

The local church has a tremendous opportunity to bring mercy and compassion to people suffering the effects of various disasters. At the North American Mission Board, our Send Relief team seeks to equip churches to be prepared to respond to disasters with the hope and love of Christ. Follow these steps to plan for potential disasters in your community to help bring stability in the midst of chaos and sorrow.

- Do a thorough assessment of your church's preparedness. Is your facility ready to host ministry teams and individuals displaced by a disaster? Are your members trained and do you have budgetary means to minister to victims of a tragedy? Also, communicate with other faith-based organizations to determine resources available so that you do not duplicate an existing response in the community.
- Train your members, and organize for immediate response. Identify the training your church needs and work with Send Relief to receive that training.
- Deploy your church with Southern Baptist Disaster Relief. Do not wait until a disaster hits your own community to involve your people in ministering in these situations, but rather minister in other contexts to gain experience.
- Follow up with survivors. Remember that survivor care is an enormous part of being a disaster ready church. Ongoing ministry to people, whose lives were shattered, provides the means to mobilize your church to care for its community after the immediate compassion and attention has shifted elsewhere.

As volunteers respond to disasters, their faith and commitment is used by the Holy Spirit to draw others to Him. When we care for others we become not just people who talk of missions, but people who put our words into action. Our world continues to experience devastation and destruction. Every incident brings new challenges and new opportunities. Find out how you and your church can represent Christ during a crisis.

For more information and help getting started, contact Send Relief (sendrelief@namb.net).