

Organizing a Disaster Response Training event in your congregation

Thank you for your willingness to organize a Disaster Response Training event in your congregation. Responding to a disaster is a vital part of who we are as members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Responding to a disaster allows a congregation to confess Christ to their community, region and world in ways they may have never considered before.

The central premise of the LCMS Disaster Response ministry's training is rooted in this verse "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19, ESV). The training your congregation will receive is rooted within our worship where our Triune God first showed His love to us through the death and resurrection of Christ. We see this love as we are washed in Baptism, fed in the Lord's Supper and continually nourished through the Word. These ways in which God has shown His mercy and love to us are now turned outwards to our community. Since we have seen God's mercy shown to us in worship, we can now show that same mercy to members in our community.

This training session will address the nature of disasters and explore what our response should be to a disaster as members of the LCMS. Using worship as our backdrop, we will explore how Christ has shown mercy to us, and how we can show this world the same Christ-like mercy as we have seen. The goal of this training is to prepare congregations and individual members to be better prepared for when a disaster strikes and know how to respond not only within their congregation, but to also respond in Word and deed within their greater community

As you prepare for this event, please keep the following in mind:

1. **Advertising.** No event comes together by itself. It takes time, work and energy to tell people about an event. A Disaster Response Training event is no different. Many people will wonder why it is important for them. It is vital that you advertise this event in your local congregation by making announcements following worship, advertisements in newsletters, announcements during church meetings and also by personal invitation. People need to understand this is important before they decide to attend.



It is also vital that you contact your circuit counselor and pastors within your circuit, as well as their lay leaders, to ask if they could also advertise this training within their congregations. Your district should also be contacted (as well as your District Disaster Response Coordinator) to ask if they would also be willing to announce the training on their websites. At a very minimum, please provide at least **3 months** to properly advertise this training event.

2. **Location.** Disaster Response recommends that you gather at least 50 to 75 people to warrant the cost of travel and other expenses (which Disaster Response will cover). It is best to host the event in a space large enough for 50 to 70 people and with tables and chairs, as participants will be writing in manuals during their training.
3. **Equipment.** During the training presentation, Disaster Response staff will need a computer that is connected to a projector. We have videos and PowerPoint slides that will be shown during the training. Our videos include audio, so it is vital to have adequate speakers connected to the computer, enabling the large group of participants to hear the video. If you do not have this type of equipment at your disposal, please let us know so that Disaster Response staff can bring it.
4. **Camera and Photographer.** During the training event registration period, a local volunteer is needed to take every participant's picture. The pictures will be used to create a picture badge they can use on a disaster response scene. Training participants will need to have their picture taken while holding a sign on their chest with their name written on it (just written on paper with a marker will be fine). The pictures do not have to be edited. After the pictures are taken, we will need this volunteer to load the photos onto a CD or DVD and mail them to our office.
5. **Lutheran.** Please note that this training is distinctively Lutheran in character, substance and quality. Other non-Lutherans are welcome to attend, but we are unable to certify them in our Disaster Response Training course because our program is designed to work within the current structure of our LCMS districts and local LCMS congregations when responding to a disaster.

This does not mean we don't work with others on a disaster scene. During almost every disaster, we have seen various church bodies come together in wonderful ways to complement, rather than compete, in sharing their resources and talents. However, you should be aware the LCMS is unable, and without the authority, to coordinate or direct non-LCMS churches or individuals. This is why we recommend the training be reserved for LCMS members and congregations.
6. **Food.** It is very important to plan for breaks with coffee and other refreshments. At approximately 12 p.m., we will also break for a brief lunch. We recommend that the hosting church find a group at the church to host a sandwich luncheon or a small potluck. Donations could also be taken beforehand to cover these expenses as a "registration fee" for the training event.



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