

# Preparing your congregation for a disaster

## Before a disaster strikes

*Use this facility safety checklist:\**

- Post an emergency number by each phone. Include 911 (or area equivalent), the poison control center, law enforcement and the fire department. Make sure a phone is accessible in each area of the building at all hours.
- Review insurance policies annually. Keep duplicate copies of important church documents off site with photographs and vital records.
- Identify the nearest storm shelter. (Identify whom to contact to help do this.)
- Post clear directions on what to do and where to go in case of a severe storm/tornado warning.
- Practice evacuation/fire drills.
- Have a working weather radio or battery-operated radio in an accessible location in the church. Ensure that someone is listening during watches while church functions are in progress.
- Maintain a list of who is assigned to cut off utilities, cover windows and secure loose items inside/outside the building.
- Collect emergency/disaster-preparedness needs such as emergency lights, flashlights, first-aid kits, blankets.
- Create a prayer/life phone tree of people who will pray and give blood in case of emergency or disaster.
- Check exits: make sure they are marked and/or lit, free of obstruction, locked doors have crash bars; establish evacuation routes on upper floors; have a plan to evacuate handicapped persons.
- Check electrical equipment: mark circuit breakers, cover switches and outlet boxes, ground electrical units; do not overload circuits.
- Check gas equipment: know where gas main is; know where meter shut-off valve and gas wrench are.
- Check fire-fighting equipment: extinguishers should be fully charged, inspected and tagged; they should be appropriate type - for electrical, grease and ordinary fires. Maintain smoke detectors.
- Store chemicals including paint, solvents, cleaning fluids, thinners, toner, propane, toxic or corrosive materials properly.

\*Thanks to Lutheran Social Services of the South, Inc. and Christine Iverson of Lutheran Social Services of Kansas and Oklahoma for contributing to this list.

For more information go to: [WWW.LDR.ORG](http://WWW.LDR.ORG)