

Crisis Management Planning

Phases of plan development:

1. Identify existing assets and resources – plan templates, experts, agencies
2. Craft a risk assessment; understand what the plan should accomplish
3. Outline the plan and get approvals from pastor and governing board
4. Form a committee only if there is special expertise available among members
5. If a group, allocate who compiles what by when
6. Research each major topic
7. Write procedures, review, edit – get some fresh eyes on it
8. Revisions and final approval
9. Publish and distribute as required

Types of risks and hazards that may be mitigated (choose only those that apply):

- Medical emergency
- Severe weather
 - Tornado
 - Hurricane
 - Flood
- Fire, gas leak – things needing evacuation
- Violence
 - Agitated aggressor, intruder
 - Active shooter
 - Bomb threat
 - Terrorism
- Power outage, tech outage (server crash, software crash)
- Volcano
- Earthquake

Considerations:

- Scripture, how our faith informs us, and the church's mission statement – these should drive the overall thrust of the plan
- Feasibility of actions, given available resources
- Relevance of actions, given the risk assessment
- Acceptability of actions, given the culture
- How actions can be practiced or exercised
- Readiness of actors, decision makers despite infrequent events
- Schools vs. churches – the latter are not subject to many government requirements for emergency planning
- Information from local police and fire departments pertaining to your context
- Accountability – annual review by governing body that plan is in force

Areas to consider in each risk area:

- Timeframe
 - Before the event – how to prevent/avoid the circumstance (non-weather related)
 - Just prior and during the event – how to preserve/protect people and property
 - After the event – how to respond and recover, focused on staff, members, people in the community, and church property
- Persons responsible to execute actions
- Communications to leaders, from leaders; modes of communication; graphics
- Money, equipment, or expertise needed (e.g., 1st aid kits, medical people, generator)
- Assumptions being made
- Constraints (e.g., budget)
- Assistance for certain affected people (e.g., elderly, disabled, infants, Hmong)
- Not just sanctuary, but offices, classrooms for Sunday School, fellowship hall, kitchen
- Agencies that could assist
- Legalities, liabilities
- Back-ups, redundancies, fail safes
- On-site decision maker(s) with authority and means to execute actions
- Sequence and timeline for actions before and during and after

Sample questions to ask:

General

- What are we trying to accomplish? How will we know?
- How does this intersect with policy, policy manual?
- Who is the lead decision maker? Our spiritual leader (i.e., pastor) or someone else?
- If that person isn't available, what is the decision-making chain?
- Is there a need for a crisis team or security team? If so, who comprises it?

Medical

- What liability, if any, do we face for Good Samaritan actions with someone?
- How many people should be trained on CPR? On first aid? On defibrillator?
- Who are known medical professionals that regularly attend our church?

Fire, Gas Leak, Evacuation

- How do we practice a fire drill or evacuation?
- How often?
- Where are safe rally points?

Weather (tornado or severe storm)

- For severe weather and tornado, where are shelter-in-place locations?
 - If people are in the sanctuary
 - If they are in the fellowship hall
 - If in classrooms
 - If in offices
- What campus maps with this info should be created and where should they be posted?
- Who checks emergency lighting, and how often? What considerations if a tornado at night?
- During services, classes, meetings, fellowship, etc. who monitors for a tornado watch or warning?
- How would an unfolding dangerous situation be communicated to the decision maker?
- Who helps group quick and orderly movement to shelters?
- What are the criteria for the decision to shelter? Weather siren alone? Something earlier?
- How long does it take to move 250 people to shelters? 100? 30? Including elderly and disabled?
- Can we/should we prohibit people from going outside or to another building for kids?
- Do we provide calming as we shelter people, such as prayer or singing?
- How do we check for all clear and safety before returning to the event?
- How do we assess and treat injury (including fainting, heart attack, etc.) from the event?

Weather (hurricane)

- Who will hurricane or natural disaster cover in this plan?
 - The church and its campus – protect and remediate property?
 - Aid to others – shelter and food for limited time for displaced people?
 - Restoration of properties and/or aid beyond our campus, i.e., our neighborhood?
- What preparatory actions do we take for hurricane prep?
 - What roofs are vulnerable to wind?
 - What existing leaks do our facilities have?
 - Is any part of the campus susceptible to flooding?
 - What trees could fall onto a roof or wall?
 - What, if any, plywood, tarps, and duct tape will we store in case it's needed?
 - How many days before a major hurricane do we prepare our facilities for the storm (e.g., remove outdoor objects that could impact buildings, unplug and cover computers, etc.)?
- What facility would we use to shelter others, for example, the fellowship hall?
- What agencies could partner with us in sheltering people?
 - Red Cross?
 - FEMA?
 - Food bank?
- Who sets the official requirements to shelter a group, and what are these?
- What sorts of volunteers would we need to help with sheltering (e.g., medical, cleaning, fix-it, vehicle drivers, communicators, logistics)?
- What equipment or supplies would we need to shelter others? What is supplied by other agencies?
 - Cots, blankets?
 - Toiletries?
 - Generator?
 - Other?
- What is the projected expense for a generator that could power a large hall, kitchen, and frig?
- What aid could we provide others outside our campus?
 - Food, water, clothing?
 - Clean up?
 - Restoration services?
- What sorts of volunteers would we need to accomplish this aid?

Violence (shooter, intruder)

- Who will collect information from city and county law enforcement on their strategy to respond to an incident at our campus?
- What info do we supply police?
 - Blueprints and photos (digital, hard copy) of each facility on campus?
 - Contact info for key personnel?
 - Keys?
 - Shutoff points for electric, gas, water?
 - Designated rally points?
 - Ongoing information regarding existing "watch list" danger (e.g., domestic disputes, child custody battles, combative divorces, people with restraining orders)?
- How can we prevent or minimize the crisis ahead of time?
 - Who should regularly pray for the safety and protection of our campus and all who meet here? How do we ensure this actually occurs?
 - How may we reduce hostility or bad feelings through faith interactions with those known to be hurting?
 - How might we decrease physical access points?
 - What does it cost for a squad car/officer presence on Sunday morning? Is this worth the investment?
 - What police, military, or security people regularly attend here? What might we ask them to do?
 - How can we increase awareness and identification of potential dangers (e.g., ushers/greeters trained and alert for someone who appears agitated, intoxicated, or highly abnormal erratic in behavior)?
 - Could we restrict access of those people from main gatherings and alert others to this decision? How?
 - Would security cameras be useful, and if so, where? Who monitors, and for what events?
- Any lockdown policies to be employed, such as for nursery, youth, Sunday school?
 - What areas could we shut, lock, and barricade?
 - Who would order this, and how would it be communicated?
 - How do we know whom to communicate with inside? How do we do so?
 - Who can enter protected areas, such as parents to retrieve children?
- How do we educate congregation on our policies for prep and response to such a crisis?
- How do we train groups to respond appropriately, i.e., "run-hide-confront" actions?
 - Where do we guide people to run?
 - If unable to run, how do we instruct them to hide?
 - If the leader is a target, does he draw attention away from the masses?
 - If the members are the target and they have not run or hidden, how do we instruct them to confront the aggressor (e.g., yelling, throwing hymnals, tackle from behind, close the gap and overwhelm)?
 - Who calls 911 and what info do they relay (e.g., number of shooters, location, weapon types, traps or possible explosives, sensitive areas like nursery)?
- What do we explain that people should do after police have controlled the situation?
- What actions do leaders take after the crisis has subsided to calm and assure people?
- What liability issues do we face if a member opens fire and hurts or kills someone by mistake? What liability does the member face?

Power Outage/Tech Outage

- Do we have an uninterrupted power supply (UPS) for the computer and sound board?
- What are the "Go – No Go" decision criteria for holding or cancelling the service? For example:
 - Outage aside, is it safe to be gathered?
 - Inside temperature and humidity, as well as projected rise (or fall) as the service progresses
 - Inside light – can people see?
 - What works and what doesn't work (e.g., lights and HVAC but not projection or sound)?
 - Can we do the activities we intend to do?
 - Sing (if even with piano or *a capella*)
 - Read the Bible, the hymns, parts of the liturgy (confession, creed, Lord's prayer, Communion)
 - Hear the message
- Would it be more God-pleasing to cancel or meet?
- Are there alternate venues that would be better suited for meeting?
- If power goes out during a service, how do we apply the above criteria?
- If power is out and the storm is especially fierce (heavy downpour and/or intense lightning), how does that impact the decision to cancel or continue?
- What do we communicate to people who intend on attending? How?
- How much time does the leader have to inform church staff and key members or general attendees?
- How can we get the word out that we are meeting or not meeting?
- What would need to be in place to continue a funeral service or a wedding, or both? (just seeing if you're still reading)