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Emergency Preparedness Toolkit for Faith-Based Organizations

Faith Community Nursing



Preface

Emergency preparedness involves careful planning to prevent and minimize danger. In order to keep faith-based organizations and the individuals within them safe, careful preparation is vital. This toolkit contains general information to get the process started. The first step is communication and collaboration between teams involved in emergency preparedness planning. The second step is to assess safety needs by completing the enclosed surveys. Use this toolkit to generate a site-specific emergency preparedness plan. The facility plan can be distributed in strategic areas of the building. Recommendations are to review and update the emergency preparedness plan as needed.

Disclaimer: This document was created to serve as an outline for faith-based organizations in order to plan for emergencies. Please adapt and make changes to make it site-specific to your organization.

Inspired by

A Presentation on *Emergency Preparedness for Churches*

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Survey Assessment

Use the survey below to determine where safety and security improvements are needed.

- Have local police, fire department, or medical personnel visited the building to make recommendations?
- Is the building in need of major repairs?
- Is there adequate lighting in and outside of the building, and in the parking areas?
- Are the doors kept locked when the building is unoccupied?
- Is there a list of the people that have access to the building after hours?
- Are all locks in good condition and checked regularly?
- Are all windows kept locked?
- Is there a security alarm system?
- Is there a panic button installed within the church facility?
- Is there an inventory of valuable items kept in the main office?
- Are first-aid kits kept and maintained on the premises?
- Are exits marked clearly?
- Are fire extinguishers kept in the church and inspected regularly?
- Is there an AED in the church and someone with proper training?
- Are there evacuation maps and plans posted in all the rooms?
- Has the organization ever taken part in a scenario where emergency situations are practiced?

Planning

- Form a Church Safety and Security team
 - Ask for help within the faith-based organization
 - Many members may have prior experience and be willing to participate in planning
 - Example: firefighter, nurse, doctor, law enforcement professional, or someone with a military background
- Review the Toolkit outline and modify and adapt it to fit the needs of the church
- Determine Safety Managers
 - Meet to discuss safety topics and delegate the topic sections to appropriate personnel
 - Example: have the firefighter group review and develop the Fire Safety sections, and have the Law enforcement professional review and develop the active shooter sections

Note: Screen new employees and volunteers with background checks and references whenever possible.

Safety and Security Committee			
	Name	Email	Cell Phone
Communication and Contact Lists			
1			
2			
Evacuation Plan			
1			
2			
3			
Shelter-in-Place Plan			
1			
2			
3			
Active Shooter, Bomb Threat, and Theft			
1			
2			
3			
Severe Weather Plan			
1			
2			
3			
Fire Emergency Plan			
1			
2			
3			
Medical Emergency Plan			
1			
2			
3			

Scenarios

- What-if Scenarios should be used to assist in planning to help the team find holes and allow for weak areas to be addressed
- What-if:
 - Someone has a medical emergency?
 - Someone brings a weapon to the organization or an active shooter comes into the building?
 - There is a fire, tornado, or severe-weather?
 - The church gets robbed?
 - A bomb threat is called in?
 - The church needs an evacuation?

Resources:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training.

Visit: <https://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>

Communication

- Emergency Contact list
 - Establish a list of personnel that would need to be contacted in the event of an emergency
 - Example: Those who can lock and lock-down the building, office personnel
 - Create an email group list for the entire organization to communicate quickly and effectively about emergencies, closings, and cancelations
- Media Spokesperson
 - Establish a short list of key members that the organization would like to represent them to the media if needed
- 9-1-1 Call or Text
 - Call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency
 - Text 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency when noise may interfere with safety*
 - Type “9-1-1” in the text message recipient box and include message with the emergency, including location

Example Text Message:



A screenshot of a mobile messaging app's 'New Message' screen. At the top, there are two buttons: 'New Message' and 'Cancel'. Below them, the 'To:' field is populated with '911'.



A screenshot of a text input field on a mobile device. The input field contains the text: 'Please send help there is an active shooter at the church on 1234 Sesame St.' To the right of the text is a 'Send' button. Below the input field is a standard QWERTY keyboard with various function keys like '123', 'space', and 'return'.

**Oakland County has a text to 9-1-1 program implemented where text messages to 9-1-1 go directly to the Oakland County Sheriff Department. Check with the local authorities to determine if text to 9-1-1 is in your area.*

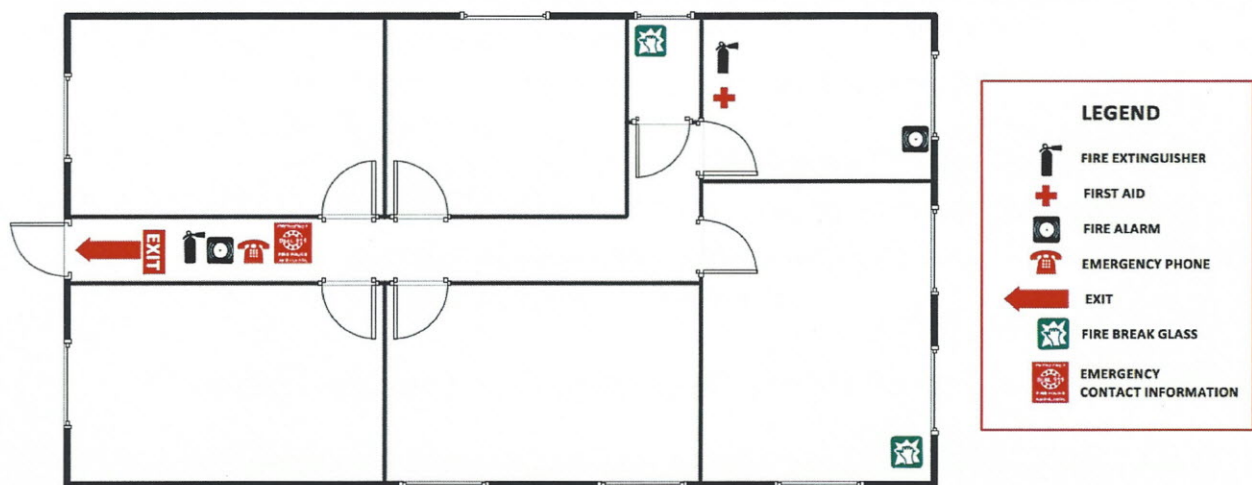
Evacuation Plan

- Designate a small group of leaders in the church responsible for creating and carrying out the evacuation plan
- Post the evacuation plan blueprints with a brief summary of the emergency preparedness plan
- All leaders should know the emergency evacuation exits
- Choose a designated gathering area location to meet after the evacuation
 - Example: Parking lot near church exit
- Should the designated gathering area be deemed unsafe, choose an alternate gathering area and include it on the evacuation plan
- Choose an alternate location to hold meetings if the building is destroyed
- If a building evacuation is initiated:
 - Remain calm
 - Follow the instructions of your church leader
 - Close doors to rooms as you leave
 - Use stairwells for evacuation
 - Do not return for coats, purses, etc.
 - Do not return to the building until the “all clear” signal is given
 - Ensure that there are delegated members to assist seniors and physically challenged persons

Include building floor plans and consider including the following information:

- Emergency exits
- Locations of fire extinguishers, fire alarms
- First aid kit locations
- Evacuation gathering places
- Rooms to report to for severe weather such as a tornado or thunderstorm
- Automatic External Defibrillator locations

Example:



Reference

Building fire emergency plans. (n.d.). Retrieved October 17, 2016, from <http://www.conceptdraw.com/solution-park/building-fire-emergency-plans>

Shelter-in-Place Plan

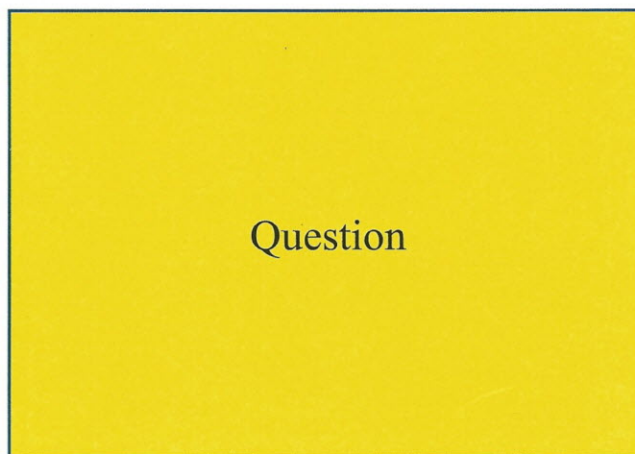
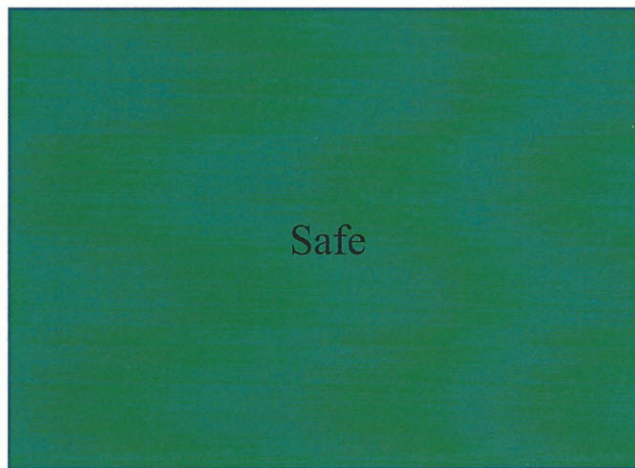
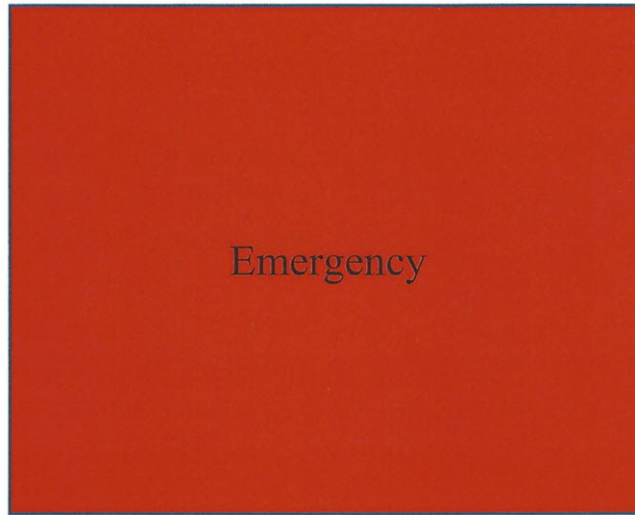
- Designate a small group of leaders in the church responsible for carrying out the Shelter-in-Place plan
- Use for severe weather or other applicable emergencies
 - Designate rooms or hallways that can be used if a weather threat occurs
 - The shelter rooms should be interior rooms without windows
 - If there are windows close blinds and drapes, and keep people away from windows
 - Basement rooms should be used if possible
 - Close doors
 - Assist individuals to the designated shelter-in-place areas
 - Shelter-in-place until you hear an announcement from a member of the safety leaders and/or a radio system station that it is safe to return to your area
- Consider organizing an Emergency Kit for Shelter-in-Place situations
 - FEMA CERT recommends having a 3-day supply of food, water, shelter, and first-aid items for faith-based organizations

Active Shooter: Prevention Plan

- Train greeters
 - Train your greeters to be on the lookout for anyone that might seem suspicious
 - Have the greeters report the suspicious behavior to authorities and the church safety committee members as appropriate
- Designate Safe rooms
 - Do not designate a single room, but identify which rooms could be used
 - (Criteria: lockable, windowless, one entry/exit, sturdy door frame, light switch, off the main hallway, barricade objects, self-defense items, first-aid kit, supplies, blankets, water)
 - **Example: Be cautious of active shooters that may already know the plan**
 - Optional method to communicate to police while in safe rooms
 - **GREEN** status card in door window if all members are accounted for and safe
 - **RED** status card in door window if you cannot account for all members, have a medical emergency, or have noted something suspicious
 - Optional **YELLOW** cards can be used if it is not an emergency, but there is a problem
 - If there is no door window, slide the card under the door into the hallway
- Communicate the plan to faith-based organization members

Sample Cards are included on the next page. They can be made with general construction paper and laminated. A good size is a normal full sheet, or approximately 8.5 x 11 inches. Contact your local authorities to determine the best method.

Example Safety Cards in an active shooter situation.



Active Shooter: Imminent Threat

- Evacuate
 - Leave all belongings and help others
 - Designate people to assist with physically challenged individuals
 - Follow instructions of Police Officers
 - Call or text 911 when safe
- Hide Out
 - If evacuation is not possible, be out of view and find a safe room
 - Lock door and/or blockade with heavy furniture
 - Silence all cell phones, radios, and/or televisions
 - Hide behind large items
 - Call or text 911 when safe
- Take action against active shooters as a last resort
 - Act as aggressively as possible against the active shooter
 - Throw items to catch them off guard and use improvised weapons such as a fire extinguisher
 - Yell at the shooter

Reference:

Active Shooter Response Guide from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office

Bomb Threat Emergency Plan

- In the event the faith-based organization receives a bomb threat:
 - Obtain as much information from the person as possible, and if the threat is made via phone do not hang up
 - Obtain as much information as possible
 - Call 911 immediately
 - Identify yourself
 - State “I have received a bomb threat.”
 - Give your location
 - Provide the details obtained from the threat
 - Example: Fill out an information card
 - Evacuate the area and initiate the faith based organization’s planned communication method (text, email, or phone) in order to notify members of closures, cancelations, and to stay away from the building

Bomb Threat Information Card

- Exact time of call: _____ Date: _____
- Exact words of caller: _____
- Caller's voice: (circle) Male Female
- Approximate Age: _____
- (Circle) Black White Hispanic Asian Other: _____
- (Circle all that apply) Calm Disguised Nasal Rapid Accent
Nervous Angry Sincere Slurred Loud Excited Giggling
Stressed Crying
- If voice is familiar, whose did it sound like? _____
- Background Noise: (circle) Music Children Typing Airplanes
Machinery Cars/Trucks Other: _____
- Questions to ask caller:
 - When is the bomb going to explode? _____
 - Where is the bomb? _____
 - What does it look like? _____
 - What kind of bomb is it? _____
 - Method of activation: mechanical, clock, movement/chemical?

 - Method of deactivation? _____
 - Where are you calling from? _____
 - What is your name? _____
 - Call received by: _____

Severe Weather Plan

- A Tornado Watch
 - Status indicates that weather conditions are favorable for the development of tornadoes
- A Tornado Warning
 - An alert issued by the National Weather Service after a tornado has been detected by radar or sighted
 - The National Weather Service provides the approximate time of detection, the location of the storm, and the direction of movement
- Severe Thunderstorm Watch
 - Issued when conditions are right for development of storm
- Severe Thunderstorm Warning
 - Issued when storms with strong winds, rain, and hail are expected
- Choose an alternate location to hold meetings if the building is destroyed
- Plan
 - Shelter-in-place by moving to a designated tornado or severe weather shelter area immediately
 - Move quickly, but do not run
 - Use Stairwells.
 - Assist physically challenged people in your area
 - Shelter in place until you hear an announcement from the safety leader and/or a local media station that it is safe to return to your area

Fire and Smoke Emergency Plan

- Designate a small group of leaders in the church responsible for carrying out the plan
- Choose an alternate location to hold meetings if the building is destroyed
- Use the evacuation plan established in the Emergency Toolkit

If Smoke or Fire Detected

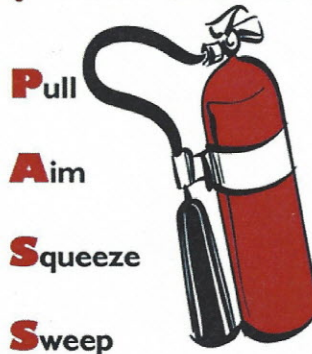
Use **RACE** Acronym

- R** Rescue those in immediate danger
- A** Alarm
 1. Activate the fire pull station
 2. Call 9-1-1
- C** Contain the fire by closing all doors and windows
- E** Extinguish if possible- Evacuate if fire or smoke is discovered
 - Coordinate with the Fire Safety Leaders

How to Use a Fire Extinguisher:

- P** Pull the pin
- A** Aim the nozzle at the base of the fire
- S** Squeeze the handle
- S** Sweep from side to side

Remember!



<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/48/64/40/4864405287704e320c6cf0c7e0332a69.jpg>

Theft Emergency Plan

- Check door and window locks regularly and determine if improvements are necessary
- Consider installing a security camera system if possible
- Invest in a security alarm system and post notices outside the building
- Contact local law enforcement authorities to coordinate regular monitoring visits
- Have key employees responsible for locking the facility so that it is always locked when the building is vacant
- Keep a list of valuables that are always kept in the building
 - Examples: Computers, furniture, safe, antiques, artwork, instruments, sheet music, etc.
 - Do not keep this list in the EAP, keep the list in the office only
- In the event of an actual theft
 - Report it immediately to local law enforcement and include the items missing, date, time, and persons involved

Medical Emergency Plan

- Designate a small group of leaders in the church responsible for helping out in medical emergencies
 - Example: List of people who know Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and where the Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) is located
- Keep first aid kits in the building and maintain them with new supplies
- In the event of an active medical emergency
 - Call 911
 - Be prepared to give the following information:
 - Name, location, number of people involved, type injury
 - Treat minor injuries with supplies in the first aid kits
 - Do not move the sick or injured person
 - When professional help arrives, allow responding units to take control of situation