

# US DISASTER PROGRAM

## Where Are We Now? And Where Do We Go From Here?



### Building the diocesan disaster preparedness and response team

## INTRODUCTION

Churches can be great in a crisis. By their very nature they have the capacity to gather people to common cause, to pray and facilitate hopeful and healing ritual and to offer hospitality and community outreach. Their coffee makers are large. They usually have a good supply of tables and chairs. And among their people are the kind of folks who roll up their sleeves and get things done.

Most importantly, churches are animated by the Gospel and its central call to seek and serve Christ in society's most vulnerable members. When people are in danger of falling through the cracks, churches offer important safety nets, including a human one that embraces, supports, heals and loves.

When a disaster hits a community, churches have a unique role to play and a particular set of gifts to employ.

But mobilizing all these gifts on a congregational level during an unexpected crisis is no easy task. It works better with some preparation, with a vision of what effective response looks like and a sense of how to use the tools and gifts at hand as needs change on a community's road to recovery. Here the diocese has its own role to play, as a source of leadership and support and a clearinghouse for information and resources.

The mission of a Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team is to help the diocese and its congregations activate a congregation's gifts of ministry when a disaster impacts the vulnerable people around them. And that requires some strategy, especially in places where churches are spread out, where communication is something of a challenge and where budgets are rather tight.

Building the Diocesan Preparedness and Response Team is designed to help diocesan teams develop the systems required to engage congregations in the ministry of disaster preparedness and response. It can be used in the initial development of a team as well as in the orientation of new team members.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to the many diocesan disaster coordinators and team members who have attended Episcopal Relief & Development's diocesan disaster coordinator trainings over the years. Your questions and comments, and your requests for resources to use at home, have shaped these exercises.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 INTRODUCTION
- 4 WHERE IS OUR DIOCESE ON THE PREPAREDNESS CONTINUUM?
- 5 NEXT STEPS PLANNING
- 6 PREPARING FOR MODULE 3
- 7 CLOSING COMMENTS
- 8 HANDOUT: PREPAREDNESS RUBRIC

The exercises were adapted from Episcopal Relief & Development's Level I Diocesan Disaster Coordinator Training. The resource is divided into three modules:

- **Module 1: Vision and Mission of the Diocesan Team.** Through exercises that explore how the diocesan committee might support congregations in responding to a disaster, participants will determine the committee's vision and mission.
- **Module 2: Where are we now? And where do we go from here?** By evaluating where the diocese is on a continuum of preparedness, participants will begin to develop a strategy on how to move the diocese forward.
- **Module 3: Parish-Level Disaster Response Stories.** By listening to first-hand accounts of how local parishes have responded to disaster and crisis, participants will get a deeper understanding of skills and best practices already present in the diocese.

Depending on the time available, portions of these modules can be inserted into regular planning meetings or can be grouped into a series of 60 to 90-minute training sessions. An outside facilitator or a team member can lead the exercises. Suggested language is provided for introducing and unpacking the activities.

## WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE SESSIONS?

The Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team may grow over time, but it's important to start with a core of diocesan and congregational leaders who are committed to fostering local disaster preparedness and response efforts. You might begin with four to six members who have experience with long-term disaster response, who are well connected with local congregations and who have relationships with vulnerable groups in the community and the network of organizations that serve them.

It's also important to have the buy-in of diocesan leadership. If a disaster hits a diocese, the bishop, the canon to the ordinary and the communications director will likely be heavily involved in initial diocesan-level response efforts. While it's not essential that these diocesan leaders sit on the team, it is important that they attend the first part of Module 1. Their input on the team's role and their thoughts on who can help shape the initial committee would be very helpful.

## FOLLOWING THROUGH ON DECISIONS

Some of the activities in these modules require the group to make decisions about issues such as its role and its membership. While formal minutes don't have to be taken, it's important that these decisions are captured, noted and shared with the members.

The mission of a Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Team is to help the diocese and its congregations activate a congregation's gifts of ministry when a disaster impacts the vulnerable people around them. And that requires some strategy, especially in places where churches are spread out, where communication is something of a challenge and where budgets are rather tight.

Either the facilitator or a designated note taker should compile these and note if the group indicated any follow-up steps and who might accomplish them by what deadline.

Also make sure to save flip charts for reposting at future meetings, especially if the team will continue its work on an activity.

## **HOW CAN EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT HELP?**

The role of Episcopal Relief & Development's US Disaster Program is to inspire, connect and equip leaders of the US Episcopal Church to prepare for hazards that might affect their communities, as well as mitigate the impact of those disasters and help vulnerable people make a full and sustained recovery. Dioceses that sign on to our Disaster Preparedness Initiative can receive ongoing annual regional training for diocesan coordinators and team members (up to two people a year) and can also receive small grants and technical support for offering diocesan-level trainings. The Resource Library on Episcopal Relief & Development's website, [www.episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary](http://www.episcopalrelief.org/resourcelibrary) contains free, downloadable disaster training curricula as well as case studies of parish and diocesan best practices in disaster preparedness and response.

For more information on this or other resources please contact [us@episcopalrelief.org](mailto:us@episcopalrelief.org). We welcome your questions as well as your suggestions for resources that will support your work in disaster preparedness and response.

## MODULE 2: WHERE ARE WE NOW? AND WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

TIME: 2 HOURS

### OBJECTIVE

By evaluating where the diocese is on a continuum of preparedness, participants will begin to develop a strategy on how to move the diocese forward.

### IN PREPARATION

Make sure that those who attend this meeting have printed copies of the group's general vision, as well as the team job description, which the group crafted in the previous module.

Prominently post the following flip charts from Module 1:

- Post-Disaster Vision
- Pre-Disaster Vision

## I. WHERE IS OUR DIOCESE ON THE PREPAREDNESS CONTINUUM?

Episcopal Relief & Development uses the Preparedness Rubric (See Handout, page 10) to evaluate the progress dioceses are making toward disaster preparedness. It also allows a diocese to determine areas where it wants to make progress, plan next steps for getting there, and it can be revisited to monitor progress. This exercise uses the rubric to evaluate where the diocese is on the continuum of preparedness and what it wants to focus on during the year.

TIME: 30-45 MINUTES

### COMPLETE THE PREPAREDNESS RUBRIC

- Distribute Handout: Preparedness Rubric. Explain that the rubric describes diocesan preparedness from beginning to advanced, on a 30-point scale.
- Go through the various steps of the rubric. Ask: Is this what preparedness should look like in our diocese? Is there anything that doesn't make sense, or do we need to add or subtract anything for our purposes?
- Have everyone fill out where they think the diocese is now on the rubric. Ask them to star three areas that are the easiest to address and circle three areas they think are the biggest challenges.

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES

In the previous module, participants discussed the work of a successful Diocesan Disaster Preparedness and Response Committee, and determined the team's vision and its role. They also explored the skill sets needed on the team and discussed whether they wanted to invite more people to the group.

In this series of exercises, participants will evaluate where the diocese is on a continuum of preparedness and will begin to plan goals and action steps for the next year. The work begun in this module can be expanded upon in subsequent meetings of the Diocesan team.

## MATERIALS

- Handout: Preparedness Rubric (page 10)
- Flip chart and markers

- Discuss answers and flip-chart a collective view of where the diocese is now.
- Point out that getting a score of 30 typically takes a diocese three to five years. Having just a few points to start with is typical. And concentrating on advancing in a few areas is a good beginning strategy.
- Discuss: Which areas are the low-hanging fruit for the team; which would be the easiest to advance in the coming year? What might that entail? Flip-chart these ideas.
- Discuss: What are the three biggest challenges? Flip-chart these ideas.
- Post these flip charts prominently.

## II. NEXT STEPS PLANNING

This exercise can be used when the team is ready to create an action plan for the next year. It allows team members to express individual ideas and provides a snapshot of team consensus. Finally, it allows the team to collectively generate its work for the year, and commit to making it happen.

Time 60 MINUTES

### OBJECTIVE

To generate ideas and determine the next steps to increased preparedness in the diocese.

### TEN-STEPS ACTIVITY (30 minutes)

Provide each team member with a stack of sticky notes. Invite team members to individually write down 10 action steps that their diocese should take to go from being unprepared to being prepared to respond to a disaster. (One step per note.)(15 minutes)

- Post these flip charts prominently. Using the “unprepared” and “prepared” signs, set up a continuum on a wall.
- One by one, or as people finish, invite everyone to silently post their sticky notes on the wall where they think they should fall along the continuum. As they post, they should set their notes in relation to the others, placing similar ideas together. But don’t move others’ notes.
- Invite the group to take one final walk along the continuum, making notes of new ideas they hadn’t thought of, or of changes they might make in timing, etc. (But don’t move any sticky notes.)

## MATERIALS

- A sheet of paper prominently labeled “unprepared” and a sheet of paper labeled “prepared.” Place the “unprepared” sign on the far left side of a blank wall, and the “prepared” sign about 10 feet to the right of it.
- Adhesive backed “sticky” notes (large, lined rectangular ones are best)
- Blank paper
- Pens

## **LARGE-GROUP DISCUSSION** (15-20 minutes)

- Ask the group: What new ideas emerged that other group members hadn't thought about? What ideas were most repeated?
- Read the notes through from one side to the other; group duplicate or similar notes together. Ask the group as you go if this preparedness effort is already in place in the diocese. If so, place the note on the wall above the others.
- Are there actions that you have done that weren't included on the continuum? Add them and place them above the others, with actions already completed.
- Survey the line of notes indicating what you have already done. What does this tell us about the work ahead?

## **DETERMINING PRIORITIES** (10 minutes)

- Now identify the ideas that the group feels can be tackled in the next year. Group these in a line under the ideas that have already been completed.
- Consider the ideas that remain. Place them below the others, as ideas to be revisited in the future.

## **SUMMARIZE THE GROUP'S RESULTS ALOUD** (10 minutes)

- Tell the group that this will be compiled into a preliminary plan from which to proceed.
- Check to see if the timing that has emerged makes sense to the group, and if it suggests any changes. Note that this can also be discussed at future meetings.
- Query the group members as to activities that they are most interested in working on. Are there ideas that individual group members would like to take the lead on?
- Photograph this continuum so that you can transpose it into notes for the group to refer to at future meeting. Make sure these notes are shared with diocesan leaders who attended the Module 1 meeting.

## **III. PREPARING FOR MODULE 3** (10 minutes)

The third module will focus on listening to disaster response stories from people in the diocese. Because most disaster response happens at a local, parish or congregational level, this is an important way for team members to learn the local story. From there they can examine how the diocesan team can offer support to parishes, and they can also network with experienced

people in the diocese.

Take a few minutes to describe the next module's storytelling activity and invite the team to plan a way to collect the stories. Brainstorm names of people in the diocese who might have such a parish story to tell.

Determine how the committee would like to gather and listen to these stories. Some options might be:

- Inviting speakers to tell their story at a disaster committee meeting
- Asking committee members to interview people who live farther away, and reporting back to the group
- Inviting speakers to join the team meeting via a Skype connection or conference call.

See Module 3: Parish-Level Disaster Response Stories for further information on how to prepare for and shape the discussion.

#### **IV. CLOSING COMMENTS** (5-10 MINUTES)

Thank everyone for the hard work they've put in on the team development sessions. Set the next date for the group to meet and discuss their planning activities in more detail.

- Remind the group of any intermediate actions that it decided to do, such as inviting additional members or contacting speakers.
- Tell them to bring their notes and materials from this training to future meetings.
- If you plan to post photos of flip chart notes for future reference on a site such as Google Groups, tell participants how to access the site.
- Close with a prayer.



# PREPAREDNESS RUBRIC

## FACILITATOR NOTES

Directions: After each category on the left, mark the box that best reflects your diocese. Count up the corresponding Preparescores. Place your score at the bottom.

	<b>Beginning = 0</b>	<b>=1</b>	<b>=2</b>	<b>Advanced=3</b>
<b>Diocesan Disaster Coordinator</b>	No coordinator appointed	Coordinator appointed but inactive and unclear about role	Coordinator appointed and understands role, but is only active during emergencies	Coordinator takes lead role in disaster preparedness and response activities in the diocese
<b>Diocesan Disaster Committee</b>	No committee formed	Committee formed, but rarely meets and unclear about its mission	Committee formed but small. Is working to grow and to begin preparedness activities	Committee represents key constituencies of the diocese. Meets regularly, and is available after crises.
<b>Responds to disasters</b>	No responses this year	Supported another agencies' efforts with funding/volunteers but didn't take any leadership role	Diocese and/or parishes tried to respond to a local disaster with limited success	Diocese and/or parishes responded to a disaster locally
<b>Relationships with key partners</b>	None	Relationships formed with 1 of these 3 key areas: government, local VOAD groups, area organizations focused on vulnerable groups.	Relationships formed with 2 of these 3 key areas: government, local VOAD groups, area organizations focused on vulnerable groups.	Relationships formed with all 3 key areas: government, local VOAD groups, area organizations focused on vulnerable groups.
<b>DDC/committee support parishes with planning</b>	None	Not well trained, but learning. Available if asked, but never utilized.	Ready and trained to support parishes as they plan for disasters. Occasionally utilized.	Well trained, and actively seeks to assist parishes as they create their plans
<b>Bishop support for disaster preparedness</b>	Bishop has very little knowledge of disaster preparedness/response work	DDC keeps bishop informed of activities annually, but it's on the back burner	DDC informs bishop on a more regular basis. Interested but not a promoter.	Bishop is actively aware of and a spokesperson for disaster preparedness and response work in the diocese
<b>Increasing response capacity through training</b>	No trainings	Beginning to plan trainings to be held this year	Trainings held, but to a very finite group. Not integrated into diocesan or parish life.	Preparedness trainings regularly included in diocesan functions (convention, ministry fair, etc.) and in parishes
<b>Parish Preparedness</b>	No central information about parish preparedness in the diocese	Preparedness work just beginning. Fewer than 30% of parishes have completed plans and exercise them annually.	Preparedness work underway. 30-60% of parishes have completed plans and exercise them annually.	Preparedness work is well advanced. 60+% of parishes have completed plans and exercise them annually.
<b>Inventory of physical assets</b>	No information about physical assets in the diocese	Preparedness work just beginning. Fewer than 30% of parishes have completed plans and reported results to diocese.	Preparedness work underway. 30-60% of parishes have completed plans and reported results to diocese.	Preparedness work is well advanced. 60+% of parishes have completed plans and reported results to diocese.
<b>Inventory of human assets</b>	No information about human assets in the diocese	Preparedness work just beginning. Fewer than 25 people signed up for Ready to Serve.	Preparedness work underway. Between 25 and 75 people signed up for Ready to Serve.	Preparedness work is well advanced. More than 75 people signed up for Ready to Serve.

Score: \_\_\_\_\_/30