

# Responding to a Major Disaster

**GENERAL ..... 2**

**BASIC DISASTER POLICY ..... 3**

**PRE-DISASTER PLANNING..... 3**

    ESTABLISH A RELIEF DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM ..... 3

    COLLECTION/STORAGE OF RELIEF MATERIALS ..... 4

    DISTRIBUTION CENTERS FOR RELIEF MATERIALS ..... 5

    PICKUP AND DELIVERY OF SUPPLIES ..... 5

    ESTABLISH A TELEPHONE HOTLINE..... 6

    OTHER COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS..... 7

**SECURING NEEDED SUPPLIES ..... 7**

**IDENTIFY DISASTER COMMITTEE CHAIRPEOPLE NOW ..... 7**

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A DISASTER ..... 8**

    REGION VICE PRESIDENT ..... 8

    ASSOCIATION ..... 9

    GENERAL CHAIRPERSON ..... 10

    LOCAL COORDINATOR..... 11

    FELLOWSHIP CHAIRPERSON ..... 12

    LIFE MEMBER CONTACT CHAIRPERSON ..... 13

**HANDLING FUNDS..... 13**

**PROVIDING ONGOING RELIEF ..... 14**

## **GENERAL**

This practice provides disaster-relief planning guidelines for group and chapter officers and local committee members. Pioneer units are encouraged use them as a starting point in the disaster-recovery process, adapting and tailoring them to local needs as required.

What is a major disaster? A major disaster is any situation wherein large numbers of people suddenly find themselves in need of food, clothing, shelter, medical care or other basic necessities.

While the actual measures taken in response to a particular natural disaster may vary situation by situation, the strategic importance of pre-disaster recovery planning should not be overlooked. Particularly in known hurricane, tornado, flood and earthquake zones, having a standing disaster-relief team or committee ready to respond on a moment's notice can make all the difference in the Pioneers' ability to be of service.

*This is not to say, however, that all chapters, councils and clubs need to have the same approach to disaster-relief.* This practice deals with substantial disaster-relief activities and a level of involvement that may be beyond a particular unit's available resources. Also, an individual community may already be well-equipped to respond.

When consulting with area representatives of the Red Cross, government and other emergency response teams, some of the key questions to ask in determining the chapter's overall disaster-relief program include:

- What are the expected needs in the event of a major disaster?
- What resources already exist?
- What the skills and abilities does the Pioneer unit possess?
- What role can the Pioneers play?

Many units have found there are other, equally beneficial ways to respond in times of crisis. Fundraising is always a welcome contribution, as money is of the highest value in the early hours and days of a disaster. Stockpiling disaster-relief kits containing blankets, water, basic toiletries, even shovels, for use should an emergency strike the community – either locally or halfway around the world – is another means of providing assistance. And, of course, Hug-a-Bears will always be needed.

Something else to consider is the unique pool of skills Pioneers bring to such situations. According to the Red Cross, for example, one of the earliest disaster-relief needs is for experienced personnel who can do the inside wiring of communications and operations centers, facilities that many times must be set up before a response can be mobilized.

The thing to remember is that while Pioneers should be prepared to respond to community needs in the wake of a major disaster, your unit has options in determining just what the best response might be.

## **BASIC DISASTER POLICY**

In cases of major disaster, the unit's Pioneer Disaster Relief Committee, in conjunction with the group's vice president, is responsible for devising and carrying out measures to help prevent and eliminate pain and suffering.

Towards this end, the Disaster Relief Committee should partner with other groups such as United Way, Red Cross, Salvation Army, National Guard, the fire department and police at the state/provincial/community level in assuring that disaster victims are given the help they need.

In addition, when planning for and responding to a disaster, it is always helpful to speak with those Pioneer units that have already gone through the experience. The Disaster Relief Committee is encouraged to contact the Association office for lists of other chapters that have recent disaster relief experience.

The group vice president should establish the general disaster recovery time frame. This could be as long as a year or more if ongoing relief is required.

The Disaster Relief Committee should ensure that the sponsor company(s) are apprised of the disaster plan. The plan should clearly state that the chapter's disaster relief team, in conjunction with the group vice president, will issue donated supplies and funds in a manner appropriate with the disaster and without special preference for any particular group, organization, etc.

The Association executive director and chief operating officer must also be notified whenever the Disaster Relief Committee is activated.

## **PRE-DISASTER PLANNING**

Especially in areas prone to such natural disasters as earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes and floods, advance recovery planning can make all the difference, allowing Pioneer units to react quickly and more efficiently should an emergency present itself.

### **Establish a Relief Distribution System**

In most instances, Pioneer emergency relief efforts involve providing disaster victims with critically needed supplies. An efficient system for the collection/storage and delivery of these materials, therefore, is invaluable.

Towards this end, it will be beneficial to determine early on which relief agency in your area is in the best position to respond with a system for collecting, storing and distributing relief materials in the wake of a natural disaster. The Red Cross or Salvation

Army, for example, may have already secured warehouse/storage locations in your area. Partner with that agency if at all possible.

Consulting with representatives of established relief organizations like the Red Cross or Salvation Army, or with commercial warehousing and distribution experts, on the design of an efficient operation is an alternate approach. The Salvation Army, in fact, uses the volunteer assistance of storage and materials distribution experts from major consumer supply companies. Coordinate directly with these agencies and/or companies, or contact them through your sponsor company.

In general, the chapter should consider the following regarding pre-disaster planning:

- Establish and maintain relationships with other relief organizations and Pioneer chapters to capitalize on your ability (and theirs) to help the most people.
- If available in your area, join your local disaster-relief planning organization, which should have an action plan established with law enforcement organizations, the National Guard and/or other military personnel as appropriate to ensure access to and protection within the disaster area.
- Establish contacts with your company(s) public relations organization so you will know whom to contact for help in getting bulletins and information out in a timely manner, publicizing your hotline number(s), for example, and what assistance callers can receive.
- Establish contacts with local health officials throughout your area so you will know whom to call to ascertain the risks of illnesses such as typhus, cholera and hepatitis. This information is particularly an issue in flood situations.
- If your chapter directory currently does not list home numbers, consider adding them. They will be useful in contacting your volunteers in the event of a disaster.
- Encourage your chapter officers and Disaster Relief Committee chairs to keep a copy of the chapter directory at home.

### **Collection/Storage of Relief Materials**

Important steps and things to keep in mind in establishing a collection/storage system include:

- Investigate facilities in the areas you serve that could be used as collection/storage locations. Adequate warehouse space is critical to your ability to provide effective relief.
- Look to establish more than one potential supplies warehouse location per area; you never know where a disaster may hit. Bear in mind, too, that collection

points for receiving and storing all goods are best set up close to, but outside of, the affected area; possibly even outside of the chapter area.

- If it is feasible to establish multiple locations in response to a particular disaster, consider specializing the material storage.
- Don't overlook the need for adequate loading docks for the receipt and shipment of supplies.
- Determine what security is available at potential warehouse locations and what, if any, security you may need to provide. Possibly coordinate this with your sponsor company's security department.
- Determine whether the potential locations have sufficient phone hook-ups, heat, air-conditioning, lavatories, etc.
- Verify that the potential location has room for an operations administration office.
- Identify sources of such equipment as forklifts and shelving or obtain them from your sponsor company.

Once your warehouse locations are established, select, if possible, a volunteer manager with previous warehousing and distribution experience to serve as on-site collection/distribution manager. Previous experience will be an invaluable resource. This individual should be prepared to be the prime coordinator of all collection and storage operations.

### **Distribution Centers for Relief Materials**

In addition to the need for warehouse space, the disaster may warrant the setting up of localized supply distribution points within the affected area. Consider sponsor company buildings (e.g., central offices) for this purpose. Meet with your sponsor company(s) building management personnel and disaster preparedness teams to exchange ideas and ensure their support for the use of company locations.

### **Pickup and Delivery of Supplies**

The uncertainty of normal transportation (and mail service) must be evaluated. Transportation methods for collecting and distributing supplies must be established.

Some things to consider in setting up your transportation operation:

- Arrange for use of corporate fleet vehicles, as appropriate.
- Establish contacts with local truck rental companies and, if possible, get agreements that at least one truck will be held for your use in the event of a disaster. (Trucks are almost impossible to come by if you wait.)

- Secure trucking agreements on a “long-term” basis.
- Arrange for special rates.
- Determine if a special driver’s license is required (i.e., commercial driver’s license or chauffeur’s license) to operate the vehicles. If so, identify volunteers who meet the requirements or are willing to arrange to meet the requirements now, before the emergency strikes.
- Secure volunteer drivers familiar with the disaster area (there may be no street signs or landmarks left).

### **Establish a Telephone Hotline**

A telephone hotline will provide those in need and those looking to contribute with access to your supplies collection and distribution system. Action plans to consider in anticipating the need for a telephone hotline include:

- Set up a “hotline central” at the chapter office where all directions on operations will originate. A secondary site should be identified in case the chapter office is unserviceable due to the disaster.
- Contact appropriate corporate management to establish an agreement on procedures to ensure a multi-line crisis center can be implemented immediately following the disaster.
- Consider the need for foreign central office lines if you have warehouse space outside your exchange (you will be coordinating with the warehouse daily). Cellular phones may be an alternative.
- Obtain at least one fax machine with memory (or two if the fax does not have memory) and an associated line(s).
- Establish appropriate billing arrangements.
- Identify a hotline chairperson and co-chair. The chairperson should identify two or three volunteers who agree to meet at the center immediately after the disaster to start receiving calls. Additional volunteers can be secured, if warranted, but have a few that can be counted on until further assessment can be made.
- The hotline chairperson should coordinate with the disaster committee general chairperson (usually the chapter administrator/Pioneer manager) on the immediate publication of the hotline telephone number.
- Make sure outside agencies such as police, fire and the Red Cross and local churches know your hotline number(s).

### **Other Communications Needs**

Mobile/cellular phones and pagers may turn out to be your only link with the world in a major disaster. Remember to:

- Negotiate for phones/pagers as “loaners” if possible (and obtain as many as possible).
- Be sure someone is responsible for every phone/pager loaned. Paying for any that are “lost” will be expensive.

### **SECURING NEEDED SUPPLIES**

Anticipating what supplies will be needed is relatively easy. Obtaining them quickly will be another matter. Some tips:

- Consider establishing contacts with local supply companies and lining up credit should the need occur. You may have to work with the regional or corporate office of the supply company to do this. Your sponsor company may have established such contacts.
- Identify sources of bottled water and ice. Also, obtain an agreement to have ice delivered to affected areas if needed (ice can be the most desirable relief item).
- Your region vice president may be able to secure supplies for a substantial discount because of high level contacts.
- Be prepared to solicit and receive supplies from Pioneers throughout the Association.

### **IDENTIFY DISASTER COMMITTEE CHAIRPEOPLE NOW**

As planning ahead is our goal, identifying Disaster Relief Committee personnel well in advance of the emergency is critical. (The duties and responsibilities of the committee members are described later in this document.) The committee should consist of:

- General Chairperson (usually the chapter administrator/Pioneer manager)
- Local Coordinator
- Fellowship Chairperson
- Life Member Contact

When selecting your committee, keep in mind that:

- Life Members who recently retired from high level positions within the company have access, clout and skills that can be invaluable in implementing plans and effecting immediate results.
- Telephone company service employees are desperately needed on the job to restore and maintain communications to the affected areas. These employees may be forced to work seven days a week restoring service and will probably not be available.
- Life Members and their Partners are also wonderful resources to help with food service programs, sorting/stocking supplies, answering phones, making deliveries, etc. Identify the skills you'll need and the availability of your potential resources, and update annually.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES DURING A DISASTER**

The purpose of the Pioneer Disaster Relief Committee is to provide fast, well-organized assistance to those affected by disaster. Established well in advance, this committee is activated whenever a disaster is reported or anticipated. The makeup of this committee will depend on the geographic location of the disaster in relation to the council, chapter or group boundaries.

In addition to the committee, the group vice president plays a key role during a disaster by assuming overall responsibility for and directing all actions taken.

### **Group Vice President**

The group vice president takes the commander-in-chief role during a disaster and is accountable for ensuring that adequate disaster planning is done on an ongoing basis. The group vice president provides the following functions:

- Interacts with sponsor company corporate headquarters.
- Contacts Association headquarters and other group vice presidents for assistance.
- Works with United Way, Red Cross, Salvation Army, National Guard, local authorities, police and fire departments to coordinate efforts and secure access and security.
- Works closely with the disaster committee's general chairperson.
- **Solicits financial support from the Association's disaster-recovery fund (by requesting a "seed donation" through the executive director and chief operating officer) and other Pioneer chapters (via fax/letter) as necessary.**
- Establishes the general time frame for disaster recovery effort. This could be as long as a year or more if ongoing relief is required.

- Ensures that local health/safety authorities are contacted to ascertain risk levels for volunteers.
- Contacts corporate public relations department or media relations for coverage.

### **Association**

After the group vice president has contacted the Association Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer to request disaster-recovery funds, the TCP Staff will implement the Pioneer Disaster Fund Distribution Process.

The following process for distributing Association disaster-relief funds was agreed to by the Association Board of Directors (BOD) at its April 1997 meeting:

1. Soon after the disaster but allowing enough time for analysis of the situation, a conference call is arranged by the TCP Staff's Disaster-Relief Support Manager with the vice presidents of the affected regions, the TCP president and senior vice president.
2. Either the TCP or a region vice president may suggest the amount of Disaster Fund dollars required for overall disaster relief. The amount agreed to at this conference call shall not exceed \$50,000.
3. The amount approved shall be for the disaster covering all groups and shall be announced to all groups.
4. Each region may draw from the approved amount by notifying the TCP until the approved amount is exhausted.
5. It is expected that no region shall request more than half of the approved amount.
6. It is understood that the approved amount is "seed money" to facilitate local Pioneers unit action. It is expected that the amount received by a group will be reimbursed to the TCP within nine months of the granting of the "seed money."
7. The TCP will coordinate publishing press releases internationally and with the internal communications organizations of the local unit/sponsor companies affected.
8. The BOD shall receive a report at each BOD meeting detailing the most current 24 months disaster-relief grants and reimbursement status.
9. Each local unit may continue to "brand" its relief efforts.

### **General Chairperson**

The general chairperson of the chapter's Pioneer Disaster Relief Committee (usually the chapter administrator/Pioneer manager) manages the frontline disaster-recovery effort.

The general chairperson:

- Contacts the local coordinator and guides him or her in assuming and fulfilling their responsibilities.
- Maintains familiarity with all established guidelines and procedures.
- Determines, with the local coordinator, the preliminary financial requirements for disaster relief and the level of chapter funding available for committee operation before the Association funds are received.
- **Determines the means of covering travel and miscellaneous expenses for regular and Life Members assigned to disaster relief work. Such expenses should not be paid from the disaster fund, but should be covered by chapter or company funds as appropriate.**
- Negotiates the acceptance of chapter vouchers by local merchants for the purchase of such goods as food and clothing to fill disaster recovery needs. Provides the local coordinator with the appropriate forms.
- Sends a bulletin to members and employees stating what has happened, what is needed, where donations should be sent and where volunteers should report.
- Supervises the receipt and disbursement of funds as outlined in the Practice on Procedures for Handling Funds, keeping a record of all financial contributions and disbursements and donations of time.
- **Sends notes of appreciation and a Form TCP-22 to all donors acknowledging their contributions. Also, considers expressing appreciation in company newsletters and other publications.**
- Arranges conference calls or periodic meetings so that all committee members are kept abreast of the needs and the status of the situation.
- Works with and keeps the group vice president apprised of all activities.
- Keeps minutes of meetings of the committee and distributes these records to company coordinators and Pioneer officers, as appropriate. Includes these minutes and financial documents in regular chapter minutes for audit and tax purposes.
- Manages the project close-out:

- Compiles all records
- Pays all bills in full
- Forwards a close-out letter to all company and Pioneer personnel involved. (This letter should be sent to all appropriate Association and company personnel to summarize and officially close-out the activities undertaken in connection with the disaster. Additional information for this letter includes the number of families impacted by the disaster, total dollars collected from various sources and dollars used to provide assistance and relief for the victims.)

### **Local Coordinator**

The local coordinator is usually the secretary or president of the council/club closest to the disaster area. The local coordinator:

- Contacts other committee members.
- Surveys victims to determine immediate needs, such as medicine, housing, food, clothing, or transportation, in conjunction with input from agencies such as police, National Guard, Red Cross, etc. (See Exhibit II AA.7.)
- Activates established pre-disaster planning arrangements as necessary.
- With the cooperation of the Life Member contact chairperson, obtains volunteer worker help as required and assigns work to members.
- If necessary, assists volunteer workers moved in from other locations in obtaining transportation, food and shelter.
- Arranges for the provision of medicine, food, clothing, housing, etc.
- Communicates needs and requirements to general chairperson.
- Surveys long-term needs. The committee must reconvene and review individual requirements and determine the distribution of available funds.

*Note: If the chapter has partnered with agencies and disaster planning groups in its area, action on the remaining items in this subsection may not be required.*

- Maintains contact with groups such as Red Cross, Salvation Army, governmental agencies, law enforcement, etc.
- Identifies major organizations for the hearing and sight impaired in your area and determines what assistance can be provided these individuals. TDDs and battery packs will be a necessity for the deaf, for example.

- Appoints a clothing subcommittee to distribute any donations of clothing received. This subcommittee should avoid wholesale clothing collections because of the difficulty in sorting, sizing, and distributing. Clothing must be suitable and clean; it should also be sorted by size and types before it is packaged and sent to the affected area.
- Appoints a food distribution subcommittee to distribute donations of nonperishable food, i.e., canned goods and dried foods. All food should be packaged in portions and clearly identified. Also, each package should represent enough nonperishable food for a family of four for a specific period of time, such as one or two days. Food should not be packed in glass jars or other breakable containers.
- Obtains donations or contracts with a local bottled water source if safe drinking water is not available for the volunteers.

### **Fellowship Chairperson**

Another key member of the Disaster Relief Committee is the fellowship chairperson. This individual:

- Establishes a group to contact families in the affected area. The Life Member contact chairperson can suggest names of Life Members who are able and willing to provide this service.
- Estimates the amount of help needed by the identified individuals. Typical information to be considered:
  - Extent of damage and loss
  - Insurance coverage, claims and commitments
  - Present living arrangements and family situations
  - Help currently being received from groups such as the Red Cross, insurance companies, governmental agencies.
- Secures the victim's priorities as to their most urgent needs. The chairperson must recognize the victim's psychological as well as physical needs in filling requests for assistance.
- Coordinates fulfillment of those needs with general chairperson and Life Member chairperson.

### **Life Member Contact Chairperson**

The participation of Life Members is relied on heavily in times of natural disaster. The Life Member contact chairperson:

- Determines the names of Life Members who are able and willing to help in providing assistance.
- Acts as liaison between the Life Members and other committee members.
- Coordinates fulfillment of an individual victim's needs with the local coordinator and fellowship chairperson.
- Schedules committee meetings each night to track the prompt delivery of assistance as requested by the local coordinator. In the event immediate assistance has not or cannot be provided, assures the victim of prompt review and of a call back on the next day to report on his/her findings.
- Makes decisions relative to help available for each case.
- Reports promptly to the victim, either personally or by telephone, of the decision reached.

### **HANDLING FUNDS**

As described above, the Association maintains a fund dedicated to disaster relief. A request may be made by the region vice president for funds to provide immediate and limited financial aid to victims.

The chapter should open a separate "Disaster Account" immediately following a disaster. This is for administering disaster funds and should be used for emergency needs rather than for the replacement of capital items. Separate checks should be ordered for use with disaster-related expenditures.

The Disaster Relief Committee should determine whether requests are to be made for donations of money from local chapter members and, if necessary, from other chapters and regions. Arrangements should also be made for contribution procedures and for publicity.

The committee should consider appointing its own disaster relief treasurer rather than putting an extra burden on the chapter treasurer. A previous chapter treasurer (perhaps they have recently retired) or the chapter auditor are recommended candidates. The Disaster Relief Committee treasurer must be someone familiar with Pioneer Practices and financial procedures. In addition to keeping up with the bookkeeping associated with logging donations, expenditures, etc., this person could also be responsible for ensuring thank you notes and any appropriate forms are sent to all donors as soon as donations are

received. In a large disaster, the task of back-tracking to send thanks could be impossible.

In some cases, the total funds received (including the Association's disaster fund donation) are greater than the need. In these cases, the Association requests you return the excess to the Association. The funds returned cannot exceed the Association's donation.

When donations are received after the specific disaster recovery period and the bank account is closed, keep these funds in a non-specific disaster account. These funds should not be returned to the donors, since they worked hard to raise these funds and may be offended if returned. Ensure that these funds are not needed for this disaster; if unneeded, maintain the funds for use in response to future disasters in your chapter area or another chapter's area.

Accurate records must be maintained showing the sources and amounts of all contributions and of the disposition of the funds. For more information, see the Practice on Procedures for Handling Funds.

At the completion of disaster relief activities, the records should be audited by competent auditors and a copy of their report retained for at least 10 years.

## **PROVIDING ONGOING RELIEF**

If the disaster is so big that it warrants ongoing coordination beyond the initial supply distribution phase, the group vice president should consider forming a team of people to act on behalf of the chapter in this capacity.

The region vice president will still have overall responsibility and direct the team; however, the team will care for the day-to-day responsibilities.

The ongoing relief should be concluded within the time frame (usually no longer than one year) originally set by the group vice president.