



**Disaster Relief  
Associational  
Assessment Manual**

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Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief  
***A Ministry of the Cooperative Program***  
***And Dixie Jackson Arkansas Missions Offering***

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# Associational Preparedness for Disaster Relief

## Introduction

The goal of this manual is to help associational leadership discover disaster relief needs and resources in their area, evaluate their disaster relief possibilities, and develop plans and protocols to assist churches in responding to the community following a disaster.

**A disaster is defined as anything that causes human suffering or creates human needs that the victims cannot alleviate themselves.**

## Prayer

Begin with prayer, conduct your research with prayer, study options in prayer, develop organization and structure with prayer, and build relationships with prayer.

## Research

- One of the first contacts should be with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Disaster Relief. Before you consider building a disaster relief unit, consult with the ABSC Disaster Relief Director. He will assist you in knowing how a new unit will fit into the state and National Disaster Relief organization.
- If there are other disaster relief organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and the local emergency management agency in your area; ask them what they are doing. You may learn something right away that your association can do to complement the work of an existing disaster relief organization.
- Know the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) leader and county judge.
- Conduct an associational disaster relief workshop and encourage churches to develop their own disaster response plans. Additionally, the association should encourage churches to provide family disaster preparedness workshops for their congregations and communities.

## Physical Resources in the Community

- Associational missionaries have a personal knowledge of the churches in the association. They will have a mental picture of the layout of the building, the size of the parking lots, etc. Most often that information is not stored where it can be accessed by other people. Please use the Google Forms link attached to share your church's facility information with Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief (there is also a paper form available. Please email Keturah at [kquimby@absc.org](mailto:kquimby@absc.org) for this form). Our office will share this information with your Associational Missionary to allow them to help coordinate with your church and ABDR in the event of a disaster.

## Information Resources in the Churches

Appendix Two is an inventory of key people and agencies in the community, county, and state. These individuals and agencies are great resources to assist the association in planning and in training leaders and



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responders. Do not expect favoritism from these leaders. However, a good working relationship will be helpful during a crisis. **Remember, the county judge has the sole responsibility for their county. Nothing gets done without their consent (this is the reason a relationship with the county judge is vital).**

Use the checklist in Appendix 3 to gather information, which will help determine how it will be used. Make sure your information is assessable to association, church and ABSC disaster relief leadership during a crisis.

### **Enlisting Leadership**

Each association must determine what works best for it. Just as you enlist other types of leadership in your association, you should ensure that the people who are asked to serve have a real passion for the work they are being asked to do. Prepare realistic job descriptions. Enlist people from a wide cross section of the association so multiple churches are actively involved in disaster relief efforts.

We recommend that each person in the leadership of the associational or church disaster relief ministry receive training in Disaster Relief.

### **When the Disaster Strikes**

It is not a question of whether a disaster will occur in your association – it is a question of when it will strike. Disasters don't always occur on a weekday between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The pastors and key staff members should know how to contact the Associational Missionary (AM) and the association disaster relief director (if one has been established in your association) at any time of day or night. Likewise, the AM or association disaster relief director should know how to contact the pastor, disaster relief coordinator, or key leaders (like the chairman of the deacons) of every church outside of normal office hours.

The association should take whatever action is appropriate to authorize the use of associational space or equipment that might be used in a disaster. In like manner, churches should be encouraged to be prepared to respond to a disaster by taking any necessary church action in advance of the event.

### **Check on the Churches and Staff**

A system should be developed to check on the churches and staff families when a disaster occurs. This system should also check to determine if any of the church buildings were damaged. The enormity of the task may be such that delegating some of the responsibilities may be appropriate. The first point of contact should be the AM or association disaster relief director. The AM (or the association disaster relief director) should coordinate this activity. Pastor, staff, and disaster relief volunteers or units from ABSC can be called to assist the associational staff.

Example: Appendix three: Each church should set up its own check in system for their church, then the AM or association disaster relief director will check with the churches and make an assessment of needs based on the information received from each church. This might be a good ministry for Deacon Family Ministries in churches where this system is in use.

### **Notify State Convention Personnel.**



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The ABSC has resources available for disaster relief. The AM or association disaster relief director should know how to request resources from the ABSC. See Appendix Two for contact information.

### **Notifying Neighboring Associations**

The work load for the associational staff actively involved in disaster relief can be tremendous. In a large disaster, an association that attempts to do what is needed without additional assistance will be stretched thin and seriously overloaded. Enlisting volunteers from some of the unaffected churches will help, but in a very large disaster an AM (or association disaster relief director) might request some help from a neighboring association. **The fellowship among AMs is such that when a disaster strikes, the affected association will often receive calls from other associations all over Arkansas.**

### **Assisting During a Disaster Response**

AMs and association disaster relief director are extremely helpful to disaster relief personnel from outside the association who respond to needs within the area of that association. The AM or association disaster relief director can contact disaster relief leaders/teams to share information about churches that will help the disaster relief personnel determine where to locate various disaster relief units. He can encourage churches to support disaster relief efforts and provide a central point of contact for much of the disaster relief effort in the area. The AM (or association disaster relief director) and ABSC Disaster Relief Director can provide mutual assistance to one another.

As the ABSC Disaster Relief Director makes decisions about the placement of various disaster relief units, the AM or association disaster relief director should assist by providing needed information and insight into the needs of the churches and impacted communities. The AM or association disaster relief director can also provide needed information about resources and their availability within the association.

### **Notification Protocols**

**Local Church** –Pastors and other church leaders should notify the AM or association disaster relief director when a disaster occurs in the area that will require more resources than the church can provide.

**Association**-The AM or association disaster relief director should notify the ABSC disaster relief director when a disaster occurs in their area that will require more resources than the combined churches of the association will be able to provide. This notification should be made as early as possible to allow units to be deployed.

**State**-ABSC Disaster Relief Director has a working agreement with the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM), and Arkansas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (ARVOAD). Therefore, disaster relief units may respond to work with those entities during times of disaster. In such cases, the AM or association disaster relief director will be notified as soon as possible. The ABSC Disaster Relief Director will look for opportunities to involve local Baptist churches and/or associations even when working closely with other disaster relief organizations.

