

Disaster Response Ministry

Whether your congregation is just beginning or expanding a disaster response ministry, it promises to be a transformational experience. Disaster response ministry provides a unique opportunity to love our neighbors in ways that would otherwise not have been possible. It builds bridges. It opens doors into homes, families, and communities in ways we could never have imagined. That is the blessing of disaster response ministry. It can transform receivers, givers, congregations, and the entire community while witnessing God's gracious love. While no one would wish for any disaster, they come and bring with them an amazing opportunity to give and receive God's blessing.

A disaster response ministry team is a small group of people who seek to serve the Lord and their congregation's leadership by helping to prepare the congregation for disaster response and to lead the response when crisis comes. As with other ministry teams, no one person can do it all. It takes a variety of people with complementary gifts and skills for successful disaster response. Volunteers are typically more effective and more likely to continue serving when they are part of a cohesive team.

Ministry Objectives

- Pray together.
- Build your ministry team.
- Develop a plan for your team.
- Consult with your congregation's leadership.
- Serve together.
- Share leadership opportunities.
- Grow together, spiritually.
- Identify new volunteers.
- Strengthen and empower existing volunteers.
- Become personally prepared for disaster.

How Do You Start?

- Identify team roles.
- Identify potential volunteers already engaged with community outreach.
- Personally invite individuals to join the team.
- Host a disaster response informational meeting for your congregation.
- Host a volunteer gathering, share the vision, and invite participants to consider serving on the disaster response ministry team.

Ministry Team Roles & Responsibilities

The goal of a disaster response ministry team is to equip volunteers from your congregation to be ready to serve during the next disaster. Each team may look different depending on the number of members. Below are some suggested roles.

Disaster Response Coordinator (DRC): The DRC serves as the liaison between your congregation and your local disaster response coalition. The DRC attends regular coalition DRC meetings and keeps your congregation's leadership informed about disaster response needs, resources, opportunities to serve, etc. The DRC leads regular meetings for your congregation's disaster response ministry team.

Co-Coordinator: The co-coordinator collaborates with the DRC to make decisions, assists in the fulfillment of DRC responsibilities, acts as the lead DRC in the DRC's absence, and performs any administrative duties not assigned to an individual.

Prayer Leader: The prayer leader supports and encourages the spiritual growth of the team. This role leads the team in prayer during meetings and regularly prays for the team.

Resource Coordinator: The resource coordinator identifies any needed equipment and supplies and shares the information with the team. This role maintains an inventory of supplies and donated items. If applicable, the resource coordinator organizes the planning and execution of shelter during a disaster and manages supply distribution for your congregation and/or coalition.

Volunteer Coordinator: The volunteer coordinator recruits and organizes your congregation's volunteers as needed during a disaster.

Preparedness Coordinator: The preparedness coordinator works to ensure your congregation is informed and taking steps to prepare its families for disaster. This role leads preparedness training for your congregation and assists in preparing and executing your congregation's emergency response plan.

Recruiter: The recruiter cultivates potential volunteers and shares information about disaster response volunteer opportunities within your congregation and the community in partnership with your disaster response coalition.



Building a Team

Effective ministries are usually led by effective leadership teams. They may still struggle with challenges, but they work together to find solutions. Every individual on your volunteer team plays an important role. Every task someone completes contributes to your team's overall success and your ability to provide service to others. If you do not have much experience working with teams, do not worry. You can learn the skills you need to build a strong team, in which you and the team can grow together.

10 Steps to Building a Great Team

1. Make a Plan

- Clarify mission, vision, and values as needed.
- Define what team members are expected to do.

2. Establish Clear Team Objectives and Expectations

- Document goals and objectives and make them easily accessible to the team.
- Divide larger objectives into smaller, more manageable ones.
- Make goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound).

3. Communicate Effectively

- Identify the preferred mode of communication for the team (call, email, text, etc.).
- Make documentation accessible (share files, etc.).
- Encourage teammates to communicate regularly.

4. Make Decisions and Set Priorities

- Ask for input and feedback from teammates when decisions are made.
- Set priorities, as there will always be more than we are able to do.

5. Assess Your Team's Skillsets

- Know yourself and your teammates and delegate to those best be able to complete the task.
- Provide more or less guidance as needed by teammates.
- Pay close attention to the needs of team members as disaster response can be stressful and draining.

6. Create a Vision for Success

- Believe in your team and its objectives.
- Eliminate barriers.
- Keep the end in mind and the main thing the main thing.

7. Lead by Example

- Be positive, clear, and consistent.
- Coach and encourage your team as needed.

8. Show Your Team You Care About Them

- Learn about your teammates and chat with them regularly.
- Affirm, listen, and empathize.
- Resolve conflicts quickly as they arise.
- Address any anxieties with a calm presence.

9. Facilitate Others' Successes

- Affirm team members in public and address issues in private.
- Build one another up, and they will build you up as well.

10. Have Fun Together!

It's been said that 95% of effective disaster response is relationships. Get to know your teammates and build stronger relationships with them. Share a meal, create a group chat, do a ropes course – do whatever works. Cultivate regular healthy communication with your fellow volunteers and maintain a positive environment. Laugh together, cry together, pray together, and celebrate together!

While responding to disasters can be stressful, it can also be a fulfilling time of serving, caring for, and enjoying one another.

Team Gatherings

You are building a team, which is like a family. Your relationships are as important as the content you cover. Developing meaningful and trusting relationships will help members prioritize the team and its task and feel that their contribution is significant. It also builds sustainable; as has been said, “vision may bring people to the table, but relationships will keep them there.”

Recommendations for Gathering as a Team

Time & Location

- Meet for one to two hours to allow ample time for relational connections, working through the content, and praying together.
- Share a meal to facilitate the deepening of relationships.
- Meet in a home to foster deeper bonding even if the congregation’s facilities are available.

When People Arrive

- Give everyone a warm welcome.
- Provide a comfortable atmosphere, possibly including music, snacks, icebreakers, etc.

Initial Connection (This could happen during the meal.)

- Share testimonies of God’s work in team members’ lives both related and unrelated to disaster response ministry.
- Share challenges to cultivate transparency, empathy, and prayerfulness.
- Pray together to develop powerful (Matt.18:19) and deeper spiritual connections.

Vision, Direction, Objectives

- Share the vision.
- Review the content of meetings and answer questions.
- Identify action items from the meeting and assign them to team members.

