

**Presbytery of Eastern Virginia
HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS:
Paperwork, Property & People**

As we anticipate hurricane season, and having learned several lessons from past storms, PEVA has compiled a list of considerations that churches will want to use in order to ensure they have adequate preparations in place for possible weather emergencies. These fall into three primary categories: *Paperwork, Property & People*.

PAPERWORK:

Take photographs or video of all church property. This is much easier and quicker than taking a physical inventory. Use a good quality camera and take it off site to a safe place in case pictures are needed.

Locate copies of insurance policies, the claims department phone numbers, and your agent's phone number and put them in a safe, handy place. This is also the time to know the answers to these questions:

- o Do we have wind and hail coverage?
- o What is our deductible? Is the wind and hail deductible equal to 2-5% of the insured value of the property?
- o Do we have flood insurance?

Bank records and the paperwork necessary to access funds immediately afterward.

Safeguard other vital, historic physical records/documents (ledgers, photographs, minutes, etc.). Take offsite or encase in protective plastic.

Backup critical computer data and take it to a safe location offsite. Much data can be stored on a flash drive or two. Save offsite in a waterproof container.

Make a list of approved vendors (electricians, plumbers, etc.) and their contact information. Keep it handy for post-event contact.

Complete church directory and emergency contact numbers. Many churches have a "short list" of essential personnel, to contact afterward, who will initiate recovery procedures. These contacts may include the chairs/staff for Property, Finance & Congregational Care. All on this short list should have extensive contact info for every other member on that list.

Congregational notification system/list (phone tree and email distribution list) that is prepared for activation. All communications possibilities must be considered and used because one cannot assume that every person will have all in operation. Make note of members with special needs who may be especially vulnerable.

Have a working camera available to record post-event damage for documentation/claim purposes.

PROPERTY:

Secure historic valuables such as communion services and paraments.

Secure rooftop equipment – check fasteners, strap, brace, or remove.

Prevent water intrusion. Inspect for possible sources and sandbag if necessary.

Electronic equipment should be at least 4 inches above the floor and protected with plastic sheeting.

Clean up and secure all loose debris and potential flying objects from the grounds. Trim trees.

Install approved hurricane shutters and/or window protection where appropriate.

Inspect generators and check appropriate fuel supply. (Do not run them indoors!)

Top off the gas tank in church vehicles.

Review emergency power systems & check for functionality. **Charge batteries!**

Locate utility disconnects and shutoffs, including fuel, water and electricity. Are they suitably marked?

Initiate the orderly shutdown of production equipment and systems that rely upon normal power. Turn off fuel gas services and nonessential electrical systems – especially computers and any system that may suffer from a power surge.

Make sure surge protectors are in place where needed.

Turn refrigerators & freezers to their coldest setting.

Check fire protection systems.

Check supplies and their location for temporary repairs: tools, plywood, tarps, plastic sheeting, roofing materials, wet vacuums, extension cords, etc.

Check cleaning supplies and their location: soap, bleach, paper towels, disinfectant, work gloves, trash bags, etc.

Inspect First Aid Kits for completeness.

Fill large containers with water in case it is needed afterward. Construction site plastic jugs with the side tap are especially suitable.

PEOPLE: *Although last in this particular list, people are the most important consideration. Congregation members, as well as those in the surrounding community, will need comfort and ministry.*

Have a contact list for all facility personnel. Develop a communication system (protocol) to notify staff when to return. Use cell and land line numbers as well as email addresses, as more than one of these may not be working.

Have a congregational contact plan in place that includes all forms of communication. Make sure that your congregation members have more than one phone number or person to call (The church phone and the pastor's phone or email may be out of commission. It may be helpful to provide contact info for two or three others who can be the "go to" people if the pastor cannot be immediately reached.) Church members will want to know what is going on and what kind of help is needed. *Phone/contact systems might be broken down by neighborhood* so that members can physically check on each other if electronic systems are down.

Be aware of local/neighborhood shelter locations and advise members as needed.

Have certain persons (perhaps those living closest) designated to check on persons who are elderly or who have special needs.

The safety of church members and employees is essential. Please do a thorough assessment of the safety and security of the church facility before allowing volunteers to assist.

Pastor should have the emergency contact information for the presbytery as well as PDA. The pastor or clerk of session will be the point of contact person with the presbytery for coordination purposes.