



## Faith Communities & Evacuation Planning

Evacuations can occur in a variety of circumstances and can lead to short-term or long-term displacement. Large-scale evacuations can be ordered by New York City when a hurricane is approaching, or evacuations can happen in your own house of worship due to fire or flooding. Being prepared for an evacuation can reduce stress and increase the likelihood that you will remember essential items to bring with you because you have thought about it beforehand. Engaging in evacuation planning for your household and your congregation is a helpful example to set for your faith community and may encourage others to prepare as well.

### Preparedness

#### Preparing Yourself, Household, and Loved Ones

- If possible, **make a plan** to stay with friends and family after evacuating.
- **Create a “Go-Bag,”** a collection of items you and your loved ones may need during an evacuation. Go to [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem) and look at “Do You Have a ‘Go-Bag?’” for a sample list and remember special needs items (for example: extra medication, assistive devices, etc.).
- **Choose a meeting place** with your loved ones; identify a place both within the community and outside of the area where you can meet as you are evacuating.
- If you think you or a loved one will need assistance during an evacuation, ask people who are likely to be in the area if they can assist; create a **small network** (more than two people) that can help.
- **Create a communications plan;** ensure that everyone in your network knows each other’s contact information and identify someone out of the area that everyone can call to check in with.
- Learn about or **create an evacuation plan** for your home. Know all evacuation plans, emergency exits, and alternate means of evacuating for your home, school, and workplace.

#### Create a House of Worship Evacuation Plan

- **Identify emergency exits and procedures** for evacuating your house of worship and other facilities.
- **Hold evacuation drills** in your house of worship and review emergency exits and procedures before meetings and services.
- **Identify at least two alternate locations** to conduct religious services and hold programs. One should be in your neighborhood, the other outside your neighborhood. Plan so that you may continue providing critical programs and services. **See NYDIS Disaster Tip Sheet “Continuity of Operations: Preserving Your Ministry & Services after Disaster.”**
- **Develop a communications strategy** so that you can reconnect with members and staff post-disaster/evacuation. Consider a reverse communications plan whereby congregants, staff, and program participants can call a central number and/or view a website to check for important messages regarding the status of your house of worship after an evacuation.
- **Share your evacuation plan** with all vendors, partners and your regional/national religious institution. In turn, find out what their evacuation plan entails and how you can remain in contact during an event that affects them.
- If a citywide evacuation is called, it is important that you **know the Evacuation Zone** in which your house of worship is located, as well as recommended Evacuation Routes and the location of the nearest Evacuation Center.
- Make sure that **your faith community understands what information and resources are available** to them, what different emergency communication mechanisms are for, and how to use them.
- **Get the message of preparedness out** to your faith community and neighbors. To arrange a disaster preparedness presentation, contact:
  - New York Disaster Interfaith Services. [www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org) or call 212.669.6100
  - NYC Office of Emergency Management. [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem) or call 311
  - American Red Cross of Greater NY. [www.nyredcross.org](http://www.nyredcross.org) or call 1.877.REDCROSS
  - Citizen Corps. [www.nyc.gov/citizencorps](http://www.nyc.gov/citizencorps)



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## Evacuation Considerations for People with Disabilities, Seniors, and Other Special Needs

In the case of people with disabilities, seniors, and other special needs populations, preparing for evacuation is essential. Identifying evacuation needs before a disaster occurs is important and allows people to put support networks in place, or to identify equipment and necessary resources (such as evacuation chairs, accessible transportation, sensory alarms, etc.). As a religious leader, you can encourage your faith community to play a vital role in ensuring your congregants and neighbors with special needs have evacuation plans in place.

- Learn about OEM's Ready New York campaign at [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem). See [www.prepare.org](http://www.prepare.org) and [www.ready.gov/america](http://www.ready.gov/america) to obtain preparedness materials that address planning for people with disabilities and other special needs, seniors, children, schools, and pet owners.

## Response

### Get Information

- **Monitor information about evacuations** on the radio, television, internet, and through emergency response agencies.
- Listen to officials so that you can make decisions based on sound advice and instructions, and encourage others in your faith community to do this as well.
- **Evacuate** when directed by City officials or when in immediate danger.
- Continue to **monitor information and instructions** after evacuating to determine when it is safe to return.

### Emergency Information Resources

- **Register for NYDISNET** and you will automatically receive **NYDISNET Alerts**, which provide up-to-date information as events occur. Visit [www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org) or call 212.669.6100.
- **Call 311**, TTY: 212.504.4115, or Outside NYC: 212.639.9675.
- Check the **NYC Office of Emergency Management** website at [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem) for information about the emergency.
- Check the **NYC Hurricane Evacuation Zone Finder** at [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem). During emergencies, this site will indicate if evacuations are occurring. You can also check if your home or house of worship is in a hurricane evacuation zone and if so, you can identify the Evacuation Center that is recommended in the event of a hurricane (this is available during non-emergencies as well).
- OEM's **Ready New York** offers evacuation suggestions, such as items to take with you. Visit [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem).

### Where to Go When Evacuating

Evacuations can result in short-term or long-term displacement from home, workplace, house of worship, or community. Although the city opens public shelters, it is advised that people evacuate to friends' and family residences where they may be more comfortable, have access to support, and have appropriate dietary or religious observance needs. Learn more about shelter locations during emergencies at [www.nyc.gov/oem](http://www.nyc.gov/oem).

### Sheltering-in-Place

Sometimes, officials may recommend that people "shelter-in-place" rather than evacuate. This is likely to occur if there is a release (intentionally or unintentionally) of biological, chemical, or radiological materials into the air. The idea behind sheltering-in-place is to put a physical barrier between you and the matter that is in the air. Some steps you can take if this occurs:

- **Listen for instructions** from officials
- **Seal off any openings in your home**, such as windows and doors: use masking tape and/or plastic sheeting
- **Move to an interior space** above the ground floor

To learn more about sheltering-in-place and what you can do when this occurs, read the American Red Cross' "Shelter-in-Place" fact sheet at [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org): Go to Disaster Services, then navigate to Be Prepared, and click on "Shelter-in-Place." Visit the OEM website for more information: [www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/ready/emergency\\_sip.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/ready/emergency_sip.shtml).

### Ready Receiving Centers

- If you don't have to evacuate, you may offer your house of worship and other facilities as a Ready Receiving Center that serves as a place where people can go temporarily during and after evacuations. NYDIS coordinates this program with the NYC Office of Emergency Management. Register with NYDIS' faith-based asset mapping database, HOWCALM™ [www.howcalm.org](http://www.howcalm.org), to find out if you can become a Ready Receiving Center. For more information about Ready Receiving Centers, visit the NYDIS website at [www.nydis.org](http://www.nydis.org) or call 212.669.6100.



## NEW YORK DISASTER INTERFAITH SERVICES

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