Health And Safety Program

EMERGENCY RESPONSE: HOW TO PUT A PLAN IN PLACE

1. **Context**

   One component of the Diocesan “Health and Safety Program” is the requirement to establish an Emergency Response Plan. Section 6 reads as follows:

   6.1 In responding to situations of actual or potential danger, parishes are to make use of local emergency services, where available.

   6.2 Each parish is to write an Emergency Response Plan, to include, at a minimum, attention to the following:

   - location of and access to the nearest public telephone, and the posting of emergency phone numbers, and locating-information to be provided to emergency responders
   - the posted location of emergency exits, fire extinguishers, and first aid kits
   - the maintenance of appropriate first aid materials

   In small parishes, with few midweek activities, and uncomplicated space, planning for emergencies may be quite straightforward. In larger parishes, there may be many variables to consider.

   Not sure where you fit? Or need help? Read on.

2. **What is an Emergency Response Plan?**

   Despite our best efforts at prevention and anticipation, emergencies happen, and they take us by surprise. An “ERP” is your plan for ensuring a safe and happy outcome when an emergency occurs. It will include everything from the provision of first aid kits to the implementation of evacuation procedures.

   Your ERP needs to be committed to writing, but it will be no use at all if it isn’t also committed to memory. So we can’t just prepare a plan: we need to communicate it.

3. **Who’s covered? and who’s responsible?**

   An ERP is for the benefit and safety of all who use your premises.

   You are responsible for designing and communicating an Emergency Response Plan for the use of all “internal” or church-related groups using your facilities.

   Your staff should be very familiar with the plan and able to take charge in implementing it.

   However, staff are not always on hand. Therefore, all groups using your space should be made aware of the safety systems in your facilities, and should identify a person “in charge” who will implement an emergency plan, should an emergency occur.

   Note that not all groups meeting in churches are “Church groups.” In the case of external users, you are responsible only to ensure that their designated leaders are familiar with evacuation routes and safety equipment on hand. It is the external group’s responsibility to make and implement their own emergency response plan.

   If you have external user groups, please refer to Appendix 1 for further information and guidelines.
4. Why do we need to bother?

Because, despite our best efforts, emergencies happen! Regrettably, there are some situations which make churches especially vulnerable. For example,

- *Who’s around.* At any given time, there’s no predicting how many people will be on site, where they will be in the building, or how capable they will be of fending for themselves in an emergency.

- *Architecture.* Many churches are little short of a rabbit’s warren, with poor accessibility – meaning that evacuation routes may not be obvious, or negotiable.

There are at least three types of emergencies parishes might encounter:

**Medical Emergencies** – These can range from falls to faints to heart attacks. Regrettably, as our congregations age, we can reasonably expect an increase in life-threatening medical emergencies.

**Fire** – Remember that 80% of all church fires are caused by arson. It could happen to you! Church buildings burn well because of their ample fuel load, and the fact that the antiquated design of older churches means that there are often many exceptions to current building and fire-safety codes.

**Imminent danger** – Rare though this may be, there are occasions which require immediate action to protect individuals from violent, threatening, or abusive behaviour.

5. How do we develop our plan for Internal Groups?

There are three steps to developing your plan:

1. Gather relevant information and assess it
2. Plan your emergency response on the basis of your assessment
3. Communicate your plan

Please note that appended to this document are two work sheets ("Forms A & B") which you may find helpful.

**Step One: Information gathering**

Make a list of all *internal* (i.e. church-sponsored) groups using your facilities. Answer the following questions for each group. (Form A, appended, is a handy recording table.)

- Who is the designated person in charge?
- Is there any member of the group with specialised training related to emergency response (e.g. paramedic, medical, nursing, first aid, firefighter, police, etc.)?
- When is the group in the building?
- Where does it meet?
- What primary and alternative evacuation routes are available to this group?
- What special considerations arise, considering who is attending (e.g. children or mentally challenged adults who cannot be expected to problem-solve in an emergency, persons with poor mobility, or impaired hearing or sight)?
- Where will they assemble once outside the building?
Step Two: Planning your Emergency Response

Form B, appended, may be helpful in preparing to draft your Emergency Response Plan.

Your emergency response plan will take account of:

- the special conditions you have identified through your information gathering
- the types of emergencies which may arise

Your ERP will identify:

- how an emergency will be communicated to those present
  - (e.g. Shout “Fire!”, use a telephone intercom to announce a lockdown)
- how an emergency will be communicated to emergency personnel
  - post the number to call (usually 911)
  - post a script for 911 calls at all public telephones. Caller gives address first, and nature of the emergency second, e.g. “I am calling from 123 Broad Street, we have a burglary underway.”
  - Caller to follow instructions of the 911 operator
- the location of first aid kits, fire extinguishers and other emergency equipment
  - consider whether equipment is accessible after hours
- evacuation routes
- an assembly area outside the building

With this information in hand, you may now draft your Emergency Response Plan. Form C (A Sample Emergency Response Plan) may be helpful.

Step Three: Communicating your Plan Before Something Happens

You are responsible for ensuring that all internal employees, workers, and “designated persons in charge” of Church-groups are thoroughly familiar with your plan, and their responsibilities to implement it. (See Appendix 1 for your responsibilities to external occupant-groups.)

At a minimum, this means that anyone who may be responsible for implementing the plan should know:

(a) the location of emergency equipment, including:
   - Telephones
   - First aid kits, portable defibrillators, etc.
   - Fire extinguishers
   - Stand pipes and fire hoses

(b) the location of accessible evacuation routes

(c) any special circumstances which might complicate a response (e.g. the presence of dependent or physically challenged group members)

Post a floor plan at each entrance clearly indicating the address of the building, the number to call in case of emergency (911 or …), and the location of fire extinguishers
If possible, you should practise your plan, for example through a fire drill. Practices often alert people to problems they hadn't expected.

In short, Inform and Practise!

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**Appended Work Sheets**

Appendix 1: Emergency Response Planning for External Occupant-Groups

Form A: Information Gathering for Internal Groups

Form B: Emergency Response Work Sheet

Form C: Sample Emergency Response Plan
EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING

Appendix 1 - External Occupant-Groups

In the case of external users, you are responsible only to ensure that their designated leaders have been informed of evacuation routes and the location of safety equipment, such as an accessible telephone to call for assistance, first aid kits, and fire extinguishers.

Once you have provided this information, it is the external group’s responsibility to make and implement their own emergency response plan.

Your external groups may find it helpful to have a copy of the form which you use to assess the needs of your own groups (Form A).

The Table below is for your use, so you can be sure you have fulfilled your obligation to inform all external users. It is recommended that a copy of this table be kept on file.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Designated Person in Charge</th>
<th>Location &amp; Time of Meetings</th>
<th>Orientation to Facilities &amp; Related Safety Equipment Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Girls Floor Hockey League</td>
<td>Jo Gretzky</td>
<td>Gym Saturday 10 -12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING

#### FORM A: Information Gathering for Internal Occupant Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name</th>
<th>Designated Person in Charge</th>
<th>Location &amp; Time of Meetings</th>
<th>Description of Users &amp; Special Needs</th>
<th>Trained Emergency Responders in Group</th>
<th>Evacuation Route &amp; Alternate</th>
<th>Assembly Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Young at Hearts</td>
<td>Jane Doaks</td>
<td>Pinker Room Tuesdays 2 - 4</td>
<td>Frail elderly, hearing impaired, wheelchairs</td>
<td>Jane Doaks – CPR training</td>
<td>Pinker Room Door into alley or window to playing field</td>
<td>Flagpole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FORM B: EMERGENCY RESPONSE WORK SHEET

Your Church, Your Town

List of Potential Emergencies

Based on your hazards assessment, and any special needs which could arise in light of what users are using what space at what time, list the potential emergencies you could face:

Location of Emergency Equipment

Note the location of fire extinguishers, fire hoses, fire pull stations, panic buttons, alarm pads, first aid kits, portable defibrillators, etc.

Evacuation Routes

Post a floor plan at each exit, with exit routes clearly marked.

Calling for Help

Identify the location of accessible telephones, the emergency number (usually 911), and post a script at each phone for callers to use. The script should first identify your location, then the nature of the emergency. Callers are to follow the instructions of the operator.

Response Protocols for Different Emergencies

Consider the 3 general types of emergency (medical, fire, imminent danger) you may experience, and provide instructions for each. Remember that this is a “general” emergency response plan, and cannot cover the specialized needs of various user-groups (e.g. a seniors’ group which needs help with stairs). It is up to the leaders of such groups to consider the special needs their groups will encounter.

Trained Workers

Each user group should know which of its members is qualified in emergency response. List the names of those on staff, or part of the community, who have specialized training. These are the people who could be called on in an emergency until the arrival of first responders (e.g. doctors, fire fighters, etc.)
FORM C: SAMPLE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

St Elmer’s Church, Four Corners, Alberta

Location of Emergency Equipment

First Aid Kits: Kitchen
              Parish Office

Fire Extinguishers: Kitchen
                   Sacristy
                   Outside Boiler Room

Stand Pipes: East wall, by church sign

Evacuation Routes

Diagram posted at each entrance

Calling for Help

Phone Locations: Narthex
                 Entrance to Parish Hall
                 Kitchen
                 (Personal Cell phones)

What to say (posted at each phone)

"I am calling from St Elmer’s Church, 123 ABC Street, in Four Corners.”
State the nature of the emergency.
Follow the directions of the operator.

The Right Response for the Right Emergency

Medical Emergencies: Call 911
If competent, provide first aid until arrival of first responders

Fire/Smoke Emergencies: Shout, “Fire, fire, fire!”
Evacuate building by closest safe exit.
Designated leaders assist in evacuation of the “Young at Hearts”
Assemble at the flag pole.
Call 911
Remain outside until first responders issue “all clear”

Imminent Danger: Remain calm
If possible call for help/call 911
Activate lockdown or evacuation protocols
Remember that personal safety is more important than assets