

Church Disaster Ministry

Learn why every church should have a disaster ministry and where to start.

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Nine Reasons Every Congregation Should Have a Disaster Ministry

No one likes to think that bad things might happen—it's human nature.

The unfortunate reality, however, is that many congregations may be touched either directly or indirectly by a disaster of some kind at any time. Since the 1980's there has been roughly a 400 percent increase in natural disasters. The world's five costliest natural disasters have occurred in the past 20 years, with three of those disasters striking in the last eight years alone. There have also been nearly 5,000 terrorist events annually over the last 10 years. Mass shootings have also increased in frequency.

If your church doesn't already have a ministry in place to address catastrophes, crises, and emergencies, the good news is that local congregations are uniquely positioned in their communities to assist with disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Following are nine reasons why every church should have a disaster ministry, based on stories we've heard from congregation leaders:

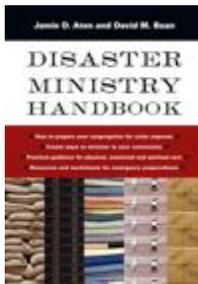
1. Congregations can provide broad-based prevention as well as holistic care for individuals after a disaster incident. Holistic care provides for the physical, emotional and spiritual parts of a person's life.
2. Congregations can reach people in need that other groups and agencies cannot reach, and thus help those who would otherwise go un-served.
3. Disaster work can be integrated into the other ministries of a congregation and strengthen those same ministries.
4. Congregations can be a source for community action. The connection with people in the community helps with assessing needs, risks, and identifying possible actions.

5. Congregations can advocate on behalf of the marginalized and vulnerable, as in ensuring fair distributions of healthcare or food, or determining where help is needed most;
6. Congregations may provide key resources during a disaster. Examples include using a meeting space as a rest or evacuation center, storing and distributing food, water, equipment, and other resources;
7. Congregations are already a center for communication, allowing meetings and messages to be communicated to a significant number of people on a regular basis; and
8. A congregation can provide a willing body of volunteers (members of the congregation, clergy and leaders) who are motivated by love and compassion.
9. We found that many people turn to faith and to local congregations for answers and assistance when disaster strikes.

You may never have thought about your church's role in responding to a disaster in your own community. However, if your church doors are open after a disaster strikes, people are going to come to you for help. By taking action now you can save lives and reduce harm during a disaster and extend your ministry to those who need help.

Where To Start?

1. Attend the [Humanitarian Disaster Institute's Annual Conference](#) and our pre-conference workshop, geared specifically for getting people started in disaster ministry. Attend sessions like last year's, "Engaging Your Congregation and the Faith Community in Building a Disaster Response Team in Preparation for Local and National Response." ([download the presentation](#))
2. Make use of our available [resources for disaster ministry](#) as well as for disaster spiritual and emotional care, including a public health planning guide, tip sheets for working with survivors, and more.
3. Follow HDI on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and sign up to receive Resilire, our weekly blog, with insights on disaster ministry via email. ([hyperlink to blog sign up](#))
4. Check out HDI's *Disaster Ministry Handbook*(Jan 2016). [More >](#)



“Aten and Boan provide practical procedures for establishing disaster ministries in your church, healing the hearts of those in distress as well as helping those in need. Every pastor should prepare to lead, even in the most difficult circumstances; to that end this book is vital.” — Ed Stetzer, author, pastor, and executive director of LifeWay Research