

Stake and Ward Emergency Planning Guide

Stake and ward councils can use this planning guide to create or update emergency response plans (see *Handbook 1: Stake Presidents and Bishops* [2010] 5.1.3 and 5.2.11). Stake and ward plans should be coordinated with plans in the community. Leaders may consider calling welfare specialists to assist with emergency response efforts. The most effective plans are brief and not overly complex. It is recommended that councils review and update plans regularly.

Step 1: Identify Likely Disasters

List the disasters (natural or man-made) that are most likely to occur in your area. For each type of disaster, identify specific response actions that would be needed. (*For example:* In a disaster that can damage homes—such as an earthquake, fire, flood, or hurricane—a key action would be to find temporary shelter for displaced families.)

Step 2: Gather Critical Information

Compile and maintain the following information:

- Contact data for all members and missionaries living within stake or ward boundaries.
- A map of the area, including the locations of member and missionary residences.
- A list of members with special needs, such as the disabled and the elderly.
- A list of members with equipment or skills (such as medical or emergency response training) that would be critical in a disaster.
- Contact information for public safety agencies (e.g., police, fire, medical).
- Contact information for community organizations (e.g., the Red Cross or Red Crescent) that provide emergency services, such as food, shelter, and medical care.
- Contact information for area welfare leaders and, where available, local Church welfare operations.

Step 3: Outline Assignments and Procedures

Plan how the council will organize and carry out each of the tasks listed below, identifying who will be responsible for each and what procedures they will follow. Designate a primary and an alternate central location where council members will gather after an emergency to direct relief efforts.

Prior to a disaster

- Develop working relationships with civil authorities and other community relief organizations.

Immediately after a disaster

- Determine and report the condition of members and missionaries.
Reports on member needs generally come from home teachers to quorum leaders, who then report them to the bishop. Bishops, in turn, report them to the stake president.
- Help to locate and reunite family members who have become separated.
- Obtain medical care for those who have been injured or who have other health challenges.
- Coordinate response efforts with civil authorities and community relief organizations.
- Assess needs and arrange for the supply of basic provisions and services—such as food, temporary shelter, sanitation, and clothing—for members and others.
Area welfare leaders and, where available, Church welfare operations can be called upon to assist with provisions and services.
- Determine and report the condition of Church buildings and property.

In the period following a disaster

- Provide assistance to members who have suffered damage to homes or belongings, emotional trauma, or loss of livelihood.
- Work with civil authorities and relief organizations to identify and respond to opportunities for the Church to assist with community needs.

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Step 4: Identify Emergency Communication Methods

Identify and plan for alternative communication methods that can be used in case phone lines, cellular phone service, or vehicle transportation routes are disrupted during a disaster. Such methods may include:

- Internet communications (including e-mail, social media, and Internet telephony).
- Text messaging via cellular phone (which may be available even if voice service is not).
- Amateur radio.
- Personal contact via foot, bicycle, etc. (Full-time missionaries can also help.)

As needed, priesthood leaders may call members of their units to be communication specialists. Qualified specialists often own communications equipment and possess valuable experience.

Step 5: Encourage Member Preparation

Regularly encourage members to engage in preparedness efforts and to follow the counsel outlined in the pamphlets *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Home Storage* (04008) and *All Is Safely Gathered In: Family Finances* (04007).

Channels for doing this might include:

- Quorum and Relief Society meetings.
- Sacrament meeting or stake conference talks.
- Home and visiting teaching messages.