PROMOTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AFTER NATURAL DISASTERS
At the center of many communities throughout the world, we find the church. Regardless of the religious denomination, church has remained a powerful source of inspiration and assistance to mankind for thousands of years. Modern communities, wherever they are located, still look to their spiritual leaders for a sense of purpose as well as a source of community aid in times of crisis. Community resilience is an important element in any region, town or city, and there are many ways in which a local church can help its community’s residents to persevere after natural disasters.

Ability to Delegate

The best thing you can do for your community in a time of disaster is to plan ahead. Only then can you and the people who rely on you be prepared well enough to remain as calm as possible and do what is needed. Discuss all aspects of your emergency plans with your parishioners ahead of time so they know what to expect.

What to Do?

• Grab your emergency supplies (see list below) and head to the pre-ordained emergency shelter. If no shelter is necessary, use this location as a meeting place to count heads and discuss survival plans.

• If you have a phone signal, use it. Make as few phone calls as you can to alert emergency crews, and then use text messaging to communicate with community members. This keeps phone lines free for disaster rescue workers.

• Prepare a sign-in sheet at the meeting place for everyone to write their full names when they come in.

• If your internet connection is working, log onto the Red Cross Safe and Well page and register each person who signs in. This makes it possible for out-of-town family and friends to quickly find missing people in the wake of a disaster.

• Stay put until any threats have passed (hurricane, blizzard, fire, etc).

• Once the danger has passed, keep most people in the shelter and send reconnaissance team members out to check for hazards.

• Post regular updates on a profile that you created ahead of time on Recovers.org and on your church’s social media sites.
Emergency Supplies

The type of tools you need during and following a disaster vary depending on where you are and what exactly has happened. That said, a few things are always necessary or at least helpful:

- **Leadership** is always the key to community resilience and rebuilding, so take charge. Find an appropriate shelter, and make sure that it is stocked with the basic survival necessities: non-perishable food items, fresh water, blankets, hygienic supplies and first aid supplies. Individuals should be responsible for bringing their own emergency supplies with them to the shelter when and if the time comes.

- You may also call upon any volunteers who can prepare extra emergency bags at their homes and bring them to the shelter during an emergency. Extra hygienic supplies, food and water are always a good idea.
Reconnaissance During and After a Disaster

Dynamic and effective church leaders should be able to inspire resiliency in their followers to avoid post-disaster economic depression and emigration. How? By creating a logical, provisional emergency plan and educating people about their role in the survival of all community members. Volunteers are needed to perform reconnaissance during their stay in a shelter, and they will need prior training.

Individuals are almost always more effective in survival situations when they are following a leader they trust. In addition to this, people also need to feel like they are an integral part of the whole organization. This aspect of human nature is beneficial to church leaders who want to establish community resilience and survival plans, because each member of the congregation becomes an individual asset to the plan.

Human motivation depends on people understanding how necessary they are to the success of a project. This is also the key to the success of any community project. Not only should a well-prepared church group be hosting regular emergency-plan meetings, it should also be seeking out individual talent along the way. Does one of your parishioners work in local outreach or health care? Ask them to take control of the communication lines or the first aid preparations. Use your community members for their special skills and abilities.

Utilizing individual leaders within your group means that your church organization can cover a lot of different angles at once, while not wasting any valuable time or innate resources. Are there bilingual people in your community? Appoint parishioners to prepare manuals and safety instructions for non-English members of the church or town. Make sure that all your community members' basic needs are addressed, and let the planning be done by an appropriate community member.

Here’s what you need to do:

- Prepare in-depth maps of the community, and store them with volunteers and at the shelter.
- Pinpoint areas outside of your shelter that have supplies or possible working internet.
- Mark everything clearly on the maps.
- Practice finding these locations and returning to the shelter.
- Let everyone know how important they are to a successful survival plan!
Schedule Demonstrations, Practice and Rebuild

Resilience comes not only with disaster survival, but with the ability of your community to rebuild itself afterwards, so make rebuilding part of your plan. Prepare to work with local businesses who will have suffered due to tornado, hurricane or other disasters, and speak to business owners about this possibility well ahead of time. If your parishioners agree, try to set aside emergency funds that can be used as part of the locally-supported rebuilding plan. Not only will these funds benefit the entire community outright, but they will also be directly reinvested into the local businesses.

A community profile on Recover.org will also allow outsiders to offer their help following a natural disaster. Be sure to update the profile regularly during and after an emergency so that people who want to help can do so by sending money, supplies and volunteers.

Give People the Tools They Need to Be Resilient

When a community is equipped with empathy, leadership and a solid, well-practiced emergency plan, they have the tools they need not only to survive disaster, but to come together to rebuild their lives afterwards, and push forward into a productive and successful future.

Communication During and After a Disaster

Efficient and effective communication is critical during a time of crisis. It is what connects those effected with one another, their church, families and support systems. PhoneTree messaging can help make those connections using phone, text, email and social media. Allowing remote access provides adaptability and flexibility during and after a disaster. Setting up a unique InfoLine providing church members up-to-date information, offering multilingual messaging and automatically generating and saving detailed reports are other ways in which PhoneTree can assist the local church in helping help its community's residents persevere after disaster strikes.

ABOUT PHONETREE

Since 1989 when a church emergency prompted PhoneTree founder A.J. DiBianca to create the first automated messaging system, PhoneTree has been the leader in automated calling and messaging. Drawing from 25+ years of experience, we implement messaging best-practices in our products, and provide the finest customer service. Contact us today to learn more about our automated messaging solutions.

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