

5. CARING THROUGH MITIGATION: LESSENING THE EFFECTS OF DISASTER

Act Now to Ensure a Safer Future

You and your church can mitigate or lessen the dangers of those disasters which occur—hurricanes, earthquakes, drought, and community violence—by promoting safe, environmentally-responsible lifestyles and taking practical safety steps in your home, church and community.

The potential of catastrophic disaster relates to the growth of cities, the remoteness of rural areas, the numbers of vulnerable groups of people such as women/children/the elderly/disabled/and the poor, increasing hazardous-waste transportation through every state and territory, and the fragility of natural ecosystems. Disaster mitigation

requires individual and collective changes in our attitudes and the ways we live.

There is no single prescription to fit every type of hazard or every location. Often lines are blurred between mitigation and prevention. Disaster reduction requires a complex mix of technical and social endeavors. Positive steps can be taken through education and early-warning systems, advocacy, and local, state/territory, national, and international legislative measures and actions.



Your local safety authorities can help you and your church take practical steps that will lessen the impact of potential disasters. Act now to ensure a safer tomorrow.

Andrea Wolf for Church World Service

First Steps

What You and Your Family Can Do

Use this checklist as a practical guide for acting to mitigate disaster:

Individual/Family Mitigation Checklist

- ___ Know risks and hazards in your home and community.
- ___ Develop an individual/family disaster plan and make up emergency supply kit(s). Review your plan monthly and update as needed. For information, contact your local Red Cross chapter or Office of Emergency Services in your area.
- ___ Ensure that your home construction meets the building code.
- ___ Ensure that you have adequate insurance coverage on your home and belongings.
- ___ Recycle all possible items.
- ___ Strap your water heater to the wall to prevent toppling during an earthquake or high winds. This may be your only water source in the first few days after the event of a catastrophic disaster.
- ___ If firearms are in your home, reevaluate their purpose and decision to keep them.
- ___ If you believe you must have a gun in your home, keep it safe. Unload it and lock it up. Store ammunition in a separate place.
- ___ Tune out violence. Contact your local TV stations to complain about violent shows or ads. Tell them you'd rather see shows that discourage violent behavior.
- ___ Invest in socially-responsible opportunities.
- ___ (Add other mitigation measures appropriate for you, your family and home to this list.)

What You and Your Church Can Do

Use this checklist as a practical guide for your church in acting to mitigate disaster:

Church Mitigation Checklist

- ___ Assess risks and hazards in your church and community.
- ___ Develop a church disaster plan and make up emergency supply kits(s). Update as needed. For information, contact your local Red Cross chapter or Office of Emergency Services in your area.
- ___ Conduct monthly review of your church disaster plan and emergency supplies.
- ___ Ensure that your church construction meets building codes.
- ___ Conduct yearly review to ensure that your church has adequate insurance.
- ___ Recycle all possible items.
- ___ Participate in church/community activities such as land-use planning, safety and security of workers in farming and business, and conflict resolution education.
- ___ Invest in socially-responsible opportunities.
- ___ Contact your community, state/territory, and national legislators to discuss ways to mitigate disasters in your area.
- ___ (Add other mitigation measures appropriate for your church to this list.)

How Church World Service Can Help

Contact your church, your state/territory Church World Service Disaster Resource Consultant, or Church World Service/New York for more information.

See Manual, **Mitigation: Lessening the Effects of Disaster**, for more information on (a) mitigation for specific types of disasters in the home, church, and community, and (b) advocacy/legislative mitigation at the local, state/territory, national, and international levels.