

Continuity Of Operations Plan or COOP Planning

No one expects a disaster. Yet, if your congregation or school were to experience a disaster: a fire, electrical storm, tornado, hurricane, bio-hazard spill – what would you do? How would you continue the necessary operations of your ministry? What will your congregation or school do when a disaster or emergency directly impacts your organization?

When Hurricane Katrina created such devastations, churches and their schools discovered that records and necessary materials for providing for their staff had washed away. Their ability to continue operations was greatly hindered and in many places, halted for weeks. What steps are you taking so that you are able to continue operating the ministry to which God has called you?

This module of Congregational Disaster Preparedness is designed to help you develop a plan that outlines the role and responsibilities of clergy, staff, and members so that ministry may be able to be continued.

Although the format of COOP can vary from a simple checklist to a very sophisticated document, they all address the core elements of ---

- business operations
- fire safety
- evacuation
- crisis lockdown
- closure operations
- weather policy
- intruder response
- ministry operations
- relocations designations
- first aid
- bomb threat
- back-up of records
- internal communication
- notification procedures

The keys to a plan are to keep it easy to understand, practice it before an emergency happens, and review/refine your plan based on lessons learned.

You will want to begin with a very simple checklist **identify potential disasters**. This will help you to determine the preparation you need to undertake. This is the first form included in your module and includes natural and technological disasters as well as the crisis violence within community and families may cause.

The second form is a checklist for **COOP (Continuity Of Operations Plan)** for your congregation. Gather together several people to help you gather, review, and evaluate the information needed for this checklist.

The third and final form of this module is a **responsibility form** and is designed to identify those members of congregation, school, and staff who have responsibility to insure the continuance of operations in an emergency.

This may seem to be an unimportant exercise, yet I encourage you to work your way through this module and evaluate it each time there is change in staffing or board

membership. The greatest gift you can give your church's, school, and community families is to be able to be the church – hands and feet of Christ, grace and mercy in the time of crisis.

Continuity of Operations, Form I: Identify Potential Disasters

Use this list to identify potential causes for disaster in your community. Place a check mark in the box to indicate potential for this to happen in your community.

Natural Disasters

- Flood
- Hurricane
- Tornadoes
- Earthquake
- Extreme heat
- Thunder storms/lightning
- Fire danger during/after disaster

Technological Disasters

- Computer System Crash
- Loss of Congregation/School Hard Drive(s)
- Hazardous materials
- Railroad accidents
- Highway and trucking accidents
- House and building fires
- Radiological accidents
- Nuclear power plant emergency
- Terrorism

Violence

- Family violence
- Community violence
- Spouse abuse
- Child abuse
- Racism and ethnic conflict
- Economic and Poverty Issues

Continuity of Operations, Form II: Congregational Continuity Of Operations Plan

Carefully work your way through the information requested in this form. It will help to insure that you are prepared to continue ministry operations during a time of disaster.

Communications

1. Emergency numbers are posted by each phone. (Check Module *** for a helpful form.)
 - a. 911
 - b. Poison Control Center
 - c. Law Enforcement
 - d. Fire Department
2. A phone is accessible in each area of the building at all hours.

Review insurance policies annually.

1. Insurance policy meets the minimum requirements of the LCMS and mortgage holder. (The LCMS Treasurer's Manual will be helpful with this information.) A review of property value was conducted on _____.
2. Insurance policy covers the cost of recent additions or high value items such as stained glass windows.
3. Insurance policy covers the cost of temporary rental of another facility in the event your church is severely damaged or destroyed?
4. Insurance policy covers the cost of temporary rental housing for the parsonage family in the event that the parsonage is severely damaged or destroyed? (Your church policy may not cover the cost of replacing the clergy's personal items; the pastor should provide his/her own renter's policy. But a renter's policy may not cover the pastor's personal items in the church.)

Protect facilities

1. Maintain a list of who (in case of impending storm) is assigned to:
 - a. Cut off the utilities
 - b. Cover the windows
 - c. Take down or secure any exterior swinging fixtures such as signs or lights
 - d. Secure loose items around the church, also look at outdoor items.
2. Should a disaster occur:
 - a. Inspect the congregation's facilities.
 - b. Make temporary repairs to protect them from further damage or looting.
 - c. Call your insurance representative.

Note 1: A quick survey should be made to identify the types of items that need to be secured and any trees or branches that pose a direct threat to church property. Most of the damage from storms comes from fallen trees or branches.

Note 2: No one should check on the church during a storm. Members and the pastor should remain indoors at home or in a shelter.

Protect church and school records

Church records are a vital part of your organization. Safeguarding them should be a matter of simple routine and limited expense. (If your records are not kept safe, what you do to restore them will seem like a disaster itself.) Here are simple things to do now.

1. Your vital records are in a fireproof safe and appropriately marked. Do not keep money in the safe. Ensure the safe is big enough to hold the kind of oversize books that are normally used. Also ensure the container is watertight.
2. A safe deposit box is used for those records (such as deeds, insurance papers and mortgages) that are not used frequently.
3. If your church uses a computer for its finances or other vital functions, be sure your treasurer backs up his/her work and takes the backup home. The regular membership and other specialized data can be stored in the safe, or the secretary can take the backups home. (Check Module *** for additional information.)

Plan for Evacuation of Facility

1. Identify the nearest storm shelter.
2. Post clear directions on what to do and where to go in case of a severe storm/tornado warning.
3. Practice evacuation/fire drills. (Especially important if you have a school or early childhood program in your building.)
4. Have a working weather radio or battery-operated radio in an accessible location in the church. Ensure that someone is listening during watches while church functions are in progress.

Resume Worship Services ASAP

1. The Church ministers through prayers, Scripture reading, and the sacraments. Be prepared to resume worship services immediately even in temporary or damaged facilities.
2. Know how you will publicize the fact that church services will be held. Many people will be listening to the radio; this may be the best method for getting the word out. Also publicize pastoral care.
3. Determine a suitable alternative worship site, such as a school, and get an estimate of what it would cost to rent. If possible, get an informal arrangement that would allow your church to relocate quickly. This might be a reciprocal agreement with another local church, or even a funeral home, to share a facility

Congregation Facility Safety Checklist

1. The exits are:
 - a. Marked and lighted
 - b. Free from obstructions
 - c. There are no doors or passages that are locked
 - d. There are no obstructions that may impede evacuation
 - e. There are existing plans for upper floor evacuation
 - f. There are contingency plans for handicapped persons
2. Electrical and Gas Equipment

- a. The breaker switches or fuse boxes are located _____.
 - b. All breakers are marked.
 - c. All switches and outlet boxes are covered.
 - d. The electrical units are grounded.
 - e. The gas main or meter shut-off valve is located _____.
 - f. Cut offs for the water can be located in _____.
 - g. A wrench for turning off the gas or water main is gas wrench located _____.
3. Miscellaneous
- a. Key for all doors and buildings are located _____
 - b. The first aid kit will be found _____
 - c. The wheelchair and/or stretcher is located _____
 - d. The battery operated radio is located _____
 - e. An emergency supply of water and food supply is kept _____
4. Firefighting Equipment
- a. Extinguishers fully charged, inspected and tagged
 - b. Extinguishers appropriate for type of use?
 - i. Ordinary fires
 - ii. Grease and oil
 - iii. Electrical
 - c. The fire alarms are maintained and checked regularly.
 - d. Smoke detectors are maintained and checked regularly
5. Chemicals
- a. Are there any combustibles stored in the facility? Identify the locations of any combustibles, including:
 - i. Paint
 - ii. Solvents
 - iii. Cleaning fluids
 - iv. Thinners
 - v. Toner
 - vi. Propane (Don't forget any camping material you may store for a scouting program.)
 - vii. Toxic or corrosive materials
6. Emergency Phone Numbers
- a. A current list is posted and visible from outside.
 - b. The EMS and Fire Department know the different areas of the facility for quick access.

Continuity of Operations, Form III: COOP Responsibility List

Identify the position and person responsible for each of these areas. Include the date so that you will be able to remember the most recent review of the list.

Task	Person Responsible	Position	Date last checked
Communications			
Insurance Policy Review			
Facilities - overall			
Facilities - utilities			
Facilities - exterior			
Church Records			
School Records			
Church computer backup files			
School computer backup files			
Financial Data Backup			
Evacuation Procedures			
Weather / Emergency Radio			
Alternative worship site			
Alternate school site			
Facility - exits			
Electrical and Gas Equipment			
Keys and Security Alarm			
First aid kit and equipment			
Firefighting Equipment			
Chemicals			
Emergency Phone Numbers			