

GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC EMERGENCIES

FIRE

Preventive Steps

1. Make sure your church meets fire and building codes. Call your local fire department, insurance company, and building code agency to gather specific building, classroom, and age-group safety requirements. Each community will vary in codes such as the number of fire extinguishers or smoke detectors required.
2. Keep all hallways, doorways, and exit areas clear and unblocked, both inside and outside. Check exits regularly to make sure they are unlocked and functioning properly.
3. Inspect gas, electric, and utility equipment often.
4. Have the building sprinkler system (if available) inspected each year.
5. Inform teachers of locations of manual fire alarm pull stations and fire extinguishers. Train all teachers in use of extinguishers.
6. Make teachers and volunteers aware of the posted written procedures and fire evacuation diagrams showing two (a primary and secondary) fire exit routes from each classroom to the outdoors. This plan provides ways to evacuate children when a fire may be blocking various exits.
7. Train teachers and volunteers for specific actions they will take during drills and emergencies (see related article, "Preparing for Emergencies - Know Your Role").
8. Schedule and conduct fire drills.
9. Safety note: Mark hot water spigots with red fluorescent stickers, and set water heater on 120 degrees to prevent burns. Also, do not drink hot drinks in the presence of preschoolers and children.

Equipment Guidelines

10. Provide fire evacuation cribs (see related article, "Conduct Emergency Drills").
11. Provide a supply of fire safety blankets.
12. Make sure screens can be pushed out of windows so that babies may be placed on fire-safety blankets and evacuated through a window if the doorway is blocked.
13. Make sure all toys, window coverings, and flooring meet flammability safety codes (check with fire officials).
14. Keep all fire extinguishers, alarms, and sprinklers in good working order. Ask your local fire department to test your detectors and equipment at least once a year. Post the date fire extinguishers are serviced on the extinguishers.
15. Make sure extinguishers are lightweight, low on the wall, accessible and unobstructed.
16. See that smoke detectors in each room are operational (batteries changed every six months) and can be heard above the noisy chatter of the room.

STORMS, TORNADOES, AND SEVERE WEATHER

In just five minutes a tornado may travel two to four miles on the ground. From the time the National Weather Service (NWS) issues a warning, to the time it takes for the message to be received, precious minutes have elapsed. Churches must be listening for the initial warning and have a plan in place for immediate action.

Preventive Steps

1. Place an NOAA Weather Radio with a battery backup and a “tone alert” feature (available from electronic stores – cost \$30-\$80) in an area where it can be monitored by the designated Emergency Coordinator.
2. Designate an Emergency Safety Zone in the building. This should consist of small interior rooms, bathrooms, and windowless interior hallways, and interior load bearing walls that provide better protection. If your church has more than one story, evacuate the upper level to the lowest level in the building. Do not use portable buildings.
3. Establish evacuation routes to the Safety Zone, and inform teachers of these routes.
4. Conduct practice drills (see related article, “Preparing for Emergencies - Know Your Role”). After each drill, evaluate to note necessary changes.
5. Train leaders to have children, parents, and teachers drop to the protective position (face down and arms folded over head) when severe weather reaches the building.
6. Train a designated team to shut off the main electrical power and gas once a storm has passed, if there is damage to the building. Use only flashlights for emergency lighting; never use candles!
7. Safety Note: If you have a bus or van ministry, never put persons in the vehicles and transport them home until a severe weather warning is completely over. If a storm is approaching and the persons you are to transport will not have time to be delivered and walk safely to their home, delay the departure until the storm has passed.

POWER OUTAGE

- Remain calm, take flashlights from designated area and turn them on. Never use candles!
- Turn off electrical equipment you were using when the power went out.
- Sit down with the children and sing songs or tell stories until you receive further instructions from the designated floor leader.
- When parents arrive, use your church’s assigned security system and/or have parents sign to receive their child.

EARTHQUAKES

Earthquakes occur without warning. Should an earthquake occur, instruct everyone to immediately take cover inside the building.

1. Gather children in locations such as:
 - Standing in a doorway.
 - Getting under a desk or heavy table.
 - Standing flat against an interior wall.
2. Remain away from hanging objects, tall heavy furniture that could topple, glass areas, hot water heaters, gas lines, electrical wires, and flammable liquids.
3. Assist physically disabled persons and young babies and toddlers to safety.
4. Once shaking has stopped, the Emergency Coordinator should give the signal to evacuate the building as quickly as possible (see related article, “Preparing for Emergencies - Know Your Role”).
5. When leaving the building, use stairwells only (do not use elevators) to move to the designated area of safety.

6. Once in a safe area, count the children and teachers. If a person cannot be accounted for, a staff member, Emergency Coordinator, or designee should call local emergency personnel to search for the missing person. (Do not re-enter the building until it has been inspected and cleared by emergency services.)

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL ACCIDENTS

Once local media has communicated that a hazardous material incident has occurred, the Emergency Coordinator should notify Floor Leaders as to which strategy to implement for the emergency.

1. Shelter-in-Place – Teachers may be instructed to:
 - a. Close all windows
 - b. Turn off heating and cooling systems
 - c. Move all children and teachers to the Emergency Safety Zone located in the inner hallways of the first floor.
2. Evacuate – Government or community officials may issue an evacuation order. This action plan may include:
 - a. Walking to a specified door to be evacuated.
 - b. Using the directions given by community officials to walk or drive away from the area.

VIOLENCE/INTRUDER

Your awareness of violent acts may only occur through sounds of an explosion, gunfire and scuffling.

For Explosions:

- Follow the same plan and procedure as for a fire.

For Gunfire or Intruder:

- Take refuge in a room with a door that locks.
- The room should provide limited visibility to anyone outside.
- Secure the door and have the children hide under a table, in a closet, or in a corner. Do not leave the room for any reason until police have searched the building and given you permission to leave your room.
- In case of a hostage situation, immediately vacate the area taking no chances to endanger the life of the hostage.

Material adapted from *Oklahoma Baptists Protecting Children* by Sheri Babb and *Steps to Take to Protect Mississippi's Children* by Don Hicks, Robin Keels and Linda Reeves. Edited by: Cindy Campbell, Sue Harmon and Cindy Morris