



Disaster Manual
A Guide for Partners, Synods & Districts

**Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response
Manual for Synods and Districts**

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Introduction

Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response, Inc. (LSSDR) is a ministry of Lutheran Social Services of the South with the mission of providing help, healing and hope in the name of Jesus Christ before and after disaster. LSSDR is also an affiliate organization of Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), a national collaborative ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS).

LSSDR serves the states of Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas which encompass nine Lutheran Synods and Districts. These include:

ELCA Synods

Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast
North Texas-Northern Louisiana
Southwest Texas
Arkansas-Oklahoma
Rocky Mountain

LCMS Districts

Texas
Southern
Oklahoma
Rocky Mountain

Our service area is located in a region vulnerable to frequent disasters, therefore we see it as our duty to continue to develop and maintain a permanent disaster response ministry that provides coordination, collaboration and communication before, during, and after disaster.

Based on prior experience in disaster response and in conversation with ministry partners, LSSDR has identified the following principles that guide our disaster preparedness and response programs:

- **A ministry of presence**—we work to bring hope and be present with those affected by disaster.
- **Open and clear lines of communication**—we seek to create and build relationships with those we serve.
- **Definitions of roles**—We seek to clarify our role in disaster response work and to help others identify theirs.
- **Well-designed crisis management plans**—we work to develop and maintain user-friendly plans that support our partners in times of crisis.
- **Well-trained volunteer force**—we value the contributions of volunteers in disaster response work. Therefore, we strive to multiply our efforts by equipping the faithful to be ready to respond both locally and nationally following disaster events.

The purpose of this manual is to provide our partners with an outline of how LSSDR plans to fulfill these principles in our ongoing disaster preparedness and response work.

We hope you find this helpful and welcome your feedback.

Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response
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Austin, TX 78754
www.LSSS.org
800-938-5777

Core Areas of Service

There are many roles and functions filled by agencies before, during and after disaster. Each disaster is different and calls for a unique response. LSSDR is capable of several roles following disaster, but not all roles will be appropriate or possible in all disasters. The needs of the community and the availability of resources will dictate the particular role(s) LSSDR will play. Additionally, as a member of VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) LSSDR coordinates with other non-profit agencies to work to assure that gaps are filled and duplication is minimized. All these factors have bearing on the shape that LSSDR's response will take following a particular disaster. Traditionally LSSDR's disaster work has encompassed the following roles:

- Preparedness
- Hardship Grants
- Emotional and Spiritual Care
- Volunteer Coordination
- Long-term Recovery

Preparedness

LSSDR is committed to being an expert in the field of disaster preparedness and response. We do this by participating in ongoing training and by identifying and sharing best practices with our fellow disaster response agencies. We seek to be a resource to Synods, Districts, congregations, communities and individuals around issues of disaster preparedness.

Hardship Grants

While LSSDR is not an emergency response agency, we accept requests for hardship grants soon after a disaster hits. These requests may come from Synod/District leadership or directly from congregational leadership. They can be used by congregations or individuals for minor repairs, emergency supplies or other such immediate needs. Hardship grants are subject to the availability of funds and generally range from \$300-\$500 per household.

Emotional and Spiritual Care

LSSDR seeks to tend to the emotional and spiritual needs of people following disaster. This can take several forms, including children's ministries (Camp Noah), crisis counseling and/or pastoral care.

Volunteer Coordination

Often after a disaster the largest need is for volunteer labor to help rebuild the community. LSSDR, with LDR, has a strong history of coordinating the recruitment, arrival and work of thousands of volunteers from around the country. Volunteer coordination also might include training of local volunteers to assist in future disasters and maintaining a database of available volunteers and their skills.

Long-term Recovery

Long-term Recovery Organizations (LTROs) are a vital part of the community recovery effort. They are organizations formed by the local leadership, disaster response agencies

and faith-based organizations to begin the long-term work of rebuilding the community. LSSDR participates as an active partner in the formation and support of LTROs. This work can include participation in unmet needs committees, the provision of case management work, the coordination of construction and rebuild work, and the organization of volunteer labor.

LSSDR seeks to find creative and innovative ways to work with our Lutheran and community partners following a disaster to maximize resources and to best help a community recover. It is our goal to be a team player in the community to maximize the volunteer and financial donations received for disaster response, helping to fill gaps without the duplication of efforts. While we are ultimately limited by the wishes of our donors and constrained by the availability of resources, we welcome any conversation about how to best participate in community recovery following disaster.

Stages of Disaster

In its 2004 *Long Term Recovery Manual*, NVOAD (National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)¹ describes the stages of disaster in the following way: preparedness, response (subdivided into emergency response and relief response), recovery and mitigation.² Not including preparedness or mitigation, each stage is generally expected to be 10 times longer than the previous stage. For example, if the emergency response stage lasts three days, then the relief stage would be approximately 30 days with the recovery stage lasting up to 300 days. In large disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, the emergency response stage can last several weeks with the recovery stage taking 10 to 15 years or more to complete.

There are many different roles to be filled and tasks to be completed in each stage. Following is a description of each stage of disaster, what you might expect during each stage and what you can do to contribute to and successfully navigate each stage. Also included is a description of anticipated roles LSSDR might play at each stage. Remember that each disaster is different and calls for a unique response. Not all tasks will be appropriate and/or possible for LSSDR in all disasters.

¹ Available for download at www.nvoad.org

² For purposes of clarity, this manual will use the term “emergency response” to refer to the first part of the response stage and “relief” to refer to the second part of the response stage.

Preparedness

*Begins any time **before** a disaster*

Preparedness is the state of being ready. It is the work that is done by individuals, organizations and communities ahead of disaster. This often involves gathering information and establishing plans for things such as communication, evacuation, sheltering needs and the securing of property. This stage also includes learning about local, state and national resources, disaster processes and the roles each entity plays in a disaster. This is the time to build relationships and partnerships that will aid in response and recovery efforts.

What to Expect

Apathy concerning need for preparedness

Limited funding for preparedness activities

Anxiousness to “have all the answers”

Sense of being overwhelmed with how much there is to learn

What You Can Do

Be patient. Work with those who are interested and motivated, remembering all who will be affected—take special care to include the elderly, homebound and disabled population in preparedness work.

Think creatively. Partner with others, check into local agencies and organizations or government programs for ideas, workshops and trainings.

Realize that you cannot plan for every event, but you can plan for how you will work together in the community.

Know that there are others who do know and find out who they are. There is no need to reinvent the wheel—much of the work has already been done.

LSSDR's Role in Preparedness

LSSDR works primarily with the nine judicatories covering our service region of Texas,

Louisiana and Oklahoma. Our main tasks in preparedness are:

- Establishing communication with each Synod and District in our service area;
- Networking with partners and judicatories to ensure helpful and timely communication in the event of a disaster;
- Offering training events and consultation for Synods, Districts and congregations;
- Encouraging and supporting the development of disaster response plans at the Synod and District level;
- Participating in state and national disaster networks to keep abreast of best practices and developing trends in disaster response work; and,
- Training volunteers for disaster response work at a variety of levels.

Emergency Response

Begins immediately after a disaster

This is the stage in which emergency and government officials are the primary players. People are evacuated, search-and-rescue operations begin, and shelter and staging areas are established. The danger can be high and most of the work should be done by people who are professionally trained. Untrained volunteers can be a hindrance at this point.

This stage can last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks.

What to Expect

What You Can Do

Chaos and confusion	Stay calm. Help people focus on the next immediate task. As you are able, tend to basic human needs.
Wide ranges of emotional response	Stay calm. Validate individual experiences. Now is not the time for intense counseling as much as for crisis care.
Loss of conventional communication	Establish alternate communication methods as best you can. Use pre-planned communication points.
Quickly changing information	Be flexible. Information changes frequently during the early stages of disaster.
Limited access to affected areas	Work with government officials. The front lines of the affected areas should be reserved for highly trained volunteers or professionals.
Calls from well-wishers wanting to donate or help	Have a planned response to help manage information. Learn local procedures for managing donations at this point.

LSSDR's Role in Emergency Response Stage

LSSDR is not a first-responder. However, we recognize that many Lutheran congregations and community members will be on the front lines in the early hours and days after a disaster. We encourage congregations to learn as much as they can before a disaster and to plan how they might respond. We can help facilitate this planning. Some of the roles LSSDR plays at this stage include:

- Provide initial hardship grants as funds are available;
- Establish contact with Lutheran leadership in affected areas to assess immediate needs of clergy and other leadership;
- Make an initial report to LDR as to local status and begin to determine what resources might be available, and;
- Support communications between organizations and stakeholders

Relief

Begins one day to several weeks after a disaster

This is the work that happens once the danger of the emergency response stage is mitigated. It includes tending to basic human needs--shelter, feeding, medical assistance and crisis care for disaster victims. The primary goal at this stage is to ensure that conditions in the affected area are safe, sanitary and secure. These efforts are often managed by government officials in conjunction with established disaster agencies such as the American Red Cross, The Salvation Army and other faith-based organizations. Basic clean-up and minor repairs may begin at this stage. This stage can last from a few weeks up to a month or longer depending on the severity of the disaster.

What to Expect

Duplication of efforts, sense of “tripping over each other,” OR gaps in service

Changing information

Constant phone calls from the “outside” for information, offers to help or donate supplies

Disorientation, confusion and chaos

What You Can Do

Stay in touch with local organizations, participate in interfaith meetings and other networks such as VOAD in order identify gaps and to minimize duplication of efforts.

Be flexible. Information may start to stabilize but will still fluctuate at this stage.

Be ready. Have a plan for how people can help or a specific list of what is needed at this point. Be careful what you wish for in terms of basic supplies--you can soon be buried in used clothing or bottled water. If you choose to accept donations, have a system to receive them. An alternative would be to connect to a local donations management system and refer your callers to them.

Continue to take things one step at a time, focusing on the next task. Encourage caregivers to remember to tend to themselves as well.

LSSDR's Role in Relief Stage

- Gather local Lutheran leadership and facilitate a first meeting to begin to identify the immediate and long-term needs of the community. This will also be a chance to share information about the processes of recovery and streamline communication. In addition, it is an opportunity for members of the Lutheran family to check in with each other, update each other on their own situations and offer each other support.
- Identify and access funding sources. LSSDR will be in contact with LDR and other granting agencies at this point to begin the process of accessing funds for long-term recovery.
- Work with Lutheran and community partners to define and begin to implement structure for long-term recovery

Recovery

Begins weeks or months after a disaster

This is the stage when the community begins to rebuild and put itself “back together.” At this point, people begin moving out of shelters and into temporary housing or back to their homes. Much of the work in this stage focuses on repair and rebuilding, helping people navigate the “system,” and tending to emotional and spiritual care needs. This is the stage in which the faith community is most active and visible. Volunteers may travel from around the country to participate, new alliances are formed and the community begins to define its “new normal.”

What to Expect

End of the honeymoon stage—initial excitement and energy begin to disappear

Moving on by those not affected. “Isn’t that over already?” Compassion fatigue

Wide range of emotional states—recovered, anger, denial, still in shock, etc.

Anniversaries of the disaster event

What You Can Do

Keep the faith. Encourage the community to hold on to the vision and dream of the “new normal.”

Keep the story alive. Find ways to keep the unaffected public in the loop concerning the recovery effort.

Validate people where they are. Continue to listen to their stories. Seek ways to provide mental health care for those who need special attention.

These are important. They can be times of celebration for accomplishments achieved, but also times that remind of losses and of how much there might still be to do. Find ways to honor both aspects of anniversaries.

LSSDR's Role in Recovery

- Recruit volunteers for long-term recovery work;
 - Construction, rebuild and repair
 - Case management
 - Emotional and spiritual care
- Train volunteers
- Participate in LTROs (Long-term Recovery Organizations)
- Manage construction, case management and/or volunteer work
- Provide emotional and spiritual care for specific populations, such as children or the elderly

Donations and Funding

LSSDR is primarily funded by LDR for preparedness work and in response to specific disasters. LDR, as a national organization, is funded by both the ELCA and the LCMS. Donations in response to specific disasters come to LDR through ELCA Domestic Disaster Response and LCMS World Relief and Human Care. LDR then directs funds for specific disasters in Texas, Louisiana and Oklahoma to LSSDR.

LSSDR also is funded through individual gifts, grants and other partners. Monetary donations are used to supply anything from emergency grants to survivors to staffing and administration to construction support and beyond. Monetary donations can be sent to LDR or directly to LSSDR to support the agency in mobilizing services for survivors and communities after disaster. Contributions may also be made through the LDR and/or LSSDR websites:

LSSDR
8305 Cross Park Drive
Austin, TX 78754
800-938-5777
www.lsss.org

LDR
8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631
800-638-3522 ext. 2748
www.ldr.org

Monetary donations are not the only way that individuals, congregations and communities can support disaster efforts. This can also be done through prayer, volunteer hours, and/or donations of supplies. Lutherans have a long history in helping in all of these ways. We encourage those interested in donating their time, talents, supplies and or funds to contact LSSDR or LDR at the above listed addresses, phone numbers and/or websites.

Resources

American Red Cross (ARC)—provides many training opportunities and publications for use in preparedness planning for individuals and organizations. ARC offers shelters and other emergency assistance immediately following disaster along with other long-term recovery needs. The website has great information for all types of planning, including information for helping special populations (children, elderly, disabled) prepare and recover from disaster. It can also direct you to your local American Red Cross chapter for further resources.

2025 E Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20006
www.redcross.org

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—provides information and publications for preparedness planning for all types of disasters. FEMA provides government assistance and financial help for individuals following disaster.

P.O. Box 70274
Washington, D.C. 20024
800-480-2520
www.fema.gov

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)—provides several publications for preparedness planning, care for those affected and resources for volunteer training. Also available are resources for children following disaster.

8765 West Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631
800-638-3522 ext. 2748
773-380-2748
www.ldr.org

Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response (LSSDR)—our website posts information about our current response efforts and how you can help. You can also contact us for more information concerning disaster response, preparedness planning or training opportunities.

8305 Cross Park Drive
Austin, TX 78754
800-938-5777
512-459-1000
www.lsss.org

National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)—another great resource for planning and recovery information, especially for faith-based organizations and volunteer agencies. There is a State VOAD chapter in each state and many cities and regions have local chapters as well. This website will also help you find your local VOAD organization.

1720 I Street NW, #700
Washington, D.C. 20006
202-955-8396
www.nvoad.org

Contact Information

ELCA

Arkansas/Oklahoma Synod
6931 S. 66th Ave. #310
Tulsa, OK 74133
918-492-4288
www.aokelca.org

North Texas/North Louisiana Synod
PO Box 560587
Dallas, TX 75356
214-637-6865
www.ntnl.org

Rocky Mountain Synod
455 Sherman St. #160
Denver, CO 80203
303-777-6700
www.rmseca.org

Southwest Texas Synod
1090 Oestreich Dr.
Seguin, TX 78155
830-379-9900
www.swtsynod.org

Texas/Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
12707 North Freeway # 58
Houston, TX 77060
281-873-5665
www.gulfcoastsynod.org

LCMS

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1232 SW 89th Suite A
Oklahoma City, OK 73199
405-912-5847
www.lcmsdistricts.org

Rocky Mountain District
14334 East Evans Ave.
Aurora, CO 80014
303-695-8001
www.lcmsdistricts.org

Southern District
68446 Tammany Trace Dr. STE 5
Mandeville LA 70471-7793
504-282-2632
www.lcmsdistricts.org

Texas District
7900 E. Highway 290
Austin, TX 78724
512-926-4272
www.lcmsdistricts.org

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