

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD OF THE ELCA DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

MISSION STATEMENT Grounded in faith, the Lutheran Disaster Response Network – Northeastern Pennsylvania (LDRN – NEPA) seeks to be prepared for disasters and to bring help and hope as we address the spiritual, physical, emotional, relational and intellectual needs of individuals and communities whose lives have been affected by a disaster.

VISION STATEMENT Called and empowered by God to be a blessing to one another, the Lutheran Disaster Response Network – Northeastern Pennsylvania (LDRN – NEPA) will work together through the various expressions of the Church to prepare for and respond to the needs of those affected by disasters, particularly the needs of the marginalized.

WHAT IS A DISASTER? A disaster is an event beyond the control of those affected, which event causes great harm, suffering, and damage and for which those who are affected need outside assistance in order to sustain and rebuild their lives.

Disasters include those events caused by forces of nature or creation, such as hurricanes, windstorms, fire, earthquake and epidemic as well as those events caused by humans such as an explosion, release of hazardous material, and acts of terror. Disasters cause damage which exceeds an individual or community's ability to respond.

Disasters are crises in that they have long term effects, response and recovery are complicated by interrelated social conditions such as pre-existing poverty and prejudice, poor civic organization or transportation, etc, and there are no simple or short term solutions. However, not all crises are disasters.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN PREPARATION FOR A DISASTER? Preparation for a disaster includes identifying potential dangers and developing clear procedures for effective and efficient response which can be adapted to the unique features of a specific disaster. Preparation includes identifying and encouraging the use of preventative measures, identifying potential resources, networking, and increasing knowledge and skills, as well as practicing and updating the protocol for response.

Different types and different levels of disasters call for a variety of responses. The levels and protocols suggested in the following pages attempt to provide broad guidance for disasters which:

- I. affect an individual, family or small group;
- II. affect a congregation;
- III. affect a community or local area;
- IV. affect a great number of people, cover an extensive area, are uniquely traumatic, or have been declared a disaster by the President of the United States; or

V. occur outside the territory of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

TERMS WHICH ARE USED IN THIS PREPAREDNESS PLAN:

CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING: a structured group discussion and educational presentation led by a trained facilitator shortly after a traumatic event for persons impacted by or exposed to the stress of a tragedy. The debriefing is designed to ease the long term impact of the event and give participants tools and resources to deal with their stress reactions.

JUDICATORY: synod bishops, district presidents and their staffs.

LDR Lutheran Disaster Response: a cooperative effort between the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (Missouri Synod) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) whose mission is to promote health, healing and wholeness for disaster survivors. LDR seeks to serve survivors in a timely, compassionate and competent manner through a coordinated, community-based system involving all Lutheran entities.

LTRC Long Term Recovery Committee: Committee formed to oversee the recovery of people and areas over a long period of time, frequently over several years. This committee is frequently made up of representatives of a variety of organizations and governmental agencies such as communities of faith, emergency management organizations, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, PEMA (Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency), etc.

MITIGATION - To *mitigate* is to make less severe, intense or painful; to moderate. In disaster work *mitigation* often refers to steps taken to prevent or lessen the impact of a potentially destructive event. For example, in areas subject to flooding, such steps might include elevating a house or at least locating the electrical panel, heater, furnace on the first floor instead of the basement. *Mitigation* can also refer to activity taken by recovery workers to help victims of a disaster acquire the needed goods and services for relief and recovery.

PHASES OR STAGES OF DISASTER:

RESCUE occurs immediately after a disaster and can last minutes, hours or days. This stage includes search and rescue, emergency shelters and feeding programs, grief counseling and pastoral care, volunteer services, and reestablishing contact with family and friends.

RELIEF starts 12 to 72 hours after a disaster. This stage is characterized by: debris removal and clean up, damage assessments, temporary repairs, applications for assistance, community needs assessment, decisions and organization for recovery.

RECOVERY is a long term effort starting 3-5 days after a disaster and can last months to years. This stage is characterized by permanent repairs and rebuilding, bureaucratic complications, volunteer projects, agency coordination and operation.

TEAMSystem: A database used by LDR to track human and material resources using GPS.

TRAUMA: the effect of a sudden, unexpected crisis event. Trauma involves significant personal loss and often leaves the individual feeling vulnerable, devastated and, at times, out of control.

VOAD Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster: A coalition of voluntary agencies, including Church World Service and many faith groups, that encourages coordination, collaboration, cooperation and communication among member organizations around disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. VOADs may be organized on the community, county, regional, state and national levels.

LEVELS AND FLOW CHART FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

I. A DISASTER WHICH AFFECTS AN INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY OR SMALL GROUP

(e.g. fire, flood, traumatic injury or death)

The situation comes to the attention of a local congregation

The local congregation decides whether and how to handle the situation.

If the local congregation needs assistance, it can contact such resources as:

- * Cluster, Mission District, local ministerium or ecumenical group
- * Community organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army
- * Synod
 - e.g. for pastoral support, liturgical resources
- * LCS
 - Family advocate – to help the family plan for recovery
 - Volunteer labor or guidance in rebuilding
 - Guidance and possible assistance in linking to other resources, collecting needed items, and fundraising
- * Diakon Family Life Services
 - Counseling, Critical Incident Debriefing and other supportive services

During any response the local congregation evaluates the effectiveness of the response and adjusts its response plan.

Particularly when a cluster, Mission District, the Synod, LCS or Diakon has been involved in the response, the local congregation is encouraged to communicate its evaluation of the response and suggestions for improvements to the participating entity as well as LCS/LDRN – NE PA.

Actions to take before disaster occurs:

1. The congregation can urge parishioners to have individual preparedness plans and can provide them with samples.
2. The congregation can develop contacts and networks with other churches and organizations in the area.
3. The Synod can develop and regularly update resources for liturgical and pastoral assistance.
4. LCS/LDRN – NEPA and the NEPS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE
 - Communicate the synod's preparedness plan to congregations, organizations, and leaders;
 - Develops models for congregational/organizational preparedness plans and trains leaders in how to create such plans
5. LCS/LDRN – NEPA

Obtains, tracks and updates information about local resources (TEAMSsystem)
Trains family advocates
Trains and tracks volunteer labor and offers and encourages opportunities for service

II. A DISASTER WHICH AFFECTS A CONGREGATION OR ORGANIZATION

Note: "organization" includes such entities as social ministry organizations, Lutheran schools, Synod office, etc.

Type A. Affects the congregational community more than its property
e.g. boundary violation, death of a serving pastor, major crime, major accident on the premises which harms people, etc.

Type B. Has a major impact on the property
e.g. fire, flood, major crime on premises, etc damages or destroys church property

In A: The congregation or organization should notify the Dean of the District and contact the Synod.

The Dean may notify other congregations within the district.

The synod may assist with:

Pastoral care,
Congregational leadership
Legal issues
Emergency Funding
Etc.

If needed, the Synod or the congregation can contact: Diakon Family Life Services for assistance with emotional care/relationship and mental health services

During the response, the congregation should evaluate and adapt its assistance for maximum effectiveness. The congregation is encouraged to communicate its evaluation of the response and suggestions for improvements to any participating entity as well as LCS/LDRN – NE PA.

In B: The congregation can contact the Synod

The Synod and/or the congregation then would notify Lutheran Congregational Services even if LCS/LDR services are not immediately needed

The congregation or the synod may request assistance from Diakon Family Life Services

The congregation can ask for assistance from the Cluster, Mission District, local ministerium or ecumenical group.

Actions to take before disaster occurs:

1. The congregation or organization should draw up a Congregational/Organizational Preparedness Plan, which includes a relationship with local emergency management (see 3)

2. LCS/LDRN – NE PA, the synod, and Diakon Family Life Services regularly update skills and prepare and/or collect guidelines and resources for dealing with A and B.

3. LCS/LDRN – NEPA and the NEPS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE

Communicate the synod’s preparedness plan to congregations, organizations, and leaders;

Develops models for congregational/organizational preparedness plans, and encourages and trains leaders in how to create such plans

Obtains, tracks and updates information about local resources (TEAMSsystem)

III. A DISASTER WITHIN COMMUNITY OR LOCAL AREA

e.g. block fire, explosion, mining accident, nuclear accident, chemical spill, school shooting, act of violence or terrorism, local flooding, tornado, or ice storm – which is beyond the resources of the local congregations and local response organizations.

The event may or may not have immediately affected members of Lutheran congregations.

Response Protocol

1. The congregation, local contact, local emergency management, or synod notifies LCS/LDRN – NE PA

Or

LCS/LDRN – NE PA hears about the event on the media or from another source.

2. LCS/LDRN NE PA contacts local congregation(s), contact person(s) in the affected area and/or emergency management personnel for an initial assessment.

3. LCS/LDRN - NE PA contacts LDR and the synod with a Disaster Flash Assessment (the initial information from 2). LCS/LDRN – NEPA and Synod consider together their appropriate initial response.

4. LCS/LDRN – NE PA further assesses needs, prepares a Disaster Initial Report and decides whether to simply support another lead agency such as Red Cross or to activate LDRN – NE PA.

5. LCS/LDRN – NE PA communicates the Disaster Initial Report to LDR and the same report as well as its decision for involvement to the synod.

6. If LCS/LDRN/NE PA is activated

a. LCS/LDRN - NE PA confers with LDR and the synod regarding assistance needed.

b. The Disaster Recovery Coordinator activates an appropriate level of response as outlined under IV.

c. LDRN – NE PA evaluates and adapts the response while it is ongoing as well when it is finished, fills out a Disaster Situation Report, and shares recommendations with LDR and the NEPS PREPAREDNESS AND

RECOVERY COMMITTEE.

7. If LDRN – NEPA is not activated, referrals as indicated in Level I and II will be made.

Actions to take before disaster occurs:

1. LCS/LDRN/NE PA develops TEAMSsystem network including:

contact persons

congregations

emergency personnel

VOADS

Other denominations

LDRN network outside NE PA

2. LCS/LDRN – NEPA and the NEPS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE

- a) regularly practice and update the disaster recovery plan outlined under IV;
- b) communicate the synod's preparedness plan to congregations, organizations, and leaders;
- c) develop and continuously update communication network
- d) recruit, designate and train persons to fill specific roles identified in the disaster preparedness and recovery plan;
- e) encourage development of and deployment of local congregational work teams;
- f) oversee the upkeep of the disaster trailer

**IV. A DISASTER OCCURS ON NEPS TERRITORY WHICH:
AFFECTS A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE,
COVERS AN EXTENSIVE AREA,
IS UNIQUELY TRAUMATIC,
OR HAS BEEN DECLARED A DISASTER BY THE GOVERNOR OR
PENNSYLVANIA OR THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.**

e.g. Ivan/April flooding, 9/11, Katrina, tornado over extensive area, Oklahoma City Bombing,

A. Information comes to LCS via media, local congregation, local contact person, synod, emergency personnel, VOAD, etc.

B. LCS/LDRN – NE PA fully activates *see below* -

Actions to take before disaster occurs:

1. LCS/LDRN – NEPA and the NEPS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE

- a) regularly practice and update the disaster recovery plan outlined under IV;
- b) communicate the synod's preparedness plan to congregations, organizations, and leaders;
- c) develop and continuously update communication network
- d) develop recruitment strategies and training procedures for volunteers;
- e) on an ongoing basis, recruit, designate and train persons to fill specific roles identified in the full activation plan, including :
 - Volunteer crews and supervisors/coordinators
 - Information and Referral workers Family Advocates
 - Pastoral Care Providers Camp Noah leaders;
- f) identify space and equipment that will be needed and how they will be acquired;
- g) collect educational and spiritual care material and distribute materials that may be helpful for others to use in their own preparation for response;
- h) develop communication network and guidelines;
- i) encourage development of and deployment of local congregational work teams;

- j) oversee the upkeep of the disaster trailer; and
- k) continues to explore means for obtaining funds to support disaster relief.

2. LDRN - NE PA

- a) develops TEAMSsystem network including:
 - contact persons congregations
 - emergency personnel VOADS
 - Other denominations LDRN network outside NE PA
- b) develops a network with emergency personnel/communities/counties
- c) develops a network with other ecumenical groups and agencies
- d) develops network outside NE PA -
LDR, LDR Mid Atlantic, VOAD, PVOAD, etc.
- e) develops forms and data base for full activation
- f) updates information on how to obtain grant money

V. DISASTER OCCURS OR HELP IS REQUESTED FOR AREA OUTSIDE NEPS TERRITORY

1. Synod and/or LCS/LDRN – NE PA receives request or LDRN – NE PA learns from media.

Whoever receives the request notifies the other

2. LCS/LDRN – NE PA

- a) Establishes contact points and communication with synod, LDR Mid Atlantic and LDR national
- b) Assesses what is likely to be needed/requested,
- c) Decides whether and how will participate in response to disaster
 - 1) If decision is made to participate, notifies Steering Committee and begins preparation for response.
 - 2) If decision made to help raise funds and goods notifies Steering Committee and prepares to raise funds and goods

3. If decision is made to send workers, LCS/LDRN NE-PA AND NEPS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE

- a) Alert and then activate appropriate staff and volunteers
Adapt plan for full activation of LDRN NE PA
- b) Continue to assess true needs and how best to provide goods and services
regularly updates information
- c) Communicate within the synod re:
 - Needs
 - Opportunities for response
 - What is happening, being done
- D) Evaluate and adapt the response on an ongoing basis as well as its termination and incorporates recommendations into the synod's preparedness plan.

Actions to take before disaster occurs:

1. LCS/LDRN NE-PA

- a) develops network outside NE PA
- b) develops TEAMSsystem

2. LCS/LDRN NE – PA AND NEPS DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RECOVERY COMMITTEE

- a) regularly practice and update the disaster recovery plan outlined under IV;
- b) communicate the synod's preparedness plan to congregations, organizations, and leaders;
- c) develop and continuously update communication network
- d) develop guidelines, forms, and trainings for volunteers
- e) recruit and train some volunteers ahead of time
Information & Referral, Family Advocates,
labor crews and supervisors/coordinators
pastoral care Camp Noah
- f) continue to update protocol for disaster trailer(s), particularly for when it is sent outside NEPS territory
- g) develop and continuously update communication network

PLAN FOR FULL ACTIVATION OF LDRN – NE PA

1. LCS/LDRN – NE PA –

- a. Obtains an initial assessment of the situation and needs
 - * communicates with emergency management and other contacts
 - * uses this information to assess and estimate immediate impact and needs
- b. Alerts NEPA Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Committee
- c. Prepares *Disaster Flash Assessment* and communicates this with the synod and LDR national and regional units
- d. Decides whether and how to assist in rescue phase
if decides to assist:
 - * activates assistance
 - * plans for debriefings
 - * plans for evaluation and adjustment of response
- e. Prepares for **relief** phase
 - * Identifies and trains people to walk the neighborhoods –
Spiritual / pastoral care
Initial assessments
Information and referral
 - * Plans for debriefings of workers
 - * Decides how will assist with food, shelter, clothing, clean up supplies
 - * Activates Volunteer Coordinator

- * Activates Cleanup and Construction Project Coordinator
For e.g. clearing brush and debris, mucking and tearing
- * Activates LDR data base
To track victims and volunteers
- * Decides what educational and supportive material and opportunities can be offered for victims and volunteers, including:
 - What's going on – info from emergency management
 - Spiritual care
 - Where to get help
 - If applicable, education about FEMA and encouragement to register
 - Increasing resiliency
 - Warning about Scams – how to file complaints, get legal aid
- * Activates Communication system
including work with media
- * Sets up checking account for this disaster-
- * Decides and communicates how others can assist
Funds, goods and services
- * Initiates raising and management of funds

f. Prepares for **recovery** phase

- * sets up or joins LTRC – unmet needs committee
- * continues activation of Cleanup and Construction Project Coordinator
Activate Materials Coordinator
- * continues activation of Volunteer Coordinator
- * recruits, identifies and trains
 - family advocates
 - case managers
 - volunteer work crews, coordinators and supervisors
- * Continues to set fund raising and fund management in place

g. Continues to assess the situation, prepares and communicates the Disaster Initial Report, and coordinates plans for response with synod, steering committee, LDR (national office) and LDR Mid Atlantic.

h. Fully activates **relief** efforts -

- * walking the neighborhoods –
 - Emotional support, spiritual / pastoral care
 - Distribute water, disposable cameras, bagels, etc
 - Initial assessments
 - Information and referral
 - Debrief workers
- * Assistance with food, shelter, clothing –
- * Database: LDR database and TEAM
 - Track victims and volunteers
 - Track contacts

- * Offer educational and supportive opportunities for victims and volunteers, distribute materials:
 - What's going on – info from emergency management
 - Where to get help
 - If federal disaster, encourage registration with FEMA
 - Educate about FEMA
 - Spiritual care
 - Encourage resiliency
 - Warning of Scams – how to file complaints, get legal aid
- * Anticipates funding needs, collects and tracks funds
 - Applies for grants
- * Communicates
 - How others can assist
 - Needs for funds, goods and services
 - Works with media
- * Identifies and coordinates work sites and crews
 - For clearing brush and debris, mucking out, tearing out and temporary repairs

i. Fully activates recovery efforts -

- * participation in LTRC – unmet needs committee
- * case management
 - Family advocates
 - Assessments of needs
 - Coordination with unmet needs committee
- * coordination of volunteers
 - Recruitment
 - Forms
 - Travel
 - Food and Shelter
 - Orientation
 - Assignments
 - Tracking
- * work on properties
 - Assessments and estimates
 - Identification of properties to be worked on
 - Formation of specific plan with family
 - Clarify funding and how to obtain materials
 - Assignment of site supervisors -
 - Assignment and supervision of volunteers
 - Paperwork
- * offer education and spiritual care opportunities
 - For Victims
 - For Volunteers
- * communication
 - To congregations and public outside immediate area –

Re: accomplishments, needs and opportunities

Work with media

* management of funds

Apply for grants

Report on grants

* Data entry – LDR Data base and TEAM

j. On an ongoing basis evaluates the situation, prepares and communicates the Disaster Situation Report and adapts the response plan.

h. Phase down operations

k. Review and adjust plan for future