

Baptist Charities

Church Based Disaster Relief - Floods For Churches Outside A Disaster Zone

There is no greater opportunity to express the love of Christ by action to a community than during a disaster. This article is intended to be a basic outline for churches outside disaster zones who want to take advantage of this opportunity by assisting churches inside a disaster zone.

Baptist Charities follows the Biblical pattern established in Acts 11:29, 30 and 2 Corinthians 8, 9. The pattern is simple: churches outside the disaster zone help churches minister the love of Christ in the disaster zone.

Baptist Charities is a church based charity connecting churches to churches. 100% of what is given for disaster relief goes to the point of need. This system will allow your church to focus their giving and labors to meet specific organized needs in the disaster zone.

God has planted the church you are helping in that devastated community. Baptist Charities takes on the identity of the church in that area, because that church will be there long after the disaster is over. It's not about us. It is good for those who help from other churches to focus on promoting the local congregation too. But always remember you are representing Jesus no matter where you are.

This article is intended to be a starting place. Use it to brainstorm how you can meet needs.

For more details or help with your project feel free to contact Larry Jones, director of Baptist Charities, to discuss your project. Baptist Charities will try to get you connected with a church or churches you can assist in the disaster zone.

There are basically four stages of flood relief but some aspects are ongoing:

1. Survival

This is the immediate focus of everyone during and immediately after a disaster. In this phase churches are generally focused on three general areas:

Food and/or Lodging:

Churches involved in this ministry will be providing food for people in the disaster zone and first responders. Ways to help:

OFFERINGS

Available cash is the most flexible way to offer disaster relief through a church caring for people in a disaster zone. That will be the case in every phase of disaster relief.

COOKING CREWS

Many churches have people who have portable cooking trailers. This is a great way to help. It is best to be self contained and have all the groceries needed to feed folks, but you can work this out with the hospitality coordinator at your host church. It is also important to consider your crew's lodging needs, this must also be discussed with the hospitality coordinator.

LODGING AND/OR JOB ASSISTANCE

Your church may be able to lodge people in your area if you are close enough to the disaster zone for people to travel to you. Understand this may be a need for weeks or even months after the storm ends. These folks may need temporary or even permanent employment to support themselves because their businesses may have been damaged or destroyed in the disaster. They may be unemployed while their company rebuilds or their company may close its doors.

Churches in the disaster zone may need cots and bedding.

Churches in the disaster zone may need portable showers and/or bathroom facilities.

Material Support On An As Needed Basis

Unrequested materials sent to a disaster zone can cause difficulties. It takes staff, storage space, and then advertising to get the materials into the right hands. It's best to meet material needs as they are expressed by the churches in the disaster zone. When a church says, "We need X.", then you can mobilize to deliver X to that church.

There is a list at the end of items that are always good to send if there is a church to receive and store the materials.

Sending clothes without a specific request is not a good idea. My experience is that people empty their closets at a time like this and storage becomes an issue as well as disposal of the clothes no one wants, which, in my experience, is most of what is sent.

Transportation and rescue assistance:

Boats and high water vehicles are often needed to rescue people from homes. But once the evacuees are dropped off by the rescue vehicle they may need transportation to a relief center, so regular vehicles may also be needed.

People in relief centers often don't have transportation to take care of basic needs including getting to medical appointments. Some people may stay in their flooded homes, but their cars were flooded so they have no transportation.

Having a transportation team is a great ministry for a church in a disaster. Be sure to check with your **church insurance company** and have the **individuals check with insurance** too.

2. The Gap

The gap is the period between the disaster and receiving financial assistance from your insurance provider or the government.

Understanding Flood Insurance and Government Assistance in Texas:

In Texas most flood insurance is handled through the National Flood Insurance Program which is administered by FEMA. FEMA will generally set up claim centers close to affected areas. It will take some time for them to get set up and operational.

Helping People Through the Frustrating Maze:

Put a team of patient people together to understand the red tape and help people through it. This team should be able to transport people to the site where their insurance is set up. Sometimes there are long lines, its a good opportunity to provide wrapped treats and drinks for people if allowed by the company or government entity. Having a staffed coffee/tea/water/ snack distribution table at these locations is a good ministry too.

Pay Check to No Pay Check

In a flood disaster some people become unemployed for weeks or months while their businesses recover and rebuild. Since many people live from pay check to pay check they face not being able to pay their bills or provide for their family.

Utility companies will often help those who are struggling, also some mortgage companies have programs to help as well. But the needs often just pile up for these families. Help here is always needed.

Churches can employ disaster unemployed members and others temporarily to help in disaster relief and also help themselves by being paid for the work. Baptist Charities considers this to be a proper use of funds given to disaster support. Giving specifically to this need is helpful.

Providing groceries/food for these folks is always a big help. Some grocery stores and even restaurants will work with churches to help people.

Gift Cards can be a great way to focus your care.

Flooded Vehicles

Many people lose their vehicles during a flood. If the flood is large it may take awhile for insurance to provide a replacement or rental. These people will need transportation.

3. Demolition

Demolition is the easiest stage of rebuilding. But it is also the most dangerous. Lets talk about a few dangers first:

Contamination

You should never question that flood water is contaminated. Drinking water may be contaminated too. I've seen animal body parts and sewage in every flood I've worked. When the water is gone the filth left behind is contaminated. Wear protective gear: water proof boots, gloves, and breathing masks. Treat cuts, scraps, and punctures quickly. Its good to carry antibiotic cream, alcohol pads, and bandaids with you. Wading in flood water without protection is foolish.

There also may be snakes in places you least expect. Watch closely.

Electrical Danger

Unless a utility company or city has shut off electricity to an area, be very careful and observant. It is best when working in a flooded home to make sure the electricity is off to the building while you are working. Downed power lines are extremely dangerous.

Weight

Wet material can be very heavy. It is important to be cautious when picking up materials and when placing loads on vehicles.

Sending Crews To Help

Christianity abounds in this great nation and there are churches ready and willing to help. Labor is the greatest need during this stage. Believe me, there will be dishonest contractors everywhere after a disaster. It is a great comfort for people to know that churches are providing this kind of ministry.

Always remember the property owner and the Host Church project leader are in full control of the project.

A brief word about legal issues. Baptist Charities will provide hold harmless forms for partner churches. One form will be for the Volunteers who serve and the other will be for the persons receiving the service. Please make sure you know the people who are on your crew. Background checks are important for the protection of your church, crew, and the people you are helping. Please keep background records filed at your church and the host church may request a copy.

CREW COORDINATOR

Each church should have a coordinator who will travel with the crew. The crew coordinator is responsible for communicating with the host church team coordinators mentioned below.

Host Church Teams

Churches in disaster areas are usually covered up with need. While they will try to accommodate teams from other churches, they may not be able to cover every base. Be patient and prepared to provide for yourselves as much as possible.

HOSPITALITY TEAM:

Each church in the disaster area or a church close by will have a hospitality contact to discuss food and lodging needs or the lack thereof with your crew coordinator.

PROJECT TEAM:

Each church will have a project leader. This person will be able to focus your team on a specific project.

This project leader will need to communicate specific project needs to your Crew Coordinator so your team will bring the correct tools and equipment.

SPIRITUAL CARE TEAM:

Each host church will be working to meet the spiritual needs of the people in their community. Many people deeply appreciate having their spiritual questions answered in a time of crisis and experiencing specific prayers on their behalf is uplifting. They also may be open to the Gospel as never before. Never lose sight of the spiritual needs of those you help.

Hauling Refuse Away

Many cities and counties in areas prone to disaster have established relationships with refuse companies and will have policies in place for disposal of demolition refuse. But where there are no refuse services pick-ups are very handy to have. Local dumps may charge a fee to accept debris.

Understand that the demolition project is not completed until all refuse is removed from the property. This may involve rented containers or moving items to the side of the road.

4. Rebuilding

The rebuilding process is identical to #3 except more skilled labor is needed and the owner, insurance company (if there is one), and local inspectors will have more input in the process. Property owners will be working to coordinate these entities. Sometimes (most the time) this is a difficult task.

Project Budgets

The budget to rebuild will obviously depend on available funds and labor. It is a good thing for homeowners to purchase the materials and the church teams to provide the labor. This way the homeowner can purchase the materials they want. If a family can't purchase materials then, as funds are available, suitable materials may be purchased.

Some supply companies will sell at a discount to churches who are doing benevolence work. I've seen them give material away at no cost. Project teams should look for companies willing to help.

Locating master plumbers and electricians who will join your crew is also a boon to these projects. Some local governments will recognize the credentials of out of state professionals,

especially if they are working through a local church. It's good to already have this worked out before you travel.

Furniture

Many folks have lost everything. Furniture will be needed. Sofas, beds, tables, etc. should be stored at your location until needed in the disaster zone. Let our team know what you have and we will let you know when the items will be needed.

Lodging and Food For Your Crew

Lodging and Food for a crew in a disaster zone can be difficult at times. The more self contained a crew can be the better. Some churches are more able to provide needs than others. Frank discussion about this is important.

Here is the list of items that are always good to send **if there is a church prepared** to store and distribute the materials:

- Money
- Change for Laundry Mats
- Water
- Cleaning supplies
- Large Heavy Duty Trash Bags
- Bleach
- Laundry Detergent & Supplies
- Bedding, Pillows
- Coats, Jackets in winter
- Food and healthy snacks that are in a wrapper
- Rubber Boots
- Rubber Gloves for cleaning
- Work Gloves
- Dust Masks
- Brooms
- Shop Vacs
- Power Washers (ones with low power cleaning attachments are helpful)
- Floor Squeegees
- Square Point Shovels or scoops
- Bow Rakes
- Sheet Rock Tools
- Demolition Tools
- Compressors
- Hammers
- Power Saws
- Table saws
- Chainsaws
- Reciprocating Saws
- Sheetrock
- Trim
- Insulation

*Having Tee shirts printed for your team with the name and information about the church you are working with will enable people in the community to know the name of the local church that is helping them. This opens more doors in the community. If you would like to supply shirts for a church to use in a disaster zone it would be a big help.

This was prepared by Larry Jones, director of Baptist Charities, a ministry of Rodgers Baptist Church. You may reach Larry by texting (preferred) or calling 409-771-8209 or email at blawrencejones@hotmail.com.

Baptist Charities works through local churches to minister to the needs of people trapped in poverty. 100% of donations get to the point of need. Call to find out how to designate your gift to a specific project. You can also support our operations which includes ministry expenses for travel and salary for Brother Larry Jones by donating to the “work fund” at Rodgers Baptist Church.

**Rodgers Baptist Church
P.O. Box 460639
Garland, Texas 75046
972-675-4800
rodgersbaptist.net**