

## **Disaster Preparation & Recovery**

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What should your church do to prepare for a weather emergency event?

The most important item in the event of an emergency is information. Have a weather radio on at all times.

Designate a safe area to congregate in. The room should have no windows and a door that opens inward. The room should contain a weather radio, a radio and/or digital TV (when the weather radio alerts you, tune into radio or television to follow the storm), flashlights, batteries, first aid kit, emergency blanket (in case of shock), tools, drop cloths, and duct tape.

To retreat to the safe area:

- Lock external doors.
- Each person should bring food, water & medication with them.
- All should remain in the room until the weather emergency has ended. If the church is damaged it may take rescuers time to get you out of the safe area.

How to prepare if the church is severely damaged or destroyed?

Physical and electronic files should be backed up with copies kept off site:

- Each employee who uses a computer should be given a thumb drive so that they can backup critical documents and take them off-site daily.
- An external hard disk drive can be used to backup an entire PC or a file server on a weekly basis, and should be taken off-site daily.
- Office procedures should include a method to reconstruct data since the last backup.
- Paper files should be scanned and saved to an external hard disk drive, and copied onto DVDs. Keep two copies on-site and one off-site.
- A fixed asset inventory should be kept on-site and off-site for insurance claims.
- You may want to consider backing up your computers to remote servers using online services such as SOS Online, Norton, IDrive, Carbonite, or Mozy.

Have a recovery plan:

- Staff should have contact information for each other, including places where each would go in case of an emergency. The pastor or designated staff would check on status and availability of others to return to work.
- A temporary home should be found for the church office.
- Insurance companies would be notified of the loss, as would companies from which equipment was leased (copier, postage meter, telephone system, etc.).
- Contact your bank(s) for new checks.
- Determine how equipment will be replaced for the short term: use personal equipment, lease or buy.

- Setup software and restore data.
- Setup email access and an Internet-based fax number.
- Contact the telephone company to have incoming calls forwarded to cell phones.
- If required, setup voice mail through a telephone service vendor that would guide callers through a menu to reach the correct person's cell phone.

While there is no fool-proof plan for surviving a disaster, preparation can address many of the related problems. A comprehensive guide can be found [here](#).