



## The Presbytery of Tampa Bay, Presbyterian Church (USA)

### All Hazards Emergency Operations Disaster Plan (AH-EODP)

**Introduction:** Disasters come in many forms. Natural Disasters - A natural disaster is the very harmful impact on a society or community brought by natural phenomenon or hazard. Hurricane, Flood, Severe Thunderstorm, Tornado, and Wildfire are examples of relevant threats to our churches and communities. Unnatural Disaster - are directly linked to human activities. Church Violence and Community Violence in the forms of Active Shooters, Domestic Violence, Gender or Gender Identity violence, Race Based Violence, Religious Hate Crimes. Humans Caused Structural Failures whether intentional or unintentional are all considered Human Caused Disasters.

**Mission:** *Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.*<sup>1</sup>

**Purpose:** This plan is to assist the Presbytery of Tampa Bay and guide the presbytery and its churches to prepare for and respond to disaster in in our geographic region in partnership with Ecumenical partners, Community Partners, and Civil Authorities.

**Author:** The Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team (PDAT) is the author. This All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan (AH-EODP) was prayerfully developed in response to the Commission Authority as extended to the Team by the Presbytery of Tampa Bay on November 16, 2024.

**Implementation:** This plan was implemented and became effective on October 9, 2025, by the Coordinating Team of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.

1. Who activates the plan?

**In the event of a disaster, or in preparation for a possible disaster event the General Presbyter or equivalent activates the All-Hazards Emergency Operations Disaster Plan.**

2. Who oversees implementing the All-Hazards plan?

**The Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team in partnership with other Presbytery commissions are responsible for implementing the All-Hazards Plan.**

3. What is the communication plan for the Presbytery?

**Depending on nature of the event, communications and information will be circulated through multiple communication formats directly from the Presbytery Office or other authorized designee.**

4. What authority does the Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team have to spend money in case of an emergency?

**The PDAT has commission authority to authorize 'Financial Assistance Grants' to churches and mission partners through designated funds available for this use.**

**The PDAT is also authorized to seek grant funding in support of PTB churches, mission partners, and partner community organizations dedicated to recovery efforts.**

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), Mt 25:40.

## **Appendices to the Presbytery of Tampa Bay All-Hazards Emergency Operation Disaster Plan**

**Appendix A: PTB All-Hazards Emergency Contact Protocol Sheet: Call Down - Call Up Procedures**

**Appendix B: Emergency Contact List for Presbytery of Tampa Bay Churches**

**Appendix C: Civil and Community Organizations Contact List**

**Appendix D: Congregation Emergency Operation Disaster Plan Template**

**Appendix E: Disaster Education Resources and Links Document**

**Appendix F: Presbytery of Tampa Bay Disaster Assistance Commission Description**

**Appendix G: Presbytery of Tampa Bay Disaster Assistance Commission Contact List**

**Appendix H: Active Shooter - How to Respond**

**Appendix I: Incident Reporting Form (Insurance Board)**

**Appendix J: Commission Post Event Incident Triage Form**

**Appendix K: Commission Financial Assistance Form**

**Appendix L: Documentation of Presbytery Property**

### **Section 1: Contacts and Staff Responsibilities**

#### **1. Pre and Post Event Roles:**

- a **Blue Skies** – PDAT is responsible for implementing, maintaining, and updating this document and its amendments as well as its other Commission and Committee responsibilities. Maintain relationships with Community COAD/VOAD/LTRG groups to offer and receive support in Grey Skies.
- b **Grey Skies** – PDAT is responsible for partnering with other Presbytery Commissions for checking in with Congregations and retired clergy not connected to a congregation prior to expected events. Communicate with Community Partners any need and offer support in preparation of and response to an event.

#### **2. Protocol Information Sheet used for communication between the Presbytery and designated **Call-down Call-up Reporting** (SMS texting allowable) (**Appendix A**)**

#### **3. Grey Skies Contact Lists for Individual Churches and retired clergy not connected to a congregation.**

- a Presbytery Directory List (**Appendix B**)
- b Current retired clergy not connected with a congregation. Contact List (**Appendix B**)

#### **4. Local Community Contacts Sheet: (**Appendix C**)**

- a **Contact 911 For ALL Emergencies in ANY Florida County.**
- b Emergency Alert Notification Registration
- c County Emergency Management Contacts
- d Community Organization Active in Disasters or Recovery (COAD, VOAD, LTRG, Disaster Committees)



- 1 Protocol Information Sheet for Call-Down / Call-Up or Text to text communications  
**Appendix A**
  - 2 Using Presbytery Directory for Churches to contact Ministers/Clerks of Session  
**(Appendix B)**
  - 3 Contact retired clergy not connected to a congregation **(Appendix B)**
- v Refer churches to the Community Resources Sheet for pre-event planning and post-event assistance in their local county. **(Appendix C)**
- e Post Event Response
- i Work with the Commission on Ministry to secure reports from all congregations' post events.  
**(Appendices A & B)**
  - ii Contact retired clergy and minister members not connected with a congregation.  
**(Appendices A & B)**
  - iii Refer churches to the Community Resources Sheet for pre-event planning and post-event assistance in their local county.
  - iv Return reports of significant Congregation Post Event issues to the General Presbyter or equivalent thereof and the Disaster Recovery Coordinator.
  - v Facilitates the collection of reports to be redirected to local civil authorities, Community Partners or Disaster Committees.
  - vi The Disaster Response Coordinator or PDAT designee arranges daily summary of updates sent to the General Presbyter or the equivalent there of.
  - vii Assist congregations in collecting information to help make local referrals for aid or assistance.
2. General Presbyter or equivalent thereof:
- a Determines whether or when the All-Hazards Emergency Operations Disaster Plan is initiated.
  - b Directs the sending of emails and SMS Messaging to the presbytery contacts for churches and mission partners as necessary to communicate preparations and/or important information and directions to be shared with or collected from pre and post area wide events.
  - c Reports discovered needs to internal presbyterian sources for assistance teams and or requests for financial support from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance or other entities offering aide.
  - d Receives all reports from commissions or staff for aid or assistance as they are returned post event.
3. Office Staff:
- a Ensure that all electronic files are backed up.
  - b All paper records should be boxed and depending upon type of disaster:
    - i either placed in a secure location on campus
    - ii or moved to a secure offsite location.
  - c Secure office equipment to the best of ability.
  - d Coordinate one way SMS Messaging through Constant Contact as directed by General Presbyter or equivalent thereof prior to significant events that have been warned by Civil Authorities.
  - e Coordinate with General Presbyter or equivalent thereof to disseminate communications using additional multiple communication options as necessary.

#### 4. Commission On Ministry:

- a Partner with Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team to make check in phone call pre and post event
  - i Protocol Information Sheet for Call-Down / Call-Up or Text to text communications **(Appendix A – available to PBTY Leadership, COM and PDAT)**
  - ii Using Presbytery Directory for Churches to contact Ministers/Clerks of Session **(Appendix B – available to PBTY Leadership, COM and PDAT)**
  - iii Refer churches to the Community Resources Sheet for pre-event planning and post-event assistance in their local county. **(Appendix C- public access)**
  - iv Return reports of significant Congregation Post Event issues to the General Presbyter or equivalent thereof and the Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

#### 5. Churches:

- a Create your own Emergency Operations Disaster Plan **(Template - Appendix D – public access)**
  - i Update the plan annually, or as often as a significant change occurs affecting it.
  - ii Update member contacts annually
  - iii Utilize the Information Resource Links for Disaster Preparation Education **(Appendix E – public access)**
- b Identify your 'Disaster Team'
- c Update designated contacts to receive/share information with the Presbytery.
- d In advance, prepare a list of congregants needing assistance, shelter or medical help.
- e Implement call list procedure before and after events to ensure congregants' safety.
- f Create a video/picture journal of church property
- g Safeguard information by backing up computer files and critical paper records in a safe location even if taken offsite temporarily.

#### 6. Pastor, Elders, Deacons and Leaders:

- a If possible, complete Basic First Aid, CPR, and AED training.
  - i Offer these training classes at your church
  - ii Acquire AED and maintain in well identified visible areas.
- b Become familiar with the Presbytery All Hazard Emergency Operations Disaster Plan
- c Become familiar with your own disaster plan.
  - i If you don't have one, start developing one.
- d Offer safety drills at various times so members and staff understand how to respond and or evacuate.

### **Section 3: Emergency and Disaster Occurrences (Grey Skies)**

#### **1. Presbytery Gatherings or Events**

##### **a. Incident Reporting**

- i. Five rules for reporting:
  - a. *Be Prompt* - Document the incident immediately. Waiting creates the risk of losing critical information.
  - b. *Be Clear and Accurate* - Give as much relevant information and context
  - c. *Be Thorough* - event's time, location, sequence of events, causes, and outcomes
  - d. *Be Sensitive to Privacy* - handle all sensitive information with care
  - e. *Be Objective* - Bias free documentation

- ii. Document the incident using the 'Host Site' process for recording details of incidents.
- iii. If no such process is available, then someone from the Presbytery will document using '**Incident Reporting Form**' for insurance purposes. **(Appendix I)**
- iv. Incident Report is forwarded to Presbyter, Stated Clerk, Moderator, Vice Moderator for review and/or further action.

**b. Medical Emergency**

- i. Direct host church team (pastor, Elder, Usher or Greeter) to call 911.
  - a. Anyone certified, use First Aid, CPR, and/or life saving devices until First Responders arrive.
- ii. Instruct the host church team to include the address of the church, the location on campus of the emergency, and the nature of the emergency.
- iii. Reassure participants and offer prayer as appropriate.
- iv. Prepare communication messages for congregants and media.
- v. Complete '**Incident Report**' Immediately following incident. **(Appendix I)**

**c. Fire/Gas/Chemical Spills (Occupied Buildings)**

- i. Direct host church team (pastor, Elder, Usher or Greeter) to call 911.
- ii. Instruct the host church team to include the address of the church, the location on campus of the emergency, and the nature of the emergency.
- iii. Host Site Team directs evacuation procedures
- iv. Once the building(s) is empty, reassure participants and offer prayer as appropriate.
  - v. Prepare communication messages for congregants and media.
  - vi. Host Site: Coordinate with emergency services (fire, police) as appropriate to secure buildings and grounds from further damage.

**d. Complete 'Incident Report' Immediately following incident. (Appendix I)**

**e. Water, Wind and Rain Intrusion/Equipment Malfunction (Occupied Buildings)**

- i. If determined to be a life-threatening situation, direct host church team (pastor, Elder, Usher or Greeter) to call 911.
- ii. Instruct the host church team to include the address of the church, the location on campus of the emergency, and the nature of the emergency.
- iii. Host Site Team directs evacuation procedures
- iv. Once the building(s) is empty, reassure participants and offer prayer as appropriate.
  - v. Prepare communication messages for congregants and media.
  - vi. Host Site: Coordinate with emergency services (fire, police) as appropriate to secure buildings and grounds from further damage.

**vii. Complete 'Incident Report' Immediately following incident. (Appendix I)**

**f. Active Shooter <sup>2</sup> - Silence your cell phone**

- i. **IF SAFE TO DO SO. Call or Text 911** (available within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay)
  - a. **Information to provide to law enforcement or 911 operator:**
    - i • **Location of the active shooter**
    - ii • **Number of shooters, if more than one**

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<sup>2</sup> *Active Shooter - How to Respond*, 2008, US Department of Homeland Security, Washington DC. **(Appendix H)**

- iii • **Physical description of shooter/s**
- iv • **Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s**
- v • **Number of potential victims at the location**

ii. **Evacuate** If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to evacuate the premises.

iii. **Hide out**

- a. If evacuation is not possible, find a place to hide where the active shooter is less likely to see you.
- b. To prevent an active shooter from entering your hiding place:
  - i Lock the door
  - ii Block the door with heavy furniture

iv. **If the active shooter is nearby:**

- a. Lock the door
- b. Turn off any source of noise (i.e., radios, televisions)
- c. Hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks)
- d. Remain quiet

v. **Act against the active shooter**

- a. ***As a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by:***
  - i Acting as aggressively as possible against him/her
  - ii Throwing items and improvising weapons
  - iii Yelling
  - iv Committing to your actions

vi. **HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES**

- a. ***Law enforcement's purpose is to stop the active shooter as soon as possible. Officers will proceed directly to the area in which the last shots were heard.***
  - i Officers usually arrive in teams of four (4)
  - ii Officers may wear regular patrol uniforms or external bulletproof vests, Kevlar helmets, and other tactical equipment
  - iii Officers may be armed with rifles, shotguns, handguns
  - iv Officers may use pepper spray or tear gas to control the situation
  - v Officers may shout commands, and may push individuals to the ground for their safety
- b. ***How to react when law enforcement arrives:***
  - i Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions
  - ii Put down any items in your hands (i.e., bags, jackets)
  - iii Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
  - iv Always keep hands visible
  - v Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as holding on to them for safety
  - vi Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling

- vii Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

**g. Major Tropical Storm & Hurricane Events**

- i. Terms to be aware of before and during storms:<sup>3</sup>
  - a. **Tropical Storm Watch:** Tropical storm conditions are possible in the area.
  - b. **Hurricane Watch:** Hurricane conditions are possible in the area. Watches are issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical storm force winds.
  - c. **Tropical Storm Warning:** Tropical storm conditions are expected in the area.
  - d. **Hurricane Warning:** Hurricane conditions are expected in the area. Warnings are issued 36 hours in advance of tropical storm force winds.
  - e. **Eye:** Clear, sometimes well-defined center of the storm with calmer conditions.
  - f. **Eye Wall:** Surrounding the eye, contains some of the most severe weather of the storm with the highest wind speed and largest precipitation.
  - g. **Rain Bands:** Bands coming off the cyclone that produce severe weather conditions such as heavy rain, wind and tornadoes.
  - h. **Storm Surge:** An often underestimated and deadly result of ocean water swelling because of a landfalling storm and quickly flooding coastal and sometimes areas further inland.
  - i. **Storm Track:**<sup>4</sup> The storm's size and path can directly influence what sort of wind patterns guide, enhance or hinder its growth, and vice versa! Forecasters have computers that take huge amounts of data and try to predict where the storm will go and usually can calculate 2-3 days out accurately.
- ii. **72-48 Hour Warning Tropical Storm/Hurricane Presbytery Preparation Contacts**
  - a. Disaster Assistance Coordinator or designee schedules Text Notifications to Initiate PTB AH-EODP activities with the Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team, Presbytery Staff, & Coordinating Team.
  - b. **Stay Informed:** Connect and listen to local news and reports and follow directions from Civil Authorities.
  - c. Tropical Storms can rapidly intensify overnight into dangerous Hurricanes.
- iii. **48 Hour Warning Tropical Storm/Hurricane Presbytery Contacts**
  - a. PDAT and Commission on Ministry partners to Initiate Call-Down Call-Up Reporting Protocol
  - b. Warm phone calls checking in with churches, mission partners, retired ministers identified in geographic **HIGH-RISK** areas for forecasted conditions.
    - 1 Protocol Information Sheet to engage in pre-storm needs or issues that can be addressed by Civil Authorities (i.e.: members unable to evacuate, security issues, etc.)
      - a Congregations/Mission Partner Contact List (**Appendices A & B**)
      - b Retired and minister members not connected to a congregation contact List (**Appendices A & B**)

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.stateofflorida.com/articles/hurricane-preparedness-guide/> Accessed July 2025.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/> Accessed July 2025.

2 Reminder to protect critical Church Records, equipment, and back up electronic files.

**iv. 24 Hours Warning Tropical Storm/Hurricane Presbytery Contacts**

- a. **Stay Informed:** Connect and listen to local news and reports and follow directions from Civil Authorities.
- b. **Call-Up / Reporting Protocols in Place**
  - i. Pastors or church Leaders call up or otherwise notify their PDAT/COM contact of any potential problems expected post storm.
- c. Civil Authorities warn to prepare to ‘Shelter in Place within 24 hours of Storm.’
- d. Evacuations to local shelters only.

**v. During the Hurricane:**

- a. **Stay Informed:** Connect and listen to local news and reports and follow directions from Civil Authorities.
- b. **Stay indoors:** Avoid windows and doors (even impact rated windows and doors) and take refuge in a designated safe room or interior space if you are not evacuating.
- c. **Be aware of the eye of the storm:** If there is a lull in the winds, it could be the eye of the storm and wind will pick up again. Do not go outside or go to churches to ‘check on things.’
- d. **Don't drive through flooded areas:** Cars can be swept away in very little water.
- e. **If you lose power:** Avoid using candles and use a battery-powered flashlight instead.

**vi. Immediately After the Storm:**

**a. Refer all Emergencies to 911.**

- i. **Text or Call 911 is available in all counties within the bounds of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay**

**b. Stay Informed:** Connect and listen to local news and reports and follow directions from Civil Authorities.

**c. Check the area for safety before attempting to check facilities.**

- i. Flash flooding is common after storms pass.
  - 1. Do not attempt to drive or walk through flooded areas.
  - 2. Swift water can hide under a calm surface.
- ii. Never touch down power lines, they can be live even if the power is out in your area and are a threat to life.
- iii. Down trees frequently hide power lines. Do not clear tree debris near power lines.

**d. Call-Up / Call-Down Reporting Protocols in Place (Appendices A & B)**

- i. Pastors or church Leaders call up or otherwise notify their PDAT/COM contact of any potential problems expected post storm.
- ii. Land Lines may be damaged, and Cell Voice Service may be interrupted. Use SMS Cell Text Messaging for reporting if that service is available.
- iii. Disaster Recovery Coordinator or designee will consult with Presbyter any recommendation for immediate Presbyterian Disaster Assistance requests.
- iv. Disaster Recovery Coordinator or designee will coordinate reporting any Denomination, Ecumenical, Community, or Civil Services available to support needs of the Presbytery, Churches or Mission Partners available to support needs of Congregations.

## Section 4: Recovery

1. Disaster Assistance Coordinator and Presbytery Disaster Assistance Team (PDAT):
  - a Work with Presbyter to invite Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Investigation Teams into the area
    - i Coordinate schedule of PDA Teams activities in the presbytery and of affected churches
  - b Facilitate Post Event Reporting through collecting the PDAT Incident Triage Form from Churches and Presbytery Mission Partners **(Appendix J)**
    - i Including coordination of Communications and site visits as needed
    - ii Referrals to community resources to address immediate needs
  - c Facilitate the distribution of information related to Post Event Resources
    - i PC(USA) Post Event support Resources
      - 1 PDA Immediate Assistance Grants
      - 2 Individual Needs Grants
      - 3 Presbytery Requested Funding
    - ii Civil Authorities communication related to Disaster Response Support (FEMA, State, County)
    - iii County Based Support Groups (COAD, VOAD Disaster Recovery Committees, etc.)
    - iv Developing Ecumenical Partnerships supporting recovery through Volunteer Support
  - d PDAT Financial Assistance Grant Applications from Congregations and Mission Partners **(Appendix K)**

## Section 5: Documentation of Presbytery Property

1. Pictures and Video clips of presbytery property are saved in a digital file format.
2. Inventory listing of presbytery property and general descriptions.
  - i. Completed and included as an appendix. **(Appendix L)**