

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas



PARISH EMERGENCY PLANNING

www.epicenter.org



The Episcopal Diocese of Texas
Office of the Bishop

February 9, 2015

Dear Emergency Preparedness Committee:

As stewards of our church buildings, our resources, and our congregations, one of the most important things we can do is to prepare for emergencies.

Too often we think of a disaster as something that affects *other* people and *other* parishes. However, we must realize that our own parishes are vulnerable to events that could devastate our communities and congregations. Through preparedness, we acknowledge that vulnerability; consider the worst-case scenarios affecting our congregation, and take precautions to minimize their effects.

In addition, our advance preparation can equip us to respond to crises in our communities and beyond. This should be a goal of every congregation.

To that end, this guide presents suggestions helpful to creating an emergency plan for your parish. By simply working through the pages and filling in each provided blank, you will create a basic and complete emergency plan.

However, I encourage you to go deeper, and to utilize this guide as a discussion starter. Examine the particular needs and abilities of your congregation to craft a unique and practical parish emergency plan.

Faithfully,

C. Andrew Doyle, D. D.
IX Bishop of Texas

How to use this Guide

Emergency planning is a unique process for every parish, church, and faith community. This guide is intended to provide a framework for that process, but by no means does it address every individual concern of each parish.

The simplest way to use the guide would be to print it out and keep this as a draft. Then fill in online.

Add in maps and phone trees and information important to your faith community. Make it a living document, under constant review, practice, and revision.

Keep your online copy in the cloud. Fill in the Disaster Preparedness summary, on the next page, and submit to The Venerable Russ Oechsel, Archdeacon at the Episcopal Diocese of Texas so that we know you have taken this important step.

And let us know how we can help; do not hesitate to ask questions, make requests, and dig deeper. Additional resources and support are available to your parish.

Go to www.texasprepares.org for ideas to help your parishioners prepare their family.

Becoming prepared is one of the most important things a parish can do. We don't know what will affect us or when, but we can make provisions to ensure that whatever happens won't leave us hopeless or helpless.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SUMMARY

Name of Church

Address of Church

Email and Website

Addresses of additional
buildings belonging to
church

Date of completion of
Disaster Plan

[Click here to enter a date.](#)

Emergency Contact List Individuals who should be contacted in an emergency are:

Work Number

Home Number

Cell Number

Rector

Disaster Leadership

Team Leader

Senior Warden

Junior Warden

Treasurer

Other

Emergency Numbers

Electric Utility Co.

Water Utility Co.

Natural Gas Utility Co.

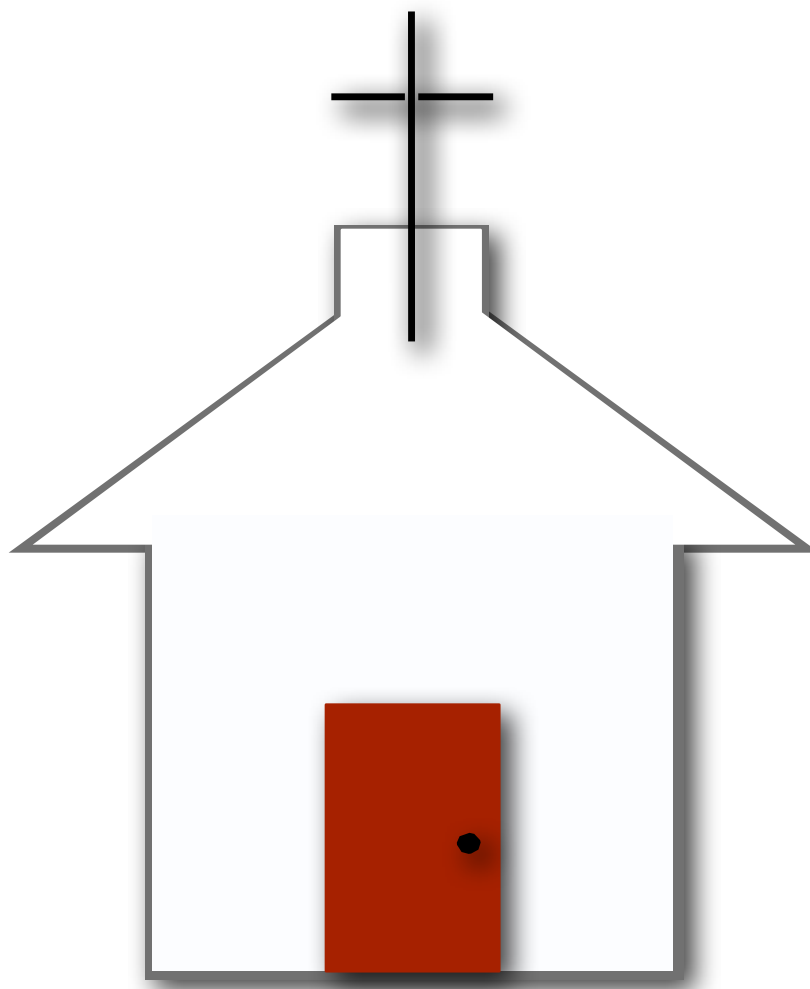
Photographic/videotape inventory of all parish grounds, buildings, and equipment kept at:

Have you catalogued your antiques and or valuable assets?

Backup Copies [updated monthly] of vital church records including computer hard drives kept offsite at:

Keep this summary and submit a scanned copy to The Venerable Russ Oechsel, Archdeacon at the Episcopal Diocese of Texas,
1225 Texas Avenue, Houston, TX 77002.

Our Parish Emergency Plan



Parish/Church: _____

Address: _____

Date of Completion: _____

Scheduled Annual Review: _____

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Assembling a Team

Parish Emergency Coordinator

The Parish Emergency Coordinator provides leadership and guidance to the parish in advance of, during, and following a crisis event.

This individual should be a prominent member of the congregation, familiar with its facilities and families. They must be available to enact the emergency plan and to oversee the collective activities of Parish Emergency Committee members.

In order to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of the congregation and community, ordained clergy should not fill the role of Parish Emergency Coordinator. Consideration should be given to rotating this position annually.

Parish Emergency Coordinator: _____

Home Phone Number: _____

Cell Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Post your parish emergency coordinator's name and contact information in a prominent place.

Parish Emergency Committee

A Parish Emergency Committee should consist of 5-10 members, depending on the size and/or needs of the parish, and may include such individuals as clergy, lay members experienced in disaster relief/recovery, leaders of parish ministries, the Jr./Sr. Warden, Vestry members, and parish staff. Possible guidelines are: media relations, facilities, congregational relations, other church assets (vessels, banners, etc.), technology (evacuation and relocation of property).

Parish Emergency Committee Members:

1) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

2) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

3) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Parish Emergency Committee, continued...

4) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

5) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

6) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

7) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

8) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

9) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

10) **Name:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____



Establishing Parish Priorities

This guide will walk your parish through many of the most important considerations in creating and enacting an emergency plan, such as securing the facilities, protecting essential records, and serving the parish community.

Your Parish Emergency Committee is encouraged to identify the highest priorities specific to your parish, which will help guide your discussions and the creation of your plan.

Parish priorities should be simple and concrete, reflective of the needs and abilities of your congregation and the mission of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas (at right), and agreed upon by each member of your Parish Emergency Committee.

**Mission of Episcopal
Diocese of Texas in Crisis:**
To serve Episcopalians
and their neighbors.

Examples may include:

- How should we protect church assets?
- Ensuring the safety of older parishioners.
- Educating parishioners about emergency preparedness.
- Providing first-response relief to the local community.

Parish Priorities:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

Identifying Risks

Local Crisis History

Emergencies of the past can help to predict the future. Create a list of all local disasters and emergencies occurring throughout the past 50 years.

Though structures may have been built and steps taken in order to prevent these crises from happening again, do not assume that they are infallible. Man-made infrastructure may be insufficient to fully prevent some disasters.

Local Emergency History (50 years):



Brainstorming Possible Crises



List out all potential disasters/emergencies, regardless of their actual likelihood, considering even the most extreme possibilities (i.e. chemical spill, fire, flood, mass violence, mass job loss, etc.).

Possible Crises: _____

Emergencies Most Likely To Occur

Review your lists of historic and possible crises, and identify the emergencies *most likely* to affect your community or parish.

List them below, in order of likelihood, and imagine each emergency from start to finish, identifying the means through which your parish emergency committee would receive warning, as well as a plan for evacuation or sheltering-in-place.

Emergencies Most Likely to Occur:

1) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

2) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

3) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

4) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

5) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

Emergencies Most Likely to Occur, continued...

6) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

7) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

8) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

9) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

10) **Event:** _____

Warning _____ **System:** _____

Evacuation/Shelter-In-Place: _____

Risk Mitigation

Certain areas of the parish building may be more vulnerable to or pose greater risk in an emergency. Walk through the parish facilities and make note of vulnerable areas, then identify steps to alleviate these concerns. Enlist the help of an outsider; they may notice problem areas overlooked by those who see them most often.

Examples of vulnerable areas include:

- Large windows, vulnerable in tornadoes, hurricanes, and windstorms.
- Rooms with only one exit, which could hinder evacuation during a fire.
- Doors that do not properly latch or lock, allowing unwelcome visitors.
- Dead trees which can be uprooted and tossed about in high winds.
- Electronics, such as computers, which are not on surge protectors.

Vulnerable Areas:

1) **Area:** _____

Risk Reduction Plan: _____

2) **Area:** _____

Risk Reduction Plan: _____

3) **Area:** _____

Risk Reduction Plan: _____

4) **Area:** _____

Risk Reduction Plan: _____

5) **Area:** _____

Risk Reduction Plan: _____

Maintaining Preparedness

Inventory

Complete a full inventory of parish property and holdings annually. Store one copy in the cloud, a second copy in a remote location, and a third copy in this binder. Each year all copies must be updated.

Photos and video may be helpful in recording belongings for reference after a disaster or break-in.

For assistance in addressing financial and insurance concerns, contact Bob Biehl, Diocesan Treasurer, at rbiehl@epicenter.org or 713.249.3613.

Annual Inventory Date: _____

_____ **List Only**

_____ **Photos**

_____ **Video**

**Download an inventory workbook
from Church Pension Group:**
[http://download.cpg.org/insurance/
publications/pdf/parish_inventory.pdf](http://download.cpg.org/insurance/publications/pdf/parish_inventory.pdf).

Person(s) Responsible for Conducting Annual Inventory:

1) **Name:** _____

2) **Name:** _____

3) **Name:** _____

Locations of Inventory Records:

On-Site: _____

Off-Site: _____

Policy Number(s): _____

Church Pension Group Contact Information:

Agent/Contact: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Fax Number: _____

Hazard Alarms

Check all alarms monthly and replace as necessary. Install additional alarms where needed, or as recommended by local authorities.

Alarm Locations:

- 1) **Smoke/Fire:** _____
- 2) **Smoke/Fire:** _____
- 3) **Smoke/Fire:** _____
- 4) **Smoke/Fire:** _____
- 5) **Carbon Monoxide:** _____
- 6) **Carbon Monoxide:** _____
- 7) **Carbon Monoxide:** _____
- 8) **Other:** _____
- 9) **Other:** _____

*Are your alarms and extinguishers checked regularly by the fire department?
Do you have a map of their locations?*

Responsible Party

Fire Extinguishers

Train all staff and ministry leaders in the use of extinguishers. Post clear instructions and the local fire department's phone number with the extinguishers.

Check fire extinguishers regularly for expiration and replace as necessary.



Extinguisher Locations:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

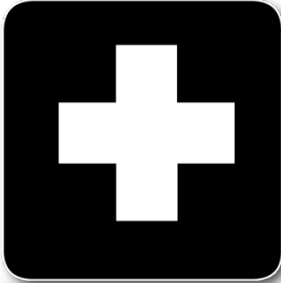
Responsible Party

First Aid & CPR

All parishes must have at least one fully stocked first aid kit and AED on-site and accessible in an emergency.

List out the parishioners, staff, and ministry leaders who are trained in first aid and CPR. These persons should be the first to administer aid if necessary.

Contents of Kit:

1) _____	 A full list of recommended first aid items is available online from the American Red Cross: www.redcross.org/services/hss/lifeline/fakit.html	14) _____
2) _____		15) _____
3) _____		16) _____
4) _____		17) _____
5) _____		18) _____
6) _____		19) _____
7) _____		20) _____
8) _____		21) _____
9) _____		22) _____
10) _____		23) _____
11) _____		24) _____
12) _____		25) _____
13) _____		26) _____

Person Responsible for Maintaining Kit and AED Battery: _____

Storage Location: _____

Persons Trained in First Aid:

1) _____	6) _____
2) _____	7) _____
3) _____	8) _____
4) _____	9) _____
5) _____	10) _____

Persons Trained in CPR:

***Adult* CPR**

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

***Infant* CPR**

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

**To find First Aid & CPR classes in your area, visit
www.redcross.org and click on “Get Trained.”**

Has your First Aid kit been checked in the last year?

Is there a map of location?

Do you have an AED which is visible? Have you had training to use it?

Securing the Facilities

Security System

All staff, Vestry members, and key ministry leaders should be equipped for the disarmament of the security system, if one is installed.

Only those with a need should be provided unsupervised access to parish facilities, and records must be maintained identifying those persons who have been granted entry.

If building security becomes compromised, re-secure the facilities by resetting system codes and/or changing locks.

Locksmith Company: _____

Security System Operation:

Assigned Codes:

1) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

2) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

3) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

4) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

5) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

6) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

7) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

8) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

9) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

10) **Name:** _____

Code: _____

Shutting Off Utilities

Record the location of and instructions for shutting off each utility, and train parish staff, clergy, Vestry, and ministry leaders in the task.

Location and Instructions for Shut-Off:

Electricity: _____

Natural Gas: _____

Water: _____

Alarm(s): _____

Other: _____

Responsible Party

In an emergency, monitor the recommendations of local emergency management; in certain instances, you may be ordered *not* to disconnect certain utilities.

Safekeeping of Records

In every parish and ministry, particular files and records are essential to continued functioning of the ministry following an emergency. Store these files securely both on-site and remotely.

With modern technology, preserving documents has become as simple as setting up an automatic daily upload of data and information. Electronic records and files can be stored online, on a remote server, or on a portable drive.

Keeping lists of passwords and names for all computers, software, and websites utilized by the parish will help to ensure access to these resources. Appropriate security for passwords should be exercised.

Paper copies of essential files should be stored in two locations, and original documents should be kept in water- and fire-proof containers and removed from the site in an evacuation.

Essential Files:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1) _____ | 6) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 7) _____ |
| 3) _____ | 8) _____ |
| 4) _____ | 9) _____ |
| 5) _____ | 10) _____ |

Backup System: _____

Contact people for password reset: _____

Evacuations

Items to Bring in an Evacuation

Sometimes the only way to prevent damage and ensure the continuity of parish operations is to remove items from the site. Valuable pieces that should be removed and preserved whenever possible include computers, other portable electronics, and church heirlooms.


In addition, prepare and have ready a “church in a box,” containing items essential to holding worship, such as communion silver, a book of common prayer, and a hymnal. Even if the church building is damaged or inaccessible, services may continue with these items. In most cases, a member of the clergy should be responsible for this item, as they will be the person to lead services.

Items to Take From the Parish during an Evacuation & Person(s) Responsible:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1) Item: _____
Name: _____ | 6) Item: _____
Name: _____ |
| 2) Item: _____
Name: _____ | 7) Item: _____
Name: _____ |
| 3) Item: _____
Name: _____ | 8) Item: _____
Name: _____ |
| 4) Item: _____
Name: _____ | 9) Item: _____
Name: _____ |
| 5) Item: _____
Name: _____ | 10) Item: _____
Name: _____ |

Person(s) Responsible for “Church in a Box:” _____

“Church in a Box” Contents:

- | | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1) _____ |  | 6) _____ |
| 2) _____ | | 7) _____ |
| 3) _____ | | 8) _____ |
| 4) _____ | | 9) _____ |
| 5) _____ | | 10) _____ |

Alternate Worship/Operations Site

Certain circumstances may require an alternate worship or office site in order to avoid a detrimental disruption of parish operations and fully enact the emergency plan. Identify and arrange this site in advance, flexibility in selecting alternate sites may be required depending on a future disaster. Consideration should be given to worshipping onsite if at all possible. Record the address and instructions for accessing the facilities, and share this information with parishioners.

Alternate Worship Site: _____

Address: _____

Directions to Location: _____

**Include a map and
information about
your destination
for reference in an
emergency.**

Contact Person: _____

Alternate Operations Site: _____

Address: _____

Directions to Location: _____

Contact Person: _____

Communications

Contacting Parishioners

In an emergency, effective communication is essential, though normal means of sharing information may be compromised. As such, a system to contact leaders and parishioners must be established.

Considerations in creating this system should include the following:

- What are the up-to-date home/alternate addresses, telephone numbers (home and cell), and email addresses for each parishioner? How will you contact them in an evacuation?
- Do you know where your parishioners will be in an evacuation?
- Do parishioners know how to contact the Parish Emergency Coordinator and where they will be in an evacuation?
- If normal means of communication (phone, email) are inaccessible or unreliable, how will you send and receive information with parishioners and/or disaster committee members?

Parishioner contact information should be updated once or twice a year. For areas affected by hurricanes, this should be completed before June 1st.

Plan for Gathering & Updating Information: _____

Coordinator of Communications Information: _____

Emergency Parish Communications System: _____

Addressing the Media

To ensure an accurate and positive representation of the parish and the emergency situation, only the Parish Emergency Coordinator and/or those delegated by him or her should make statements to the media.

For assistance in addressing the press, contact Carol Barnwell, Director of Communications for the Diocese at (713) 520-6444 or cbarnwell@epicenter.org.

Persons Authorized to Speak With the Media:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Protecting Parishioners

Vulnerable Populations

Never assume that your parishioners will be safe in an emergency, or that they have taken the recommended precautions. In every congregation and community there are persons without a means of evacuation or the ability to prepare themselves and their homes for the worst. Find out who these parishioners are, and help them to become better prepared. In locations where seasonal disasters occur, an individual should be designated to work with vulnerable congregants. For evacuation, etc., information about these individuals should be developed in advance.

Responsible Party _____

Examples of vulnerable persons within your congregations may include:

- Elderly
- Low-income
- Single parents
- Persons with limited physical or communication abilities.

These individuals and families may need additional information and assistance in order to prepare for and/or survive an emergency.

Vulnerable Groups and/or Persons within the Parish:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1) _____ | 6) _____ |
| 2) _____ | 7) _____ |
| 3) _____ | 8) _____ |
| 4) _____ | 9) _____ |
| 5) _____ | 10) _____ |

Resources Available to Aid Vulnerable Groups and Persons:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Emergency Shelter Locations:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Mass Care Food Center Locations:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

Additional Assistance from the Parish:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

**For resources to assist your parishioners in their own
emergency planning, visit:
http://www.epicenter.org/edot/Emergency_Preparedness1.asp**

Serving the Community

In an emergency, the church has an opportunity to respond in love to a hurting community.

In accordance with the Diocesan mission to “serve Episcopalians and their neighbors,” discuss assets of the parish that may be valuable to the community in an emergency and the ways in which they can be used to offer relief. Discuss these in advance with the Red Cross as there are many health and safety restrictions.

Parish assets may include:

- Shower facilities
- Large kitchen facilities
- Food pantry
- Money
- Busses/Vans

Identify an individual from the Parish Emergency Committee who will coordinate any relief efforts should they become necessary.

Parish Assets:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

Partner Parish

Partnering with another parish within the Diocese provides an opportunity to both serve others and receive services in an emergency. Partnering parishes should be located in a separate region not susceptible to the same emergencies at the same time as your parish.

Partner parishes can serve as a center for communications, an evacuation site, or a source of relief volunteers, among other things.

Partner Parish: _____

Contact Person: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____

Services Offered:

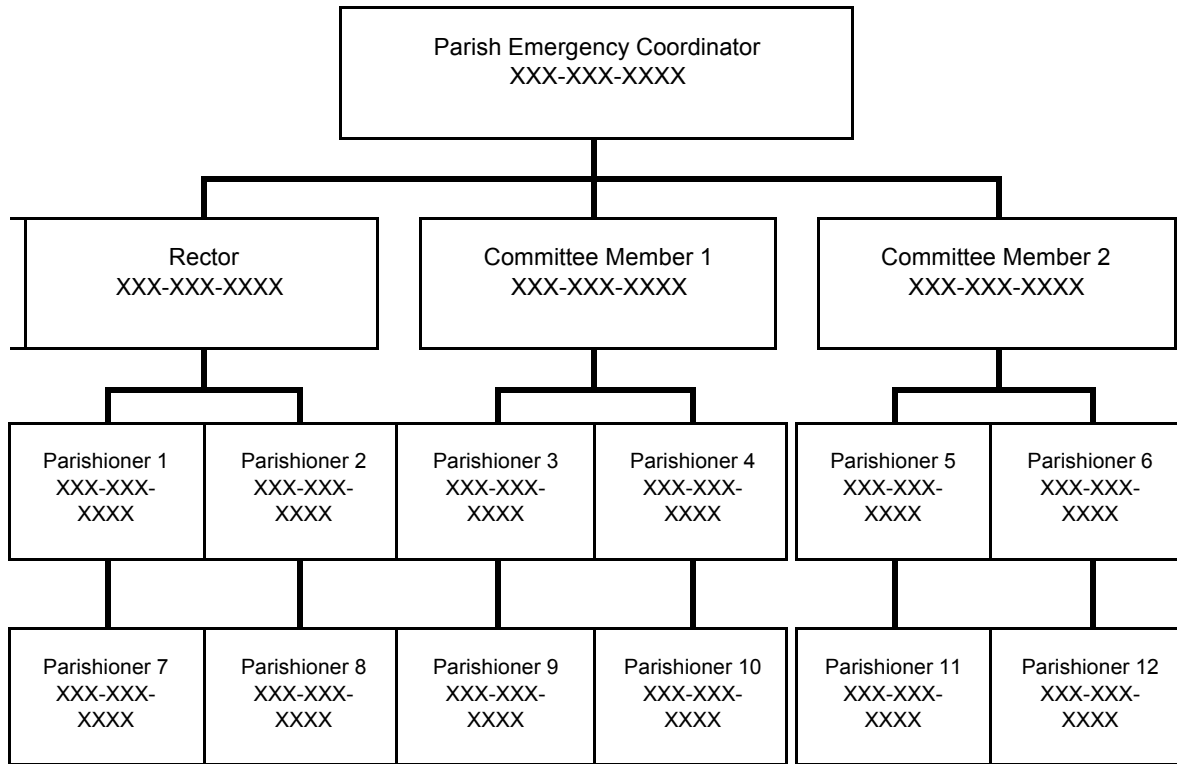
From Partner Parish:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

To Partner Parish:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

Appendix A: Sample Phone Tree



A phone tree can be created to fit congregations of all sizes. The above example portrays simple approach in which the Parish Emergency Coordinator contacts the parish rector and each member of the Parish Emergency Committee, who, in turn, provide information to two parishioners. Those parishioners would then be responsible to contact an additional parishioner, until each member of the congregation had been reached.

If any person within the phone tree cannot be reached within a reasonable amount of time and number of attempts, the caller should contact the next person on the list. Your parish emergency committee may wish to discuss how to address that situation in an emergency, as a lack of contact with an individual could indicate heightened concern for the person's safety.

Appendix B: Recovery Checklist

Listed below are several tasks important in the aftermath of an emergency. These are a starting point toward recovery, and may have already been built into your emergency plan.

- _____ Contact the diocesan office and emergency relief team.
- _____ Contact & convene with Parish Emergency Committee.
- _____ Determine whether parish facilities are usable. If facilities cannot be used, contact alternate worship and operations sites to make immediate arrangements.
- _____ Contact insurance company and notify of event.
- _____ Take photos of damage.
- _____ Contact parishioners to provide information as available and instructions as necessary.
- _____ Notify ministry partners, suppliers, and others who regularly use the facilities of the situation and to provide instruction.
- _____ Coordinate clean-up and repairs. Follow the recommendations of your insurance provider before contracting any repairs. Use caution in conducting clean-up and be aware of any hidden dangers that may have resulted from the event.

This booklet has been updated from the original of February 2010 for the benefit of parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, utilizing many of the resources available to the public.

Special thanks go to the following:

The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas
Province IV of the Episcopal Church
Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee
Episcopal Relief and Development

All portions of this guide may be reproduced in accordance with its intended purpose of preparing parishes for emergencies, with appropriate credit given to Texas Episcopal Disaster Relief & Development.

For more information, or for assistance in creating an emergency plan, please contact us.

**TEXAS EPISCOPAL DISASTER
RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT**

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The Rev. Gill Keyworth
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