

Emergency Strategy

This document is intended to lead your greeter and usher teams through a brainstorming and planning session for responding to emergency situations.

While there are multiple possibilities of situations that can arise, this document will focus on five different situations for which your congregation should have a plan in place. You might consider connecting with your local authorities while creating your plan. Outline your plan into a number of steps and designate who is responsible. Although this plan should be reviewed with your greeter and usher teams, the following responsibilities do not default to any one person or group in particular. Please determine who in the congregation is the right person/people to be a part of your emergency strategy.

1. Medical emergencies

- The first response to a medical emergency should be to call 911.
- Do you have a medical professional in your congregation? It might be helpful to get their advice in putting together a plan for medical emergencies.

2. Unruly people

- Consider a situation where a person comes into the church building or into the sanctuary during the divine service and makes a disturbance. What course of action should you take? What would be the best way to handle that person in the least disruptive way? Consider how you could physically separate the person from other members, specifically children and youth (for instance, ask them to come into another room).
- Once the person is outside of the sanctuary, who is responsible for finding out the needs of the individual? What kinds of questions would you ask? If necessary, whom could you call for help? (For example, if the person is under the influence or violent – call 911.)
- If a person enters the church who seems to have the intent of causing harm, please call 911 as soon as it is safe to do so. Consider if you need to determine further responses in situations such as this. Please make your plan known to the necessary people (i.e. Sunday School teachers, etc.). As this scenario is one of high-stress, consider how you approach these discussions to keep all involved calm, and to promote productive conversations leading to the most useful plan for your space and members.

3. Homeless person or someone seeking money

- Do you have someone in your congregation that is active in community or social work that could be of assistance? Some communities already have well-defined serving programs in place that you may be able to refer people to.
- Do you have any provisions on hand that could be given out? (For instance, some congregations have a food pantry, or have care packages to hand out.)
- Is there a member or minister available that could offer pastoral care and prayer if they are interested?

4. Power outage

- It might be helpful, in conjunction with the altar-servers, to come up with a plan outlining what to do if the power goes out during a divine service (i.e. have flashlights on hand, know the circuit breaker panel location, etc.)

5. Fire and natural disasters

- Create an evacuation plan for your church. It might be helpful to take a few minutes after a Sunday service once a year to review this plan with the congregation. Especially in the case of larger buildings, you may want to consider numbering the doors, inside and out, in order to clarify the evacuation plan. Please do not use any adhesive that is permanent or that would leave a mark. If you would like a blueprint of your church to facilitate the creation of your evacuation plan, please email communications@nac-usa.org, and we will provide if available.
- Designate who will be responsible for checking all the rooms in the building during the evacuation to make sure no one is left behind (for example, the bathrooms, Sunday School rooms, basement, etc.).
- Be sure everyone knows where the fire extinguisher is located.
- Consider your plan for when everyone is safely out of the building. Where will everyone meet? If the weather outside is unsafe, what is your back-up plan? Whom can you call for help? Who will make sure that all people are accounted for?

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER LIST

Please fill out the following list for your area and be sure to have a copy in the church or on your phone.

Emergency: **911**

Police Department (non-emergency): _____

Fire Department (non-emergency): _____

Hospital / Ambulance Services: _____

Poison Control: _____

Homeless Shelter: _____

Battered Women's Shelter: _____

Humane Society / Animal Control: _____

Gas Company: _____

Electric Company: _____