

# PREPAREDNESS FOR CRISIS

*This document, incorporating data from a number of agencies which deal with crises, was designed by the Tarrant Baptist Association Crisis Management Task Force. It is a resource piece for times of crisis whether a natural disaster, an accident, an act of violence, suicide, or terminal illness.*

**I**N TODAY'S WORLD, violence, natural disasters, terrorism, and various other crises have become a focus of concern for churches, schools, public buildings, and other places where large numbers of people gather together.

What can a church do to minimize the risk of a man-made or natural disaster while continuing vigorous ministry to the community?

## **FACILITIES ISSUES**

- Have a first aid kit in a designated spot and teach basic first aid to church staff and interested lay volunteers.
- Have ample fire extinguishers in working order and know where they are.
- Make sure the fire department has correct emergency contact numbers for your facility.
- Have ample lighting for parking lots, entrances, and exits.
- Trim trees and bushes that might limit lighted areas or conceal trespasser.
- Have Lexan glass replace regular glass.
- Have lights automatically come on with timers for building lights inside and outside.
- Have motion lights outside near windows and doors.
- If affordable, have permitted and monitored alarm on building with possible panic alarm capabilities and/or motion detectors along with alarm contacts on all windows including skylights.
- Have cameras or decoys set up at entrance areas.
- Secure rooftop vents and fuse boxes.
- Have appropriate doors and locks installed; always lock doors when alone inside building and have only necessary doors unlocked for uncontrolled access areas; have auxiliary locks on opening windows.
- Meet the Neighborhood Community Relations Police Officer (NPO); have NPO or Crime Prevention Specialist provide free security survey of facility and discussion, including awareness training for greeters and other staff. (Good people like to be noticed. Bad ones don't.)
- Have office equipment marked with registrations numbers (Crime Prevention Specialist of police department do this free of charge).
- Mark valuables with identification pen (Can be checked out from NPO).
- Place stickers at entrance and exits announcing that valuables have been marked.
- Utilize paper shredders for important documents.
- Conceal bank deposit bags when depositing money and/or go in pairs.
- Do security checks on hired help, especially employees with key access.

- Consider the need for security personnel at facility, but remember that if we have police officers in our congregation, they may not always want to work—they want to be “regular people,” too.

## **LOGISTICAL PREPAREDNESS**

- Keep a Crisis Management Outline somewhere besides in the church building in case you are unable to access that material that includes the following: (This is a wonderful thing to keep in your trunk or other location you can get to. If several people have the same kit you will be well prepared.)
  - Chart of phone numbers of whom to notify; e.g., police, fire, ambulance, Associational Office (support and counseling network)
  - A comprehensive contact list of all key church staff and support staff including janitorial and maintenance crews
  - Map of your facilities with this guide—it may be utilized by police or firemen
  - Extra keys
- Have important numbers listed beside phones.
- Identify an evacuation plan and identify the safe place to meet as well as alternatives.
- Identify alternative locations and predetermined strategies to assemble your staff in an emergency to serve as a “command center.”
- Get in the habit of having mobile phones with you when away from office area.



- Hire off-duty police for large functions.
- Develop an emergency code to be an alert to the congregation of impending danger; e.g., code word "Wolf" or "Blue," etc., /intercom/flashing emergency light, etc.
- Have an office secret code word if police are needed without causing alarm.
- Have list of vehicle description and license number (in case of abduction).
- Network with other churches, the local emergency management office, police and fire departments to identify capabilities and additional resources that may be shared in an emergency.
  - Keep an updated copy of counselors. Share in training events.
  - Invite speakers from the public service organizations to staff development meetings.
- Plan ahead for who can provide you with extra clerical support, answer phones, update Web site, receive donations. Identify contractors ahead of time that can respond for emergency repairs.
- Check insurance policy coverage for natural disaster coverage, acts of violence, vandalism, etc. Your agency can direct you to a public relations specialist for information.

## PROCEDURES DURING THE CRISIS

What are the steps to be taken during a crisis? What can you do for others who are experiencing a crisis?

- Call 911.
- Follow the evacuation plan.
- Have building diagram available and numbers available of who is in charge of facility.
- Identify a spokesperson—city officials are trained in dealing with the media and can handle that better (police, fire chief, city manager, mayor).

- Have the victims and their families gather at a predetermined location; i.e., Family Assistance Center.
- Identify a person to get names of witnesses who are safe; start a sign-in list for persons at designated area who are allowed to leave scene. (This should assist PD with accounting for persons when late family members arrive.)
- Have a child care coordinator if children are involved.
- Take any threats seriously.
- Observe any warnings of using radios, phones, etc around a possible bomb threat scene.
- Have family who might be in route bring car phones, chairs, blankets for victims.
- Stay out of building after evacuation until police clear the building.
- Designate a place to call to offer help—arrange for food and drinks if appropriate.
- Designate transportation officials to arrange transportation for large or small groups.
- Designate a clean-up official to work with Emergency Management Team to contact needed agencies.
- Arrange for clerical support with phones messages, update web site, receive donations—talk with your bank to know the procedure to set up a special account.
- Have a correspondence answering team.

## CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM)

- Use this system of intervention designed to assist persons touched by a crisis event
- There are three primary categories of victims:
  - Primary Victims—direct victims
  - Secondary Victims—observers, bystanders, response personnel
  - Tertiary Victims—Family members or rescuer
- CISM interventions are directed to lessening the long-term traumatic effects of a crisis and may include

1. Pre-incident education and preparation,
2. Stress management and trauma management education,
3. One-on-one crisis interventions,
4. Group crisis interventions,
5. Informal group discussions,
6. Family support programs,
7. On-scene support services,
8. Peer support programs, and
9. Follow-up programs.

Counseling is a great need both during the crisis and in short-term and long-term follow-up. CISM trained personnel, LPC, LMFT, etc., are available through your denomination or state agency.

## FOLLOW UP

What do we need to do, once the immediate crisis is over?

### Needs of Victims

- Someone to return their phone call
- Someone to listen
- Someone available after the initial contact
- Someone to empathize their feelings of fear, anger, sadness, revenge, confusion, frustration, desperation, dependency, a life out of control, an emotional roller coaster
- Someone to pray with them
- Someone to search God's Word with them not just for them
- Someone to "flesh out" the presence of Christ

### Ministry

- Be willing to listen to the hurt and the grief and avoid giving quick answers and platitudes.
- Assure people that the roller coaster of emotions is normal.
- Assure people of God's love and His abiding presence and your continued prayers.
- Help them to realize that they are not responsible for the tragedy.
- Allow victims to share memories and encourage them to see how God has been working in their lives.

- Encourage them to write down their thoughts and experiences.
- Encourage them as they attempt to resume normal daily activities, but prepare them for the realization that things will never be the same again.
- Assist them in developing a strong support system and finding the counseling help they need.
- Help them realize that everyone grieves differently.
- Help them to see that in the midst of personal, emotional, and social earthquakes, God is still the firm foundation.
- Provide for the helpers.

#### **How to Take Care of Yourself**


- Spend time with people.
- Talk about what you are thinking.
- Give yourself permission to react.
- Give time an opportunity to enhance the healing process.
- Eat healthy—fruits, vegetables and some protein—avoid fat, salt, and sweets.
- Eliminate caffeine—caffeine causes further stress to the body system.
- Exercise is an excellent way to help eliminate stress.
- Spend regular times in prayer and meditation.
- Practice grace on yourself—take time to do enjoyable activities.
- Avoid stressful situations—this is not a time to make major decisions in life.

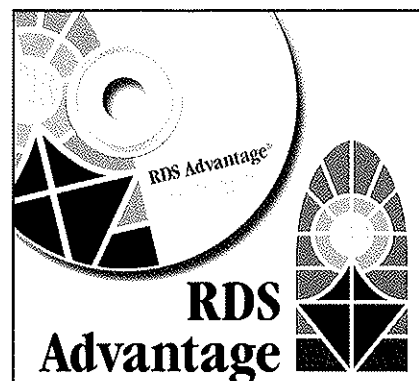
#### **Logistical Support**

- Designate someone to handle the following:
  - Communications
  - Calls
  - Incoming offers of services needed
  - Letters, cards, gifts
- Keep a list of volunteers who help in all areas during the crisis.
- Keep return addresses for thank you notes for monetary donations, artwork, books, tapes, etc.
- It is not necessary to respond to notes of sympathy.

- Establish a place where people can read cards & letters, this brings comfort.
- Box overflow you do not have time to open and process it later when things calm down.
- Have a planned procedure to clear away memorials (flowers, cards, etc.) that are placed at the site (as needed).

#### **Special Events**

- "First" date memorials: First time back in the facilities, first month anniversary, first year anniversary, etc.
- Age group expressions and interactions that affirm God's grace in the lives of the youngest as well as the oldest.
- An "Ebenezer" or memorial experience that describes God's "rock of help" in the time of crisis. 



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