordination with other responder entities prevents duplication of services and gives greater assurance that the whole person is being cared for. This care is not only material and financial but personal, psychological, and spiritual. Because of shock, anger, grief, helplessness, and loss experienced by the survivor, an able listener is extremely valuable.

Pastors & Local Churches – Duties & Responsibilities

Advance Preparation

- Become familiar with this document. Keep it on file, paper & electronic. Also available @ <https://www.eocumc.com/missions/disaster-response>. There may be no electricity.
- Have a conversation with your District Disaster Response Coordinator regarding preparedness and training. Record in your contacts the cell phone numbers of 3 key people you can call if you are affected by a disaster.
- Compile the names, addresses, and phone numbers of those in your congregation or larger community who in a disaster would be willing to provide transportation to and from helping agencies, help survivors complete forms for loans or grants, open church facilities as housing for outside volunteers.
- This is a ministry of the entire community. Record contact information of your Fire Chiefs, emergency management agency <https://ema.ohio.gov/RegionalOperations.aspx>, Ohio Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) <https://www.ema.ohio.gov/CERT.aspx>, (source of volunteer citizens trained by the Ohio EMA organized by County) and local relief agencies. i.e. the Red Cross and Salvation Army.
- Identify shelters, places where supplies can be gathered, and places that volunteers can meet following a disaster. Consider whether the church should be a “Red Cross” shelter during a disaster. If so, the Red Cross will need to provide a “Letter of Agreement” and will offer specific direction and requirements.
- Develop a plan for communication, worship and spiritual care should the disaster effect the ongoing operation of your local church.

When a Disaster is Imminent

- Plan for your own safety and the safety of your family. Charge your cell phone.
- Gather information of impending storm activity or other event which could lead to a disaster.
- If your immediate area is likely to be affected and an evacuation is recommended - be certain your District Superintendent and District Disaster Response Coordinator has your current contact information or email them, so they know how to reach you. Another local church office away from the danger zone may be an alternative. Email, text, social media are ways to communicate as appropriate to the urgency of the situation.

Rescue Phase – Typically 2 to 4 days of, or after a Disaster: Caring for Life and Safety

- Assess your own damage first. Is anyone in your household injured? Unless it is unsafe, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you. Take time for prayer. If you are a victim, do not rely upon your own judgment. Listen to emergency personnel.
- Make your own assessment report on the magnitude and severity (a general sense of how many people affected, the area affected, kind of disaster and damage) within 24 hours to: your **District Superintendent; OR your District Disaster Response Coordinator; OR the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator**. Note: Pastors outside the damaged area may help to make calls. **Report: Are you okay? And how the response is being handled.**
- Be a shepherd. Attend to the spiritual needs of the community as well as individuals.
- Aid the community as you are able. The pastor can get quickly involved in details of needs. Find volunteers to coordinate relief efforts on the local level, working in cooperation with others. The pastor’s primary task is to assure a caring ministry team is functioning.
- If you need UMCOR kits such as cleaning buckets, please contact the District Disaster Response Coordinator or the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator.
- Monitor the damage to your district, community, or region. Report new facts and observations.

Rescue Phase - continued

- Do not interfere with any first responders: emergency safety personnel.
- When encountering survivors do not promise help over which you have no control.
- During the rescue phase people need to be found, rescued, and given proper medical attention. They also need to be housed and fed. The Emergency Management Agency and the Red Cross coordinate the response. Work quickly with community leaders on where help can be found.
- Consider having a community memorial service for families affected by a disaster, no later than 48 hours after the disaster. A later time may conflict with funeral services for the deceased. The emergency workers should be encouraged to participate.
- **The local people “own the disaster” and have a right to be consulted** on decisions that directly affect them. The pastor and church along with other community groups begin responding to the needs of survivors. Account for your own church members but be an advocate especially for those who may otherwise not get attention: the elderly, one parent families. Everyone needs to have access to shelter, food, and medical attention. Provide counseling to survivors.
- After the initial Rescue Phase, expect a letdown, you are faced with a great workload. Do get rest, and you too may need a counselor. Share your concerns for yourself and family with the District Superintendent or another pastor.
- The worship service is effective in dealing with the frustration created by the disaster. God does not save us from disaster, but God gives us strength to face whatever comes our way.

Relief Phase: Temporary Solutions to Halt the Damage

- Work with the community to organize local volunteers to help in the church office, transport survivors to agencies, help apply for financial assistance, and help where needed. The pastor’s primary roles are spiritual and leadership. A lay person or team should be managing the response details.
- Assist survivors of disaster in getting their lives back together.
- Work with the District Disaster Response Coordinator to communicate ways other churches and volunteers can help. The purpose of Emergency Response Teams and their training is this Relief Phase.

Recovery Phase: Long Term Repair, Support and Preparation to Mitigate Impact of Future Disasters

By this time, most of the other helping agencies are gone. UMC Volunteer in Mission Teams and some grant programs can be helpful in rebuilding for the future. Government, insurance, and other assistance are the priority for help, saving church resources for remaining unmet needs.

Disaster Fatigue: Beware

Within days, weeks or months following disaster people are exhausted. The adrenaline is gone. The grief process generally involves a short period of shock with psychological numbness with anger, guilt, and a need to talk about what has happened. A perceptive listener is needed who portrays acceptance of the grief reaction as normal. “Disaster Syndrome” is a zombie-like reaction of “plan-lessness”. Immediate things of need are done, yet survivors have trouble planning and carrying through, especially long-range plans. Volunteer groups must respond to disaster survivors with love, kindness, understanding and especially patience. Consider inviting the Conference Emotional and Spiritual Care Team to be part of your team.

District Superintendents – Duties & Responsibilities

Advance Preparation

- Become familiar with this document. Keep it on file, paper & electronic. Also available @ eocumc.com/missions/disaster-response. There may be no electricity.
- Recruit a District Disaster Response Coordinator, along with the District Nominating Committee, a candidate of dependability, credibility, initiative, and good at organizing.
- Plan with your District Disaster Response Coordinator and church pastors to promote preparedness and training. District DRC Name _____ #'s _____
- Develop a plan for communication, worship and spiritual care should the disaster effect the day-to-day operation of one or more of your local churches.

When a Disaster is Imminent

- Gather information of impending storm activity or other event which could lead to a disaster.
- Contact your District Disaster Response Coordinator(s) and know each other's location and availability. If your immediate area is likely to be affected and an evacuation is recommended a local church office away from the danger zone may be an alternative. Charge your cell phone.

Rescue Phase – Typically 2 to 4 days of, or after a Disaster: Caring for Life and Safety

- Assess your own damage first. Is anyone in your household injured? Unless it is unsafe, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you. Take time for prayer. If you are a survivor, do not rely upon your own judgment. Listen to emergency personnel.
- Account for District Churches & Pastors. Make sure everyone has access to shelter, food, and medical attention. Provide counseling to survivors and to those who have experienced the loss of a loved one or friend.
- Monitor reports about the damage to your district, community or region.
- With the District Disaster Response Coordinator provide a needs assessment regarding the “magnitude and severity” (a general sense of how many people affected, the area affected, kind of disaster and damage) within 48 hours to: the **Conference Disaster Response Coordinator and/or the Bishop. Report: Are you okay? How is the response being handled?**
- Sometime in the Rescue Phase (perhaps after meeting with the Red Cross or EMA) the District clergy & the Disaster Coordinator(s) should meet to determine a plan of action. The DS may need to initiate the organizational meeting.
- Determine who will coordinate relief efforts on the local level, working with the District Disaster Coordinator and relief agencies. Do not interfere with any first responders: emergency safety personnel. Who will be the UMC point of contact as we move into the relief phase?
- During the rescue phase people need to be found, rescued, and given proper medical attention. They also need to be housed and fed. *Volunteers going into a disaster area must be able to care for their own needs, bring their own supplies, and not be a burden by counting on food and water in the disaster area.*
- **The local people “own the disaster” and have a right to be consulted** on decisions that directly affect them. The pastor and church begin responding to the needs of survivors.
- The District Superintendents may be a survivor or subject of an exhausting workload. Neighboring District Superintendents outside the damaged area may need to make calls.
- Once the response plan has been established the role of the Superintendent is to be a visible and spiritual presence.

Relief Phase: Temporary Solutions to Halt the Damage

- Make a scope of damage Assessment tour with your District Disaster Response Coordinator and/or Conference Disaster Response Coordinator. If the damage is widespread, perhaps divide your efforts. Check with local law enforcement officers first as they may host your tour and gain entry to restricted zones.
 - Expect to be in shock at what you see. Expect others to be in shock. People will want to tell their stories over again. Be prepared to do a lot of listening and listen carefully to the affected pastors and be prepared to ask other pastors to help.
 - Look for damage in terms of areas hit. Do not try to count the number of homes destroyed. Leave that job to FEMA and the Red Cross. Try to gain a general sense of magnitude and severity.
 - If shelters are open, tour the shelters. Check to see if the church has a presence there. Is pastoral care available in the shelter?
 - Inform the Bishop and Conference leadership of your situation. Offer the Bishop a tour.
- Organize the District: Review with your District Disaster Response Coordinator what your pastors and churches should be doing. Call a meeting of the pastors in the affected area for your District Disaster Response Coordinator to explain how local churches can respond to the crisis and resources at their disposal. Encourage your pastors to work ecumenically and on an interfaith basis in the relief effort, and even to spearhead such a joint response.
- Take the initiative to seek resources to respond to the affected local churches such as UMW Men, UMW Women work teams to help with cleanup, childcare arrangements, feeding stations; and seek assistance from the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator.
- Look after the wellbeing of your pastors. Do not allow them to “burn out.” If pastors need help, be sure to get them and their families away from the area for a while or provide them time. Be ready to supply substitute pastors to fill their pulpit. Ask the pastor’s family how the pastor and family members are doing. If pastors suffer loss, make certain that local churches respond with sensitivity. The Red Cross may be able to furnish some initial living expense money. Find out if the pastors need financial help. Your direct involvement during a crisis will have a tremendous impact on pastors and their families.
- At this point a lay person or team should be handling the details of the response.

Recovery Phase: Long Term Repair, Support and Preparation to Mitigate Impact of Future Disasters

Support the Pastor. The likely period for clergy burnout is during this phase. Pastors may function well in the early stages of a crisis with long hours and heavy responsibilities, however, most of their needed effort takes place after the obvious urgency is past. Local congregations may be less understanding of the time required to help survivors four to six months after the event.

- Let the congregation know how much the pastor’s work is appreciated.
- If the workload is excessive, can another person be hired part time to handle parts of the program? Work with the Staff Parish Relations Committee to provide some time away for the pastor. Is there a retired pastor who could help fill in temporarily? Keep in touch with the pastor. Do not assume things are going well if you do hear anything to the contrary.
- Check on the members of the pastor’s family. Make certain they are not neglected with the pastor’s increased workload. Pastors may not be accepting the fact that they are survivors.

Use the System. Stay in touch with the Conference and District Disaster Response Coordinators.

District Disaster R. Coordinator: _____ #'s _____

Conf. Disaster R. Coordinator: _____ #'s _____

District Disaster Response Coordinators – Duties & Responsibilities

Advance Preparation

- Become familiar with this document. Keep it on file, paper & electronic. Also available @ eocumc.com/missions/disaster-response. There may be no electricity.
- With your District Superintendent promote Disaster Response Training of District Churches.
- Document District churches with community assistance programs: church names; program types (i.e. food pantry, food kitchen, clothing, ...); contact people and numbers.
- Initiate and renew contact annually with Church Pastors of your district including church and Pastors contact information. Promote use of this Conference Disaster Response Plan.
- Make contact annually with disaster relief agencies in your district and keep vital contact information: Red Cross, Emergency Management Agency, and any Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in your counties. If EOC's have been established for counties in your district, become acquainted with their location and Director.

Preparation When a Disaster is Imminent

- Gather information of impending storm activity or other event which could lead to a disaster.
- Contact your District Superintendent and know each other's location and availability. If your immediate area is likely to be affected and an evacuation is recommended, move out of the area, but be certain that your District Superintendent knows where you will be.

Rescue Phase - Typically the first 2 to 4 days of, or after a Disaster

- Assess your own damage first. See if anyone in your household is injured. Unless it is unsafe, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you. Take time for prayer. If you are a survivor, do not rely upon your own judgment. Listen to emergency personnel.
- Monitor the damage to your district, community, region.
- Do not interfere with any first responders, police, fire, etc. People need to be found, rescued, and given proper medical attention. They also need to be housed and fed.
- Make a scope of damage assessment report with your District Superintendent. Based on a pastor's call alerting the District Superintendent to disaster, determine with the DS a list of calls to additional pastors and decide who will make those phone calls.
- Check with local law enforcement officers first as they may host your tour and gain entry to restricted zones.
- You may be a survivor or subject of an exhausting workload. District Response Coordinator(s) outside the damaged area may need to make calls.
- Provide needs assessment regarding the "magnitude and severity", a general sense of how many people affected, the area affected, kind of disaster and damage, within 48 hours to: your **District Superintendent; Conference District Disaster Response Coordinator**; neighboring District Disaster Response Coordinators; and pastors in the disaster's surrounding area.
- During the rescue phase volunteers going into a disaster area must be able to care for their own needs. Do not add to the burden by counting on getting food and water in the disaster area. Bring your own supplies and necessities.
- The local people "own the disaster" and have a right to be consulted on decisions that directly affect them.

Relief Phase: Temporary Solutions to Halt the Damage

- Keep in contact with the affected Pastors, District Superintendent, and the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator.
- Dialog with pastors and churches the possibility of ERT & UMVIM work teams helping in your district to clean up and rebuild, during the recovery phase.
- Monitor progress of ERT & UMVIM volunteer teams.
- Make a scope of damage assessment tour with the District Superintendent and/or Conference Disaster Response Coordinator. Include affected pastors as well as local officials. If the damage is widespread, perhaps divide your efforts.
 - Expect to be in shock at what you see. Expect others to be in shock. People will want to tell their stories over again. Be prepared to do a lot of listening and listen carefully to the affected pastors to assess their fatigue.
 - Look for damage in terms of areas hit. Do not try to count the number of homes destroyed. Leave that job to FEMA and the Red Cross. They will have an accurate count within two days. Try to gain a general sense of magnitude and severity.
 - If shelters are open, tour the shelters. Check to see if the church has a presence there. Is pastoral care available in the shelter? Do not expect evacuated pastors to provide this.
 - Coordinate your estimates with those of the District Superintendent and Conference Disaster Response Coordinator.
- Organize the District: Review with your District Superintendent what your pastors and churches should be doing, including calling a meeting of the pastors in the affected area to explain how local churches can respond to the crisis and resources at their disposal. Encourage your pastors to work ecumenically and on an interfaith basis in the relief effort, and even to spearhead such a joint response. Organize or join a [Long Term Recovery Committee](#) (LTRC).
- Help the pastor(s) find lay leadership to take the job of managing response details.

Recovery Phase: Long Term Repair, Support and Preparation to Mitigate Impact of Future Disasters

- Keep in contact with the Pastors, DS, Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, and other disaster response and UMVIM Committees.
- Explore with pastors and churches the possibility of UMVIM work teams helping in your district to clean up and rebuild, during the recovery phase.
- Monitor progress of UMVIM volunteer teams.

Conference Disaster Response Coordinator – Duties & Responsibilities

UMCOR recognizes the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator as their contact and the one to work with the Bishop regarding disasters. This position shall organize and promote the Conference being prepared for a disaster event and ready response within the District and externally. The Director of the Connectional Ministries will assign an individual(s) as Conference Disaster Response Coordinator(s).

All funds received through UMCOR, Episcopal appeals, or through direct contributions shall be funneled through the Conference Treasurer. The Bishop may request an UMCOR grant by phone or by letter.

Advance Preparation

- Become familiar with this document. Keep it on file, paper & electronic. Also available at eocumc.com/missions/disaster-response. There may be no electricity.
- Review the plan periodically and following the response phase of each disaster to make sure that the content is accurate and effective.
- Provide general oversight for the entire Disaster Response Plan and its implementation. Encourage pastors and churches to use this Plan to prepare for disasters.
- In cooperation with the Conference UMVIM & Disaster Response Committee, coordinate an annual training/review event(s) for the District Disaster Response Coordinators and volunteers.

Preparation When a Disaster is Imminent

- Gather information of any impending storm activity or other event which could lead to a disaster.
- Be in contact the District Superintendents, Bishop, Director of Communications, and others for possible action should a disaster strike.

Rescue Phase- Typically the first 2 to 4 days of, or after a Disaster

- Assess your own damage first. Is anyone in your household injured? Unless it is unsafe to remain, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you. If you are a survivor, do not rely on your own judgment or the judgment of other survivors.
- Gather information about the damage to the Conference or region by listening to news reports. Do not interfere with any ongoing relief efforts. Stay in your home or office until the danger is past. It will be easier for the Bishop and DS(s) to reach you if you remain at your home or office during this phase.
- Contact the Office of Pastoral Care. Inform one of the pastoral counselors about the disaster and request that one of them contact the pastor, other professional staff, and their families to offer support.

Relief Phase: Temporary Solutions to Halt the Damage

- Contact the District Disaster Response Coordinator(s) and receive an initial assessment or report.
- Contact the Emergency Management Agency for an initial report on damaged areas.
- Inform the Bishop and District Superintendents of current information.
- Lead scope of damage assessment tours with the Bishop, DS(s), District Disaster Response Coordinator(s), and Director of Communications.
- Follow up with the Office of Pastoral Care regarding counseling support for the pastor, staff, and their families.
- Determine if assistance is required from UMCOR and, if so, follow proper protocol to receive such assistance.
- Meet with the Conference UMVIM and Disaster Response Committees to develop the specific response steps for handling the disaster.

Recovery Phase: Long Term Repair, Support and Preparation to Mitigate Impact of Future Disasters

- Monitor progress of the recovery phase of the disaster during this long period of time as other priorities begin to consume the church. It is vital that periodic reports be given to the Bishop, the Director of Communications, and the Conference Leadership Team.
- Provide oversight to the Conference's entire Disaster Response efforts. Visit the damaged area while work teams are working and provide encouragement to both survivors and volunteers.

Resident Bishop – Duties & Responsibilities

The Resident Bishop brings moral and ecclesiastical authority to any endeavor of the church. The urgency of need in a disaster often requires the additional emphasis that only the office of the Resident Bishop can bring. When sufficient information on the magnitude and severity of the disaster has been gathered, the Bishop shall make a determination relative to an Episcopal appeal for relief funds. If the Conference does not have adequate resources on hand or if there is a need which requires specialized help, the Bishop may request such assistance from UMCOR.

Direct involvement by the Resident Bishop in disaster results in the following:

- Presence. Your presence in the disaster area demonstrates to people the caring concern of the church in the midst of crisis.
- Church Involvement. Motivates involvement of church leaders in the disaster relief.
- Cooperation. Inspires cooperation among church boards and agencies as they contribute to the overall effort.
- Finances. Inspires contribution for the relief of disaster survivors.

Advance Preparation

- Make sure the Conference is organized for disaster relief. The task of organizing the Conference for disaster relief belongs to the Conference Disaster Response Committee.
- Offer assistance with problem solving. When problems arise within the Conference regarding policies or procedures for disaster relief, the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator may need assistance with your Conference Coordinator having no authority over any other boards or agencies, the authority may defer to the Director of Connectional Ministries, the Board of Global Ministries Chairperson, or to the Bishop for assistance.
- Keep this Disaster Response Plan on file, paper & electronic. Also available at eocumc.org/missions/disaster-response. There may be no electricity.
- Encourage pastors, churches, Cabinet, committees, boards, and agencies to use this Plan to prepare for disasters.

Preparation when a Disaster is Imminent.

- Be attentive to any impending storm activity or other events which could lead to a disaster.
- Be in contact with Cabinet and the Conference District Coordinator to prepare for possible action should a disaster strike and know each other's location and availability.
- If your immediate area is likely to be affected and an evacuation is recommended, move out of the area and be certain the Cabinet know where you will be. You may want to set up a temporary office in a location away from the danger zone.

Rescue Phase - Typically the first 2 to 4 days of, or after a Disaster

- Assess your own damage first. See if anyone in your household is injured. Unless it is unsafe to remain, stay with your family and property until emergency personnel get to you. If you are a survivor, do not rely on your own judgment. Do not rely on the judgment of other survivors. Listen to emergency personnel and follow their instructions.
- Gather information about the damage to the Conference by listening to news reports. Do not interfere with any ongoing relief efforts. Stay in your home or office until the danger is past. It will be easier for the cabinet and Conference Disaster Response Coordinator to reach you if you remain at your home or office during this phase.

Relief Phase: Temporary Solutions to Halt the Damage

- Contact the Conference District Response Coordinator (CDRC) to gather updates from the District Disaster Response Coordinators in the affected areas. The CDRC should also be in contact with the Ohio Emergency Management Agency to get an initial report on damaged areas. At this point, all information will be preliminary and general.
- If this is a large-scale event, contact UMCOR to request a grant as needed.
- Call for Damage Assessment Tours. As soon as possible after the event, District Superintendents and their District Response Coordinator(s) should conduct scope of damage assessment tours. They should look for damage in terms of areas hit and attempt to gain a general sense of the magnitude and severity. They should gather information of injuries to pastors and their families plus damage to church property. They should also tour shelter areas to see what involvement the church has in caring for evacuees.
- Make an Episcopal Tour. Once the DS has completed the scope of damage assessment tour, he or she should report the findings to you. If the damage is widespread or if church personnel or property are involved, the District Superintendent should request an Episcopal tour.
 - The tour should be coordinated through the District Disaster Response Coordinator. This person should have contacts with the appropriate county FEMA officers who can authorize access to the affected areas. The tour should not be conducted without prior arrangements.
 - The focus of the tour should be to demonstrate the church's presence and willingness to help in the affected area. Personal contact with those who have suffered losses should be encouraged and the participants should be kept to a minimum. The key individuals would be: the Resident Bishop (providing personal contact with the survivors and relief workers, and being a pastor to the affected pastors); the District Superintendent; the District Disaster Response Coordinator(s); the Chairperson of the Conference Disaster Response Committee; the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator.
- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator develops a preliminary plan of action for disaster response based on the needs identified, as well as any other information obtained.

Recovery Phase - Typically – 10 times Relief Phase - 200 to 400 days

The recovery process may last more than a year for some disasters. The highest level of involvement will be in the four to six months after the event. Therefore, it is very easy for other priorities to gain attention just when the church needs to be most active.

It is vital that periodic reports be given to the Bishop and/or to the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator regarding the progress of the recovery effort.

Conference Disaster Response Committee – Duties & Responsibilities

Purpose

The Conference Disaster Response Committee (Committee) was created to:

- Assist the local churches and districts in their response to disasters in their communities.
- Keep the Conference prepared for and informed about disasters occurring within the Conference.
- Provide training and materials, scheduling at least one training session with the Conference and District Disaster Coordinators/Trainers each year.
- As the local community “owns the disaster”, the Committee assists local efforts.
- The church’s unique purpose in disaster response is to deal with peoples physical, emotional and spiritual needs.
- Coordinate the Conference response by establishing policies, procedures, and funding guidelines. Including disbursement of funding, evaluation, and accountability reports.
- Along with assistance of the UMVIM Committee, develops and maintains a network of volunteers available for a call by the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator to assist disaster relief and recovery.
- Determine need and arrange for identifying signs, caps, badges, shirts, etc. with official East Ohio Conference and United Methodist insignias to help visibility and identification of volunteers.
- Encourage the use and development of a functional network of other groups (such as United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women) within in the Conference to assist disaster relief.

Financial Collection and Disbursement Policies

The Conference Disaster Response Committee (Committee) shall review all requests and applications for disaster relief funds and shall observe the following guidelines:

1. Disaster response programs “shall advance the dignity of persons without regard to religion, race, nationality, or sex and shall seek to enhance the quality of life in the human community.” The Committee shall welcome requests based on need for financial aid without regard to religion, race, nationality, or gender.
2. Persons requesting financial aid shall apply to such agencies as FEMA, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, and the Red Cross before receiving financial aid from the Conference. This guideline ensures that conference relief will be conserved.
3. In rendering financial aid to disaster survivors, the Committee shall give individuals and families priority consideration who are in need because they have inadequate insurance or because they fail to qualify for aid from Federal and State Emergency Management Agencies or the Red Cross.
4. Funds received from UMCOR can be used only for the relief of human suffering and not for church property repair or rebuilding. Funds for church properties can be applied for through the Congregational Development unit of the National Program Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. The Conference itself can set up its own Conference Advance Special (so long as the monies raised are used within the Conference boundaries). Whenever the Conference publicizes an appeal for funds which can be used for church properties, the UMC Discipline requires due notification be given of such use of the appeal.

5. Excess contributions received in response to a disaster will remain in a reserve with the Conference Treasurer. These funds may only be used in response to a subsequent disaster within the Annual Conference, unless:
 - a. Disaster strikes beyond the Annual Conference boundary with overwhelming magnitude.
 - b. The other Annual Conference exhausts all financial resources; and
 - c. The Committee feels morally obligated to provide humanitarian aid.
6. After the Committee has approved financial aid to individuals or relief groups, the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator shall provide a voucher to the Conference Treasurer with the names and addresses of the individuals/groups to which relief funds are disbursed.
7. It shall also be the responsibility of the Conference Disaster Response Coordinator to obtain an accounting of the ways in which contributed funds were used in any given disaster. This report from the funded relief group shall be forwarded to the Treasurer of the Annual Conference and the Committee.

Telling the Story

Assistance will be offered from other churches, communities, and groups sooner if they hear the story immediately. Use every communication vehicle available as soon as possible to “tell the story.”

Photographs and videotapes of the immediate aftermath of the disaster may be useful in communicating the magnitude and severity of the disaster. Be sensitive to the survivors and obtain permission in writing of photographs or videos will be published.

“The story” includes accounts of survivors’ and survivors’ experiences, property damage, community disruption, government and school interruptions, and all effects of a disaster. Telling the story is therapeutic for the survivor and important to those who would share in assistance and response.

Tell the story:

To the Community -- Contact the media: newspapers, radio, television, and government agency networks. Post to social media.

To the Denomination -- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator should contact UMCOR representatives and use the network of District and Conference Agencies. Include Bishop, D.S.’s, Conference Staff, UMW and UMM.

Ecumenically -- Whenever possible, work together. A network of leaders in all interfaith groups working together will facilitate “telling the story.”

Response to Disasters Beyond the Conference

When a disaster occurs beyond East Ohio Conference the objective of this Disaster Response Plan is to facilitate the most helpful response by our churches and people.

Advance Preparedness

The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator shall be a part of a network of other Conference Disaster Response Coordinators and UMCOR.

Rescue Phases - Typically the first 2 to 4 days of, or after a Disaster

- The East Ohio Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will communicate with the Bishop(s), Jurisdictional Office(s) and UMCOR to determine the proper steps which should be taken by the East Ohio Conference to help meet needs for emergency funds, supplies, and volunteers.
- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will be the contact person to coordinate funds, materials, or volunteers.
- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will advise groups on the specific items needed and with the ERT Coordinator authorize the activation and dispatching of East Ohio Conference Early Response Teams when needed.
- The Early Response Team Coordinator (ERTC) will dispatch the Conference Early Response Team(s) to the designated location(s), working under the direction of a specified local person and/or agency.

Relief Phase: Temporary Solutions to Halt the Damage

- The East Ohio Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will communicate with the Bishop(s), Jurisdictional Office(s) and UMCOR to determine the proper steps which should be taken by the East Ohio Conference to help meet needs for emergency funds, supplies, and volunteers.
- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will advise groups on the specific items needed and with the ERT Coordinator authorize the activation and dispatching of East Ohio Conference Early Response Teams when needed.
- The Early Response Team Coordinator will dispatch the Conference Early Response Team(s) to the designated location(s), working under the direction of a specified local person and/or agency.
- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will be the contact person for those who wish to help with funds, materials, or volunteers. This is critical during the rescue phase, but also essential during the relief phase.

Recovery Phase: Long Term Repair, Support and Preparation to Mitigate Impact of Future Disasters

- The East Ohio Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will be in communication with the appropriate Bishop(s), Jurisdictional Office(s) and UMCOR to determine the proper steps which should be taken by the East Ohio Conference to help meet the needs for emergency funds, supplies, and volunteers.
- The Conference Disaster Response Coordinator will keep the Conference UMVIM Committee informed of priority needs, and recommended approach by volunteers from the East Ohio Conference for emergency funds, supplies, and required recovery projects.
- The UMVIM Committee will assist linking volunteers with priority recovery projects in light of their skills and interests. Teams and individuals who desire to volunteer their help in the event of a disaster should only go to the disaster site when invited by a hosting organization.
- Churches and individuals that wish to give volunteer assistance during the recovery phase should contact UMVIM Committee.

Mutual Aid Compacts

East Ohio Conference Districts that share common borders with adjacent Conferences may be participants in “Mutual Aid Compacts.” Upon request the Director of Connectional Ministries will provide information regarding any “Mutual Aid Compacts” pertaining to your District.