



Plan, Prepare, and Protect

Emergency Operation Plan for Houses of Worship

The Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) addresses incidents that require immediate action, e.g., fire, medical emergencies, etc. These incidents will require you to act quickly to save lives and or reduce destruction of your property.

We start with Best Practices to help with the decisions of places, things, and actions to take.



Planning

- **Why Plan?**

- ✚ *Assure safety and wellbeing of staff, congregants, and others on premises*
- ✚ *Protect assets (physical property, data, records, reputation)*
- ✚ *Needs & concerns differ from the immediate to two hours, tomorrow, next week, etc.*

- **How to Plan?**

First review any existing plans. Usually this is a fire plan.

Next think of things that can happen in your locale:








- ✚ *Fire is always an issue*
- ✚ *Gas or Smoke, you may smell a leak, especially if you heat or cook with gas. Don't forget your HOW may not use gas but there may be gas lines close by.*
- ✚ *Electrical problems*
- ✚ *Automobile & truck accidents. especially large ones if your HOW is near a major highway*

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-  *Medical issues in your congregation, staff or visitors*
-  *Flooding, due to riverine, broken pipe, uphill neighbor's issues*
-  *Earthquake, yes it has happened in Northern Virginia*
-  *Civil disturbance*
-  *Someone who wants to do harm*
-  *Contact local fire department and Office of Emergency Management to determine other things that have occurred*
-  *Look at development in the area, things could change and you may need to adapt existing plans*

Have a team of people that will put together a plan to present to the HOW directors. The team may be formed from the congregation, local businesses, and community members. Usually there is little funding needed for the team. The recommendations that the team comes up with may involve funding. There are usually no to low cost things that can be done to increase emergency preparedness. Collaborative team planning is the key that helps to determine areas that need work.

- *Designate individuals as evacuation wardens to help move people from danger to safe areas during an emergency.*
- *Evacuation wardens require training specific to their responsibilities.*
- *Provide evacuation wardens with a bright colored vest, bright colored cap or some other article of clothing that is clearly visible for those being evacuated. This item should be carried on their person and donned quickly.*
- *Generally, one warden for every 20 employees should be adequate, and the appropriate number of wardens should be available at all times such as when services or meetings are being held.*
- *Wardens may be responsible for checking offices, bathrooms, and other spaces before being the last person to exit an area. They should use a buddy system where each warden is also responsible for keeping track of another warden.*
- *Wardens should know all hazardous areas to avoid during emergency evacuation for their own safety and the safety of those being evacuated.*

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- *Wardens might also be tasked with ensuring that fire doors are closed when exiting.*
- *All those designated to assist in emergency evacuation procedures should be trained in the complete HOW layout and all alternative escape routes if the primary evacuation route becomes blocked.*
- *All those designated to assist in emergencies should be made aware of people with special needs (who may require extra assistance during an evacuation).*
- *Visitors also should be accounted for following an evacuation as they may need additional assistance when exiting.*
- *Have visitors sign in when entering the HOW and use this list when accounting for all persons in the assembly area.*

Know your building

What type of materials it is built with, e.g., wood, brick, steel. Learn about the Electrical and Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC, doors and exits, what is underground, gas, water, sewer and what is above) and who will and how to secure each system.

Who needs to be involved at all levels of planning and actions?

- congregation
- employees
- directing board
- Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
- Fire and Safety personnel
- Police
- other houses of worship
- the neighboring community

Though those above may not be writing the plan, they can be involved to give information and advice when needed.

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Hazards

Determine what can hurt you; possibly conduct a hazards & vulnerability analysis (HVA) to identify hazards and to identify their likelihood of occurrence and the impacts they may have. The OEM Web Site and consultation with OEM personnel can assist in this effort.

What to do - Notification



- *HOW employees, ushers, and those using HOW space must know how to report emergencies. There are several alternatives for reporting emergencies including use of internal telephone numbers, intercom, or public address systems to notify others. It is important for those in the HOW to know which methods are available, how to use them and how to also notify the proper authorities such as fire, medical, or police.*
- *As mentioned above, the wardens or ushers or others appointed to assist the evacuees, should be distinguished from others by a hat, vest or such a garment that is clearly recognizable.*
- *Once an emergency that requires a response is reported, a system -- typically an alarm system -- must be in place to notify those in the HOW.*
- *Alarms must be:*
 - ✚ *Distinctive*
 - ✚ *Recognized by all as a signal to evacuate or perform other actions identified in the emergency action plan*
 - ✚ *Must be capable of being perceived above ambient noise and light levels*
 - ✚ *Alarms should be heard, seen, or otherwise perceived by everyone including those with hearing and/or sight impairment.*
 - ✚ *Otherwise, wardens or others should be tasked with ensuring all are notified.*

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- ✚ You might want to consider providing an auxiliary power supply to your alarm system in the event of an electrical failure.
- ✚ Consider making available an emergency communications system, such as a public address system, for broadcasting emergency information.

EVACUATION PLAN



Many parts of this Emergency Operation Plan will include evacuation. The type and place of the evacuation will be dependent on the situation and the information available. The evacuation decision should include the type of trouble, the weather, who will be evacuated, and the location to which the evacuees should proceed.

- ✚ Use of elevators and how to assist those with special needs should be considered in the evacuation plan
- ✚ Also consider who can order the evacuation, and alternates. Consider how the evacuation order will be given, e.g., public address system, cell phone, land lines, air horns, etc.
- ✚ Practicing, walking through, posting maps and training are important elements of the evacuation plan.
- ✚ Evacuation procedures also often describe actions that should be taken before and while evacuating such as shutting windows, turning off equipment, and closing doors after people leave.
- ✚ When the evacuation plan is composed think not only of getting out but also how to check the impacted and non-impacted rooms and areas for those in need of assistance.
- ✚ Sometimes a critical decision may need to be made when planning - whether or not employees should fight a small fire with a portable fire extinguisher or simply evacuate. If they are to fight a fire they require full initial training and follow on training. This should be written into the plan. In most circumstances, immediate evacuation is the best policy, especially if firefighting services are available to respond quickly.
- Know your building structure, brick, wood, steel, and building utilities' shut off locations and procedures when writing the plan.

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Assembly, Rally, or Mustering Points

Assembly locations within the building are often referred to as "areas of refuge." Rally or Muster Points collectively refer to "areas of refuge" inside the building and to designated assembly points outside the building.



- *The HOW should have rally points:*
 - ✚ *Outside and inside of the building/s*
 - ✚ *For inside the building, areas large enough, accessible to restroom facilities, and away from large windows if possible.*
 - ✚ *For outside the building areas large enough and far enough away to be safe.*
 - ✚ *If possible, outside rally points should provide protection from inclement weather.*
 - ✚ *Outside rally points should not be located in areas (roadways and parking lots) that may be used by first responders arriving and staging equipment to assist.*
 - ✚ *Attempt to determine if everyone has evacuated the building and is accounted for – this is often very difficult but should be attempted in order to provide information to the first responders.*
 - ✚ *Do not let evacuees get in their automobiles to depart until clearance is received from the first responders for accountability reasons and to not have departing traffic impede the first responders.*
 - ✚ *For each rally point there should be a primary location and at least one alternative location.*
 - ✚ *Establish procedures for further evacuation in case the incident expands.*

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- ✚ *The same should be considered for the alternative rally point.*
- ✚ *Consider arranging for a rally point in a nearby building or another HOW if within walking distance.*
- ✚ *Rally points could be inside the HOW depending on the incident, weather and participants.*
- ✚ *If the HOW is large and spread out there may be a need for more rally points and alternatives*
- ✚ *Have communication between rally points*
- ✚ *Try and designate assembly areas so that you will be up-wind of your building from the most common or prevailing wind direction.*

Exits



- Clearly marked and well lit
- Wide enough to accommodate the number of evacuating personnel
- Unobstructed and clear of debris at all times
- Unlikely to expose evacuating people to more hazards, and
- Checked on a regular basis

Routes for Evacuation



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- *Things to consider when planning evacuation routes are:*
 - + *Quickest way out*
 - + *Distance*
 - + *Obstacles to rally points*

Communication


















- *Communication before, during and after an evacuation is important.*
 - + *Build and maintain relationships with OEM, Fire and Safety personnel before incidents.*
- *Communicate with staff, congregants, and those wanting information using all means available.*
 - + *Who will speak for HOW? Laity, clergy, other*
 - + *to implement the Continuity of Operations (better known as Continuing to Serve (CTS) plan*
 - + *to congregants*
 - + *to media*
 - + *hierarchal authority, e.g., synod, diocese, et cetera*
- *The HOW must consider these things for an incident:*
- **Who-**
 - + *can order the evacuation*
 - + *who will be the coordinating person*
 - + *who speaks with the coordinating person, usually the wardens*
- **Before-**
- *Establish that the communication system works,*

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-  *can cell phones be used in the HOW building,*
-  *can radios be used*
-  *and are land lines the best method?*
- *How to signal the evacuation*
 -  *by telephone,*
 -  *in person*
 -  *PA system,*
 -  *alarm etc.*
- *How to communicate with those leading the evacuation, usually wardens*
- ***During-***
 -  *establish if things are going as planned*
 -  *what are the deviations to the plan,*
 -  *are all areas clear*
 -  *personnel accounted for*
 -  *observations*
- ***After-***
 -  *are all safe,*
 -  *accounted for*
 -  *other issues*

REFUGE IN PLACE

Chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants may be released into the environment in such quantity and/or proximity to a HOW that it is safer to remain indoors rather than to evacuate. Such releases may be either accidental or intentional. "Shelter-in-place" means selecting an interior room or rooms within your HOW or ones with no or few

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windows, and taking refuge there. In many cases, local authorities will issue advice to shelter-in-place via TV, radio, and emergency alert systems.



- **Close the House of Worship**

- ✚ *If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave.*
- ✚ *When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps immediately.*
- ✚ *Do not drive or walk outdoors*
- ✚ *Unless there is an imminent threat, ask congregants and visitors to call their emergency contact to let them know where they are and that they are safe.*
- ✚ *Turn on call-forwarding or alternative telephone answering systems or services.*
- ✚ *If the HOW has voice mail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the HOW is closed, and that staff and visitors are remaining in the building until authorities advise it is safe to leave.*
- ✚ *Quickly lock exterior doors*
- ✚ *Close and secure windows,*
- ✚ *Close air vents.*
- ✚ *Close fireplace dampers.*
- ✚ *Have those familiar with your building's mechanical systems turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems.*
- ✚ *Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air. These systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed, or disabled.*
- ✚ *If you are told there is danger of explosion, close the window shades, blinds, or curtains. This may help prevent glass from flying into the place of refuge.*

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Continuity of Operations (COOP) – Continuing to Serve

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Selecting a place of refuge

- *Select interior room(s) above the ground floor, with the fewest windows or vents.*
- *The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit.*
- *Ideally, the space will have access to restroom facilities.*
- *Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary.*
- *Large storage closets, utility rooms, pantries, copy and conference rooms without exterior windows will work well.*
- *Avoid selecting a room with mechanical equipment like ventilation blowers or pipes, because this equipment may not be able to be sealed from the outdoors.*
- *It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the room(s) you select.*
- *Call emergency contacts*
- *Have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition.*
- *Cellular telephone equipment may be overwhelmed or damaged during an emergency.*
- *Write down the names of everyone in the room,*
- *Call your HOW's designated outside of HOW emergency contact to report who is in the room with you, and their affiliation with your HOW (employee, visitor, other).*
- *Listen to the radio, watch television, monitor the emergency alert system and/or use the Internet for information and further instructions until you are told all is safe or to evacuate.*
- *Let those taking refuge know what is happening.*
- *Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community*
- *Take your emergency supplies and go into the room you have designated. Seal all windows, doors, and vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape or anything else you have on hand.*

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- Consider precutting plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap 6-8 mil ideally) to seal windows, doors, and air vents. Each piece should be several inches larger than the space you want to cover so that it lies flat against the wall. Label each piece with the location of where it fits.
- Have instructions posted in every room or have hang tags for door handles with notes.

THE PLAN

EVACUATION

If told to evacuate go to

Primary Location if unable, unavailable, or the primary is unsafe go to

Alternate Location

If sheltering in place go to

Primary Location if unable, unavailable or the primary location is unsafe go to

Alternate Location

Check those with Special needs

A. _____

B. _____

Have Communication with the evacuation or shelter in place locations

Telephone number _____

Telephone number _____

Account for people

Names

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1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Decide :

- Go or stay at HOW
- Utilities- turn off?
- Contact 911, leader, board of trustees
- Protect records and data
- Activate the Continuing to Serve plan

RESPONSES TO HAZARDS

FIRE- Call 911. Provide the location of the fire to the extent known to the Fire Department.

UTILITY

GAS LEAK- Evacuate unless leak is outside, Call 911 when clear of gas odor since a phone may ignited fumes

ELECTRICAL- stay away & call 911 probably from a cell phone or another location

WATER- determine the cause if possible, if necessary shut off the water

MEDICAL- call 911, AED? First aid Kit, administer first aid or CPR

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SOMEONE TO DO HARM- roaming threat- call 911. Determine to evacuate or protect in place, and take the safest actions.

- Decisions and procedures for evacuation and protect in place during incidents involving the intention to cause harm are evolving. Each HOW should consult with the OEM and local police to determine the best plan for dealing with such an incident.

EARTHQUAKE- seek a safe location, under desk, in doorway away from things that could fall such as bookcases, loose items on shelves, glass, etc.

CIVIL DISTURBANCE- call 911 to determine the safest actions which often result in protect in place actions.

WEATHER- Shelter in place until provided information from a credible source (first responders, emergency alert system) that it is safe to move outside the shelter in place location.

CONTACT - Local Police, Fire Department and Office of Emergency Management to determine other things that have occurred and if it is safe to leave the HOW.

CONSIDER - Developments in the local area, what could or has changed that require you to adjust your plans

ACCOUNTABILITY PROCEDURES

- Who was in building
- Where are they now

Emergency Contacts

- First responders

Police _____

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Fire_____

Emergency Medical Services_____

Office of Emergency Management_____

- Clergy or Religious Leader_____
• Governing Board President/Chairperson_____
• Other Governing Board Key Contacts: _____

• Other Houses of Worship_____

- Contractors
Plumber
Electrician
Structural Engineer

PREPARE FOR AFTER EMERGENCY

- Develop a Continuing to Serve (CTS) plan
• Needs and actions
• Volunteer coordinator
• What needs fixing- do an assessment
• Director for event and aftermath
• Alternate meeting & office space
• Record of event- photos, those involved, write down sequence of events and decisions taken

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DISTRIBUTION OF PLAN

- Copies are stored at religious leader's house
- Assembly sites, primary and alternates
- Another HOW
- Trustee's house

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ANNEXES

Annex I

Fairfax County telephone numbers

LOCAL EMERGENCY NUMBERS besides 911

Gas leaks emergency	703-750-1400	
Poison Information Center	800-222-1222	
Fairfax Water emergency	703-698-5613	TTY 711
Fairfax Sewer emergency	703-323-1211	TTY 711
Dominion Power outage	866-364-3457	
Virginia Relay for hearing impaired (VARELAY.org)		TTY 711

Local Fire & Rescue station non-emergency _____

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Annex II

Emergency Kit Materials

- Ecclesiastical needs- make a kit
- Plastic sheeting 6-8- mil thickness
- Duct tape
- Nitrile gloves
- N-95 masks
- Water- drinking also toilets
- Hygienic wipes flushable
- Plastic bags for sanitary use
- Tools for utility shutoff- water & gas wrenches
- Lights, e.g., flashlights or battery operated lanterns- with batteries stored separately
- Battery operated radio-with batteries stored separately
- Contact list
- Copy of OEP
- Copy of CTS Plan
- Food
- Resource inventory
- First Aid Kit

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