

Presbytery of Lake Huron Disaster Preparedness Coordination and Communication

Policy

The Presbytery of Lake Huron (PLH) has created a Disaster Coordination and Communication Task Force to assist churches/partners in witnessing to the healing love of Jesus Christ through caring for communities when crisis occurs.

The PLH is called to service and mission, and its members are committed to fulfilling God's plan. Therefore, in times of disaster PLH will respond as God calls to help affected individuals and congregations.

PLH pledges to be prepared to respond in the event of a disaster, through planning, coordination and communication and to be actively involved on both short-term and long-term recovery efforts. Because the capacity to respond effectively in times of disaster is tied to the establishment and acceptance of a well orchestrated plan, PLH will develop and adopt a disaster communication plan that ensures that members are informed and equipped to carry out their roles.

The PLH will coordinate and partner with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) and other appropriate agencies during disasters in order to be as effective as possible in its response to disaster.

Plan

A. GENERAL PREPARATION

The Presbytery Council shall establish a Disaster Coordination and Communication Task Force (DCC) which shall be accountable to it. The PLH DCC Task Force shall be staffed by members elected and serving in classes for three-year terms on a rotating basis, to respond to large or small disasters. The DCC shall be resourced by the EP or other individuals as directed by the EP. The Council shall review the work of the DCC at least annually.

The Task Force shall be organized as follows:

Director—Overall leadership and coordination of the DCC plan.

Associate Director—In the absence of the Director the Associate Director shall assume the leadership.

Regional Coordinators—Trained to function as the primary contact with churches within their region, assess needs, monitor, report damage in their areas to the acting Director of the DCC. If the regional coordinator is not available during an emergency another coordinator shall assume this role.

Advisors—People with a variety of knowledge, skills, and abilities, who can assist the presbytery in communicating the disaster preparedness and response plan. This team will help provide information and assistance to congregations within PLH.

CHARGE TO THE TASK FORCE:

Meet at least twice yearly to review and update the DCC, train for activation and coordinate with the nominating team to ensure adequate team staffing.

The Task Force shall notify the American Red Cross (ARC), and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD, that the presbytery has a DCC in place in case of natural disaster and establish contacts and communication links in advance.

In case of a disaster of human origin (e.g., a shooting, toxic release, etc.), all communication with media shall be managed by the Executive Presbyter or his/her designee.

Maintain a current list of MEMA Coordinators, ARC and Salvation Army (SA) contacts in case of disaster.

The Task Force shall prepare and execute a Disaster Preparedness Checklist with detailed contact information that shall be accessible online and distributed to each congregation in PLH.

Consult with the EP on PDA involvement.

Establish a communication contact or “telephone calling system” to include each installed pastor, interim or CRE and each clerk of session. The Director is responsible for activating the system when a disaster is imminent, or when an unexpected disaster has occurred.

Work with churches to ensure that an appropriate communication system is in place for each congregation.

Coordinate with the PLH Administrative Assistant/Office Manager to maintain an up-to-date directory of pastors and churches that includes all necessary communication information such as: home, office and cell phone numbers of pastors, clerks of session and other key staff.

Work with churches to ensure that they have reviewed and updated security plans.

Maintain readiness and conduct a minimum of one mock disaster per year to ensure adequate preparation.

B. ACTION WHEN AN ANTICIPATED DISASTER IS IMMINENT

The Director or Assistant Director in the director’s absence in consultation with the EP shall activate the calling system; the Regional Coordinator Team shall warn pastors and churches of the imminent disaster and offer assistance as needed.

Instruct each pastor and clerk to respond as soon as possible after the disaster with the following information

- Are you and your family OK?
- Do you need help?
- Is your congregation OK?
- A preliminary estimate of damage to their homes, churches, and neighborhood.
- What are your immediate needs?

It is important to note that text messages will often work even when voice cellular service is not available.

The DCC director shall establish an emergency communications center, possibly at the presbytery office, that will be ready to receive calls or text messages and serve as task force headquarters as soon as the disaster has passed.

PASTORS

Pastors shall seek appropriate shelter and stay where she/he is until danger passes.

Pastors shall assess their own damage, attend to family, and loved ones **first!**

When it is safe, pastors shall assess the general situation and the physical needs of the people in their congregation and community. Pastors shall contact their Regional Coordinator if the coordinator has not already contacted them for updates. If the Regional Coordinator is unknown they shall contact the Executive Presbyter.

Pastors should respond to the needs of survivors, in cooperation with local emergency response agencies/police, fire department, ARC, the Salvation Army, etc.

Pastors shall report their findings to the Regional Coordinator or if the Coordinator is not available to the Director of the DCC as soon as possible.

Pastors should under-gird all efforts with spiritual support to the survivors of the disaster. No secular agency is equipped to do this task. Pastors should perform this unique and important role in cooperation with other pastors, priests, and spiritual leaders of the community.

Pastors shall assist the presbytery response by working closely with the DCC Regional Coordinator and director.

When the relief phase of the disaster response begins, pastors shall help coordinate efforts of the congregation on the local level, working in cooperation with the DCC, other pastors, interfaith response groups, FEMA, civil and governmental authorities, etc.

Pastors shall coordinate with the DCC, and PDA (if deployed) before accepting direct offers of assistance from non-governmental agencies and charities.

EXECUTIVE PRESBYTER

The EP shall seek appropriate shelter and stay where she/he is until danger passes!

The EP shall assess his/her own damage, attend family, loved ones and themselves **first!**

When it is safe, the EP shall move immediately to the disaster response office and be available to assist the Director and/or Assistant Director in receiving messages. If the EP is not available the Stated Clerk shall assume these duties.

The EP shall coordinate with the Director, on reports of damage. They shall contact pastors or churches in the affected area who have not reported.

If not already accomplished, the EP shall activate DCC task force with the Director.

The EP, along with the Director, shall make a "ministry of presence" visit to affected areas as possible. The EP shall report findings to the PDA associate for disaster response and the Synod

executive. The EP shall request the services of the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Team as appropriate.

After immediate disaster response needs are met and the recovery phase begins, the Director shall assist in volunteer management as requested by PDA and VOAD or other agencies.

After a disaster, the presbytery or individual churches may receive donations from individuals and churches who want to give directly to those managing recovery efforts. PLH should direct these funds in the most immediately helpful ways. The funds may be distributed upon the authorization of both the EP and person designated by the Council (usually the Moderator). However, care must be taken not to jeopardize eligibility for funds from the ARC, insurance settlements, and FEMA. All disbursements shall be reported in a timely manner to the Council and the DCC.

PLH shall notify PDA through the EP so that a central data bank may be maintained of churches, pastors and individuals of PLH that have been affected.

DIRECTOR OF DISASTER RESPONSE TASK FORCE

The Director shall seek appropriate shelter and stay where she/he is until danger passes

The Director shall assess her/his own damage, tend to family, loved ones, and self **first!**

If the Director is not available the Assistant Director shall assume these responsibilities.

In addition to the above, the Director shall begin to give necessary disaster response information to all pastors and churches in cooperation with the EP.

The Director shall begin to keep a list of damages to each congregation and community, inquiring of each affected pastor or church through communication from the Regional Coordinators.

If necessary, the Director shall set up an emergency communications network, and work with the EP to arrange for temporary staffing.

The Director shall convene the task force for decision making and ensure that necessary communication is occurring within the presbytery and with outside agencies.

As support agencies and insurance companies respond, begin a list of "unmet needs" which can serve as an assignment guide for work teams who come to assist in recovery. Pay careful attention to the needs of the poor, minorities, handicapped, elderly, the uninsured, and others who might "fall through the cracks" when aid is disbursed. Ask each affected church to carefully survey its community to bring these unmet needs to light. Check these needs through MEMA, Red Cross, Salvation Army or similar agencies.

The Director in coordination with the EP shall arrange to assess the spiritual as well as physical needs. The Director shall also help make plans to meet these needs, using as a resource the list of PDA RESOURCES FOR MID COUNCILS (<http://pda.pcusa.org/page/midcouncil-epda>).

REGIONAL COORDINATORS

The Regional Coordinators shall **seek appropriate shelter and stay where she/he is until danger passes** and will assess their own damage **first**. They will be available to send and receive messages. If a Regional Coordinator is not available the Director shall appoint another regional coordinator to assume these duties.

Regional Coordinators shall contact assigned churches, monitor damage in their area and shall report that damage to the Director . They shall advise on the most immediate needs.

When it is safe Regional Coordinators shall assist as requested by the Director in communication and coordinating with other agencies for supplies and assistance.

Regional Coordinators shall continue to communicate with the Director and the DCC, maintaining contact with assigned pastors, churches, and community leaders.

Regional Coordinators shall compile a list of needs for their assigned area and convey this information to the Director.

ADVISORY PANEL OR COMMITTEE

These individuals are responsible for providing specialized professional advice. Such advice will generally have to do with Protection and Safety (of survivors, workers and the Presbytery), Possibilities (for advocacy, contact, creative response), and Propriety (what norms, whose turf may be involved). Advisers will be available in many areas: medicine, law, finance, banking, insurance, community organization, human rights, ecumenical and inter-faith relationships, governmental agencies, private enterprise, the environment, etc.

LONG-TERM RESPONSE AND RECOVERY ISSUES

It is important to remember that while immediate disaster response time can be counted in terms of days and weeks, long range recovery workers will need pastoral care for themselves and their families, in order that these workers may continue to be effective leaders. Disaster always puts great stress on persons and families involved in the response and recovery. The presbytery will need to plan for ways to minister to the special needs of these persons during times of crisis.

C. RESOURCES FOR THE PRESBYTERY

Important names and phone numbers

<u>989 799-7481</u>	The Rev. Dr. Dan Saperstein Executive Presbyter
<u>810 441 0444</u>	CJ Merriman Director of Response
<u>810 695 3714</u>	Debbie Grant Associate Director of Response
<u>800 728 7228 x5839</u>	Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

RESPONSE RESOURCES & CONTACTS

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

<https://www.epa.gov/>

800-535-0202

Poison Control

800-222-1222

Department of Homeland Security

<https://www.dhs.gov/report-incidents>

Disaster Checklist for the Presbytery of Lake Huron

- ✓ Presbytery Disaster Response Coordinators recruited, trained, and commissioned.
- ✓ Communication mechanisms in place and tested. Redundancy encouraged.
- ✓ Memos Of Understanding (MOU's) established to move office and operations if necessary.
- ✓ Representation established on local VOADs. (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters)
- ✓ Insurance policies stored electronically in multiple locations.
- ✓ Financial, Statistical, and Rolls of Ministers and Educators stored electronically in multiple locations.
- ✓ Minutes and other records stored electronically in multiple locations.
- ✓ Staff informed of safe rooms and policies for continuation of operations.
- ✓ Communications established with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), including financial venues for the quick transfer of funds upon request.
- ✓ Preparedness Coordination and Communication Plan plan in place and understood.
- ✓ Arrangements made to have regular training/resourcing for constituent congregations.
- ✓ Planning coordinated with Synod Disaster personnel.
- ✓ Review all policies and procedures on at least an annual basis.
- ✓ Consider appointment of a Disaster Preparation/Response Committee which can function as a Commission in times of catastrophic disaster.

Questions/Comments?

Contact CJ Merriman

Presbytery Disaster Coordination and
Communication Director 810-441-0444

Approved February 2019

Disaster/ Emergency Preparation Checklist for the Local Congregation

- ✓ Congregational Disaster Response Coordinator(s) selected and trained.
- ✓ Congregational Directory updated regularly. (Including cell phone and e-mail addresses.)
- ✓ List of congregational members with special needs noted and updated annually
- ✓ Insurance Policies reviewed annually and saved in multiple locations.
- ✓ Financial and Session records saved electronically and stored in multiple locations monthly.
- ✓ Inventory of physical plant made and updated annually. Video record recommended.
- ✓ Consultation with local(county) EMA re: possible disaster scenarios. Develop plans for each.
- ✓ Share emergency kit information with congregation. Kits can be assembled and distributed by groups within the church to elderly and special needs congregation.
- ✓ Determine if the physical plant can be used as an emergency shelter, point of distribution, etc.
- ✓ Develop a communication system within the congregation (i.e. phone tree, dialing service, etc.)
- ✓ Participate in the network of response throughout the Presbytery.

Questions or Concerns?

Contact CJ Merriman

Presbytery Disaster Coordination and
Communication Director 810-441-0444
cjmerman16@gmail.com

**Presbytery of Lake Huron
Disaster Preparedness Coordination and Communication Plan
Church Contact Information**

Review this information and submit to the Presbytery of Lake Huron annually by February 28

Congregation Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Physical Address _____

Office Phone _____

Office email _____

Title	Name	Home Phone	Cell Phone	email
Pastor				
Assoc. Pastor				
Clerk of Session				
Mod of Trustees				
Mod of Deacons				
Treasurer				
Property Com				
Secretary				
Disaster Contact				

Please provide the following information

	Name	Phone (non-911)
Local Fire		
Local Police		
Local State Police		
Local Sheriff		
Ambulance		
Hospital		
Local Government		
Local Highway Dept		
Red Cross		

**Presbytery of Lake Huron
Disaster Preparedness Coordination and Communication Plan
Church Emergency Preparedness Information**

Congregation Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Physical Address _____

Office Phone _____

Office email _____

Pastor _____

Home Address _____

Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Clerk of Session _____

Home Address _____

Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

E-mail _____

Essential Document Storage

Documents	Location of Originals	Backed-up Where
Presbytery contact List		
Session Contact List		
Trustee Contact List		
Deacon Contact List		
Member Directory		
Insurance Company Contacts		
Policy Numbers		
Building Inventory		
Essential Church Records		
Historical Documents		
Bank and Credit Card Info.		
Tax Exempt Certificate		

**Presbytery of Lake Huron
Disaster Preparedness Coordination and Communication Plan
Emergency in the Building Information**

Local Phone Numbers

Ambulance _____

Police _____

Fire _____

Important Contact Information

Be prepared to provide this information during a call for first responders.

Church Name	
Church Address	
Church Phone	
On-site Emergency Phone	

	Name	Home Ph.	Cell Phone	Email
Pastor				
Clerk of Session				
Secretary/Office Mgr				
Presbytery Office				
Insurance Agent				
DCC Regional Coordinator				

Immediately after an emergency in the building is controlled, the pastor or clerk of session shall contact the EP or Director of DCC before there is any contact with the media.

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