

# CHURCH-LED DISASTER RESPONSE MINISTRY







# Developing a Program to Provide Ministry Aid and Response to Disaster

As Hurricane Harvey ravaged the Houston, Texas area, Houston's First Baptist Church (HFBC) saw an open door of opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ.

During the storm's worst moments, HFBC was present, administering disaster response efforts and providing tangible resource and a corps of volunteer workers. After the storm subsided and some normalcy settled back into the area, the church felt compelled to share with other churches what it learned through its disaster response efforts by publishing a manual designed to help them go deeper in their disaster response ministry.

This manual can help those who want to be in the middle of the disaster-relief effort — making a significant contribution in disaster response. It includes what steps HFBC took and the lessons the church learned in the process.

Hurricanes are not the only natural disasters that the U.S. faces. In 2018, "The U.S. was impacted by 14 separate billion-dollar disaster events: two tropical cyclones, eight severe storms, two winter storms, drought and wildfires."<sup>1</sup>

If your church already has the basics of disaster preparation covered, please read on.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam B. Smith, "2018's Billion Dollar Disasters in Context," climate.gov; available at <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/blogs/beyond-data/2018s-billion-dollar-disasters-context>.



# Discover the Needs in your Community

Before you begin any new ministry, it is important to first take time to discover and understand the unique needs within your community. Explore the physical community, listen to and learn from people living and working in the area and seek God's guidance by prayer-driving and prayer-walking the neighborhood.

*If preparing your church to be ready to respond to a disaster is a need and desire within your congregation, keep reading! We have practical steps to help you get started.*

To learn more about how to identify needs in your community, download [\*How Can You Serve? An In-Depth Guide to Discovering Community Needs\*](#).

If not, [check out some of our other ministry guides](#) for opportunities that fit for your church's gifting and community's needs.





# Strategically Considering Ministry Opportunities

Take the next step by enlisting a small group of people within the congregation to assess your church's potential for creating a disaster response program by working through the following questions:

- **What groups in your community could you partner with to meet this need?** These could include other community churches and existing disaster response groups, police and fire departments, community leaders and local civic clubs.
- **Who in your church is passionate and equipped to lead or participate in this ministry?** Consider people with experience in disaster response, building, repair, construction, meal prep, mission team members and other passionate volunteers.
- **What resources and relationships has God given your church to support this ministry?** Consider missions offerings, other financial resources, church members and Sunday School classes as places to start.

These questions can lead this small group of local missionaries to determine whether or not:

- (1) There is desire within the congregation to meet this need.
- (2) There are resources of people, space and money to meet this need.
- (3) This ministry is sustainable over time.
- (4) You feel God leading your congregation in this direction.







# Best Practices in Disaster response

Three guidelines should be considered as you begin any disaster response program:

**1. Create a disaster response plan.** Get started by creating a plan so disaster response can happen effectively and quickly. A comprehensive disaster response plan should include timeframes and tasks for each of the following stages of relief:

- Initial response
- Transition into relief
- Transition into rehabilitation
- Transition into long-term development

Create a plan for staff reallocation for each stage of disaster response, making sure to involve staff in the planning, so they will know what they are expected to do. Set priorities for who will receive help and when. There will be little, if any, time to make that decision once a disaster has occurred. Once the plan is in place, review it annually to make sure preparation is up-to-date before a disaster hits.

**2. Develop working relationships with disaster response partners.** When the plan is complete, look for partners in the community who uphold the highest standards for quality care of those affected. Ensure that partners are registered with local and national authorities and seek clarity about potential partners' time frame and whether they can meet the needs in a timely fashion. Review the qualifications of and training procedures for those working in disaster response. Make sure these meet your standards.

**3. Provide disaster response during the disaster.** Give cash, material donations and other resources cautiously and under the guidance of local leaders. Identify ways you can support local leader development, increasing the sustainability of ministry. Communicate expectations in writing where possible to minimize the risk of miscommunication. Communicate expectations and roles to staff clearly and often. Make conversation about expectations and roles ongoing, revisiting it over time and when changes take place. Prioritize relationships over projects. Let partners be the heroes of your shared ministry.



# Strategy for Disaster response

HFBC organized their work under the umbrellas of three major teams. Use this example as a guide in your own response:

**The Give Team**, which handled gathering relief supplies and materials.

**The Grow Team**, which handled obtaining boats, vehicles and housing for displaced families.

**The Leadership Team**, which arranged and assigned tasks in based on priority.

These three teams worked under the guidance of the Missions Office which oversaw setting up Data Collection and Distribution, helping plan the clean-up phase, disbursing benevolence resources and coordinating non-church volunteers. The responsibilities for each team are outlined below.

## The Give Team — Gathering Relief Supplies and Materials

**1. Initial steps:** In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, relief supplies are needed quickly. The Give Team is responsible for the collection and distribution of physical supplies and resources that are donated by both individuals and organizations. The Give Team is administered by three individuals — the team lead, the intake lead and the distribution lead.

Provide information on the church's website to explain how to donate, what to donate and how to contact the Give Team. On the website, immediate needs likely to be requested first may include:

### Food

- Non-perishable food
- Bottled water

### Baby Supplies

- Baby spoons
- Baby formula
- Baby food
- Baby wipes
- Baby diapers
- Diaper cream

### Toiletries

- Comfort kits (soap, shampoo, toothpaste)
- Hand sanitizer
- Deodorant
- Feminine products
- Face wipes

### Linens

- Pillows
- Towels
- Blankets

### Pet Supplies

- Dog food
- Cat food
- Pet crates

### Medical Supplies

- Wheelchairs
- Adult diapers



After the immediate needs are met, provide information through the website about the supplies needed to begin the clean-up process which may include:

- Shovels
- Sledgehammers
- Crowbars
- Mold killer (Concrobium, Shockwave, or a similar product).
- Sprayers for bleach
- Saws for tree clearance
- Work gloves
- N95 Respirator Masks
- Utility trash bags
- Cleaning supplies (new, not opened or used)

Provide a designated email address as the point of contact for those with donations. Use a centralized document, like a Google Doc, to set up shared records where information can be collected and accessed by team members.

Obtain necessary information from all donors:

1. Name/point person
2. Organization name
3. Phone number and email address
4. Estimated date and time of delivery
5. Details of items in delivery





From this information, determine what facilities will be needed to intake, sort, store and distribute donations. A lot of space will be needed. In fact, donations will probably exceed anticipation. Make sure enough space has been designated to handle it. If necessary, arrange for a tent or other temporary structure to provide storage outside. If possible, arrange to have forklifts and pallet jacks on site. Receive goods on pallets if possible to make unloading, moving and storing donated items easier.

Enlist a team of leaders to oversee and organize the army of volunteers necessary to intake, sort, store and distribute donations. Determine how long you plan to receive donations, as well as an exit strategy for when this team will no longer receive donations. Consider options for people to continue to donate through other sources, as well as where else people can go to receive needed supplies. Finally, help volunteers find other organizations that need volunteers.

## 2. Next steps:

**Develop an effective organization for the intake of donations.** Designate a staff member or a trusted lay leader to oversee the processes of receiving, sorting, storing and distributing donated items from an overall viewpoint. Encourage this leader to work to streamline those processes as the program continues. The leader is to connect with individual team leads to ensure each team has what it needs.

**Designate locations for sorting and storing various types of goods.** These might include: clothes, linens, toiletries, baby supplies, food, cleaning supplies, pet supplies and water. Later, other supplies will come to help with the rebuild effort that need to be sorted and stored as well.

### These supplies might include:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• N-95 masks</li><li>• Crowbars and pry-bars</li><li>• Hammers</li><li>• Utility Knives or sheetrock knives</li><li>• Sawzall, which can speed up work if available</li><li>• Sledgehammers</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sump-pumps</li><li>• Wheelbarrows</li><li>• Work gloves</li><li>• Work boots</li><li>• Shop vacs</li><li>• Heavy latex gloves</li><li>• Face masks or safety glasses</li><li>• Push brooms</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Floor squeegees</li><li>• 1- to 2-gallon pump sprayers</li><li>• Mold killer and inhibitors (Concrobium, Shockwave, or a similar product)</li><li>• Tyvek coveralls to protect from the mold</li></ul> |
|---|--|--|

**Do not ask specifically for clothing donations.** Clothes are often least needed in disaster response and can quickly become an overwhelming task to tackle. You **will receive clothes** even if they haven't been requested. On the other hand, cleaning supplies are always much needed but frequently lacking in the quantity needed.



On the website, explain that all donations arriving in anything larger than a personal vehicle must be scheduled through the intake team. If possible, any large donations coming on semi-trucks need to be on pallets to keep those less labor-intensive. **Don't** promise to take pictures of distributed goods, either when goods are received or given out in aid. There is not enough time in the urgency of the moment to be able to honor that request.

**Assign a team the responsibility of unloading all donations**, whether single car donations from the community or larger donations from churches and organizations. As needed, this team has the responsibility of sorting the donated items and delivering them to their designated areas. Assign each area of designated donations (such as baby supplies or water) to a team leader who will then organize a group of volunteers to sort and organize the donations in their specific area. Instruct team leaders and volunteers to sort and store with your end goal in mind. For example, if you are planning to distribute resources from your facility, then store items so that people can easily access the items to be distributed. If they will be distributed elsewhere, pack them securely for the transportation to that location.

If distributing goods from your own facility, assign volunteers to be “hosts” or designated volunteers who help those seeking to receive donations. Determine if these “hosts” need to be bilingual, and, if so, strategically utilize your bilingual volunteers in this way. Allow only one person from a family seeking to receive donations to navigate your facility with a “host.” You may need to designate a waiting area for the rest of the members of the family.

**Enlist a team leader for “Volunteer Check-in”** to assign volunteers who show up unannounced to the team that has the greatest volunteer need at that moment. Your organization may also have volunteers going out from your facility to help with cleaning and rebuilding in the community. Coordinate with the person in charge of those volunteers to make sure their needs for cleaning supplies are provided.



**Think through how/if you are going to feed your volunteers.** Some relief organizations' mission is to feed large groups of volunteers, and they may be able to help with that need.





## The Grow Team — Establishing Immediate Physical Needs

The Grow Team has the responsibility of organizing immediate crisis/rescue help. Their assignment is:

- Determining physical needs of church members and non-members (Leverage networks already in your church, like Sunday school classes or small groups.)
- Coordinating temporary housing for victims and out-of-town volunteers
- Organizing and mobilizing volunteer teams
- Organizing and providing necessary tools for volunteer teams
- Training teams regarding work expectations and safety issues
- Following up daily with homeowners to make sure each job is complete and next steps scheduled

### 1. Initial Steps:

In the first few days after the disaster, rescue efforts, temporary housing and other crisis situations will be the priority. The mission is to provide for the safety and well-being of each family.

Since a family's situation could deteriorate rapidly, it may be necessary to call each identified family each day to confirm the family's safety and determine any future needs they have. By leveraging the church's Sunday school, small group or Bible study network, you can compile a list of those people who are members of the church who were affected and enter them into a centralized document (like a Google Doc).

Create forms to speed up the process of identifying the needs of people. Once the forms are released to the public, you may find the response overwhelming. Identify partner churches to work with in areas you cannot cover.

Develop two forms: an "I need help" form and an "I can help" form. Use these to gather data for those with needs and those who desire to help meet needs. Using Google forms, you can automatically export this data into the appropriate master Google Sheet.

- A master Google Sheet (using multiple tabs for each ministry team's use) allows different ministries to sort, organize and meet needs in a timely fashion.
- Google Maps can be set up automatically to plot needs and assets from the Google forms, so you can visually target volunteer teams to specific geographic areas for maximum efficiency.
- Leverage services like Mailchimp to coordinate multiple service calls for speed and efficiency.

Using this kind of system can help speed up the initial setup of disaster response needs and help you efficiently provide for those needs by interfacing simultaneously with various teams. Make sure that all who have access to the information know how to use it correctly, or important information can be lost through operator error.



**2. Temporary Housing Needs:** Those who need temporary housing fall into two categories: out-of-town volunteers and families who have been displaced by the disaster. Gather all potential host homes from the “I can help” forms—including the number of beds each home has—the duration of stay they are able to offer and whether kids/pets are welcomed. Match these with the housing needs by geographical locations that have been communicated on the “I need help” forms. Some of the out-of-town volunteers may also be housed in these homes.

**Consider the following recommendations:**

- Be aware that issues can arise over differing expectations on the part of the hosts and the recipients, many of which will be based on family dynamics.
- Create a clearly worded covenant agreement for behavior and expectations for both parties.
- If possible, conduct background checks—especially if the elderly or children are involved.
- Have a point person daily contact each housing situation to be sure the dynamics within the home are healthy and good for all involved.
- Many of the out-of-town volunteers may prefer being housed at the church with cots.





## The Leadership Team — Providing Clean-up Support

The leadership team has the responsibility of setting the priorities of who could be helped and the parameters of the kind of help you are able to provide.

### 1. Initial Steps:

**Because of the initial flood of needs coming in, priorities have to be set on who will be helped.**

Concentrate on helping the church members, the vulnerable (elderly, widows, single parents and/or low-income individuals or families), those with no insurance (if applicable) and those within a certain mileage area to the church. After helping these, you can then sort through the remaining “I need help” responses and help meet these requests as teams become available.

**Create a list of supplies that will be needed during the clean-up phase.**

**Coordinate the placement of volunteers.** If the crisis comes with some warning, like a hurricane, send out a preliminary all-call volunteer email. This list created from responses to the email can become the foundational “on-call list.” After the crisis, issue a call to every member of the church to complete the “I want to help” form. This group shares their addresses, availability, skills, tools and other resources/skills they have.

After the initial response phase (i.e., once people began going back to work), the Leadership Team can schedule large “all serve” days which can be supplemented with smaller daily targeted service projects, creating a hybrid model of using “all hands on deck,” while smaller groups or individuals work to meet very specific requests.

Many of your members may not have experience with this kind of relief work, so few may own any of the necessary tools. Much of your time/resources in the first week may be spent locating, securing and organizing tools. After the second week, supplies may begin to come through donation to supplement teams on the field. Keeping up with maintenance and organization of the tools, as well as recovering all the tools after each project is completed, can be challenging.

Encourage Sunday school classes, small groups and Bible study groups to serve together. Use youth ministries to mobilize students, parents and leaders—again, working together on teams.





## The Missions Office—Coordinating the Details

The Missions Office has the following responsibilities:

- Set up data collection and distribution
- Help plan the clean-up phase
- Disburse benevolence resources and coordinate non-church volunteers

**1. Initial Steps:** *Focus on locating church members and help those who need immediate assistance.* In the first few days, develop an organizational structure with staff and key volunteers that can collect, sort and distribute data. Also establish priorities of whom we would help and in which order. Finally, connect with other organizations and churches that are doing work you can partner with.

It is necessary to train those who have access to the information sheets to make sure nothing is changed or removed, or that information received verbally is put into the system.

**2. Preparation for the Clean-up Phase:** As stated under the Leadership Team section, the Missions Office may be overwhelmed with the requests for help, *so priorities must be set on who would be able to receive help.* These two teams establish the guidelines of who would be the target group to receive help. These have been identified above. These teams also develop the list of supplies that are needed for the clean-up phase. An example list is provided under the Leadership Team's instructions.

**3. Coordination of out-of-town volunteer teams:** *Contact and coordination of out-of-town teams is another area of responsibility for the Missions Office.* The coordination of data can be set up through Google Drive from a Google Form Volunteer Link on your website. The form can automatically feed into a Google sheet for contact of the volunteers and coordination with teams. Contact is made with each team of volunteers to confirm dates, time of arrival, the number of volunteers and the supplies the team is bringing. The volunteer teams should also receive a detailed follow-up email containing guidelines and procedures. [Click here for an example from HFBC.](#)

*Safety: For teams spending the night in common areas of a church or temporary space, it is highly recommended you make provisions to complete a background check or the traveling team leader provide you with evidence of completed background reports for each volunteer. In either case, it is preferable to have them done prior to a team's arrival.*

**Taking care of out-of-town volunteers:** If out-of-town volunteer teams are housed in the try to separate male and female volunteers on different floors of the church if possible. Otherwise, use rooms on opposite sides of your building. Teams can be required to bring their own bedding (sheets, mattresses, etc.) and towels. If you are housing them in classroom spaces, have them pack up their materials and move them to a corner of the room or to an empty room to make space for classes on Sunday.

Consider serving breakfast to teams housed at the church each day and providing box lunches each day as they leave for the field. You may choose not to serve dinner, as the time teams return from work sites may not be predictable.

Contact teams the day before their arrival to confirm their arrival time. To avoid complications with housing, you may choose not to receive teams after a curfew time. Teams arriving after that time should be advised to wait until the following day to join the efforts. Upon arrival, give teams a short tour of the church and then show them to their rooms.

*Out-of-town volunteer orientation:* All teams should be required to attend an orientation, either on the day they arrived or the very next morning BEFORE being sent out. Teams that arrive after orientation may not be sent out until the following day. Orientation should include the following:

- Walking through *Orientation Packets*. The packet should feature vision statements for your church and disaster response ministry, procedures, work descriptions and contact information.
- Signing waivers for volunteers' stay at your church.
- Briefing of specific assignments for volunteers.
- Prayer before volunteers go out to their sites.

**An example orientation packet is provided at the end of this guide.**

*Sending out-of-town volunteers to the field:* Work each night to prepare a schedule for each team for the next day.

- Follow up with the assigned projects from the day to see if these were completed.
- Follow up with the teams sent out to see if they completed the work or if they needed to be sent out again to the same site.
- Check with new teams arriving to confirm their arrival time.
- Review and confirm the number of work teams available.
- Contact people in need to see if they will be available to receive a team the next day until a worksite is set up for each team.
- Update the Google Sheet on assignments to reflect which worksites were assigned to which team.

*Daily coordination of volunteers:* Time and location of volunteers to meet and carpool to work sites should be established and announced using church email lists and social media. Each gathering of volunteers includes: prayer, orientation and expectation of the sites, an on-site visit, leader guidance and discipling on the site, a group debriefing and announcement of next visit before departure.

**4. Disbursement of Benevolence:** The Missions Office has responsibility for the intake and accounting of gifts, as well as distribution. A benevolence sheet can be linked off the main Google Sheet which is only viewable by those who needed to approve donations. As people are added to the main sheet, the information is automatically placed on the benevolence sheet. As people are added, the Missions Office continues to prioritize giving to church members first, then regular attenders, then those with some other strong connection to the church.

*Calling those who requested help:* A team of church staff members and key volunteers should check the names of those requesting help for the first time to verify which priority category (members, regular attenders, or those not connected to the church) each fit into. Non-members should be called by a staff member who is responsible to provide outreach to them. As appropriate, this staff member can connect the family in need ongoing ministry at your church. In the first round of calls, church members only are called. In the second round, follow-up calls to members are made and initial phone calls to regular attenders and those who had a strong connection to the church. A set list of questions should be used. Use the following as guidance.



- A team has come to serve you. How are things progressing for you?
- We are able to help financially toward your recovery. May I ask a few questions to see how we can assist you?
- Do you own your home or are you renting?
- What damage was specifically done to your home?
- Did you lose furniture or appliances?
- Have you heard back from FEMA or your insurance company?
- If so, what did they cover? What did they not cover?
- Are you still living in the home? Did you have to relocate temporarily? Are you paying rent and a mortgage?

*Disbursing funds:* Set guidelines for who can receive funds. For example, you may only give funds to those who experienced damage to their home or vehicles. Depending on the severity of the disaster, mail service may be unreliable, so you may need to deposit money directly into someone's account or ask them to pick a check up at the church office. In the case of non members, use this as an opportunity to have a staff member take the check to them and establish a relational connection.

**5. Assessing needs of ministry partners:** Assess the needs in disaster response efforts being conducted by other agencies and organizations to see if you can help. Assess the volunteer sign-up procedures and request a step-by-step outline of volunteer procedural requirements to be sent to an assigned volunteer or staff member. Gather information about the group/organization, the contact information of staff members involved and specific information on the area they were coordinating, including: supplies being delivered and those urgently needed and the meals, spiritual care, and medical aid being provided. Assess the needs for Bibles to be given out, an area set aside for prayer and a chapel area, beginning conversations with the leading organizations. After assessing needs, a short list of urgent supplies needed can be created. Your church or church members can donate and deliver these supplies or volunteer as needed.

**6. Lessons learned:** Based on their experiences during Harvey relief, HFBC has added these *over-all recommendations for future disaster-relief events*:

- Conduct an all-staff meeting to review what was done during your disaster response, determine what the process will look like in the next emergency, and assign each staff member a specific role for the next emergency.
- Determine how the church can help: those in temporary housing; places needing to be muddled out or rebuilt; and coordinate with other ministries.
- Maintain a supply of hard-to-obtain items for disaster response.
- Conduct annual disaster-relief training to maintain personnel preparedness.
- Create a Google form that is ready to send out immediately after a natural disaster has occurred that assesses needs of those in the disaster area and that identifies available volunteers.
- Encourage church members to keep at least one disaster kit at their homes so supplies are immediately available in a disaster.

- Leverage the emails of church members for processes, tools, team and network to have Area Captains preassigned for mobilization. These area captains will be involved in leading annual training. Also, leverage a text system to communicate with this group of people.
- Create a waiver form that can be used for the entirety of disaster response efforts (for volunteers and homeowners) instead of a daily waiver that must be redone every day.
- Annually review all forms, sheets and documents used to evaluate, tweak and cue up for future use.
- Don't schedule out-of-town teams more than one month out from the disaster event if you are not including a time of rebuilding as part of your long-term vision.
- Make sure all teams come prepared to be self-sufficient and that they'll bring their own work tools and all bedding. Note that it is okay to turn down a group that cannot supply its own needs.

## Operations — Church Liaison

The Operations Team acts as the primary contact for disaster response related ministries that wish to partner with the church in disaster response (such as: Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, Samaritan's Purse, the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team, the North American Mission Board and Send Relief). Responsibilities include reaching out to the ministry or receiving calls requesting partnership and coordinating with affected multi-site campus churches or Faith Center Ministries to determine need, facility availability and plan logistics. Logistics can include providing office space, storage space, sleeping quarter and preparing/providing meals, showers and laundry facilities. This work is done in conjunction and cooperation with the Missions Office which will provide Disaster Response leadership. Additional responsibilities include coordinating and conducting periodic and on-going meetings or phone calls, evaluating effectiveness of relationship, troubleshooting problems and ensuring two-way communication is occurring.

### Lessons Learned:

- Good coordination and communication are required.
- Visiting teams and team numbers will be fluid and communication is required for meal planning (if required) and providing sleeping quarters.







- Meals will likely be provided by a group of volunteers from your church. Frequent updates will be needed to ensure adequate supplies are purchased (which is challenging amid a citywide disaster response) and that the proper number of meals are provided.
- The Security Director for your church needs to be kept in the communication line to ensure proper levels of security are available to protect the building and its occupants. Be aware that staffing of the building can become challenging.
- Communication with relief partners is also very important to understand the number of volunteers available when planning internal logistics as well as possible resources to help house volunteers (such as: portable showers, toilets, generators, storage containers and tools).
- Ministry partners may have a great deal of expertise that you don't have and are happy to share.
- Communication with volunteer teams is essential for them to understand building use guidelines, meal times, access to the building after hours, and specific expectations.

## The Impact of Disaster Response

In 2017, Send Relief disaster response tally was significant:

- 145,173 hours worked
- 275,481 meals distributed
- 400 roofs repaired
- 6,526 showers provided
- 4,603 loads of laundry done
- 854 properties cleaned up
- 718 Gospel presentations
- 118 salvations

God has placed this need before you. What will you and your congregation do with this opportunity?



# Making your Church Disaster Ready

**1. Pray.** The first line of response to any disaster, even before the disaster takes place, is prayer. Encourage a culture of prayer, individually, in small groups and as the church gathers, for those caught in and those who respond to disasters:

- Pray for those in the path of storms, fires and other disasters. Pray for their safety and wisdom. Prayer for the first responders who go into areas of disasters long before the areas are safe.
- Pray for those in government leadership and emergency management as they make decisions before a disaster that can save lives or put lives at risk, and as they make decisions that could impact the ability of people to evacuate or receive assistance.
- Pray for organizations that rush to the scene of a disaster to coordinate the services for disaster survivors and the assistance of thousands of volunteers.
- Pray for businesses, non-profit organizations and churches that are key allies in meeting needs after a disaster.

**2. Volunteer.** Instead of waiting for a disaster to hit, plan for disaster response in advance. Southern Baptist churches can connect with their state convention leadership for training and credentialing to respond through Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, laying the groundwork to begin your own comprehensive, church-wide response. Your state's leadership will advise you on when training takes place and the role your church can play. Connect with your state leadership [here](#).





**3. Lead.** Disaster response leaders are always integral to the response. Identify experienced volunteers with backgrounds in construction, project management, communications and other trades are valuable in leading volunteer teams. In most disaster response situations, team leaders are assigned a group of volunteers and a list of projects which need attention. The leader has the responsibility of managing the work of team members while ensuring that proper safety protocols have been followed.

**4. Partner.** Typically, once the on-the-ground disaster response has begun, churches located in the impacted disaster area mobilize to provide assistance in their communities. These churches will look for long-term partnerships from other churches outside of the impacted area that will provide long-term support in the form of volunteers and other physical resources.

**5. Give.** Your willingness to support crisis response allows Send Relief to confidently prepare and respond in times that are most urgent.

## WHAT NEXT?

*This is your opportunity to start meeting a huge need in your community — providing disaster response, one disaster at a time and opening doors to share and live out the gospel to people who need it most.*



# FIRST

## [HoustonFirst.org/HarveyRelief](https://HoustonFirst.org/HarveyRelief)

The central hub of our LOVEFIRST Disaster Response efforts

Request Help + Give Funds + Donate Supplies + Volunteer + More

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# Daily Schedule for Volunteers

**As you arrive, attend the first available Welcome Orientation Meeting time:**

Time	Activity	Location	SUNDAY (location)
9:00am-9:30am	Welcome Orientation	Connection Center	Will provide location as space is available
1:00pm-1:45pm	Welcome Orientation	Connection Center	Will provide location as space is available

**Schedule AFTER your welcome orientation as you arrive at HFBC:**

Time	Activity	Location	SUNDAY (locations)
8:00am-8:45am	Breakfast	Fellowship Center	Café line
9:30am-10:00am	Assignment Briefing	Fellowship Center	Will provide location as space is available
10:00am-6pm	Ministry	City of Houston	
7:30pm-11:00pm	Free time		
11:00pm	Curfew	Room	

*\*Sack lunches will be provided each day before leaving for ministry sites. Details will be given upon arrival.*

# Accommodation and Instructions while at HFBC

Once again, thank you for your willingness to serve our city. These are a few guidelines for your stay here at HFBC:

1. HFBC address: 7401 Katy Freeway, Houston TX 77024
2. Please wear your colored wristband at ALL times. This will identify you as an overnight guest with our security team.
3. We have an 11pm curfew at HFBC. Please DO NOT leave the building during overnight hours or you will set off the church security alarm system. If you need to leave campus for an emergency, contact HFBC security.
4. On **Sunday**, we will use some of your rooms for Bible studies. Please pack up and move your belongings to the side of the room on Sunday morning in preparation.
5. Every Monday night, we host a prayer night in the chapel from 7:00pm-9:00pm.



# Who We Are, What We Are Doing, Where We Are Helping

## Who We Are:

Houston's First Baptist Church is a **Relevant Biblical Community**.

Houston's First is a thriving and diverse community of real people experiencing real life together. Sundays are a time when we gather together to grow and give of what we have, but our lives consist of much more than attending church on Sunday. We want to be in church every day of the week.

## What We Are Doing:

Our church has temporarily shifted its focus to disaster response, rehabilitation and development. Our aim is not to only provide physical help, but also bring spiritual awakening through the comforting, unconditional LOVE of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit.

## Where We Are Helping:

The greater Houston area.

# How We Will Help

This is a disaster area and many people have lost everything they owned. As a result, and because of the love of Christ in us, we want to serve with love and care. It can be easy to simply go into someone's house and just start removing everything. Remember that this house is someone's home, and they will be grieving during this process. Go slow and with care. As much as we want to do stuff, we want to be as helpful and healing as possible in this process. We are, as Jesus was, servants. We want to serve them — not our need to do stuff.

## Here are a few things to remember:

- Be flexible! Things may not go according to plan. Be okay with shifting gears.
- Even if you are not able to do anything physical for a day, prayer-walking a neighborhood is work that needs to be done.
- If someone does not want help, don't push them. Say okay, ask if there is any way you can pray for them, and then move on.
- Ask before you remove any of their possessions from the house.
- Even if an item is completely ruined, don't simply toss it outside. Treat it with care.
- Talk the homeowner through the process of remediation.
- Have a couple of people check in with the homeowner and talk and listen to him or her and pray.
- Listen to your team leader at all times. Whatever they say to do, do that.
- Pray for our city. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to feel for Houston and its people.



# Flood Damage Procedures and Guidelines for Safe Remediation

Follow the guidelines outlined below for safe remediation of houses:

## Initial Contact:

As you go into the community, ask these questions:

- We are with Houston's First Baptist Church (or something similar) and want to help with clean up. Would you like help?
- Can we help clean out your house to prevent mold from growing?
- Do you have flood insurance? If so, has your insurance company given you any direction?
- Have you filled out a form with FEMA already?
- Have you taken photos already?
- Would you like for us to help you take those pictures? (If they are able to do it on their phone, all the better. We just need to help them with a tape measure.)
- Can we have your email to follow up with you later and see if you need any help?

**If the homeowner grants you permission to help, talk them through the process below, explaining what you will be doing:**

## Safety Brief:

Before doing anything, assess the situation around the home.

**The safety of residents and volunteers is more important than cleaning out the house.**

1. Is it safe to enter the home?
  - Storm damage can weaken the structure of the home.
2. Have all utilities been turned off?
  - Electricity and water don't mix!
  - Utilities can become damaged, leading to gas and water leaks.

## Remediation:

### Water Removal

The first step is to get any standing water out of the house.

- Mold will begin to form within the first 24-48 hours!
- This can be done with shop vacs, push brooms, or squeegees.

- Push it out of the house to where it will drain naturally out into the yard.
- Poke small holes in the bottom of sheet rock to allow any standing water to drain out.
- Water will be contaminated, so take extra safety precautions. Rubber gloves and masks must be worn by everyone.

### Removal and Salvage of Furniture

- Take furniture, rugs, bedding and clothing outside to dry as soon as possible. Use an air conditioner or humidifier to remove moisture or open at least two windows to ventilate with outdoor air. Use fans to circulate air in the house. If mold and mildew have already developed, brush off items outdoors to prevent scattering mold spores in the house. Vacuum floors, ceilings and walls to remove mildew and then wash with disinfectant. Wear a two-strap protective mask to prevent breathing mold spores.
- Mattresses should be thrown away if they were in the water.
- Upholstered furniture soaks up contaminants from floodwaters and should be cleaned only by a professional.
- Wood veneered furniture is usually not worth the cost and effort of repair.
- Solid wood furniture can usually be restored, unless damage is severe. If it is to be salvaged, it needs to be dried immediately and protected from further damage.
- Toys and stuffed animals may have to be thrown away if they've been contaminated by floodwaters. If they can be washed thoroughly, they may be salvageable.
- Photographs, books and important papers can be frozen and cleaned later. They should be dried carefully and slowly. Wash the mud off and store the articles in plastic bags and put them in a frost-free freezer to protect them from mildew and further damage until you have time to thaw and clean them or take them to a professional.
- Deciding which furniture to save may be a more personal issue, especially if you have antiques and other pieces with sentimental value. Keep in mind that you don't need to repair all pieces of salvageable furniture immediately. You can clean, dry and store them in a warm, well-ventilated place until you have time to deal with them.

### Appliances

- **Have a service person check flooded appliances before you attempt operation or invest a lot of time in clean-up.**
- **Appliances should not be operated until they have been checked by service personnel.** Here are some things that may need to be done.
  - Electrical motors may need to be reconditioned or replaced.
  - Wiring and fixtures need to be checked and cleaned. They may also need replacement.
  - Before cleaning and sanitizing an appliance, be sure the motor is in safe working order. It may not be worth the time to clean up the unit.
  - A rust inhibitor may need to be applied to all metal parts. Even though an appliance may not have been submerged, rust can develop from dampness in the air.
- **Refrigerators and Freezers:** Sanitize the refrigerator or freezer if water has seeped in. Be sure



the motor and freezing unit is in safe working order and insulation is not wet. Wet insulation means replacement may be necessary. Remove and wash all shelves, crispers and ice trays. Wash thoroughly with water and detergent. Rinse with a disinfectant solution. Wash the interior of the refrigerator, including the door and door gasket, with hot water and baking soda. Rinse with a disinfectant solution. Leave the door open for about 15 minutes to allow free air circulation. If odor remains, place several pieces of activated charcoal in an open metal container, or use a commercial refrigerator deodorizer. Wash the outside with a mild detergent and hot water.

- **Laundry Equipment:** After washers and dryers have been reconditioned, sanitize them as follows: Pour a disinfectant (chlorine, pine oil, or phenolic) into the empty washing machine. Then complete a 15-minute cycle on the “hot” water setting. Unplug the dryer and wipe the drum and door with a cloth dipped in disinfectant solution. Rinse with a cloth dipped in clear water. Leave the dryer door open until all parts are thoroughly dry — preferably overnight.

### Debris Staging for Removal

- Remember that drywall is heavy — especially waterlogged drywall. But there are several ways to move it. One is to slide it inside a tarp. Large chunks can also be placed in a wheelbarrow or dropped into a plastic garbage can, which you can slide out of the house or carry on a hand truck.
- Whatever you do, figure out debris transport before you cut your first piece of drywall and you’ll have an easier time overall.
- **From City of Houston’s Waste Removal Site:** Tree Waste and Junk Waste should not be stacked under low overhead electrical wires, other utility cables, signs, or mailboxes; next to fences or posts, or on top of water meters, gas meters, fire hydrants, or other exposed utility components. Materials should not be placed in the street, on the sidewalk or other right-of-way, or in any manner which would interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic.

### Removal of Drywall

- **Mark the Water Line** (the highest point that floodwaters reached). It will be evident on the drywall. Mark a **cut line 6 to 12 inches above that** using either a laser level or marking around the room at a uniform height above the floor. **If the line is nearing four feet, go ahead and mark it at four feet, which will make re-installing drywall easier.** If available, snap a chalk line. This might seem unnecessarily fussy at this point when all you’re trying to do is remove soggy drywall to ventilate the wall. But a neat job now will greatly speed the installation of replacement drywall.
- **Cut the drywall along the marked line** with a utility knife scoring all the way through. Power tools are not recommended unless you have experience with them. Cutting all the way into the studs will damage the structure.
- **Take a framing hammer and knock a hole in the drywall** that will allow you to reach through to the other side. Make sure you do this between the studs and below the cut line, so that you’re damaging only the drywall that you’re going to remove anyway.
- **Remove the plates from your electrical outlets and pry off baseboard trim.** Next, wearing gloves, reach into the hand hole and pull the drywall away from the studs. The first couple of bays will be difficult. Once you’ve opened a large area, use a flat bar, hammer, or a flat-nosed shovel to pry the drywall away from the studs.

- While you're doing this, check for dampness on the exterior walls. Get your hand in the insulation. Your goal here is to remove the drywall up to the point where the insulation is dry, so that anything that got damp is replaced. So, if the insulation still feels wet where you made your first cut line, make another test cut higher up the wall.
- NOTE: Removal of electrical cable, outlets and outlet boxes (and installing their replacement) should be left to a licensed electrician.
- **Cut away soggy fiberglass insulation and stuff it into contractor trash bags.** Remove drywall screws by backing them out or snapping them off. Same goes for drywall nails.

### Removal of Flooring

- Most recommendations are **that all flooring will need to be removed if submerged in flood waters.** Drying of the subfloor is mandatory to keep mold from spreading. There is no certainty that the flooring hasn't been contaminated with sewage and other chemicals.
- **Rugs can be removed and dried and then cleaned by professionals.**
- **Carpet and padding need to be rolled up in strips no wider than three feet** and in manageable weights. They will be heavy with water in them!
- **Stack the rolls neatly by the curb** in a manner that will not impede vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
- **Wood flooring should be made into secured bundles using tape or rope** and stacked neatly in the same manner as carpet.

### Wash Everything

- It is recommended that the entire interior be hosed down, if possible, to rid the structure of any mud and contaminants.
- Only do this if you know for certain that the power is off to the home and that the water can be removed.
- Once it is all dry inside, a mold inhibitor needs to be applied to all surfaces that were submerged. Circulation is key in this process! Use fans and open up the house to allow full drying of all structures.





4200 North Point Parkway | Alpharetta, GA 30022  
[SendRelief.org](https://SendRelief.org)