



# The Disaster Lifecycle: Where Do Religious Leaders Fit In?

Weather-related emergencies are some of the most common hazards facing New York City. The following “action steps” pertain to hurricanes, and they’ll take you from the mitigation and preparedness phases through short- and long-term recovery. This checklist is designed to provide guidance as you develop your own disaster plans. Many of the actions listed here can be applied to most hazards.

See NYDIS Disaster Tip Sheet “*Disaster Basics*” for disaster concepts, language and structures.

## Disaster Lifecycle

Emergency Management is best viewed as a cycle of phases. Although activities in each phase often occur simultaneously, each phase informs the next. The phases are:

- **Mitigation** – Reducing or eliminating the future effects of disaster.
- **Preparedness** – Establishing authorities and responsibilities for emergency actions, and ensuring necessary resources are available and coordinated to respond effectively.
- **Response** – Saving lives, protecting property, and providing for public welfare during the period immediately before, during, and following a disaster.
- **Recovery** – Helping communities heal and return to a state that is similar to, or even improved from, pre-disaster conditions. Typically divided into short-term and long-term recovery. Recovery generally implies a return to economic, emotional, and spiritual self-reliance of individuals or families.



## MITIGATION

### Emergency Management & Response Agencies

**Purpose:** Implementation of measures to mitigate potential damage during future hurricanes

- Develop new zoning and building code requirements (to withstand high winds, etc.)
- Analyze flood plain and other hazard-related data to determine appropriate rebuilding parameters
- Encourage homeowners to install shutters and make other structural changes as needed
- Information Education – Where flood zones and high hazard areas are located
- Develop new codes and ordinances regarding public health
- Develop legislative agendas to advocate for laws/programs that would enhance jurisdiction’s ability to plan for, respond to, and recover from disasters

### Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

**Purpose:** Implement measures to lessen impact on houses of worship and their services

- Advocate measures for community safety
- Participate in poverty reduction, affordable housing, and economic development activities in your community
- Take measures to safeguard your house of worship
- Educate yourself and your religious community on personal and home preparedness
- Advocate for programs for the most vulnerable and underserved populations; work with NYDIS on legislative agenda
- Advocate for mitigation funding for faith-based disaster initiatives

Continued on reverse

## PREPAREDNESS

### Emergency Management & Response Agencies

**Purpose:** Ensure response and recovery agencies incorporate lessons learned into response plans and systems

- Ensure all aspects of response and recovery are reviewed and discussed with relevant agencies/organizations through various forums
- Engage all potential partners in every level of planning
- Launch public education campaign in hurricane-prone areas
- Exercise various parts of the Coastal Storm (Hurricane) Plan
- Provide various trainings to response and recovery partner agencies and organizations

### Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

**Purpose:** Ensure your house of worship incorporates lessons learned into plans/systems; re-assess roles in future disasters

- Join or help lead NYDIS and community-based consortiums
- Register your House of Worship in HOWCALM™, NYDIS' faith-based asset mapping database, to include your information in disaster planning and response. Visit [www.howcalm.org](http://www.howcalm.org).
- Get involved in your religious community's program. See **NYDIS Disaster Tip Sheet "National Faith-Based Disaster Service Organizations"**
- Write/update your congregation's disaster plan. See **NYDIS Disaster Tip Sheet "Continuity of Operations Planning: Ministry & Services Post-Disaster"**
- Provide training to your worship community to enable you to execute your plan. For information on Community Disaster Education presentations: [www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org), or [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem).
- Take advantage of other trainings through NYDIS, Citizen Corps, and NYCVOAD

## RESPONSE

### Emergency Management & Response Agencies

**Purpose:** Save lives and property, provide emergency assistance to victims, and reduce further damage

#### Before the storm (during storm watch and warnings)

- NYC OEM Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated and agencies/organizations report to the EOC.
- Emergency communications systems established, including: 311, [nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov), TV, radio, computer alerts, agency call downs
- Evacuation decisions made and orders executed (traffic control, support of critical facilities, increase public transportation fleets, shelters)
- Protective measures taken to secure public property and critical infrastructure

#### Immediately after the storm makes landfall

- Public Safety activities conducted: search and rescue, security and law enforcement, Emergency Medical Care
- Provision of Mass Care: sheltering, food & water, other emergency items as available
- Damage assessment begins
- Restoration of essential infrastructure begins
- Requests for assistance to state and federal sources

### Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

**Purpose:** Establish communication with your family, congregation (particularly vulnerable members), staff, and other networks

- Link to public information. Encourage congregants to listen to public warnings and follow directions
- Make and communicate decisions regarding closing/cancelling of congregational events, activities, & social services
- Ensure your family is safe
- If possible assist with evacuation of vulnerable congregants
- Secure personal and congregational property
- Take other actions detailed in your house of worship's disaster plan
- Take care of yourself and family
- Assist religious and immediate community with basic provisions/support if possible
- Open House of Worship as spontaneous shelter if appropriate and possible
- Execute any pre-determined disaster response plans
- Stay connected with your networks for information and to request assistance and/or share resources

## NEW YORK DISASTER INTERFAITH SERVICES

22 Cortlandt Street, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10007 ■ Tel 212.669.6100 ■ Fax 212.669.6101 ■ [www.NYDIS.org](http://www.NYDIS.org)

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## SHORT TERM RECOVERY (Relief)

(Many of these activities often begin simultaneously with response activities)

### Emergency Management & Response Agencies

**Purpose:** Continue to provide temporary solutions to most pressing community needs; begin planning for long term recovery

- Debris removal & infrastructure restoration continues
- Re-entry into damaged areas may begin
- Clean up of homes begins
- Mobile and fixed feeding begins to support clean-up
- National Organizations set up field offices
- Shelters still open and transitioning into longer-term temporary housing begins
- Public Health issues emerging (food spoilage, contaminated water, hazardous materials, mold)
- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) works with OEM to coordinate mental health response networks:  
[www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/mhdpr/mhdpr.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/mhdpr/mhdpr.shtml)
- NYDIS begins coordinating and deploying trained and spontaneous volunteer chaplains to work with victims and emergency workers at specific recovery sites
- Emergency Assistance to individuals provided through individual agencies/organizations. Main providers: American Red Cross ([www.nyredcross.org](http://www.nyredcross.org)), The Salvation Army ([www.salvationarmy-newyork.org/EDS](http://www.salvationarmy-newyork.org/EDS)) New York City Human Resources Administration ([www.nyc.gov/html/hra](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra)), New York State agencies and FEMA ([www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov))
- Multi-agency Disaster Assistance Centers established by New York City OEM/FEMA that include multiple non-profits and government agencies
- Major types of services established: food, clothing, housing stipend, disaster unemployment, crisis counseling, emotional/spiritual care, etc.
- In spite of public information efforts to discourage unsolicited donations, donations/volunteer offers pour into the City. State Emergency Management Office (SEMO) and NYC OEM establish warehouses, distribution systems and mechanisms for the public to make offers
- New York Cares serves as lead agency through New York City Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NYCVOAD) for spontaneous volunteer coordination
- Various recovery organizations begin to emerge; Human Services Council of NYC (HSC) establishes casework coordination systems working with social service community; NYDIS provides interfaith coordination
- Various agencies develop resource guides for affected populations



### Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

**Purpose:** Continue routines as much as possible; assist self, congregants, and immediate community

- Inventory damage to yourself and family and assess your ability to support your congregation
- Practice and support others in self-care
- When permitted by officials, begin assessing damage to your house of worship's facilities and other assets
- Work to restore house of worship routines and programs
- Document your damage and keep records of your recovery work
- Find out what activities your national religious organization is engaged in, e.g. has it set up local disaster operations headquarters
- Work with your local partners to assess the disaster needs of your congregation and community. Expand existing ministries (soup kitchen, day care) if you are able and services are needed
- Work with other neighboring faith communities to ensure that there are enough pastoral care resources for your community
- Ensure pastoral care providers are trained and have knowledge to make mental health referrals for those individuals with severe symptoms of disaster-related trauma, and/or in need of material assistance.
- Conduct special worship services
- Support NYDIS by:
  - Participating as a chaplain only if you are: pre-trained, have the support of your religious organization, requested by NYDIS, and not significantly impacted by the disaster
  - Staying alert through networks for ever-changing disaster chaplaincy needs and training opportunities
- Assess disaster assistance you and your family may need
- Through NYDIS ([www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org)) and NYCVOAD learn about emergency assistance being provided
- Help congregants who may need it, to access disaster services
- Advocate to better allocate resources (i.e. financial donations) for long-term recovery efforts
- Facilitate process of enabling congregation and community members to help each other
- Encourage monetary donations; check with your national religious organization to see if they have established a specific relief fund
- Don't collect or encourage collection of goods unless you have made pre-arrangements with an organization that needs them. (For best practices regarding donations: [www.nvoad.org/disaster.php](http://www.nvoad.org/disaster.php))
- Work with New York Cares to post any volunteer needs you may have and encourage your community to check New York Cares website for volunteer opportunities ([www.nycares.org](http://www.nycares.org))
- Stay connected to recovery efforts through your networks to:
  - share information on your community's needs
  - offer and coordinate assistance if able
  - communicate recovery messages to your community

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## LONG TERM RECOVERY

(This is a long process that can take anywhere from a few month to several years)

### Emergency Management & Response Agencies

**Purpose:** Long process of rebuilding community; addressing more complex needs: economic revitalization (housing, employment), individuals with complex recovery issues, mental health, etc.

- General public and media are losing interest in the “story”
- Long-term mental health programs may continue
- Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other “Emergency” Assistance programs close down; some agencies develop longer term programs based on current needs; transfer of some cases to local social services programs
- Long-term recovery coordination groups may include:
  - NYDIS – unmet needs roundtable
  - Casework/services coordination by HSC
  - Government-led economic recovery organizations
- Individual recovery issues, such as housing and unemployment, compound and become more complex
- Harder to reach populations, including rescue workers and undocumented individuals, may have only just begun requesting assistance
- Fewer agencies able to support casework as funding becomes scarce

Term: **Networks** could include local faith communities, grassroots organizations, your community board and precinct council, your national/regional religious organizations, New York Disaster Interfaith Services, and New York City Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster.

### Religious Leaders & Faith Communities

**Purpose:** Continue to help your congregation and community heal; be aware of triggers, such as anniversaries

- Find ways to recognize, support, and educate others on the long difficult road to individual recovery
- Stay aware of your own and your family’s emotional, spiritual and physical recovery needs
- Continually assess and advocate for community needs
- Stay connected with current service delivery and coordination efforts.
- Create or join community-based coordination mechanisms
- Support the NYDIS Unmet Needs Roundtable, a forum for providing financial assistance to disaster victims with the greatest need
- Continue to provide emotional support and pastoral care for those affected
- Provide casework services if you have the expertise and are able
- New mental health issues will continue to emerge; and work with networks to effectively meet congregational needs

## NYDIS’ DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TIP SHEETS FOR NYC RELIGIOUS LEADERS

***Disaster Backlash: Bias Crimes & Mitigation***  
***Continuity of Operations Planning: Ministry & Services Post-Disaster***  
***The Disaster Lifecycle: Where Do Religious Leaders Fit In?***  
***Disaster Spiritual Care***  
***Disaster Basics for Faith Communities***  
***National Faith-Based Disaster Service Organization***  
***Faith Communities and Disaster Mental Health***  
***Faith Communities and Evacuation Planning***  
***Faith Communities and Disaster Sheltering***  
***The Role of Faith Communities in Disasters***  
***Self-Care for Religious Leaders***  
***Trauma Resilience & Harm Reduction in the Community***  
***How to Use Your House of Worship in a Disaster***  
***Faith Communities & Disaster Volunteerism***  
***Faith Communities & Donation Management***

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