



ANNEX C

Human Caused Disasters



This template provided as part of the Faithfully Ready Initiative. Information on Faithfully Ready is available at faithfullyready.org

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THUNDERSTORMS AND LIGHTNING

Thunderstorms are a frequent occurrence in Texas. They are often accompanied by lightning, damaging winds in excess of 50 mph, and hail. A severe thunderstorm may be a prelude to a tornado.

The National Weather Service issues the following alerts related to severe thunderstorms:

Special Weather Statement	NWS Issues a Special Weather Statement when storms are occurring that fall below the normal “Severe” threshold, but may cause non-life threatening impacts, such as heavy rain and strong winds.
Severe Thunderstorm Watch	Issued when there is a possibility of a storm developing, which would be greater in intensity than the severe storm indicated by the severe thunderstorm bulletin above.
Severe Thunderstorm Warning	Issued when a severe thunderstorm has developed and will probably affect those areas stated in the bulletin.

1. Preparation

- Remove dead or rotting trees and branches that could fall and cause injury or damage during a severe thunderstorm.
- Remember the 30/30 lightning safety rule: Go indoors if, after seeing lightning, you cannot count to 30 before hearing thunder. Stay indoors for 30 minutes after hearing the last clap of thunder.

2. Response

- The [*house of worship leadership team*] will monitor the weather reports by the National Weather Service.
- The Emergency Management Team shall be activated to assist in contacting parents and releasing congregants
- Staff will depart as necessary after members have left.

TORNADOES

In Texas, tornadoes are very possible. Houston has a history of dangerous tornadoes accompanying severe thunderstorm systems. While our tornadoes aren't as severe as those in other parts of the country, they are nonetheless very dangerous.

These storms are generally small and short-lived, yet the most violent of all atmospheric phenomena. The National Weather Service issues two types of tornado products:

Tornado Watch	NWS Issues a Special Weather Statement when storms are occurring that fall below the normal "Severe" threshold, but may cause non-life threatening impacts, such as heavy rain and strong winds.
Severe Thunderstorm Watch	Issued when there is a possibility of a storm developing, which would be greater in intensity than the severe storm indicated by the severe thunderstorm bulletin above.

- Tornado Watch
- Tornado Warning indicates that a tornado has been sighted and protective measures should be taken immediately.

1. Preparation

- Determine in advance where you will take shelter in case of a tornado warning. Storm cellars or basements provide the best protection.
- If underground shelter is not available, go into an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible.
- Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls. Go to the center of the room. Stay away from corners because they attract debris.

2. Response

- Tune into the local TV/radio station or weather alert radio for updated information when notified of a tornado watch.
- During a watch, close all windows and doors.
- During a warning, leave all doors and windows closed.
- Move congregation into the designated emergency shelter areas if the watch becomes a warning.
- Follow emergency procedures at once when a tornado warning occurs. The signal will be an announcement over the PA system.
- Move quickly to a temporary shelter area if there is sufficient time to take shelter.
- Take personal belongings only to provide extra protection (i.e., large books, notebooks or coats may be held over head and shoulders).
- Take position for greatest safety by sitting down, head down with hands locked at the back of the neck.

Floods and Flash Floods – Floods are the second most common and widespread of all natural disasters, after fire. In Texas, many communities experience some kind of flooding after spring rains or heavy thunderstorms. Floods can be slow or fast rising but generally develop over a period of days. Dam failures are potentially the worst flood events. When a dam fails, a gigantic quantity of water is suddenly let loose downstream, destroying anything in its path.

Flash floods usually result from intense storms dropping large amounts of rain within a brief period. They occur with little or no warning and can reach full peak in only a few minutes. Communities particularly at risk are those located in low-lying areas, near water, or downstream from a dam.

1. Preparation

- Know your area's flood risk – if you're unsure, call your local emergency management agency.
- Property insurance does not typically cover flood damage! Talk to your insurance provider about your policy and consider if you need additional coverage. The National Flood Insurance Program is designed to provide reasonable flood insurance in exchange for the careful management of flood-prone areas by local communities. The program, administered by FEMA, is available in hundreds of participating Texas communities. Visit FEMA Business NFIP for more information.
- Reduce potential flood damage by raising your furnace, water heater, and electric panel if they are in areas of your house of worship that may be flooded.

2. Response

- Designate someone to turn off utilities at main switches. This person should unplug appliances, and do not touch electrical equipment.
- Staff will not stack sandbags against the outside facility walls, this increases the amount of pressure placed on the structure which can cause damage.
- If water is standing in the facility, staff should let it flow freely through the facility to help avoid further structural damage.
- Staff and/or designated persons will take care to avoid downed power lines.
- Staff and/or designated persons will ensure that no one drinks tap water due to contamination.
- Staff and/or designated persons will monitor weather radios during periods of torrential rain.

- Staff and/or designated persons will keep all congregants indoors, and encourage them not to leave in cars when flash flood warnings have been issued until the community has been deemed safe.
- [*House of Worship Leadership Team*] will consult with public safety officials to determine course of action.
- Entire house of worship community will be notified if the facility must be evacuated to a safe area of higher ground.
- Entire house of worship community will be notified if its activities are cancelled, opened late, or closed early because the facility is being used as an emergency shelter for the community.
- [*House of Worship Leadership Team*] and staff will work to provide support to any families affected by flooding.

Winter Storms – The major dangers of winter storms are intense cold, power outages and breakdown of transportation due to poor visibility and road conditions. Winter weather warnings are issued by the National Weather Service (NWS). When the threat of such weather exists, monitor radio and local TV. The [*house of worship name*] is closed for winter storms when all of [county name] religious organizations are closed, or when the [*house of worship leadership team*] feels that getting to the campus would endanger the lives of members, staff, and visitors.

1. Preparation

- Staff will contact respective families of any house of worship delays, cancellations or required early dismissal.

2. Response

- Winter storms are often accompanied by power outages. Always exercise caution when using alternative light and heating sources:
 1. Use flashlights during power outages instead of candles to prevent the risk of fire, and have plenty of extra batteries on hand.
 2. Never bring portable generator instead of the facility. Keep them at least 20 feet away from the building, doors and vents to prevent deadly carbon monoxide poisoning.

Fire- A fire may originate within a building or threaten from the outside. A small fire in a rural wooded area or urban area can quickly become out of control and jeopardize the safety of others in the vicinity. Internal fires may result from a variety of causes, ranging from carelessness to arson.

1. Preparation

Equipment

- All personnel and members should be familiar with the location and operation of the alarm systems and fire extinguishers.

- All equipment should be marked and maintained in accordance with local and state regulations.

Evacuation Plans

Evacuation Plan Instructions

- Provide to personnel and members at the beginning of the evacuation instructions and include a method to safeguard records.
- Keep a copy in all classrooms in the house of worship.
- Post by fire exit diagram.
- Provide to designated members and staff responsible for closing windows and doors when leaving rooms, checking adjacent restrooms, meeting rooms, storage areas, assisting members with special needs, and guarding exits to prevent unauthorized persons from entry into buildings.
- Exercise in accordance to evacuation plans avoiding patterned responses that have members gathering in the same location.
- Establish personnel to shut down utilities and conduct safety checks of grounds and transportation.

2. Response

- Sound an alarm and notify the fire department immediately upon the discovery of a fire.
- Conduct evacuation of buildings immediately and in an orderly manner using designated evacuation paths and exits.
- Use evacuation procedures including member accountability, closing doors and windows, and perimeter control.
- Remain vigilant and aware of surrounding activities during evacuations.
- Avoid establishing a single evacuation assemble point.
- House of worship is encouraged to have evacuation emergency kits.
- Assigned person will shut off power and gas during an evacuation, if possible.
- Doors should not be locked in the building in order to allow public safety quick access.

Hurricanes- As a coastal state, Texas is particularly at risk for hurricanes. Storms that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico have the potential to affect our state. Every congregant and house of worship should plan what to do in the event of an evacuation.

- **Hurricane Watch** – Means a hurricane is possible in your area. Be prepared to evacuate.

- **Hurricane Warning** – Means a hurricane is expected in your area. If local authorities advise you to evacuate, leave immediately.

1. Preparation

- Get a kit of emergency supplies and prepare a portable Ready kit in case you have to evacuate.
- Prepare to secure your property.

2. Response

- [*House of worship leadership*] and staff will listen to the advice of local officials and evacuate the area when told to do so.
- [*House of worship leadership team*] and staff will monitor weather radio and local media outlets for evacuation instructions.
- If advised not to evacuate, all occupants of building will stay indoors and away from windows.
- Staff will work to provide support to any families affected by the hurricane.

Earthquakes – An earthquake is a movement of the earth’s tectonic plates, which causes the violent movement of the earth’s crust endangering structures and occupants. Texas rests on two earthquake zones. The southern part of the state is designated a number one on “minor-expected damage” zone. The northern part of the state is designated a number two or “moderate-expected damage” zone. Earthquakes generally occur without warning. Seismologists can identify areas where earthquakes are most likely to happen but cannot predict the exact time and place.

1. Preparation

- Make sure all hazardous or flammable materials are stored safely. IF a container of flammable liquid spills during an earthquake, any source of flame may ignite the fluid and start a fire.

2. Response

During the shaking, remain in place, assess the situation, then act. Most injuries or deaths are the direct cause of falling debris, therefore:

- All persons should stay in place, seek cover under desk or other sturdy furniture, and cover the neck and head as much as possible.
- Move away from buildings and avoid utility lines, if outdoors.
- If in transit, stop the bus quickly and safely in an open area away from overpasses and bridges, and keep students on the bus.
- The Emergency Management Team should be notified of their activation status by the [*house of worship leadership team*] and should report to the designated evacuation areas.
- Utilities should be turned off to prevent fires due to possible gas leaks.

- Walkie-talkies and cell phones shall be used for communication.
- Couriers, whether members or staff, should be used only in designated “safe areas.”
- Information should be gathered from staff and sweep teams to determine missing persons.
- Injuries should be addressed and qualified staff should render first aid assistance at the evacuation site.

After the shaking, evacuate and move to open areas away from buildings and do the following:

- Do not reenter the buildings until officials have checked for possible structural damage, gas line leakage, and other utility disruptions.
- Do not use any open flames (candles, matches, etc.).
- Listen to the radio/TV for information updates.
- Use discretion in implementing early or late dismissal policy for house of worship day school depending on communications, availability of transportation, damage to building(s) and residential areas, and road clearance.
- Staff should avoid downed power lines, ensure no one drinks tap water due to possible contamination, and monitor weather radios. Administrators will consult with local public safety officials to determine the best course of action.