

Parish Planning for the Hurricane Season 2009

Brief Overview of Practical Steps

The purpose of this resource tool is to briefly outline several key strategies a parish may consider implementing in light of the hurricane season. If a parish would like additional information on how to plan and prepare for hurricanes, one can use the “*Quick Parish Guide*” and “*Insurance Office Administrators Guide to Diocesan Insurance and Risk Management Procedure*”s which is an expanded version of the outline below (it less than 40 pages with several forms and checklists to use). If you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, Peter Burns, at (727) 344-1611, ex. 472, or, my email address, pjb@dosp.org.

The following are suggestions that a parish may choose to implement in preparing for the hurricane season:

1. **Consider developing a disaster committee to assess, plan, oversee, and facilitate the overall parish preparation and implementation** – consider skills and needs when inviting people to participate in the committee: leadership, communication, construction/contractors, health care personal, ministry leaders, any parish disaster experts, building experts, insurance experts, and other related skills
2. **Offer information and encourage parishioners to develop their own family disaster plan by offering the following:**
 - a. Consider having Red Cross or the county emergency management people come to the parish and do a presentation for parishioners
 - b. Utilize local resources that provide printed information concerning disaster preparedness for individuals and families; local resources include the Red Cross, local newspapers, county emergency management, local television weather station’s handouts, and newspaper guides; remember the different languages and cultures in your parish
 - c. Make this information available through parish bulletins, flyers, webpage, ministry meetings, display booths on the parish campus, as well as other opportunities identified by your parish
 - d. Encourage those who are at-risk and vulnerable (elderly, disabled, those with medical needs, and homebound) to register in advance at a designated shelter in the county
 - e. For parishes that are in evacuation zones make plans and identify a potential site(s) where the pastor will be evacuated

- 3. Protect sacramental records and church property**
 - a. Develop a specific plan for storing and securing Sacramental records – utilize the information and recommendations provided by the Archives Department of the Diocese contained in this packet
 - b. Develop a plan for parish computer information being backed up on a regular basis and safely stored at a remote site
 - c. Develop a plan to address accounting issues if the parish office would not be able to be occupied
 - d. If your parish is in an evacuation zone, plans with specific steps need to be considered such as removing and securing the Blessed Sacrament along with items such as sacramentals, sacramental records, computer information, accounting, and other needed resources and documents in order to function and handle fundamental tasks at an offsite location; assign someone to handle each of these items as well as securing them at a remote site
 - e. Consider taking pictures of the parish buildings, grounds, and documenting the inventory before the hurricane season for insurance purposes
 - f. Consider and make arrangements for using an off site location for key parish staff to meet and set up work in the event the parish is not able to be inhabited

- 4. Promote volunteer and outreach efforts to assist the parish, neighbors at risk, and those affected by disasters**
 - a. Have a volunteer team ready to secure the church’s property 24-36 hours before a storm such as securing windows, removing potential flying objects from the parish grounds, and setting up sand bags where needed; designate a volunteer coordinator and supervisor
 - b. Encourage individuals to be trained and volunteer with community providers such as Red Cross
 - c. Develop a list of volunteers to assist in identifying the vulnerable and at-risk people; develop a list (names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses) of vulnerable parishioners such as elderly, disabled, single parent families, and homebound in order to promote and encourage the vulnerable and at-risk people to make evacuation plans with family or register at designated county shelters

- 5. Consider developing a communication plan to parish staff and parishioners**
 - a. Create and maintain an accurate list of important phone numbers of parish staff, key people, and ministry leaders in order to use as a “telephone call tree” to communicate cancellations and important parish function information
 - b. Develop a communication plan to share with the staff and parish (where appropriate) what is being done by the parish in preparation for the hurricane season – this may include plans for evacuation; communicate the process of how parish functions such as mass will be canceled in the event of a storm