

Lutheran Disaster Response

Work Team Preparation

Disaster Recovery

In Cooperation With:



ELCA Disaster Response
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Note: Please feel free to copy and adapt this guide to meet the needs of your work group.

Role and Responsibilities of the Volunteer

Remember the primary concern of the disaster response volunteer is the need of the victim! The victim's overwhelming need is to tell his or her story to someone willing to listen, and to be assisted in obtaining a wide-range of disaster related services.

Volunteers will find that the following qualities are important for a successful work experience:

Flexibility – *Need to be incredibly flexible*

Volunteers should be prepared to offer whatever services are most needed at the time of assistance. Although you may have made plans for a certain project, you should be flexible enough to respond to needs that may be more immediate at the time. Teams must follow the project assigned. Do not make changes on your own or decide to do some other job. Ask the coordinator of the project what needs to be done.

Adaptability

In disaster response you may have to improvise. In these situations a person needs to be able to do the best with what is available. Supplies may not be available. Change can happen at any time. Change can happen while traveling to the site.

Willingness to Serve

You are here to serve. Be guided by the owners in what you do and how you do it. Try to establish a friendly relationship with the persons in whose home you are working.

Sensitivity

Be sensitive to what people are going through. Be tolerant of the reactions of other relief workers and victims - their irritability and short tempers. Disasters are a time of stress for everyone. Treat all individuals as persons of worth with feelings, skills and knowledge. Avoid making remarks that might be harmful or hurtful to the disaster victims. Before speaking, try to think how you would feel if outsiders came into your territory and said the same things. Ask permission before taking snapshots of individuals or homes. Approach victim's possessions with great care, what may seem like rubbish to you may be a precious belonging to the owner. Do not judge people by how they lived before – this is a chance to start anew.

Cooperativeness

The ability to work with others, to take directions from the people in charge, to overlook some of the irritations which come from living and working around other people is essential. A few general rules to follow: Refrain from unannounced excursions; avoid derogatory comments about the food, lodging, project etc.; be helpful at all times; allow team leaders to lead; make the best of the situation; maintain your sense of humor.

Personal Checklist for Volunteers doing Work Projects

Since each individual trip is unique, there is no one checklist that will fit each experience. However, some items will always be needed on nearly every trip.

- Picture Identification
- Medical Information form, including your medical history, allergies and medications, in triplicate (team leader, yourself, someone at home) If a group is traveling in several cars, trucks or vans keep medical information in the vehicle in which you are traveling.
- Double supply of medication. Keep one with you, the other in your suitcase or where appropriate. Have a copy of any prescription in case you lose medication.
- Change of clothing for after work
- Old work clothing (long sleeve shirts and tee shirts, long pants)
- Work boots, sturdy shoes (no sneakers or sandals for working)
- Work gloves, heavy duty but good fit
- Safety goggles
- Disposable face masks (those with exhale vent are best)
- Rain jacket, possibly rubber boots for muddy areas (ponchos are hard to work in)
- Hat for working in sun, bandana, sweatband, neckband
- Sun block, sunglasses
- Insect repellent (high in % of DEET)
- Absorbent body powder – zinc oxide type
- Moleskin
- Gel Sanitizer, wet wipes
- Sleeping bag, pillow, air mattress or pad
- Bathing suit for public showers
- Towel(s) and washcloth(s), flip-flops
- Personal toiletries (non-scented – mosquitoes are attracted to certain scents)
- Personal First Aid supplies (Band-Aids, disinfectant, Tylenol, Neosporin, etc.)
- Spare contacts or glasses
- Plastic bags for wet and dirty clothes
- Heavy cord, 10-20 feet, for clothesline, clothespins, laundry soap
- Flashlight
- Notebook and pencil
- Camera (with label) and film.
- Water bottle, cooler, water jug
- Money or travelers checks
- Snack food (power bars, granola bars, fruit, nuts, etc.)
- Back pack
- GPS

WHAT YOU NEED

Current Tetanus Immunization is necessary; hepatitis shots at the discretion of your doctor. Volunteers should be in **good health**.

CAUTIONS

Increase your fluid intake & decrease caffeine intake

Take showers daily (if possible) to prevent rashes

Rinse and powder feet

Change underwear and socks daily

No sneakers (there are a lot of nails and other debris that could pierce sneakers)

Treat "hot spots" immediately. Rashes and skin infections will become infected quickly in the environment

Use moleskin for foot blisters

No swimming in local bodies of water

Get out of a thunderstorm

Coping with Disaster at the Site or When You Return Home – Some Possible Reactions

Having recently experienced the shock and pain of the aftermath of a disaster, you may experience some normal emotional reactions as a result of your experience. Recognize your own feelings and reactions, and accept your right to experience them. Strong feelings after a disaster are almost universal. It is not "abnormal" or "crazy" to have strong feelings and unanticipated reactions.

Some common reactions are:

Exhaustion – get sufficient sleep. It is a good healer.

Sadness/apathy

Feelings of helplessness

Agitation/anger

Hyperactivity

Loss of appetite

Nightmares

Sleep disorders

Inability to concentrate

Headaches

Gastro-intestinal symptoms

Skin disorders/rashes

Memory loss

Increased use of alcohol or drugs

Panic attacks with shortness of breath and increased heart rate

Coping with Disaster at the Site ... (cont'd)

The items listed below are suggested interventions to help you cope while any of these reactions may persist:

- Take care of yourself. Get enough rest. Eat properly. Take time-off to do something you enjoy. Get as much physical activity as possible, such as running or walking. Take care of your own needs first, so that you can then be of assistance to others.
- Eat well-balanced meals - increase your fluid intake, eat more complex carbohydrates, and decrease your intake of caffeine and alcohol.
- Allow for changes in sleep patterns and feelings.
- Decrease environment stresses such as noise and clutter.
- Recognize your own emotional reactions, and accept your right to experience them.
- Be willing to ask for and accept help from others.
- Use your support systems – family, friends, counselors and associates.
- Make time for yourself - do task-centered activities, resume hobbies or projects you especially enjoy, even if it is less time than you normally spend.
- Set realistic goals - aim for short term goals and avoid long term goal setting.
- Prioritize - set limits for yourself and others and delegate duties and responsibilities to others.
- Make "to do lists" based on things that must be done - (A) self care and (B) other tasks that must be completed. Put other tasks on a "wait list".
- Find a friend you can visit with periodically who can give you the outlet you need for the frustrations and aggravations that always come in high-intensity situations. Talking helps relieve stress and helps you realize that your feelings are shared by others. Do not allow yourself to become isolated from others. You are not alone.

TRAINING BEFORE YOU GO

Disaster training is available from our ecumenical partners and can be found on the internet allowing you to take the courses at your own pace and time. Visit:

- Community Arise – www.communityarise.com
- Church World Service - www.cwserp.org/id42.html
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)
www.nvoad.org
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) www.fema.org

WHEN YOU RETURN HOME

Give yourself a few days to make the transition. Help your family understand you need some time to yourself before beginning a full schedule of normal activities.

Be tolerant of what others at home want to share. What has happened to them is as important to them, just as your experiences were important to you.

Anticipate mood swings and strong emotional reactions. Expect that your family's responses to you may not be what you expected or think you "deserve." Be aware that you may have unexpected reactions to sounds, sights, or people that remind you of experiences at the disaster site. Prepare others for this and be realistic yourself.

For more information contact:

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Lutheran Disaster Response
www.ldr.org

Upstate New York Synod LDR Resources
<http://upstatenysynod.org/ldr>

ELCA Disaster Response
<http://www.elca.org/disaster>