

CUENTA CONMIGO

Episcopal Diocese of West Texas 2008 Diocesan Emergency Plan

Introduction. The Episcopal Diocese of West Texas covers over 69,000 square miles and 60 counties of central and south Texas and includes approximately 4.5 million residents. The number of Hispanics and Anglos is similar region wide but there are significant variances in concentrations, i.e., Hispanics represent 80-90% of the population in the southern half of the region. Historically, the Catholic Church has been the largest denomination in the region, followed by other traditional Protestant faiths. Recent decades, however, have seen significant growth in non-denominational Christian congregations and today, evangelical Protestants outnumber mainstream Protestants.

Just like the population, everything about this region is diverse, and in some cases extreme. It contains several major metropolitan areas (including the Rio Grande Valley, Laredo, Corpus Christi and San Antonio) as well as counties like Schleicher, which is believed to have more livestock than people. The topography is arid and flat in some places, hilly and green in others. The weather is generally temperate, with moderate annual rainfall and minimal freezes—except for our severe spring and fall thunderstorms, which bring damaging hail and spawn tornadoes, and our nearly annual late winter ice storms that leave hundreds of homes without heat and paralyze isolated segments of the population for extended periods. The region also contains over 300 miles of coast line, much of which is below sea level, leaving thousands at great risk of catastrophic flooding during the once-a-decade tropical storm or hurricane that ravages the area. In addition to these natural environmental hazards, several of the larger communities in the Diocese are believed to be mid-level targets for terrorism because of the 11 military installations located here and the more than 600 miles of a largely unsecured border with Mexico. Clearly, disaster preparedness is essential to the safety, security and quality of life for persons living within the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.

Efficiently planning for such varied tragedies in a region that is **larger than 30 of the 50** United States requires focus and clear priorities. To this end, the Diocesan Emergency Coordinator and a dedicated Task Force of church volunteers approached the development of a comprehensive disaster plan by first researching current disaster guidance and recommendations. As the Task Force members attended meetings and connected with other groups, they quickly

learned two things: (1) most all elements of a comprehensive plan already had been developed by subject matter experts, and (2) this material typically had been placed in the public domain. Plan preparation was expedited by the fact that the majority of available content could either be replicated as is or easily customized to reflect local conditions.

Once all necessary elements had been located, the Emergency Coordinator and the Task Force turned their attention to several activities that will be catalytic to full, region wide disaster preparedness, including:

- ✓ Assembling a Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide that can be maintained and updated as needed including a CD with emergency resource contact numbers;
- ✓ Arranging for translation of the Guide and all critical materials into Spanish;
- ✓ Preparing a dissemination plan that assures each of the 90 churches in the Diocese receives a Guide and subsequent updates;
- ✓ Helping all congregations find and add locally specific information to their Guide (especially important for rural, under-resourced communities); and
- ✓ Developing pre- and post-disaster communication and deployment strategies for information, volunteers and supplies that are sufficient to effectively cover the entire 69,000 square mile region and reach the 30,000 Episcopalians living there.

The outcomes that have and will accrue from the efforts of the Emergency Coordinator and the Task Force are described in the following.

A. *Role of the Emergency Coordinator.*

The Emergency Coordinator for the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas, a staff person in the World Missions office, has been charged by our Bishop with responsibility for coordinating pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster long term recovery in all counties. These duties include:

1. Working with the Diocesan Emergency Volunteer Coordinator, Diocesan Emergency Communications Coordinator, Convocational Coordinators, and Emergency Task Force in training and preparation for emergency;
2. Cataloguing emergency preparedness and response support available from all sources;
3. Identifying and developing responses to resource gaps;
4. Organizing sub-regional volunteer relief efforts;
5. Creating congregational-level communication and information dissemination plans;
6. Verifying that each church and the Diocesan Center have business continuity procedures in place regarding chain of authority, records safety and staff security;
7. Publishing a list of contents for emergency kits and maintaining an inventory of kits at the ready;
8. Dispatching a first responders' trailer (owned by a priest in our Diocese and available for use at any time) to disaster sites; and

9. Publishing and updating disaster plans on the Diocesan web site.

These activities were highlighted at the 2008 Diocesan Council when the Bishop addressed the Diocese's goal for disaster preparedness and response. As this work is to be ongoing and refined yearly, every Diocesan Council will feature a report by the Emergency Coordinator and churches on the status of disaster preparation and any support provided since the last Council.

B. Communication and Deployment Strategies for Information, Volunteers and Supplies.

The Emergency Coordinator and Task Force volunteers have launched the following efforts:

1. **Information and Communication.** Five separate activities are under development to ensure our capacity to communicate and distribute information in the event of an emergency or disaster.
 - (a) **Basic Emergency Response Training (BERT).** The Parish Mission board at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Antonio hosts a 14-week BERT training designed to teach disaster recovery volunteers to use the existing emergency communications system. The training also covers basic first aid, protective measures to use when dealing with contaminants and basic rescue navigation. Training is free and is offered annually. Individuals who complete training will be entered into a Diocesan database of specially skilled volunteers (see d. below) who can be accessed in times of emergency. By 2010, the Diocese expects to have conducted BERT training in all seven convocations.
 - (b) **Designated Parish Representatives.** All 90 congregations in the Diocese have been asked to designate at least two representatives (based upon the size of the community) to serve as "point persons" in times of emergency. The Emergency Coordinator maintains the list of point persons, and throughout the year church members will be reminded of who is serving their congregation and how they may be reached in an emergency. The point persons have three critical responsibilities:
 - (1) Alert Convocational Communications Coordinators of the need(s) during emergencies;
 - (2) Maintain lists of and check on vulnerable church members to ensure that they receive any support needed; and
 - (3) Establish registries of the status of parish members that can be accessed by persons outside the immediate area who are worried about but cannot contact their loved ones. The first service will be available during 2008. The latter two services will come online in 2009 after sufficient training and capacity have been developed. Every point person

must agree to have a text messaging-equipped cell phone as this method of communication is often the most reliable component of cell service.

- (c) **Convocational Communications Coordinators.** Because the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas covers such a vast area, the Emergency Coordinator (with help from the Task Force's Emergency Volunteer Coordinator and Emergency Communications Coordinator) is recruiting and training seven Convocational Communications Coordinators who will organize disaster recovery efforts in specific geographic territories. The Coordinators will be knowledgeable of available emergency resources and specialized Diocesan databases to help any resident in need of supportive services. The Coordinators also must agree to have a text messaging-equipped cell phone. During a crisis, the Communications Coordinators will maintain regular contact with the Emergency Coordinator and/or the Volunteer Coordinator (by email or cell phone) to remain current on support opportunities, unmet needs, and the status of the emergency.
- (d) **Specialized Databases.** In 2007 the Emergency Coordinator established a database of church members willing to house evacuees, segmented by host preferences, i.e., those willing to house families with children, adults only, pets, etc. The Emergency Coordinator has continued to populate this database and has been establishing two additional ones: clergy willing to provide pastoral care and volunteers with special skills that can be applied during relief efforts, e.g., health care workers, trained search and rescue team members, individuals with building trades skills, etc. Using information supplied by the parish point persons and the Communications Coordinators, the Emergency Coordinator, or her designee, will be able to quickly coordinate resources and dispatch assistance to the areas of greatest need.
- (e) **Spreading the Word.** The Diocesan newspaper (*The Church News*), which is mailed to every member of an Episcopal Church in the Diocese, features quarterly articles and updates regarding the state of disaster preparedness in the region, new resources or training opportunities, changes in emergency contacts, emerging threats (i.e., targeted information preceding hurricane season), etc. Other pertinent information is disseminated regularly using Diocesan Internet vehicles, *The Direct Line* (accessed by all subscribers, including clergy and lay leaders), and *Enews* (sent to all church office staff and clergy). The Emergency Coordinator will be responsible for either writing these articles or obtaining the content from another source.

The quality and depth of information gathered by the Emergency Coordinator has been materially enhanced by the services and contributions of several generous external partners. For example, local representatives of the Methodist Church

conduct disaster response training. Similarly, a national director of the Presbyterian Response Team has shared the best practices in disaster response and outcomes from actual scenarios he receives. Finally, the Red Cross will continue to certify our first responders so that they might efficiently answer emergency calls in the Diocese. Many of these same organizations are joined by local and state governmental entities, FEMA staff, and other voluntary and faith based groups on the Long Term Recovery Steering Committee organized by the San Antonio Council of Churches. Steering Committee members, including the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas' Emergency Coordinator, regularly meet to assess and improve preparedness, and respond to emergencies in the South Texas region.

2. **Volunteers.** Volunteer alert and notification procedures are described in the preceding response. Creating a single point of contact at the Diocesan level (Emergency Coordinator) ensures that available volunteers are effectively assigned. The Diocesan Emergency Volunteer Coordinator and Emergency Communications Coordinator work directly with the Emergency Coordinator to facilitate necessary relief efforts through convocation-level Coordinators who will be close enough to any emergency site to accurately and rapidly plan for volunteer deployment needs. Finally, the Disaster Plan (and links) posted on the Diocesan website is a dynamic tool designed for instant update to reflect best practices and current developments. Congregational point persons, Communications Coordinators, clergy members, and lay leaders are encouraged to share ideas and raise the profile of our volunteer-led disaster preparedness initiatives.
3. **Supplies and Resources.** Every church in the Diocese has received a contents list for an emergency kit, e.g., personal hygiene items, first aid supplies, etc. The list is also published on the Diocesan website and contained in the reference section of the Guide. The Diocese and many churches maintain a ready supply of kits for distribution to disaster sites. During 2008, the Emergency Coordinator will attempt to increase the number of churches with emergency kits on hand.

Additionally, lists of available emergency resources are being developed for each convocation in the Diocese. The broad headings of the resource list follow. As a template and for local use, The Bexar County resource list is posted on the website of Good Samaritan Community Services (www.goodsamcenter.com), a ministry of the Diocese of West Texas, and all community churches have been informed of its availability.

- Search and Rescue and Emergency Responders—Police, Fire, EMS
- Disaster Support and Shelters
- Hospitals

- Community-Based Medical Services
- Veterinarians
- Optical/Eyeglasses
- Prescription Assistance
- Food/Groceries
- Points of Entry for Case Management and Supportive Services
- Transportation
- Utilities

Similar lists are being developed by church volunteers throughout the Diocese. These will be posted on the Diocesan website for ready access. The Diocesan website also includes links to the evacuation route information published by the State of Texas and the essential items recommended for an emergency kit, which every family in the Diocese is encouraged to have. Finally, the Diocesan website will list designated response centers (generally located within a church facility) where anyone can go to receive an emergency kit. A key responsibility of the Emergency Coordinator will be the timely movement of sufficient numbers of emergency kits to post-disaster areas.

C. Diocesan Support to Parishes: Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide.

As previously described, the Diocese has assembled a comprehensive Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide. Three-ring binders containing the Guide and a CD (for accessing needed information in the event the Guide has been destroyed) are being distributed to all 90 congregations. The Guide features color coded dividers that correspond to ten, same-colored sections of a Table of Contents. Supplemental materials will be distributed whenever needed and will be tabbed with the section's color, thereby enabling church staff to quickly remove old content and substitute new or additional information.

The following reflects the materials and sources contained in the Guide. In many cases, the information has been directly extracted from and attributed to other sources. Because some of the documents are of significant size, executive summaries were developed and include instructions for accessing the full document. Individual churches will be encouraged to note hazards for their particular locale, access and print those documents listed in the index, and file under the pertinent section of their personalized Guide. (The example which is being submitted has been developed for the Central Convocation.) The Emergency Coordinator will oversee Convocational Coordinators in collecting similar materials for their geographic locations.

The Emergency Coordinator anticipates distributing updated or new Guide materials at least quarterly. In some instances, the information may not be pertinent to all congregations (e.g., information specific to urban areas), in which case it will only be sent to those parishes that are likely to use it.

D. Accountability Measures to Ensure Plan Implementation and Maintenance.

The Task Force and the Emergency Coordinator will meet quarterly to review planning work, identify and develop ways of addressing assistance or volunteer gaps, and strategize the application of new resources or initiatives. Also, the Task Force members, congregational point persons, the Convocation Communication Coordinators, the Diocesan Emergency Volunteer Coordinator, the Diocesan Emergency Communications Coordinator, and the Emergency Coordinator will complete an after-action assessment anytime Diocesan relief and recovery efforts are deployed. Recommendations for improvements in efficiency or effectiveness will be made and followed up by the Task Force members and the Emergency Coordinator at their next quarterly meeting.

All of the above will be captured in an annual report compiled by the Emergency Coordinator and presented at Diocesan Council. Additionally, a section of every church's mandatory Council report will be devoted to emergency preparedness planning and activities that occurred in the prior year. In this way, the churches will hold one another and the Emergency Coordinator accountable for plan implementation and the quality of the Diocesan response to disasters or emergencies affecting our congregations and communities. Finally, the Bishop has placed priority on both the local and broader initiatives, as indicated by the subject's prominent placement in Diocesan publications and websites and during Council meetings.

Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide

Section	Overview	Source
1. How to develop <u>family-level</u> emergency and disaster preparedness	Includes checklists for planning, maintenance, and post-disaster reminders.	<p>“Preparing for disaster.” http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_601_00.html Emergency Preparedness website for the State of Texas (evacuation, shelters, transportation, vehicle readiness), http://www.texas.gov/emergency/eng/index.html</p>
2. How to develop a <u>congregational-level</u> disaster preparedness and response plan	Assists churches in responding to emergencies and crises, including staff and record relocation, locating medical support, and unique responses to victims of natural and man made disasters.	<p>“Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Congregations.” Episcopal Relief and Development. http://www.erd.org/documents/Interim Checklist for congregations FINAL.pdf “Emergency Action and Recovery Plan for the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, Model for Parishes and Organizations.” November 2006. http://www.rochesterepiscopaldiocese.org/pdfs/2007/April/Emergency%20Action%20%20Recovery%20Plan%20%20WORD.doc “Parish Disaster Preparation and Response Guidelines.” Diocese of Southwest Florida. June 2007. http://images.acswebnetworks.com/1/371/DisasterPlan20071.pdf</p>
3. Developing a <u>faith community</u> response to disasters.	Covers crisis intervention, stress relief, grief counseling, role of the faith community in preparedness, response and	<p>“Community Arise.” (Lesson 3: Faith-Based Disaster Response). http://www.communityarise.com/online.htm “Too Much, Too Ugly, Too Fast: How Faith Communities Can Respond in Crisis and</p>

	recovery.	Disasters.” Carol Hacker, Ph.D. http://www.ldr.org/resources/TooMuchTooUglyTooFast.pdf
4. Basic <u>disaster ministry training</u>	An 8 hour on-line training course supporting the clergy in providing an appropriate response to the community in the event of disaster and in helping the community prepare for a disaster.	“Basic Disaster Ministry.” Community Arise-Online, a project of the Presbyterian Church. www.communityarise.com/index.htm
5. Developing an <u>emergency communication plan</u>	Using telecommunication tools, both old and new, to keep in touch and assist families and individuals during crisis.	“Tips for Developing an Emergency Communication Plan.” AT&T. www.att.com . “Efficient and Nearly Instantaneous Communication.” http://www.bizactions.com/index.cfm/ba/e120/fa/62259252G1531J1139253POP727T2/
6. Preparing for <u>natural and non-weather related disasters</u>	How to make evacuation plans, preparing for business continuity, document and file safety for churches, key contact rosters, assembling reconstitution equipment.	“Hurricane Plan.” (Natural Disaster Shell Plan). Good Samaritan Community Services (Episcopal Diocese of West Texas). June 2006. www.goodsamaritancommunityservices.org/disasterrelief.html “Winter Weather,” (S17, S18), “Extreme Heat,” (S19, S20), “Flood,” (S25, S26), “Fire,” (S31, S32), The Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee. http://www.etdiocese.net/policy/disastermanualSMALL.pdf “Texas Hazard Mitigation Package.” http://www.thmp.info/
7. Responding to <u>epidemics</u>	Responding to flu and other global disease outbreaks in the local community.	“WHO Checklist for Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Planning:” http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO_

		<u>CDS...</u>
8. Preparing for <u>terrorist attack</u>	Overview of preparation and response to terrorism.	“Preparing for the Unexpected.” American Red Cross. www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_589_00.html
9. Taking care of and evacuating <u>pets and livestock</u>	Helps pet owners develop their own disaster and evacuation plans and kits to transport and care for their pets. Sections for dogs and cats, horses and livestock.	“Information for Pet Owners.” FEMA. www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals.shtm “Saving the Whole Family.” Disaster Preparedness Series, American Veterinary Medical Association, 2006. www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp
10. <u>Resources</u> for Central Convocation	Emergency response items, first aid kits, personal hygiene kits, keeping vital information safe.	“Go Bag.” Good Samaritan Community Services (Episcopal Diocese of West Texas). www.goodsamaritancommunityservices.org/disasterrelief.html Contacts for Central Convocation: medical, optical/eyeglasses, prescription assistance, legal, food/groceries, school, employment, emergency shelters, day centers, transportation, utilities

LINKS FOR DISASTER RESOURCE GUIDE

Family-Level Emergency and Disaster Preparedness

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_601_00.html

Evacuation Issues

<http://www.texas.gov/emergency/eng/index.html>

Parish-Level Emergency and Disaster Preparedness

http://www.er-d.org/documents?interim_Checklist_for_congregations.FINAL.pdf

<http://images.acswebnetworks.com/1/371/DisasterPlan20071.pdf>

Developing a Faith Community Response to Disasters

<http://www.communityarise.com/online.htm>

<http://www.ldr.org/resources/TooMuchTooUglyTooFast.pdf>

Basic Disaster Ministry Training

www.communityarise.com/index.htm

Developing an Emergency Communication Plan

www.att.com

<http://www.bizactions.com/index.cfm/ba/e120/fa/62259252G1531J1139253POP727T2/>

Contact Harry Greer: hgreeg@grandecom.net

Preparing for Natural Disasters

www.goodsamaritancommunityservices.org/disasterrelief.html

<http://www.texasonline.com/emergency/eng/typesofemergencies.html>

<http://www.etdiocese.net/policy/disastermanualSMALL.pdf>

<http://www.thmp.info/>

Preparing for Non-Weather Related Disasters

<http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/fswy6.pdf>

<http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/fswy11.pdf>

http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/all_citizens/atf/moreinfo.shtm

Responding to Epidemics

http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenze/WHO_DCS...

Preparing for Terrorist Attack

http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/0,1082,0_589_00.html

Pets and Livestock

<http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/animals.shtm>

http://www.avma.org/disaster/saving_family.asp

Resources

http://www.goodsamaritancommunityservices.org/images/Go_Bag.pdf

http://www.goodsamaritancommunityservices.org/images/Bexar_County_References.pdf