



Disaster Preparedness Checklist

Preparing for a weather disaster is crucial for houses of worship to ensure the safety of their congregations and communities, and to protect their facilities. Below are 10 steps that you can take.

Additional resources can be found at [OneHomeOneFuture.org](https://www.onehomeonefuture.org)



1. Form an Emergency Response Team

Establish a team to create and implement an emergency plan. Do your best to include members trained in first aid, emergency response, and crisis management, and members who are familiar with the physical layout of the property (it is recommended to record a video) and the location of shut-off valves and switches for water, gas, and electricity. Sign up for local emergency alerts with your city or town.



2. Create an Emergency Plan

Develop a comprehensive emergency plan for the disasters likely to occur in your area. Determine if the building can be used as an emergency shelter and/or point of distribution. Include procedures for securing the congregation, evacuation routes, and emergency contacts. Post the address, phone number, and emergency contacts by phones. Keep the Emergency Plan in an easy to find and well marked location.



3. Update Insurance and Backup Important Documents

Review your policy with your insurance agent and update if needed. Ensure that all important documents are backed up, secured onsite, and copies kept offsite, including membership records, insurance and financial documents, historical documents, and legal papers.



4. Stock Emergency Supplies

Maintain a supply of easily accessible emergency items such as water, non-perishable food, flashlights, batteries, first aid kits, and blankets to support your congregation if there is a need to shelter in place. Be sure the fire extinguishers and defibrillators are in good working condition. Create a kit of items needed to hold worship services.



5. Evaluate and Secure Property

Strengthen your building. This may include updating drain systems, adding trees and permeable surfaces to prevent flooding, installing storm doors and shutters, securing loose items that could become projectiles, evaluating roof and foundation condition, and fire safety.



6. Establish a Communication Plan

Set up reliable communication methods to contact members, especially those who are the most vulnerable, during and after a disaster. This could include social media, text message alerts, and a phone tree. Regularly update your congregation about the emergency plan. Encourage families to develop their own emergency plans. Connect with local leaders to receive information and offer support.



7. Partner with Local Authorities and Organizations

Collaborate with local leaders, emergency management services, other houses of worship, and community organizations. Join a network that can offer support during a disaster. Consider [Willing to Respond](#), a joint venture to help congregations work better together and connect with their local disaster response infrastructure.



8. Conduct Drills and Training

Create evacuation and shelter-in-place signs, and regularly schedule drills to practice the emergency plan with your congregation and response team. Organize training sessions on preparedness topics such as CPR, first aid, disaster response, and emotional wellbeing.



9. Review and Update the Plan Regularly

[Deepen your knowledge about climate change and the impacts.](#)

Update the church directory, including emergency contacts and notes about members who would need assistance in an emergency. Review and update the emergency plan annually to incorporate new insights and address any changes in your congregation or community's needs.



10. Support Emotional Wellbeing and Spiritual Resilience

[Learn about the mental health impacts of climate change.](#) Be proactive in supporting the mental health of congregational members, especially youth. Incorporate actions to support mental health into the life of the congregation and increase it as a priority during and after a disaster.