

Disaster Do's and Don'ts from Week of Compassion

(2014)

Also included in the Chalice Press book [*Help and Hope: Disaster preparedness and response for congregations*](#) (royalties benefit Week of Compassion)

DO: Check on your members, neighbors, and especially those who are elderly, disabled, or vulnerable in other ways.

DON'T: Self-deploy as a volunteer, especially during the search and rescue phase. You will only get in the way or put yourself in danger.

DO: If there are needs in your congregation and you belong to a national denomination, please contact your Regional Office, District Superintendent, or appropriate middle judicatory office, so they can coordinate ways to provide support through available disaster funds and organizations.

DO: Check with your local VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster) about needs of survivors before collecting any material donations.

DON'T: Collect material donations without arranging an appropriate destination (local social service agency, etc.).

DO: Know that money is the most flexible donation you can make. Denominational and other disaster response funds often have really low overhead and are efficient, effective ways to turn your generosity into assistance.

DO: If eligible, encourage all affected folks in your congregation and community to apply to FEMA for Federal Disaster Assistance. Please be aware that this is a long process, and be sure to read all documents carefully. An initial rejection does not mean one cannot appeal; an applicant may also be eligible for low-interest loans to replace damaged property.

DON'T: Get discouraged by how long the process takes.

DO: Become familiar with FEMA's sequence of delivery.
(<http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/regions/regioni/sequence2008.pdf>)

DON'T: Organize material good distributions that might compromise an affected person's eligibility for aid. (Let the sequence of delivery be your guide.)

DO: Encourage leaders in your congregations to become involved in the formation of a long-term recovery committee and to put their skills to work.

DO: Stay hopeful. Recovery takes a long time, even among well supported, well-organized communities.

*For more practical tools to help your church plan for the unexpected, check out [*Help and Hope*](#), now available for pre-order from Chalice Press. Royalties benefit the work of Week of Compassion and Church World Service.*