

Preparing for Hurricane Season

Planning for People, Parish, and Plant

A Quick Parish Guide

Based Upon the Province of Miami's

"Disaster Preparedness and Response Planning Guide"

And

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston's

"Disaster Recovery Manual"

Diocese of St. Petersburg

Office of Parish Ministry Support

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(727) 344-1611, ex 472

Preparing for Hurricane Season: Planning for People, Parish, and Plant

The information in this guide will assist the parish with the following activities:

Section One - “Profiling the Parish” by the following:

- Becoming familiar with the parish property.
- Taking inventory of the physical contents of the parish.
- Creating and updating accurate staff rosters to develop a “telephone call tree.”
- Identifying parishioners who may need assistance during a disaster.
- Knowing the community resources

Section Two - “Protecting Church Property” by the following:

- Following routine checklists to address maintenance issues.
- Following the “Beyond Routine” maintenance checklist during severe storms.
- Storing and protecting parish records.
- Taking inventory of and protecting hardware and software.
- Collecting emergency supplies.

Section Three - “Developing a family Disaster Plan” by the following:

- Helping parishioners prepare for disasters by providing educational materials that will aid in the assistance of a family disaster plan.

SECTION ONE

Profiling the Parish

SECTION KEY

- The Parish Facility
- Parish Activity
- Parish Staff and Communication
- Volunteers
- Vulnerable Parishioners
- The Community

Hint: It is recommended that the key parish personnel are contacted before working on this section. Critical people to include may be a building manager, parish secretary, and Deacon or other person(s) in charge of the parish social services, ministries, and other outreach programs. From these key individuals a disaster committee can be formed. Also, consider the 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.

Before preparing and planning for the hurricane season, a careful examination of the current state of the parish - including its buildings and other property, physical contents, and parish activities - should be performed. Elements of this examination should include: (a) a thorough check of all parish property, buildings, and physical contents; (b) the creation of a log of activities occurring daily in the parish; (c) the updating and maintaining parish staff listings; (d) the creation of a "phone tree"; (e) the identification of parishioners who are most vulnerable to disaster; and (f) a determination of the possible hazards the parish may be susceptible to because of its location and structure.

Analyze the Parish Facility

Begin by locating blueprints or drawings made of the facility. A copy of the blueprints should be located at the parish. These drawings will show the boundaries of the property and layout of all the buildings including internal rooms and corridors. If you have difficulty locating these documents, contact the Diocesan Construction Department at (727) 341-6840.

Once the committee locates the drawings, make several copies of the blueprints. Mark and number all rooms and building exits. Using a copy of this blueprint along with the attached room survey, move from room-to-room, taking an inventory of all equipment, furniture, and data, and noting emergency-related items (i.e. exits, smoke detectors, windows, etc.). Tour the outside of the parish campus and identify trees that may need to be

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trimmed especially those that are close to buildings. Take special note of limbs and trees that show signs of dying or at risk for falling. Also, address building and maintenance issues that could turn into major issues in the event of a storm.

Inventory All Equipment

While examining the parish facility, it is important to document all physical contents. The documentation should be written, videotaped, or photographed. It is recommended to generate the inventory in at least two different mediums (for example - take individual pictures, or do a video, and create a log of all equipment). Move room-by-room and list appliances, equipment, furniture and archival records (including but not limited to baptismal certificates and marriage certificates, sacramental records, etc.). List all equipment, including computers; printers, telephones, fax machines, answering machines, lawn equipment, kitchen equipment, activity equipment, as well as blankets, batteries, flashlights, or other disaster-related materials. Include all furniture from the parish offices, rectory, and sanctuary. Do an inventory of the items within the church including sacred vessels, art work, and other precious items. This is extremely helpful for insurance reasons.

Documenting Parish Activity

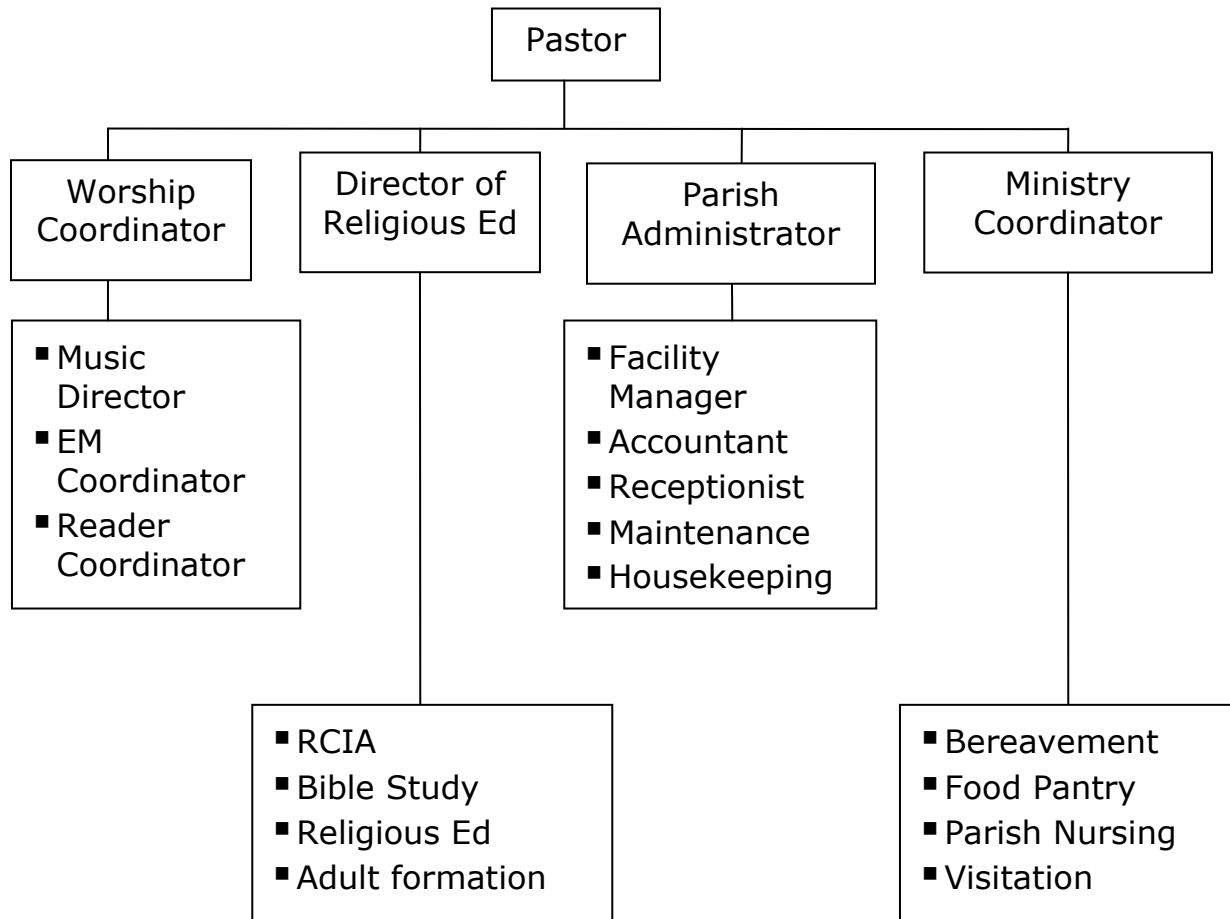
It is important to create a master schedule of activities keyed to their specific rooms, buildings, or areas in order to have a better command of all the activities occurring at the parish. Create a master schedule of parish activities and check it regularly (i.e. semi-annually, annually), updating as needed. This can be helpful when cancellations for parish functions during a particular day of the week are necessary and a targeted "telephone call tree" initiated.

Parish Staff and Communication

It is important to keep a list of current parish staff and key ministry leaders up-to-date and accessible in the event of a disaster. If there is not one already available, create an organizational chart of parish staff. You can use a simple table similar to what is shown in the example below. Be sure to include in your organizational chart and "telephone call tree" those volunteers who may be in charge of various ministries and programs since they are an integral part of parish activities.

Simple example:

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Using the organizational chart, assign each staff member the names of two or three other staff members that they are responsible for calling in the event of a cancellation or an emergency. Make sure that each staff member has access at all times to an employee roster as well as a copy of the phone tree. A call from the pastor or disaster coordinator initiates the phone-calling process. Instructions should be precise and limited to simple and straightforward information.

Note: It is important that details such as offsite meeting areas are established prior to any evacuation. Do not waste valuable time and energy debating where to meet if the parish is inaccessible when a disaster is imminent.

Volunteers

Like staff, volunteers are a key component during hurricane preparedness and relief activities. They might assist in clean up after a disaster or check on elderly parishioners who may need assistance. Use the following section as a guide to determine which parishioners may offer assistance before, during, and after times of a hurricane or any disaster. Doing this before a hurricane allows for the parish to coordinate spontaneous volunteers after a storm event.

Creating a Talent Bank of Volunteers

Each year, the hurricane committee could profile the parish to identify and gather a pool of volunteers who could aid in time of disaster. Many faith-based communities have done this by using a “talent bank survey”. Other churches have created and maintain a data base that they use to tap into the skills of parishioners.

The committee along with the pastor play an important role in determining how best to organize and involve parishioners in developing a talent bank of volunteers. They may choose to discuss the purpose of the talent bank to the parish, then distribute a survey in the bulletin and provide drop-off boxes. Or, they may decide to distribute them in a more intimate setting, such as committee meetings, activities, or Bible Study classes during the week. It is important to remind parishioners now that completing the form does not commit them to respond to every disaster. Also, it is important that there is discussion how the committee will organize and track this information.

Other options to consider include the following: trainings or collaborative plans with the Red Cross or county emergency management people. Being coordinated and connected with local experts is often a great use parish volunteers.

CONCERNING DEVELOPING A TALENT BANK - HOW OFTEN WILL THE PARISH UPDATE THIS INFORMATION?

SHOULD THE PARISH CREATE AND MAINTAIN A DATABASE THAT WOULD STORE THE VOLUNTEER INFORMATION?

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Identify the Types of Volunteer Teams Your Parish Will Support

EMERGENCY PREPARATION TEAM: (Securing the parish grounds before a storm, communication with parish, contractors, disaster experts, insurance experts, ministry leaders especially those who serve the elderly, sick or homebound are examples of potential human resources)

POST DISASTER TEAM: (Once the grounds have been determined safe by an appropriate qualified person, a team to help clean up, and do short term repairs to could be used.)

LONG-TERM RECOVERY TEAMS: (Construction people)

HOW WILL YOUR COMMITTEE MOBILIZE THE POOL OF VOLUNTEERS?

WHO IS DESIGNATED AS VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR AT THE PARISH LEVEL?

HOW WILL YOU IDENTIFY THE APPROPRIATE AND QUALIFIED VOLUNTEERS FOR PLANNING AND FOLLOW UP FROM A STORM? (SEE SAMPLE ON-SITE REGISTRATION FORM) WILL YOU COLLECT A RELEASE FORM FOR EACH VOLUNTEER? (SEE SAMPLE FORM)

Vulnerable Parishioners

Many parishioners have no one except the Church to turn to in times of disaster. Before a disaster strikes, it is important to determine who these vulnerable people are so the parish can encourage these individuals to register at a shelter especially a “special needs shelter.” Second, the parish may consider and plan to establish outreach programs targeted towards helping them. An example would be a “Guardian Angel”/Buddy system in which parishioners would team up with a vulnerable individual or family and be a resource in preparation and follow up after a storm.

Eucharistic ministers can provide a list of those who are homebound or at risk. Parish Nursing, visitation volunteers, St. Vincent de Paul, and other parish ministry people may know people that have medical disabilities that result in their reliance on electricity for homebound medical treatments. These people are particularly vulnerable during times of disaster when electrical service can fail for an extended period of time. Consider getting the names of the elderly, widowed, single parent families and seek ways to assist them.

Again, working with the parish volunteer teams to help the vulnerable and at-risk people and families register at designated shelters and/or accessing critical information and needed resources can be invaluable in serving the weakest among us.

A form that the parish can use to identify parishioners with special needs is found below. Also, contact the local county emergency management department to find out more information about services and shelters for people with special needs.

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SPECIAL NEEDS PARISHIONERS

Parish Name:

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Name:

Spouse:

Address:

Phone:

List names and ages of additional members:

Do you only speak a foreign language? No Yes Language

Residence Type: Single Family Mobile Home Apt. __Floor

Name of Residential Complex:

Medical Disability:

Are You Legally Blind Deaf Mute Aphasic

Are you homebound? Yes No

Do you use a wheelchair? Always Most of the Time Sometimes

Do you use a walker/cane? Always Most of the Time Sometimes

Do you require a special diet? No Yes Type:

Special Medical Needs (Ex: severe cardiac, diabetic on insulin)

Do you rely on electricity for home medical treatments? Yes No

Family Physician: Phone:

Emergency Contact: Phone:

(NOT living with you)

Do you have any dog(s)? Yes How many? Cats? Yes How many?

(Note: Pets are NOT allowed in shelters. Make evacuation-shelter arrangements for them BEFORE a disaster strikes.)

Do you have transportation in an emergency? Yes No Maybe

Would you need transportation in an emergency? Yes No Maybe

If yes, what type? Standard Vehicle Wheelchair access Ambulance

State and Community Resources

Identify parish boundaries. What areas of the parish may be at particular risk and/or need to be evacuated? What community resources are within the identified area, city, or county? Are there emergency shelters and where are they located? What are key phone numbers and websites? It is important to know the areas at risk for a disaster and the community resources available.

State Emergency Management Websites & Helpful Links

Florida Division of Emergency Management Homepage

This website is an excellent source of information for emergency management questions and answers. From this starting point, you can access a countless number of very informative links and websites.

<http://www.floridadisaster.org/>

Florida Division of Emergency Management Site Index

Contains a quick and easy index to all the websites connected to the Florida Division of Emergency Management website.

http://floridadisaster.org/site_index.htm

Emergency Management Toolbox

Specific links to several important websites including, State of Florida Emergency Plan, emergency management related Internet sites, and search engines.

http://www.floridadisaster.org/EM_toolbox.htm

Family Disaster Preparedness

Provides emergency preparedness checklists, family disaster plans, supply kits, tips for pets and animals, and steps on how to receive assistance after a disaster.

<http://floridadisaster.org/bpr/family%20preparedness/index.htm>

Florida County EM Listing

Contains links for Florida county emergency management contact phone numbers, addresses, and web site links.

http://www.floridadisaster.org/County_EM/county_list.htm

List of Shelters

Provides list of shelter currently open, organized by county, including specific information on shelter capacity and if they can accommodate special needs.

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http://www.eoconline.org/EM_Live/shelter.nsf

Long-term Hurricane Recovery

Provides links for hurricane recovery, specifically temporary housing, applying for assistance, individual and public, and hotline phone numbers.

<http://www.floridadisaster.org/recovery/>

Road Status

Provides information concerning roads that have been listed by The Florida Highway Patrol as being closed.

http://www.eoconline.org/EM_Live/roadstat.nsf

State Agency Emergency Coordinating Officer Information

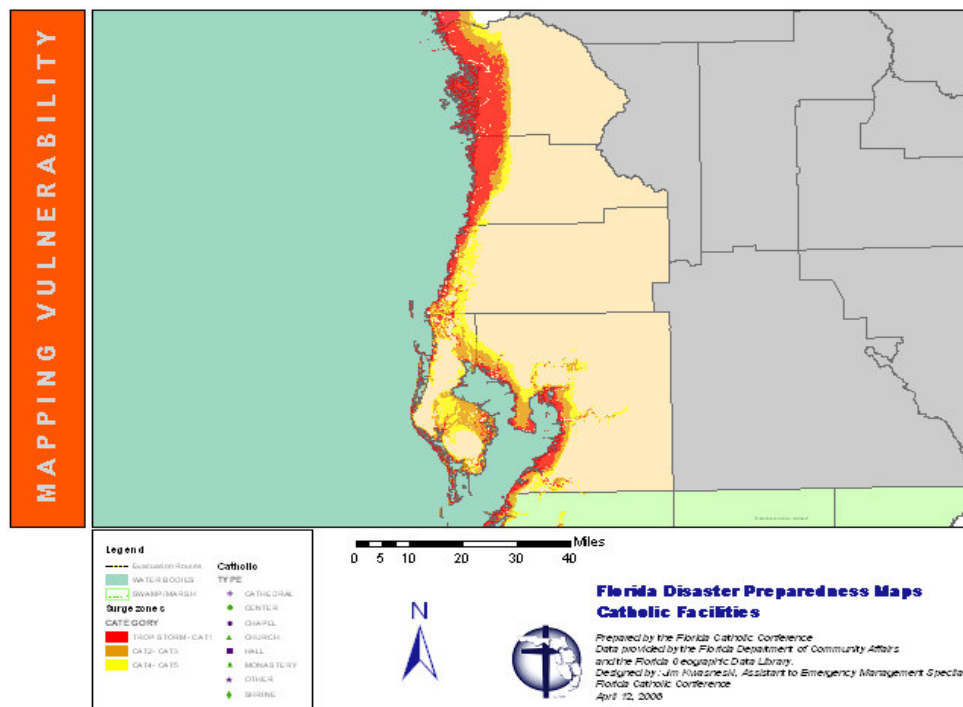
<http://www.floridadisaster.org/eco/index.asp>

Threat Assessment

Includes current and Florida specific weather and climate links based on the National Weather Service forecast products.

http://www.floridadisaster.org/hazards_page.htm

Storm Surge



An example of a Storm Surge Map

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IS THE PARISH LOCATED IN A HURRICANE EVACUATION ZONE FOR STORM SURGE? IF SO, WHAT STEPS NEED TO BE TAKEN IN ORDER TO PLAN FOR AN EVACUATION?

National Weather Service Forecast's web site:
(<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tbw/html/tbw/>)

Information on Storm Surge provided on the following website:
http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/storm_surge.shtml

The disaster planning committee has now become familiar with the parish facility, determined the daily activities taking place in the parish, updated its staff phone tree, determined who its vulnerable parishioners are, and identified potential options and resources to consider such as volunteer teams and activities to the vulnerable.

Section Two Protecting Church Property

SECTION KEY

- Routine Maintenance
- Protecting Computer Hardware and Software
- Beyond Routine Maintenance
- Emergency Supplies Checklist

Hint: Be sure a member of the building or parish staff is present during this stage of planning.

This section focuses on how to minimize damage to the church property by keeping up with routine maintenance as well as maintenance during storms. Additionally, this section includes a list of basic emergency supplies that the parish should keep on hand in case of a disaster.

Routine Maintenance

Routine, preventative maintenance can help to minimize greater damage to a parish facility during a disaster. Many insurance claims are denied because maintenance issues are allowed to go unresolved which, in effect, creates a “pre-existing condition.” It is imperative that the building and grounds be routinely checked for maintenance issues and that problems are fixed as soon as they are realized. A leaky pipe may cause major mold problems down the road. Likewise, an unchecked fire extinguisher could malfunction, resulting in a larger fire that causes significant damage. As part of storm season preparation, routine maintenance is a necessary requirement. Please assign a member of the disaster committee, a member of the building committee, and/or a parish staff member the task of completing a maintenance check on the campus. (see sample maintenance checklist below.)

Storing and Protecting Parish Records

- I. **SACRAMENTAL REGISTERS** – (Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Death.) An inventory identifying the span of years and the number of books in the parish should be created. In the event of a disaster the parish would need to know how many books would need to be evacuated. This inventory is also important in determining if records are missing or lost whether they are evacuated or not.

Safe keeping of records begins with proper storage. The outline below describes the fundamental steps to proper storage.

A. Proper Storage –

- Books should be stored horizontally in a climate controlled environment. Ideally the temperature in records storage areas should be 68° with a relative humidity of 45%.
- Fireproof Water-resistant safes are highly recommended.
- Do not store books near overhead water or steam pipes.
- Protect from direct sunlight and excessive artificial light.
- Do not store on the floor. Store on anchored metal shelving at least four inches above the floor and six inches away from walls.
- Records should be secured – Cabinets should be locked.
- Doors leading to the records should be closed with only designated authority having access.
- Consider custom made boxes for the registers such as laminated boxes that repel water on contact.

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B. Evacuation –

- Evacuate Registers when the civil authorities call for an evacuation
- Evacuate all Irreplaceable Permanent Historical Records.

II. PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR PRESERVATION

- A. Building Maintenance – Repair windows, roof, masonry. Replace elements (e.g. drainpipes, flashings, reattach downspouts).
- B. Climate/Energy Efficiency – Seal windows. (e.g. caulk around panes, add weather-stripping, etc.) Check vents.
- C. Light Control – Keep collections away from direct light.
- D. Pest Control – Prohibit food in storage and research areas. Remove potted plants from building interior. Clean storage areas.
- E. Water Protection – Find source of any leaks. Relocate collections away from known leaks. Relocate from below/adjacent to sinks, restrooms, or other water source hazards.
- F. Fire Protection – Ban or restrict smoking, inspect fire detectors and fire extinguishers.
- G. Security – Install locks on storage areas. Restrict access to collections. Inventory collections.
- H. General Risk Reduction (Emergency preparedness) – Assign responsibility for emergency response. Locate freezer for emergency storage of wet material. Store emergency supplies. Identify salvage priorities.
- I. Books – Replace rubber bands with fabric tape. Measure for and order custom book boxes. Make polyester book jackets (for red rot). Make sure books are fully supported by shelves (add oversize shelves if needed).

If your records have been damaged, or you need additional information regarding what to use and how to store your records contact the Archivist at the Diocese, (727) 344-1611, extension 383.

Protecting Computer Hardware and Software

More and more, electronic information has become a vital part of our parishes and organizations. As such, there are various steps parishes should take in order to protect these resources in the event of a disaster. In this section, some of the major steps that should be taken as we prepare Copies of these forms are included below.

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1. Inventory and document systems

- a. Maintain an Inventory of Assets so losses can be documented for insurance.
- b. Identify the functions performed by your computer systems and develop procedures and practices to accomplish those tasks manually. (For example: publishing the parish bulletin and newsletters, maintaining pastoral records)
- c. Document the parish's **Network Configuration Diagram** (there is a form below for you to use). Draw a diagram of how your network is connected. Include any routers, hubs, switches, servers, workstations and printers.
- d. Document your hardware configurations. Make a Hardware Configuration List (again, there is a form below for you to use) that includes each piece of hardware. Keep a file on each of these pieces of equipment that includes any special settings or software drivers required.
- e. Document your software applications. Create a Software Applications List (see form below) that includes all the software programs you use along with their associated licenses, if applicable. Make a copy of this software and store these copies at an offsite location. Be sure to treat your software licenses as you would any titles or deeds.
- f. Identify hardware and software critical to the recovery of the administrative functions of the organization. (i.e. publishing the parish bulletin and newsletters, maintaining pastoral records, etc.).

From the lists prepared above in Items 1d and 1e, identify which hardware and software is critical and needed to the recovery of the administrative functions of the organization.

- g. Develop a **Recovery Priority List** (see form below).

Using the information gathered in Items 1b and 1f (documentation of hardware and software application), prioritize the order in which hardware and software elements will be recovered.

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2. Backups

Perform daily data backups as well as separate weekly and monthly backups. These backups also should be stored at a secure off-site facility. Consider using a **Backup Schedule Chart** to track your activities. (see form below)

3. Backup Processing Facilities

Develop a plan for utilizing other computer systems as a backup for critical processing needs when your current system is not available for use. Consider making vendor agreements or teaming with other parishes (see attached form below).

4. Contact List

- a. Keep an up-to-date list of IS support personnel and vendors (see attached form below).
- b. Identify and line up alternate vendors for essential supplies and equipment.

5. Security

Physically secure your computer assets in areas that can be locked and restrict network and PC access with the use of passwords. Additionally, it is very important to obtain up-to-date virus software patterns from your anti-virus software vendor.

6. Environment

- a. Consider where business equipment is located, i.e., near a hot water tank or pipes that could burst or on the floor where things could fall on it.
- b. Use UL listed surge protectors and battery backup systems for all computers.

7. Other

- a. When there is a change in hardware, software, or a process that might impact the business of the institution, make sure the plan is reviewed and updated immediately.
- b. If vital records are not computerized, ensure that either copies or originals, as appropriate, are kept offsite (i.e., in a safe depository).

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NETWORK CONFIGURATION DIAGRAM

Parish Name:

Date:

Beyond Routine Maintenance

Hours of preparation can save days of cleanup and restoration.

Thunderstorms bringing high winds, hail, lightning, and heavy rain are a common occurrence most of the year in Florida. Although these storms are not as powerful as a hurricane or tropical storm, they still

can cause significant damage. If such a storm is forecasted, use the following simple checklist to save the parish from sustaining additional unnecessary damage.

Shutting off Utilities

Depending upon the type of disaster, those responsible for preparing the facility for a disaster will need to know what utility lines should be turned off to prevent damage. Please use the following table to help determine when to shutdown the following facility utilities. Note that it is generally not considered necessary to shut off connections during storm conditions. Under such conditions as a hurricane or tornado, it more likely that electrical power will fail over a wide area. Water and gas lines that are generally buried are not as vulnerable unless a building is damaged.

Type of Switch	Color Coding	Conditions Necessary for Shut-off
Water	Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Severe Flooding• Severe Freezing
Electrical	Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fire• Severe Flooding• Brownout• Shorting Connections• Flickering• Equipment Failures
Gas	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smell of Gas• Fire• Severe Flooding

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Routine Maintenance Checklist

- _____ Check roof and foundation of building annually. If roof is leaking, or foundation has problems, schedule for repair.
- _____ Test smoke detectors annually. If the alarms are battery operated, replace batteries.
- _____ Inspect HVAC equipment annually. If HVAC needs maintenance, schedule for repair.
- _____ Have an electrician inspect the wiring, power connection, and circuit boxes annually.
- _____ Inspect water heaters annually.
- _____ Provide backups and surge protection for all power sources.
- _____ Clean out gutters and drains annually.
- _____ Maintain grounds and fences.
- _____ Trim all trees away from the rooflines annually.
- _____ Check the security of canopies and covered walks on a regular basis
- _____ Check Emergency Supplies. If storing food and water, exchange food and water supplies every 6 months.
- _____ Insure vehicles have updated preventative maintenance
- _____ Insure jumper cables are on hand.

Beyond Routine Maintenance Checklist

- _____ Close blinds and curtains to minimize damage from broken windows
- _____ If possible, position computers and other electronic equipment away from windows
- _____ File and secure all papers, books, and archival materials.
- _____ Cover computers and furniture with heavy plastic to prevent wind and rain damage from broken windows. Elevate computer towers off floor if computers are located on ground floor.
- _____ When high winds are anticipated, board vulnerable windows.
- _____ When high winds are anticipated, remove outside furniture and store inside.
- _____ When high winds are anticipated, remove satellite rooftop dishes.
- _____ Check the integrity of storage sheds; close and lock the doors.
- _____ Check the security of all doors.
- _____ Check attic spaces and windows for leaking after every storm.
- _____ Contact the Diocesan Office of Insurance and Risk Management if the Parish facility has sustained damage as a result of the storm.

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Emergency Supplies Checklist

It is important that a parish have adequate disaster supplies on-hand before the threat of a storm occurs. The parish does not want to be involved in a pre-storm rush for flashlights, batteries, and food supplies in the event of a potential disaster. Remember, a hurricane could cause the loss of electricity for an extended period of time.

Emergency Supplies List

Equipment for Facility Preparation and Clean-up

- Copy of disaster plan
- Plastic garbage bags
- Sealable plastic bags
- Waterproof boxes
- Flashlight/ extra flashlight batteries
- Plastic sheeting/ tarps
- 2-way radios/extra batteries
- Plywood (for boarding windows)
- Ladders
- Hammer and nails
- Mops
- Buckets¹
- Brooms
- Disinfectant/cleaning compounds
- Bleach (at least 3 gallons)
- Rubber boots
- Rubber gloves
- Work gloves
- Masks
- Duct tape
- Small dehumidifiers/portable fans
- Wet Vac
- Extension Cords/50', 3 wire grounded
- Portable Incandescent lamps/extra bulbs
- Power saws/hand saws
- Shovels
- Crowbar
- Wheelbarrow/cart
- Jumper cables
- Cameras (standard, digital, or video)
- Battery operated radio/weather radio
- Portable gas/electric stove
- Ice chests

Disaster Supplies for Persons Onsite

- Blankets/ sleeping bags
- Sun screen
- Canned goods²
- Water³
- First aid kits CPR kits
- Paper goods, plates, cups, plastic utensils
- Insect repellent

¹ Be sure to have at least six 3-5 gallon buckets that can be used both to fill with water for flushing toilets and then for necessary cleaning.

² Be sure that the food is non-perishable and packaged or canned. Identify storage date and replace every 6 months.

SECTION THREE

Developing a Family Disaster Plan

SECTION KEY

- Preparing your Family for Disasters
- Basic Steps to Disaster Preparedness
- Natural Disaster Facts

The family is the domestic church and is integral to the life of the parish. As such, families should be as prepared as the parish to face a disaster. Parish staff live in two worlds, one with their employer (the parish) and the other with their families at home.

If a disaster was to strike and the parish staff and parishioners' families were not prepared, the parish community would be unable to adequately respond to the broader community.

Attached are two different preparedness guides that can be distributed to families. The first is a family readiness guide produced by Catholic Charities USA that will prompt families to begin thinking about preparing themselves for disaster. The second is a comprehensive guide based upon the parish plan of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston. This second guide provides more detailed planning for families as well as basic facts about specific disasters.

We encourage parish staff to distribute these materials to all families within the parish. Forming a Parish Disaster Committee could then be the group responsible for communicating the family plan resource to the parishioners. The more involved and knowledgeable parishioners are in the preparation for a disaster, the better their ability to respond to such a disaster will be, resulting in less loss of life, injury, and property damage.

³ Drinking water should be stored at the rate of one gallon of water per person per day. Store water in sealed, unbreakable containers. Identify storage date and replace every 6 months.

Preparing your Family for a Disaster

Unfortunately, hurricanes are familiar to many Floridians. Having experienced these storms, we have learned that we can take some simple steps to protect our families and ensure the safety of our children, while at the same time making it easier to recover if and when we have to go through a future disaster. This family readiness guide is designed to help you and your family be prepared for future disasters.

Basic Steps to Disaster Preparedness

Hold a family meeting: Keep it simple and work as a team!

It is important to warn children - without overly alarming them - about potential storms. Use the following guidelines to teach children about hurricanes and to make them feel as if they are helping in the disaster planning.

- Tell children that a hurricane is something that could hurt people or cause damage.
- Explain how important it is to make a Family Disaster Plan.
- Have a common plan in case family members are separated:
 - Choose someone out-of-town to be your family contact.
- Fill out the local emergency phone numbers and child identification cards.
- Keep emergency phone numbers by each phone.
- Teach Children:
 - How to call for help (emergency numbers).
 - When to call each emergency number.
 - How to dial long distance.
 - How to memorize the names and numbers of local and out-of-state-emergency contacts.
- Show everyone how and when to turn off the utilities.

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- Locate the main electric fuse box, water service main, and natural gas main.
- Keep a wrench near gas and water shut-off valves.
- ❑ Remember: if you turn off the gas, you will **need a professional to turn it back on again.**
- ❑ Plan home escape routes – two from each room.
- ❑ If you are not evacuating, identify a safe place in your home for the storm.
- ❑ Designate “rally points” where you and your family can meet if a disaster happens when you are separated away from home.
- ❑ Have all adults take a Red Cross First Aid and CPR Class.

If you have to evacuate...

- ❑ If you are told to evacuate, please take the following steps:
- ❑ If the local Emergency Management Office recommends evacuating, take their advice and do so immediately. It could save your life.
- ❑ Listen to the radio, TV, or a NOAA Weather Radio for instructions from local officials. They will provide instructions on evacuation routes and shelter openings.
- ❑ Shut off water, gas, and electricity if told to do so.
- ❑ Leave a note telling when you left and where you are going.
- ❑ Call your family to tell them where you are going.
- ❑ Make sure you have all of your disaster supplies (see checklist)
- ❑ Secure doors and garage doors from the inside.
- ❑ Fill up your car with gasoline.

Hurricanes and Evacuation

You will have time to prepare for evacuation in the event of a hurricane. However, it will take more time to prepare your home and your family for this type of evacuation. Here are some additional steps to take before evacuating.

- ✓ If you live in a mobile home, LEAVE.
- ✓ If it is recommended you evacuate, take the advice and LEAVE.
- ✓ Cover windows, skylights, and sliding doors with shutters/boards.
- ✓ Wrap up irreplaceable items (family photos, videos, etc.) in plastic and pack them so you can take them if you evacuate.
- ✓ Take your family records and documents. If your home is damaged in a disaster, you will have to prove home ownership to the American Red Cross and FEMA.
- ✓ Move furniture away from windows and cover with plastic.
- ✓ Move lawn furniture inside with other loose outdoor items.
- ✓ Remove TV and Cable antennas and turbines from the roof.
- ✓ Secure dumpsters and land-docked boats by filling them with water.
- ✓ Leave as early as possible – being stuck on an evacuation route as a hurricane strikes is not only scary but also dangerous.
- ✓ Remember any special dietary needs of your family.
- ✓ For the elderly or disabled, take all walkers, wheelchairs, extra oxygen or other special health care needs.
- ✓ Arrange for pets’ safety. DO NOT leave pets tied up outside.
- ✓ Take bedding and essential clothing.
- ✓ Bring enough food/water/medicine to last for 3-5 days.

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- Use evacuation routes recommended by officials.

If you stay at home...

- Only stay at home if you have NOT been ordered to leave.
- Prepare your home as if you were evacuating (see Hurricanes and Evacuation Checklist).
- Stay in a large center room with few windows.
- If flooding occurs, move to higher floors.
- Keep all windows and doors closed tightly.
- Monitor radio for news and weather reports continuously.
- Turn off propane tank. Unplug all unnecessary appliances.
- Fill bathtub and large containers with water for sanitary purposes.
- Use flashlights instead of candles. Cook with Canned Heat; DO NOT USE charcoal or pressurized gas inside!
- Turn refrigerator to maximum cold and open only when necessary.
- Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities.
- If you are in a multiple-story building and away from the water, go to the first and take refuge in the halls or interior doors.
- Stay inside until “all clear” is announced. If seeking shelter during a hurricane, do not leave your home when the eye of the storm passes – Eye wall winds, the strongest of the storm, can start to back up with very little notice.
- Be alert for and ready to seek shelter from tornadoes, which can happen during a hurricane or a severe thunderstorm.

Create a Disaster Supply Kit

Use kit if evacuating or staying put in a disaster!

When preparing for a disaster, use the “15 minute rule”. This rule states that the essential things you need to evacuate or prepare for a disaster should take you 15 minutes or less to get together. To make sure that items are readily accessible: (a) assemble the supplies in easy-to-carry containers like backpacks and duffle bags, (b) have important papers already packed in waterproof containers, and (c) have plastic sheeting easily available if needed.

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Use this checklist to prepare your family disaster supplies kit

Household Items

- Battery-powered radio
- Battery-powered flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Cash or Travelers Checks and change
- Map to follow evacuation routes/ find shelters
- Minimum 3-5 day supply of nonperishable, packaged or canned food (e.g. Canned or dried juice mixes, powdered or canned milk, peanut butter, jelly, crackers, unsalted nuts, trail mixes, cereals, rice, cookies, hard candies, instant coffee, tea bags)
- Basic food seasoning (salt/pepper)
- Manual can opener
- Paper plates
- Minimum 3-5 day supply of bottled drinking water – one gallon of water per person per day. Don't forget water for pets. Store water in sealed unbreakable containers. Replace every 6 months.
- First Aid Kit
- Fire extinguisher (small ABC type)
- Duct tape
- Waterproof matches
- Sewing kit
- Plastic storage containers
- Paper, pencils and pens
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic sheeting/tarps
- Basic tool kit (adjustable wrench, screwdrivers, hammer, etc.)

Family Documents (stored in a water-proof container):

- Birth Certificates
- Marriage Certificates
- Death Certificates
- Ownership Documents
- Insurance Policies
- Passports/ Visas
- Social Security Cards
- Bond/Stock Issues
- Wills/ Living Trusts
- Medical Records/ Children's vaccinations histories
- Photocopies of all cards carried in wallet
- Backup disks of computer information

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- Irreplaceable photographs/videotapes/family heirlooms
- Inventory of personal property for filing insurance claims. List everything and include receipts of big-ticket items.
- Videotape or photos of home(s) contents to supplement your written inventory of your home.
- Clothing and Bedding (For Each Family Member)
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Rain gear
- Blankets and sleeping bags
- Hat and work gloves
- Thermal underwear
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent and sun screen

Sanitation Supplies

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Soap, liquid detergent
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags with ties
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant
- Unscented household bleach

Baby Needs

- Disposable Diapers
- Formula
- Bottles
- Powdered milk
- Medications
- Changes of clothing

Adult/Elderly Needs

- Extra Months' supply of prescription medicine refills (Store in easily accessible bag in medicine cabinet, rotate pills as prescription is refilled).
- Walkers/ Wheelchairs/canes
- Denture Needs
- Extra set of prescription glasses/ contacts
- Entertainment – Books, Toys, and Games
- Extra set of car keys

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Storing your Kit

Choose a cool, dark location in which to store your kit (i.e. a closet or “safety corner” in the garage). If you live in an apartment or have limited space, be innovative. Other possible storage locations include under stairways or in a large box or plastic tub that can be covered with a tablecloth and used as an end table.

Layer and Monitor Your Supplies

Layer supplies and keep them together in a container such as a plastic garbage can with wheels. Check the items every 6 months for expiration dates, changes in your children’s clothing sizes and weather requirements. A good way to remember to inspect your kit is to do it when you set your clocks back and change your smoke detector batteries.

Use What You Already Have

Use what you already have and prepare as if you are going camping for 3-5 days in the mountains with no facilities. If you are a camper, you have a head start: camping supplies, tent, camp stove, and water jugs can double as emergency supplies.

Tips for Storing and Using Water

Purify water by boiling it for 5 –10 minutes or by adding drops of unscented household bleach containing 5.25% hypochlorite. FEMA recommends using 16 drops of bleach per one (1) gallon of water. Purification tablets or a filter system designed for backpackers also work well. Store water in plastic three-liter soda bottles instead of plastic milk-type jugs. Milk jugs will breakdown over time, while soda bottles last considerably longer. Consider freezing water so it will last until needed. Frozen water also can be used for non-emergency situations like camping, fishing, hunting, etc. However, don’t forget to replace the water jugs when you get home.

Disaster Facts – Hurricanes and Tropical Storms

A **Tropical Storm** sustains winds of 39 to 73 miles per hour; a storm is assigned a name when it reaches tropical storm strength.

A **Hurricane** sustains winds of 74 miles per hour or more and is accompanied by heavy rain. Hurricanes are designated from categories one through five as they increase in wind strength and the height of expected storm surge. Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and Hurricane Andrew in 1992 were both Category 4 hurricanes.

A **Storm Surge** is a rise in tide caused by a hurricane as it moves over or near the coastline, often with breaking waves on top. A storm surge can cause devastating damage: entire buildings can collapse once the storm surge wipes away the foundation; millions of fish are killed by the crash of the storm surge against the coastline, and many people drown in the strong current produced by the storm surge.

A **Hurricane Watch** is issued when hurricane conditions pose a possible threat to an area within 36 hours.

A **Hurricane Warning** is issued when a hurricane is expected to strike within 24 hours. The Hurricane Belt is described as the area along the Atlantic coast from Virginia south to Key West, Florida, and along the Gulf of Mexico from Key West to and including Texas.

Tornadoes often accompany hurricanes.

Hurricanes spiral counterclockwise around a relatively calm center known as the **eye of the storm**. Hurricane-force winds and torrential rains border this calm. Additional winds, rains, etc. will follow the calming down of the storm (eye of the storm). Remain indoors until experts advise that the storm has passed.

Hurricane winds do much damage, but huge waves can raise tides 15 feet or more. These waves often come rapidly and produce flooding and flash floods. **Drowning is the greatest cause of hurricane deaths.**

Vertical evacuation (moving to second or third floor) is not safe. Storm surges can wipe out the foundation and/or the first floor, destroying the upper floors in the process.

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Board windows up instead of taping them. Broken windows can allow hurricane winds to enter a building and blow off the roof. Boarding up windows where strong winds are expected is a safer method to protect the roof, the interior, and the overall structure of the property and prevent flying glass.

Officials may advise that all utilities be shut off to homes and other property. **Locate shut off valve(s) in advance and know how to use them safely.** Write down step-by-step instructions and make sure more than one person knows how to use them.

When storm conditions arrive, **secure all outside items** such as lawn furniture, children's toys, etc. so they do not become airborne.

Important records such as tax documents, insurance policies, social security cards, birth certificates, passports, bonds, stocks, wills, and medical information **should be placed in a waterproof container and stored in a safe place.**

If sheltering at home, stay in the room or area most central to the home, preferably without windows.

Take pictures of your home and property before a storm hits. If your property is damaged, take more photos after the storm. Develop 2 sets and give one set to your insurance company. Keep one set and the negatives in a safe location. Do not begin clean up until an insurance agent has inspected the damage.

When flooding accompanies a hurricane, snakes and rodents can become a hazard. Stray dogs and cats can cause problems also. Pets can become hostile once they have endured the effects of a serious storm.

Disruption of garbage and trash pickup can pose a problem. Food that cannot be used or saved after a storm should be buried rather than left outside to attract animals.

To **avoid accidents** in the home after a storm, clean up a room where small children can stay safely.

Looting can also be a problem after a storm. Work with your neighbors and friends and consider taking turns standing watch if looting becomes a problem.

Check with local civil defense or emergency management authorities before using any water after a flood. **Water sources may have been contaminated.**