

PREPARE NOW FOR A CHURCH EMERGENCY

Over the years, there have been a broad range of disturbing incidents in New England churches. A pastor's car was stolen during worship, a decapitated pig's head was found defacing a nativity set, and a bomb threat caused the cancellation of an Easter Vigil. Vandalism, fire, terror, weather-related disasters, medical emergencies, police activity, and even stuck elevators happen.



Preparation is the key to remaining calm and effective in any emergency. To that end, the Maine Conference Disaster Resource and Response Team invites you to consider whether your church is ready if an emergency should occur.

1. Do you have an emergency protocol?
2. Do you have people designated for specific roles: to call 911, comforter, facilitator, and first-responder
3. Do you have medical personnel in your congregation?
4. Are your emergency evacuation routes posted? Are they made known to groups that use your space? Are your exits clearly marked?
5. Do people know where the fire extinguishers are...and how to operate them? Is anyone designated for this task?
6. Do you have an evacuation protocol? Who will assist with the children, disabled, and elderly folks? Children, teachers, and parents should all be well informed of your procedures and know where to meet following any incident. Particularly with regard to the children, it is a good idea to practice your emergency protocol through drills.
7. Are the nursery and children's education areas secure?
8. Is there some kind of communication system, such as an intercom, monitor, phone or doorbell available between the Sunday School room and the rest of the church? Is there a phone in the education area?
9. Do you lock any of your entrances once services have begun? Is there a protocol for securing your space?
10. Is there someone to act as a greeter at the church entrances? Does anyone beside the pastor face the narthex?
11. Do you have folks that can escort unruly people out?
12. During or after an emergency, how will you inform people?
13. If you cannot use your space, how/where will you hold service
14. Is your coffee hour food secure or is it left out in an open area without supervision in a space where anyone can come and go without notice?

For other helpful information about how you and your church can prepare for and respond to disasters and traumatic events, please visit the Maine Conference Disaster Resource and Response Team at [Disaster Ministries - Maine Conference United Church of Christ \(maineucc.org\)](https://www.maineucc.org/disaster-ministries).

Authored by Rev. Estelle Margarones, Maine Conference Disaster Coordinator