# The Lifecycle of a Disaster

**Preparedness:** Continued efforts to anticipate, respond to and recover from possible disasters. Preparedness activities should be ongoing.

**Impact:** An event (natural or man-made) occurs that outstrips the capacity of the local community to respond.

**Rescue:** Rescue is the period of time right after a disaster where first responders, e.g. local fire, police and emergency medical services, attempt to contain or minimize damage and save lives.

- Power is often out. Utility companies may cut power to ensure safety.
- Debris is visible. If possible, road crews begin to remove debris.
- Local community members, including churches, community agencies and others, provide emergency food and housing. Affected individuals may move to emergency shelters.
- The National Guard may be called up to assist.
- Most schools and businesses are closed.

**Relief:** During relief, people create temporary solutions to meet immediate needs, such as shelters and mass feeding programs.

- Local road crews and utility workers continue their work.
- Additional workers from around the country arrive to begin to clean up and restore power.
- Red Cross and other organizations open shelters and distribute food.
- Schools and many businesses remain closed.
- Insurance Adjustors are on site and people begin applying for insurance claims.
- People may apply for government funding through FEMA to help pay for rebuilding.
- Churches often act individually to meet immediate needs such as meals, phone and computer charging, spiritual and emotional support, housing and other needs.

**Short Term Recovery:** Individuals and communities work to find more permanent solutions to disaster damage and begin rebuilding.

- Roads have been cleared, and power and utilities have been restored to residents whose homes weren’t damaged.
- People in shelters are transitioned to motels and apartments.
- Undamaged schools and businesses reopen.
- Some people begin to receive insurance, loans and government aid.
- Donations continue to pour in, but the contributions are not always what is needed.
- Relief groups are leaving and local long term recovery groups begin to form.

**Long Term Recovery:** People begin to find their “new normal.” Disaster recovery may take many years.

- Residents begin to transition to FEMA-funded temporary housing, some may return to their homes. Others move away.
- Prolonged job loss from closed businesses combined with increased housing costs prompts an increased need for social services.
- Some people are hiring contractors and rebuilding their homes using insurance, FEMA funds, loans and savings.
- Individuals may need continued outside help, disaster case management and/or continue to have unmet needs.
- Outside volunteers arrive to help repair and rebuild homes.
- Mental health issues may surface for some, particularly around anniversary events.
- Churches and organizations begin to work together to form more coordinated disaster responses.