

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

If your facility does not have a disaster plan, now is the time to develop one. The basic steps of formulating an effective disaster plan include: *identifying disaster exposures; examining feasible alternatives to deal with disaster exposures; selecting and implementing the most suitable method for dealing with each exposure; and monitoring/modifying the disaster plan on a regular basis.*

Parishes, schools, Chancery offices, and other Arch/Diocesan institutions face a variety of disaster-related exposures.

Fires – Church fires are frequently caused by old electrical wiring, overloaded circuits, malfunctioning heating equipment, improper storage of combustible materials, lightning, or arson.

Tornadoes – Tornadoes are difficult to predict and can strike anywhere if atmospheric conditions are right. These destructive storms destroy hundreds of homes and kill or injure many people each year.

Other disaster exposures – Other disaster exposures include hurricanes, floods, power failures, loss of personnel, bomb threats, and workplace/school violence.

A safety committee should be formulated to identify each disaster exposure and to examine appropriate ways to deal with these exposures.

Basic essentials of any disaster/emergency preparedness plan should include: developing emergency notification procedures and evacuation plans; providing fire extinguisher training; establishing cell phone and emergency call lists; planning for computer system back-up/off-site storage; and selecting an alternate business site in case of emergency.

Once all disaster exposures have been identified, the safety committee should select the most suitable method for dealing with each exposure. There are common elements with all disaster planning procedures; however, there should be specific procedures for dealing with each exposure. It may be helpful to designate an emergency coordinator from the safety committee to coordinate disaster planning activities.

Upon completion of the disaster/emergency plan for your location, provide in-service training for all employees. Relevant sections of the disaster/emergency plan should be discussed during the training.

All disaster plans will require monitoring and modification on a regular basis to account for changing organizational needs and disaster exposures. The emergency coordinator should complete this task.

All successful risk management programs begin with support from upper management. Obtain support from your pastor, principal, or administrator prior to formulating your disaster/emergency plan.

Disaster planning resources can be obtained through a variety of sources; federal, state and local governments; state fire marshals and local fire departments; the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); and numerous related websites.

Disaster planning assistance can be obtained from Catholic Mutual Group's Risk Management Department. There is also crisis information for use in schools that can be downloaded from the following website: <http://iu20.npss.org/crisismanual>.