



DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

A Higher Purpose

Prepare your community before disaster strikes. Councils will engage their parish and community in disaster preparedness exercises by organizing trainings, fundraisers and various awareness activities.

Overview

Communities can be brought to a halt when disaster occurs – from large natural disasters to local crises. As community leaders, Knights of Columbus will ensure that their members, families and parish communities are prepared through a campaign that promotes planning and education.

This program motivates councils to take a holistic approach to emergency situations by promoting readiness in times of crisis, assessing response capabilities, and learning how to properly respond well ahead of a disaster. Councils will also fundraise and teach (where able) in anticipation of larger efforts to assist brothers in need.

Chairman Role and Responsibilities

- Work with the pastor and local community leaders to understand parish and community needs in case of an emergency and determine what the council is prepared to do.
- Working with the state disaster coordinator, contact your jurisdiction to notify them of the preparation and awareness your council is taking in the event of a disaster.
- Coordinate fundraisers or collections of goods that may be donated to affected areas.
- Ensure council is ready to assist neighboring communities if needed.
- Submit disaster relief questionnaire to jurisdictional leadership.
- Complete and submit all associated reporting forms to the Supreme Council Department of Fraternal Mission.

Action Steps

1. Contact your jurisdiction disaster coordinator to inquire about the procedures in place in your jurisdiction in a disaster situation.
2. Preparation – start each fraternal year with disaster preparation activities.
 - Meet with your parish priest on an annual basis to identify specific needs of the parish and discuss how the Knights can help
 - Communicate with the jurisdiction leadership. Discuss things the council can do to be prepared in the case of a disaster from hosting a fundraiser to raising awareness for relief efforts, making facilities available, and preparedness education.
 - Institute and maintain a disaster communication phone tree to ensure council leadership can reach all council members by phone. Update information regularly.
 - Maintain contact lists of the parish's vulnerable community members (the elderly, disabled and widow(er)s) to ensure that they are safe prior to a disaster or after a disaster has struck



3. Working with local law enforcement, fire departments and/or the Red Cross, conduct an event to educate the community on disaster preparedness and what to do before, during and after a disaster situation.
4. Prior to the event, use the sample press release as a model to create and distribute a tailored release to local media.
5. Build public interest for the event! Promote the event in your parish and larger community through a variety of efforts:
 - Prominently display promotional posters (which can be ordered through Supplies Online)
 - Bulletin announcements
 - Pulpit announcements
 - Posting on your council and parish website / social media pages
6. On the day of the event, wear Knights of Columbus-branded apparel and have the council membership director set up a table with brochures and membership documents (including *Prospect Cards* #921A). Do not forget that this event is a recruiting opportunity!
7. Enlist a fellow Knight or community member to photograph the event.
8. Following the event, update the community on the success of your program by amending the sample announcement and distributing it to local media, along with energizing photographs from the event.
9. To gain credit for your program, complete the associated reporting forms and submit them to the Supreme Council Department of Fraternal Mission. Remember to retain copies for your council records.

Council Disaster Preparation

Organizing and maintaining a council-level action plan is extremely important to the success of any disaster response efforts within the local community and at the jurisdiction level. There are many steps that a council should take to be prepared in the case of a disaster, including:

1. Prepare a communication plan:
 - Meet with your parish priest on an annual basis to identify specific needs of the parish and determine how the Knights can assist
 - Create a phone tree with contact information for all council members. Practice using this phone tree at least twice a year.
 - Know the disaster chain of command within your jurisdiction and the council's role and responsibilities, including individual roles and responsibilities
 - Maintain contact lists of the parish's vulnerable community members (the elderly, disabled, and widow(er)s) to ensure that they are safe prior to a disaster or after a disaster has struck
2. Provide disaster safety and awareness training to council members and parish community. These trainings should include information on:
 - Fire safety
 - Disease control
 - Natural disaster awareness
3. Allocate at least \$500 dollars in the council's general funding account in case of a disaster

Responding to a Disaster

When a disaster occurs, the following steps should be taken to ensure that all council members and their families are safe before and after the event. These steps include:

1. Immediately put your phone tree into action to ensure the safety of council members and their families
2. Notify your jurisdiction leadership and disaster coordinator of the status of your members and their families, highlighting any needs that they may have
3. Maintain contact lists of the parish's vulnerable community members (the elderly, disabled, and widow(er)s) to ensure that they have access to food and water
4. After the danger has passed, hold fundraisers and collection drives to benefit those affected by the disaster
5. To the extent possible, communicate with the jurisdiction disaster coordinator and jurisdiction leadership regarding available and safe facilities for a council to use as a point of distribution (i.e., schools, parish or council halls)
6. Volunteer – encourage members to volunteer for opportunities suitable to their abilities and the council's ability to respond
 - After major disasters, those affected often need help cleaning up debris, repairing fences, spreading traps on roof, rebuilding damaged wheelchair ramps, or a myriad of other activities

***Important Note:** During and in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, never act in the context of a council beyond ensuring members of the council and parish community are safe unless assistance has been requested by emergency professionals, your parish, community disaster coordinator or through your state council leadership.*