



# IF A DISASTER STRIKES, WILL I BE PREPARED?

A Guide for Disaster Preparation  
*Includes Flu Pandemic Planning*

*Prepared by*  
Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief



# If a Disaster Strikes, Are You Prepared?

## INTRODUCTION

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*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Matthew 6:33-34*

Across the years "Are we prepared?" has been a key question asked as we have faced critical disaster situations. Even in 2005 with 30 years of disaster response experience behind us, we found that a storm like Katrina taught us how unprepared we could be. As we look to a future with promises of more terrorism, intense hurricanes, severe tornadoes, increased earthquakes and a possible pandemic flu outbreak, we learned that early preparation is the best security we can have for our own well-being. The following manual has been prepared to help your church as you look to your future preparation and ministry.

Disasters strike quickly and many times without warning. They force evacuations, trauma, injuries, and destruction. If you are involved do you know how to respond? When basic services – electricity, gas, water, or telephones – are cut off, what would you do? Many relief agencies and officials respond quickly but they can't meet every need. You can have your family and church better prepared if you have a family disaster plan. We hope this helps as you look to the future.

# EARTHQUAKES

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## WATCHING NEW MADRID

Earthquakes in the United States occur most frequently west of the Rocky Mountains. However, the strongest earthquakes to occur in the United States occurred along the New Madrid Fault which lies between St. Louis and Memphis. If one were to occur there today it would impact most of North Mississippi. We need to make sure we are prepared for such a future event.

## WHAT TO EXPECT IN AN EARTHQUAKE

During an earthquake, the “solid” earth moves like the deck of a ship. The actual movement of the ground, however, is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most casualties result from falling objects and debris because the shocks can shake, damage, or demolish buildings.

Earthquake injuries are commonly caused by:

- building collapse or damage, such as toppling chimneys, falling bricks from wall facings and roof parapets, collapsing walls, falling ceiling plaster, light fixtures, and pictures.
- flying glass from broken windows. (This danger may be greater in modern, high-rise structures.)
- overturned bookcases, wall units, and other furniture.
- fires from broken chimneys, and ruptured gas and electrical lines. The danger may be aggravated by a lack of water caused by broken mains.
- fallen power lines.
- drastic human actions resulting from fear.



## BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

Check your home for potential hazards.

- Defective electrical wiring and leaky gas or inflexible connections are very dangerous in the event of an earthquake. Bolt down water heaters and gas appliances.
- Know where and how to shut off electricity, gas, and water at main switches and valves. Check with your local utilities for instructions.
- Place large and heavy objects on lower shelves. Securely fasten shelves to walls. Brace or anchor high or top-heavy objects.
- Bottled goods, glass, china, and other breakables should be stored in low or closed cabinets.
- Overhead lighting fixtures such as chandeliers should be made fast. A little wiring or anchoring will usually take care of these risks.
- Deep plaster cracks in ceilings and foundations should be investigated and repaired.

Hold occasional drills so each member of your family knows what to do in an earthquake.

Teach responsible family members how to turn off electricity, gas and water at main switches and valves.

## HAVE ON HAND:

- a flashlight and battery-powered radio in case power is cut off.
- a supply of drinking water and some nonperishable foods which can be prepared without cooking. You may use the Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist in the back of this manual.
- a fire extinguisher and first aid kit.

## DURING AN EARTHQUAKE

First and foremost, **stay calm**. Think through the consequences of any action you take. If you are inside, stay inside; if you are outdoors, stay there. In earthquakes, most injuries occur as people are entering or leaving buildings.

If indoors, take cover under a heavy desk, table, bench, in a supported doorway, or along an inside wall. Stay away from glass. Don't use candles, matches, or other open flame either during or after the tremor because of possible gas leaks. Douse all fires.

# TORNADOES

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## WHEN A TORNADO APPROACHES...

Your immediate action may mean life or death. Seek inside shelter, preferably in a tornado cellar, underground excavation, or steel-framed or reinforced concrete building of substantial construction. Stay away from windows.

## IN OFFICE BUILDINGS

Stand in an interior hallway on a lower floor, preferably in the basement.

## IN BUSINESSES

When a tornado warning is received, post a lookout. Workers should move quickly to the section of the business offering the greatest protection in accordance with advance plans.

## IN HOMES, SMALL BUILDINGS, AND VEHICLES

Go to the basement or to an interior part of the lowest level (a closet, bathroom, or interior hall). Get under something sturdy. Mobile homes are particularly vulnerable to overturning during strong winds. Trailer parks should have a community shelter. Appoint a community leader to be responsible for constant radio monitoring during threatening weather or during watch periods. Leave mobile homes or vehicles and go to a substantial structure. If there is no shelter nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, ravine, or culvert and shield your head with your hands. Do not try to outrun a tornado with your vehicle-leave your vehicle immediately!

## IN SCHOOLS

Whenever possible, go to an interior hallway on the lowest floor. Avoid auditoriums and gymnasiums or other structures with wide, free-span roofs. If a building is not of reinforced construction, go quickly to a nearby reinforced building or to a ravine or open ditch, and lie flat.

## KEEP LISTENING

NOAA weather radio and your radio and television stations will broadcast the latest tornado advisory information. Call the Weather Service only to report a tornado.

**Remember: A tornado watch means tornadoes are expected to develop. A tornado warning means a tornado has actually been sighted.**

# Hurricanes

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## HURRICANE ADVISORIES...

will help save lives. Follow these safety rules during hurricane emergencies:

1. Enter each hurricane season prepared. Every June through November, recheck your supply of boards, tools, batteries, non-perishable foods, and the other equipment you will need when a hurricane strikes your town. You may use the Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist in the back of this manual.
2. When you hear the first tropical cyclone advisory, listen for future messages; this will prepare you for a hurricane emergency well in advance of the issuance of watches and warnings.
3. When your area is covered by a hurricane watch, continue normal activities, but stay tuned to radio and television for all NOAA National Weather Service advisories. Remember: A hurricane watch means possible danger; if the danger materializes, a hurricane warning will be issued. Meanwhile, keep alert. Ignore rumors.
4. When your area receives a hurricane warning:
  - Plan your time before the storm arrives and avoid the last minute hurry that might leave you marooned or unprepared.
  - Keep calm until the emergency has ended.
  - Leave low-lying areas that may be swept by high tides, storm waves, or flooding rains.
  - Board up windows or protect them with storm shutters or tape. Danger to small windows is mainly from wind-driven debris. Larger windows may be broken by wind pressure.
  - Secure outdoor objects that might be blown away or uprooted. Garbage cans, garden tools, toys, signs, porch furniture, and a number of other harmless items become missiles of destruction in hurricane winds. Anchor them or store them inside before the storm strikes.
  - Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs, bottles, and cooking utensils; your town's water supply may be contaminated by flooding or damaged by hurricane floods or power loss.
  - Check your battery-powered equipment. Your radio may be your only link with the world outside the hurricane, and emergency cooking facilities, lights, and flashlights will be essential if utilities are interrupted. Have a generator if possible.
  - Keep your car fueled. Because of flooding or interrupted electrical power, service stations may be inoperable for several days after the storm strikes, due to flooding or interrupted electrical power.

- Stay at home, if it is sturdy and on high ground. If it is not, move to a designated shelter and stay there until the storm is over.
- Remain indoors during the hurricane. Travel is extremely dangerous when winds and tides are shipping through your area.
- Monitor the storm's position through NOAA National Weather Service advisories.



# Preparing for Pandemic Influenza

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History's greatest killer has always been disease. Small-pox alone has killed hundreds of millions of people, more than all the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century combined. Preparing for a pandemic is important, sometimes controversial, and challenging.

At this time, the H5N1 virus (Avian influenza), has been found in 47 countries. A confirmed 332 people in 12 countries have been infected with the virus, mostly through close contact with infected chickens or, in rare cases, sustained, close contact with infected individuals such as family members. Of those 332 cases, 204 have proved fatal.

The H5N1 virus may not provide the spark for a pandemic. However, steps taken now to prepare for what could be a severe pandemic will have benefits for a range of health and disaster-related challenges. A severe pandemic will affect all sectors of society. Examples could include...high rates of worker absenteeism affecting the operations of basic services. Efforts to slow or stop the spread of the disease could limit the availability of food or cause schools and other public arenas to be closed for significant periods of time. Economic hardships for state and local governments, business owners and individuals could result. Government efforts to manage the public's response could be complicated by the myriad sources of information – including the internet causing widespread confusion and misinformation.

## WHAT MUST HAPPEN FOR AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC TO OCCUR?

Seasonal influenza outbreaks occur regularly around the world. While serious, these outbreaks are rarely the source of pandemic. Pandemics are unique in that they present a previously unknown strain of virus to the world. The avian flu is such a virus and therefore possesses the potential of such a pandemic. Experts indicate that for a pandemic to occur the following four factors must be met...

1. A new flu virus must emerge from the animal reservoirs that have produced and harbored such viruses – one that has never infected human beings and therefore one for which no person has developed antibodies.
2. The virus has to make humans sick (most do not).
3. It must be able to spread efficiently, through coughing, sneezing, or a handshake, or through contaminated media such as doorknobs.
4. Mutation of the virus to allow human to human spread.

Avian flu virus H5N1 has already met two conditions...it is new and it has been documented to make humans sick. As the virus mutates to support human to human transfer a pandemic is possible.

## WHAT COULD HAPPEN?

Health and Human Services Department estimates that in a moderate influenza pandemic, the United States might experience 209,000 deaths with 128,750 patients requiring ICUs and 64,875 patients needing mechanical ventilators. In a severe pandemic (similar to 1918) the numbers could rise to 1.9 million deaths, with 1.5 million needing ICU and 742,000 needing ventilators. Under both scenarios, 30% of the population (90 million) would contract the illness and 45 million would need outpatient care.

Epidemics could last six to eight weeks in affected areas. Multiple waves of illness are likely, with each wave lasting two to three months. During each wave, absenteeism rates could reach 40% in severe pandemic from illness, caring for sick family members, and fear of social contact.

## PREPARATION FOR MISSISSIPPI CHURCHES, FAMILIES, AND INDIVIDUALS

If a pandemic occurs, most pastors and church leaders will be unprepared. The pandemic threat is different than any faced by Mississippi Baptist leaders. Helping pastors and church leaders prepare is crucial to survival of many people.

1. The government (CDC) will discourage public meetings and gatherings for the time of the pandemic. This will include churches.
2. People must be encouraged to be inoculated and take other medications and precautions necessary for prevention and protection.
3. Each church will need to set aside an emergency percent of offerings to cover needs in event of loss of funds through missed Sundays due to the flu outbreak or death of members.
4. Churches will need a plan to encourage volunteers to check on Senior Adults or "at risk" members.
5. Design a plan for using your volunteers realizing a percent of them will be infected. Plan to hold a portion of them for later response since early responders may be lost to the infection.
6. As the pandemic begins to subside there will be a critical need for counseling those who have experienced loss of family members.

## SOCIAL DISRUPTION MAY BE WIDESPREAD

- Plan for the possibility that usual services may be disrupted. These could include services provided by hospitals and other health care facilities, banks, stores, restaurants, government offices, and post offices.
- Prepare backup plans when public gatherings, such as volunteer meetings and worship service, are canceled.
- Consider how to care for people with special needs in case the services they rely on are not available. Would include oxygen, dialysis, etc.

## BEING ABLE TO WORK MAY BE DIFFICULT OR IMPOSSIBLE

- Find out if you can work from home.
- Ask your employer about how business will continue during a pandemic. (A Business Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov/business/businesschecklist.html](http://www.pandemicflu.gov/business/businesschecklist.html).)
- Plan for the possible reduction or loss of income if you are unable to work or your place of employment is closed.
- Check with your employer or union about leave policies.
- Keep cash on hand.

## SCHOOLS MAY BE CLOSED FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME

- Help schools plan for pandemic influenza. Talk to the school nurse or the health center. Talk to your teachers, administrators, and parent-teacher organizations.
- Plan home learning activities and exercises. Have materials, such as books, on hand. Also plan recreation activities that your children can do at home.
- Consider childcare needs.

## TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MAY BE DISRUPTED

- Think about how you can rely less on transportation during a pandemic. For example, store food and other essential supplies so you can make fewer trips to the store.
- Prepare backup plans for taking care of loved ones who live far away.
- Public transportation will be non-existent. Long distance travel will be very limited.

## PEOPLE WILL NEED ADVICE AND HELP AT WORK AND HOME

- Think about what information the people in your workplace will need if you are a manager. This may include information about insurance, leave policies, working from home, possible loss of income, and when not to come to work if sick.
- Meet with your colleagues and make lists of things that you will need to know and what actions can be taken.
- Identify other information resources in your community, such as mental health hotlines, public health hotlines, or electronic bulletin boards.

## BE PREPARED

Stock a supply of water and food. During a pandemic you may not be able to get to a store. Even if you can get to a store, it may be out of supplies. Public waterwork services may also be interrupted. Stocking supplies can be useful in other types of emergencies, such as power outage and disasters. Store foods that:

- are nonperishable (will keep for a long time) and don't require refrigeration
- are easy to prepare in case you are unable to cook
- require little or no water, so you can conserve water for drinking

## STAY HEALTHY

Will the seasonal flu shot protect me against pandemic influenza? No, it won't protect you against pandemic influenza. But flu shots can help you to stay healthy. Get a flu shot to help protect yourself from seasonal flu. Get a pneumonia shot to prevent secondary infection if you are over the age of 65 or have chronic illness such as diabetes or asthma. For specific guideline, talk to your health care provider or call the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at 1.800.232.4636. Make sure that your family's immunizations are up-to-date.

Take common sense steps to limit the spread of germs. Make good hygiene a habit.

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Put used tissues in a waste basket.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Stay at home if you are sick.

It is always a good idea to practice good health habits.

- Eat a balanced diet. Be sure to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products. Also include low-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and beans. Drink lots of water and go easy on salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat.
- Exercise on a regular basis and get plenty of rest.

## GET INFORMED

Knowing the facts is the best preparation. Identify sources you can count on for reliable information. If a pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical.

- Reliable, accurate, and timely information is available at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).
- Another source for information on pandemic influenza is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Hotline at: 1.800.CDC.INFO (1.800.232.4636). This line is available in English and Spanish, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. TTY: 1.888.232.6348. Questions can be e-mailed to [cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov).
- Look for information on your local and state government Web sites. Links are available to each state department of public health at [www.cdc.gov/other.htm#states](http://www.cdc.gov/other.htm#states).
- Listen to local and national radio, watch news reports on television, and read your newspaper and other sources of printed and web-based information.

As you begin your individual or family planning, you may want to review your state's planning efforts and those of your local public health and emergency preparedness officials. Many of the state plans and other planning information can be found at [pandemicflu.gov/plan/state/index.html](http://pandemicflu.gov/plan/state/index.html).