



# Disaster Planning for Nonprofits

An action-oriented guide  
with tools you can use

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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**A disaster plan helps keep your basic operations functioning if an unexpected situation occurs.** Your plan can reduce the human, facility, and resource damage that might occur in the event of a disaster or disruptive event.

**Not having a plan can be devastating to an organization.** You could lose your physical space, those key documents that are hard to replace, or, most importantly, your ability to do what your mission calls you to do. You have put so much work into your organization. It can be overwhelming to think about what would happen if all or part of it went away.

**While it can be overwhelming to think about how to rebuild after a disaster, we also know that disaster planning itself can be overwhelming.** That is why we have broken it down into its parts, with actionable steps to take along the way.

**This guide and its accompanying tools are designed to help you get your organization ready for a disaster so the unexpected doesn't get in the way of your work.** We have designed this set of resources to be results-focused, filled with worksheets and online tools that you can customize. We have made the goal crystal clear so you'll know when you are ready. No matter your budget size, you can move your organization forward to make it more secure in case of a disaster.

## How to Use This Guide

 Be sure to have a pen or pencil in hand as you read through the entire document. Fill out the checklists and worksheets as you go. We've provided them to help you get organized and assemble your plan.



We also offer a set of **online tools** that you can use to create your inventories and Continuation of Operations Plan. By storing this information securely online, you'll be able to access the data from anywhere, even if you don't have your own computer available.

*If a disaster has just happened, jump straight to Chapter 3 to see what information you need to start recreating. Use Continuity of Operations Planning (COOP) to plan now that you know the severity of the disaster. Don't spend time regretting the lack of planning—you are in good company! But do make sure that you plan to plan once you are on the other side of this situation.*

**Whether you are concerned about future disasters or are just coming out from under one, please give yourself all the grace you need to complete the project. We are cheering you on. Good luck!**

## Disaster Defined

Let's define what we mean by disaster:

**A disaster is a devastating event, especially one occurring suddenly and causing great loss of life, damage, or hardship.**

We are focused on disasters not perpetrated by an individual. While you certainly need to be prepared for a scandal, embezzlement, or active shooter crisis, this resource is focused on disasters that are not the result of a person's actions or behavior.

Every community is at risk from natural events, and these vary widely. You need to be prepared for them, as well as for a more generic list of disasters, like a pandemic or building fire.

**Tip:** Visit [www.climatecheck.com](http://www.climatecheck.com) to see what your biggest natural threats are.

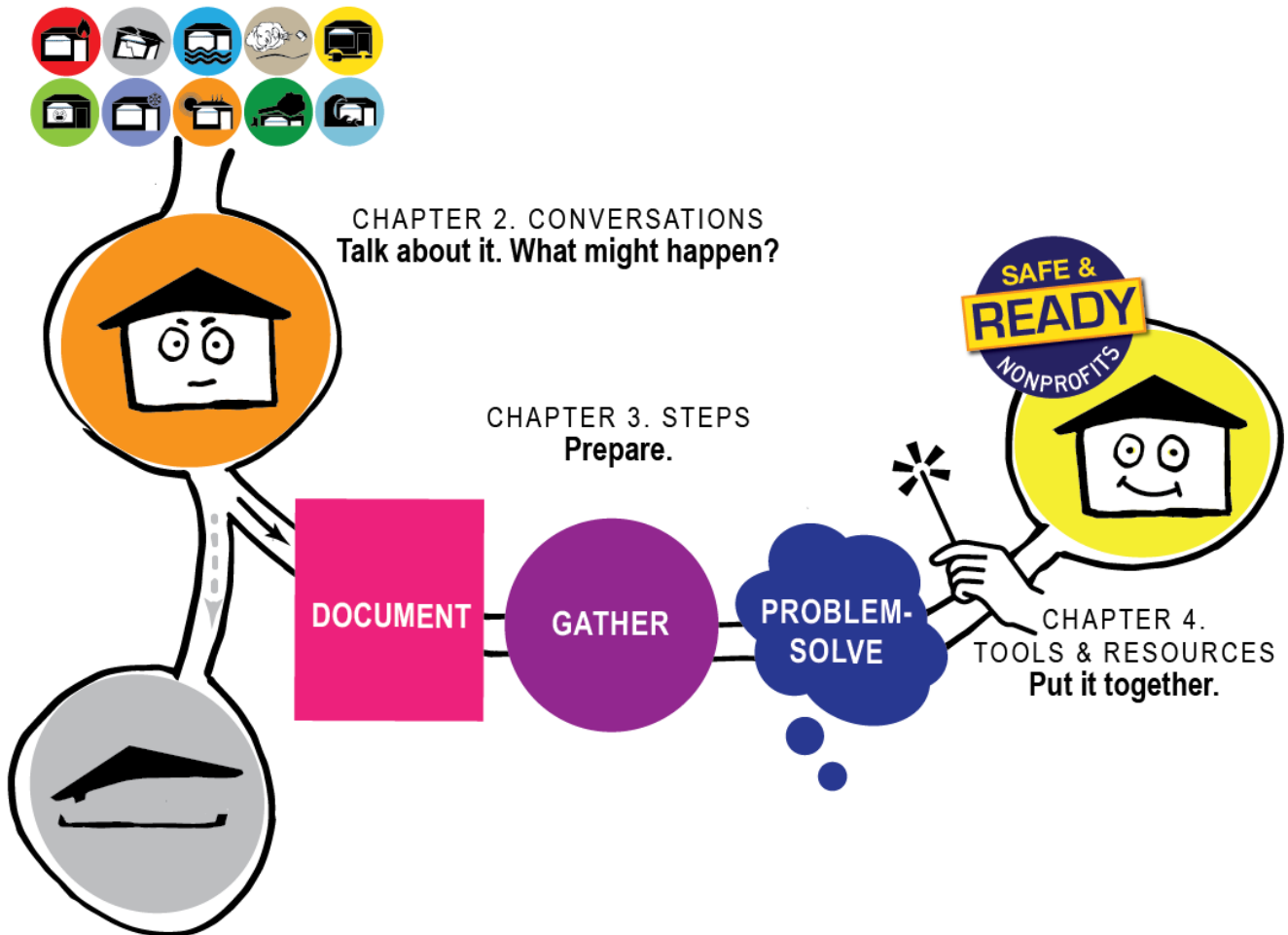
## Your Disaster Planning Roadmap

This toolkit gives you a manageable, action-oriented framework you can use to develop your organization's disaster plan. It comprises four chapters and a set of online resources.

1. **Chapter 1** is the introduction. We'll define "disaster" and then step back and look at disasters as possible events.
2. **Chapter 2** goes through the conversations you need to have with your board, staff, and community members before writing the plan.
3. **Chapter 3** explains the three steps you'll use to create your plan: Document, Gather, and Problem-Solve.
4. In **Chapter 4**, we provide tools and resources you can use to put your own plan together.
5. In addition to this document, we have a set of easy-to-use **online resources**. Digital documentation is critical for speedy recovery, so you can use these Microsoft Word-based tables to compile the information and save it on a remote drive or in the cloud.

### CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Start here.

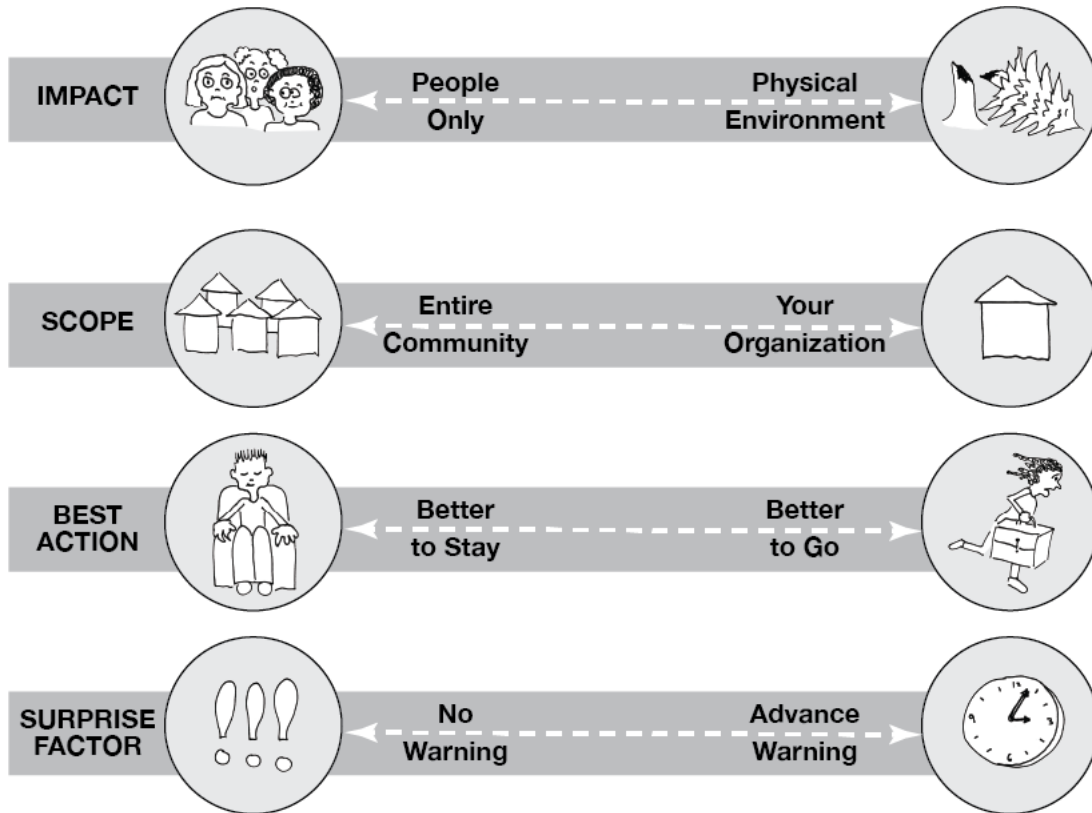


**Disasters come in too many forms to list them all, but they can be categorized based on the following criteria:**

- Does it impact the physical environment, or just the people?
- Does it impact the whole community, or just your organization?
- Is the best response to stay or to evacuate?
- Is there advance warning, or does it come as a surprise?

We've created the following graphic to help you think about possible disasters and what makes them similar or different from each other.

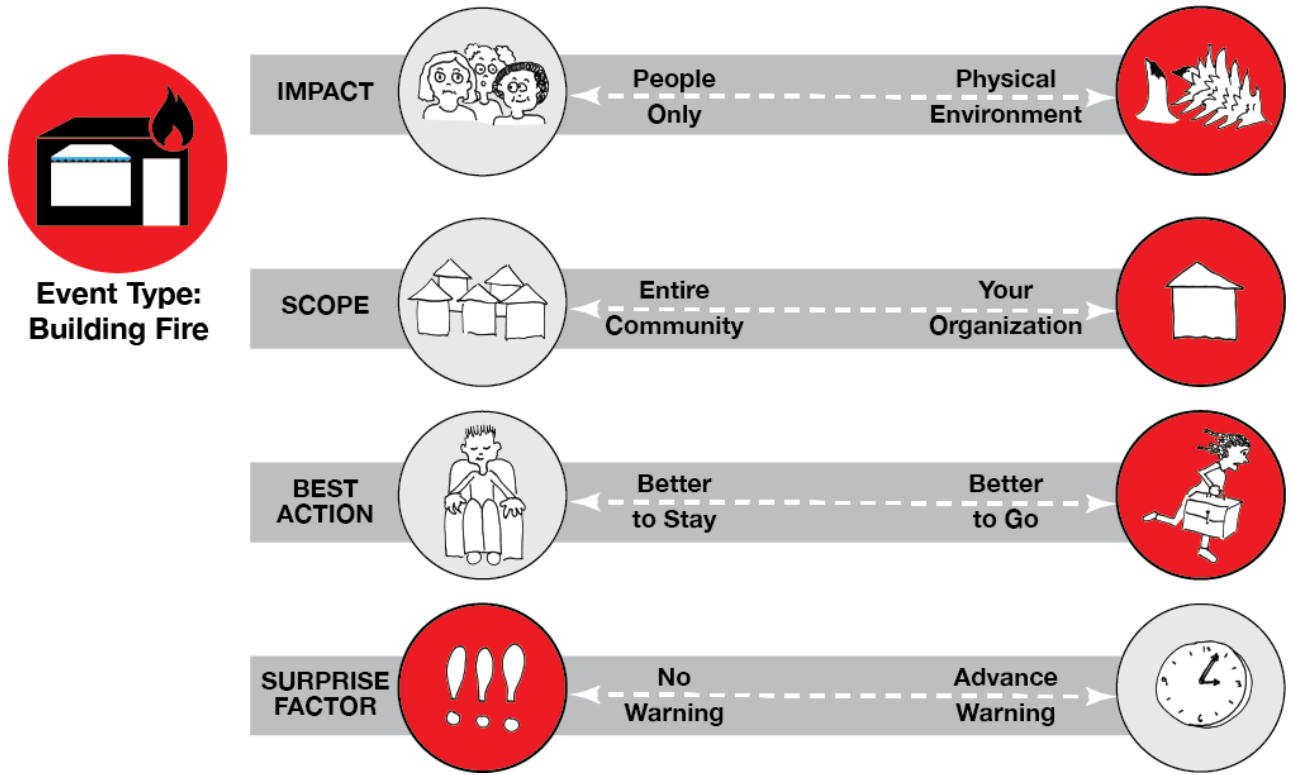
### Disaster Types



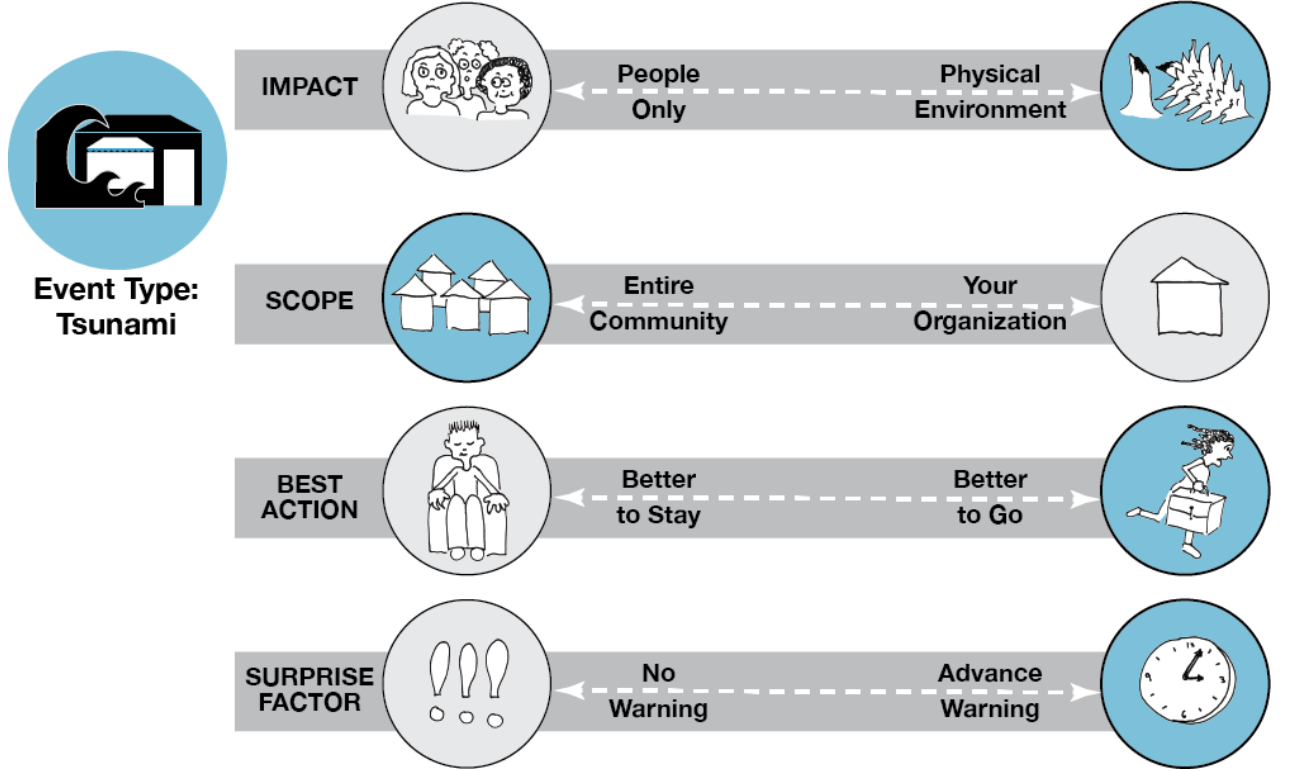
**Each of these categories represents a range of responses, and your situation will dictate where you fall between the two extremes.**

For example, if your building is located on high ground, you will take that into account in a flood or a hurricane. If it's especially sturdy, you'll take the construction into account for an earthquake or tornado.

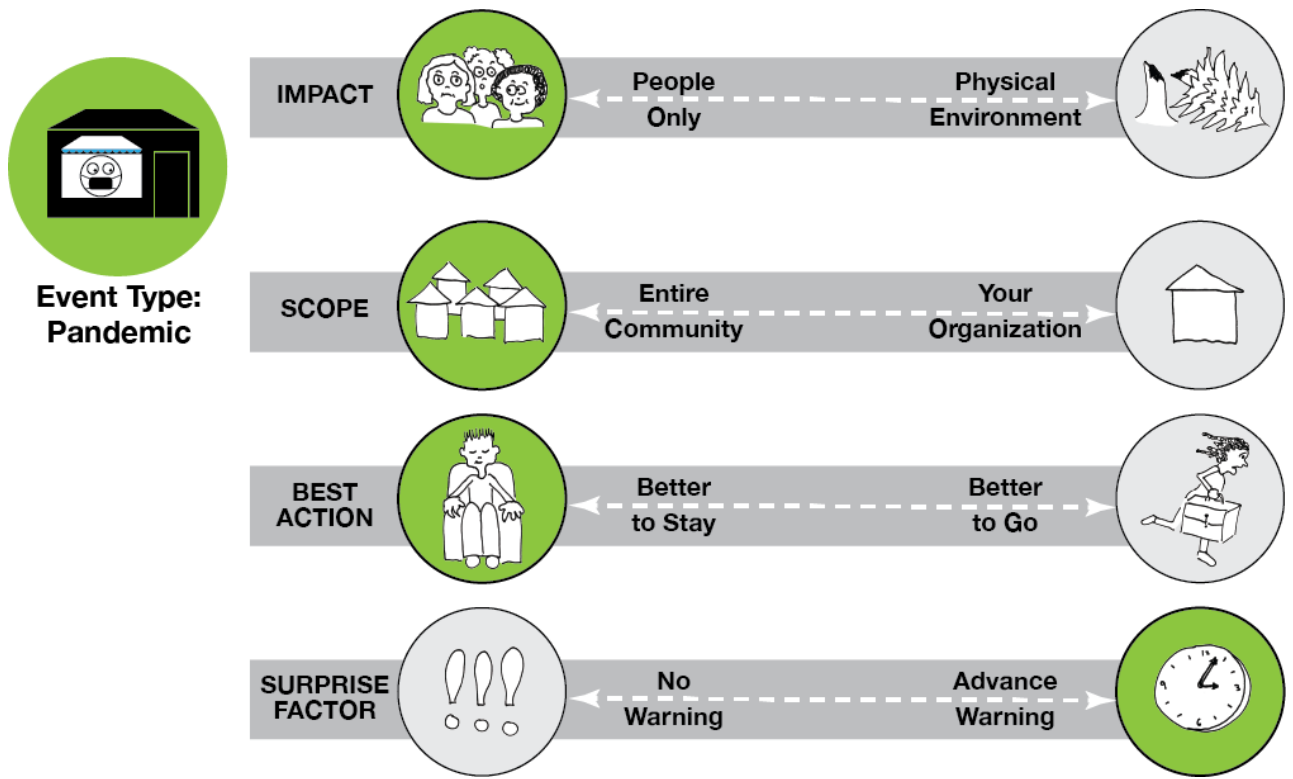
On the next couple of pages, we've put together some examples.



*When you look at these categories, you'll notice that a fallen tree can be similar to a building fire. What other disasters are similar? How can you prepare for them?*



*What systems do you have in place to monitor warnings? Compared to several days of warning for a hurricane, you might have only 15 to 60 minutes of warning for a tsunami.*



*What systems needs to be in place for disasters where whole communities need to isolate at home?*

 **YOUR TURN**

Use the graphic on Page 3 to think about typical disasters and how they play out. What was the last disaster to impact your organization? How did it fall within these categories?

**TOOLS**

To help you come up with a list of disasters that might impact your organization, we've created a **brainstorming tool**. Go to Chapter 4: Tools & Resources (page 20) for a list of all the tools, or jump to one of these:

Disaster Brainstorming List, page 21

Insurance Checklist, page 22



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# CHAPTER 2: CONVERSATIONS

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## Engage Your People

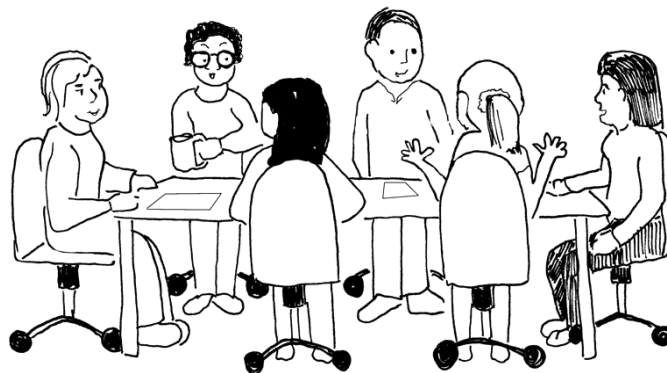
You can't disaster plan alone. It takes an organization-wide commitment to managing for risk. It takes leadership that dedicates precious time to something that isn't immediately standing in front of you. It takes a team to spread out the work. Your first step is to build momentum within your organization so you get all of the way through this process.

Here are some ideas:

1. **Discuss disasters at a board meeting.** Invite people to remember the natural disasters that they have experienced and what happened. If someone in your community saw a nonprofit through a disaster, invite that person to share their story. Bring in data from your local government on what disasters they are preparing for. Discuss what would happen to your organization if that disaster actually happened. Immerse people in the conversation about disasters to instill a sense of why disaster planning is important for your organization.

A good outcome will be the decision to prioritize disaster planning over the next six months. (You can do a similar activity with staff and volunteers.)

2. **Discuss your organizational culture as it relates to disasters.** It is hard work against a culture, so now is a good time to articulate how your organization approaches disaster-related topics: risk, planning, documentation, science-based decision-making, and cross-organization collaboration.
3. **Build a disaster planning team.** This can include board members, staff, volunteers, and community members with an interest in disaster planning.
4. **Define clearly what success looks like for you.** You can read through this guide to know what our recommendations are—that you document information, gather key documents, and problem-solve in advance of a disaster. What would success look like for you?



## Know Your Goal

Our Nonprofit Disaster Plan has three steps:

### ACTION

### RESULT



#### Up-to-date information about your organization

You will have written down in one place your most information, such as contact information and inventories of stuff. Having this “in the cloud” (available anywhere) will help you get up and running after the disaster passes.



#### “Go Kit” with what you need to run your organization

You’ve written information down...now add the other key documents that you have in a file folder. We are talking about administrative, organizational, and financial documents, such as your 501(c)3 letter, copies of your insurance policies, and your budget.



#### Strategies for dealing with different scenarios before trouble strikes

*Often called a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)*

You can think in advance of a disaster to plan what might happen and how you might therefore respond. There are two types of problem solving:

**By disaster:** Walk through a disaster scenario, make assumptions about it, and then imagine ways that you could respond.

**By task:** Write down key organizational tasks and plan for ways to keep your organization running during and after the disaster.

This is a short and doable process. This kit gives you the tools you need to create a plan you can implement any time. Your plan will give you full operational capability for essential functions that you can sustain for 30 days or longer. Let’s be clear what success looks like.

## Plan Your Plan

**A good plan takes a plan.**

The Executive Director has the responsibility to create a Disaster Plan. If your organization has no Executive Director, then someone on the board should assume the management role in order to move the planning forward.

	Document	Gather	Problem-Solve
Who leads			
Team members			
Start date			
Check in date			
Complete date			
Potential partners to connect with			
Notes			

ANNUALLY

We will update the plan annually in the month of \_\_\_\_\_.

QUARTERLY

- Discuss the plan during staff and volunteer meetings. Schedule them now!
- Provide a training opportunity to staff and volunteers.

Date	Action	Next Steps

### TIPS

Integrate disaster planning into your ongoing administrative functions, like meeting agendas and work planning.

Incentivize progress. Celebrate small wins along the way.

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# CHAPTER 3: STEPS

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## Document

You are surrounded by information. Let's capture some of that and put it in a place that you and your colleagues will be able to find later on.

There are two buckets of information we are collecting here: contact information and inventories.

We've provided a set of Microsoft Word-based online tools to help you with the "Document" step, including the following:

- Inventories
- People Contact Records
- Partners & Resources
- Key documents

The filenames are listed in Chapter 4, Tools & Resources (page 19). Each file includes instructions on how to complete it, and you can decide how and where to store it. Be sure to have a plan for keeping them updated, especially the contact records.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

- Employees
- Board and Volunteers
- Business Service
- Insurance
- Business Contacts

### INVENTORIES

- Office
- Technology
- Software
- Special equipment
- Back-ups
- Land and buildings
- Photos or video inventory
- Online programs
- Alternate sites

Print out copies when you are finished. You will need them in the next step!

#### TIP

Tackle this task over time. Commit to one item on the inventory list each week.



## Gather

Let's turn our attention to a different kind of task—document collection. The documents below are key to keeping your organization running. Your task is to gather them in one place.

### ORGANIZATIONAL DOCUMENTS

- Articles of Incorporation
- Bylaws
- Budget
- IRS Determination Letter
- Most Recent Form 990
- Most Recent Audit
- Certification Binder

### ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS

- Insurance Policies
- Memoranda of Understanding
- Grants and Contracts
- Leases and/or Deeds
- Personnel Policies
- Human Resource paperwork
- Any policies and procedures

### FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS

- Current Financial Statements (Balance Sheet & Profit/Loss)
- Chart of Accounts
- Bank Account Information
- Investment Information
- General Ledger
- 1099 Vendor Report

#### TIPS

Make two copies. We recommend that two people living in two parts of town have the hard copy documents in a safe place. Typically, this is the Executive Director and board president.

Make sure the documents are also available online through a folder shared by a few leaders in the organization. You don't want to share it too broadly given security concerns.

*A quick way to capture an office inventory is to walk around your office making a video. Share that video with another colleague so it is safe. You'll have a way to remind yourself what you had should disaster strike.*

Sarah Brooks



## Problem-Solve

*A terrible storm or wildfire is headed your way. You must act fast to respond. What should you do? If there is ever a time for your brain to freeze up and overload, it is when faced with big decisions under a pressing deadline. Why not do the thinking during calm times so you are ready when problems arise?*

During the "Problem-Solve" step, you think through scenarios so you can plan for them in advance. In its simplest form, it is notes about what you will do in different situations. A more formal way to document problem solving comes in the form of a "Continuity of Operations Plan," or COOP.

**Don't get hung up on the need to produce a formal document. Focus on the purpose—solving problems—and create whatever is right for your organization.**

We offer two ways to problem-solve: by disaster and by task. Choose the way that works best for your organization. (You can also do both!)

**Continuity of Operations Plan by Disaster:** This plan centers on a specific disaster and what your organization will do if it occurs within your organization or community.

**Continuity of Operations Plan by Task:** This plan centers on the administrative tasks that you must do to keep your organization running.

**If you can pause activities during the course of a disaster, focus on the Continuity of Operations by Task** (page 16). Problem solving looks different if you are a social service organization—say, a food bank—as compared with organizations that can more easily pause operations through the challenge of a disaster.

*I think of scenario planning as storytelling. You are going about your business, and a challenge gets in your way. Tell the story of what happens and how you dealt with the barriers.*

Nancy Bacon

## CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN BY DISASTER

**This plan centers on a specific disaster.** (See page 21 if you would like a list of disasters to consider.) It invites you to drill down into the impacts of that disaster and how your organization can respond in the short and long term.

Here's an example to consider:

*Your food bank is located in a region known for earthquakes. The last big quake hit in 2001, and you know that the next one is due anytime. You serve people out of the annex of a brick church which has not been earthquake retro fitted. Your clients are people experiencing poverty; they come to you by public transportation.*



1. What assumptions can you make about the impact of an earthquake, given publicly available information? What assumptions could you make about your building?
2. How will those impacts affect the delivery of food to your location? The ability of your staff/volunteers to get to your location? How clients get to your location?
3. How will other organizations in your community fare? Can you turn to a partner for help?
4. What could your short-term response be? How about after the immediate crisis is over?

### YOUR TURN

**On the following page, we've created a worksheet to help you gather the information you need to create one or more Continuation of Operations Plan by Disaster.** This is a good activity for a board or staff meeting.

1. Choose a disaster or disruptive event to focus on for this scenario.
2. Document your “regular operations.” This means what you would do on an average day during an average week. Consider the six elements listed: inputs, people, clients, partners, location, and outputs. Be very specific.
3. Describe two levels of the disaster: moderate or severe.
4. Name assumptions that you could make across all six “regular operations” elements.
5. Plan what your immediate response will be. The exact timeframe will depend on event, typically 24-48 hours.

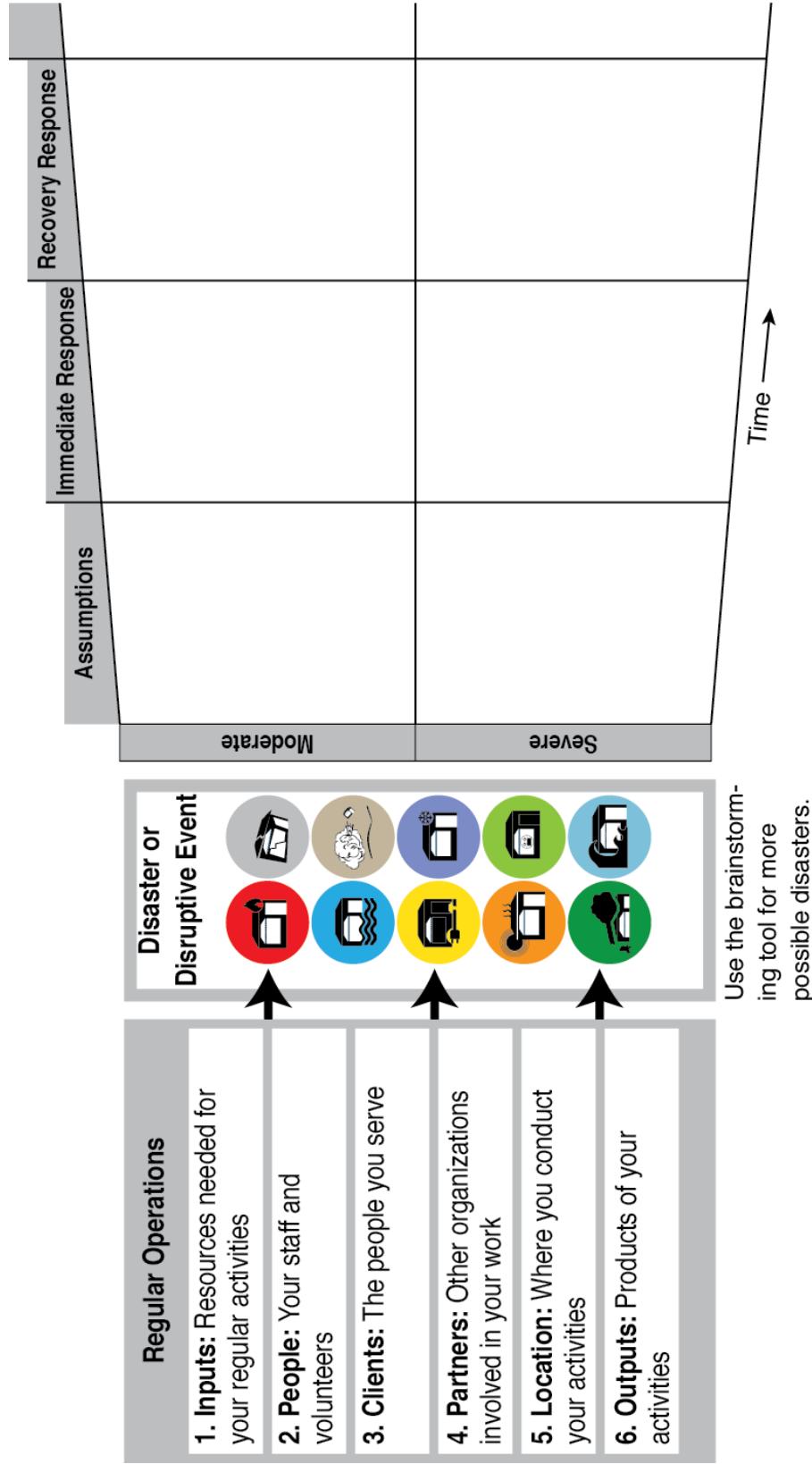
Plan what your recovery response will be. This is beyond the first response but before things stabilize.



**Use your handwritten worksheet to complete the Microsoft Word-based online tool we've provided.** It's called COOP-by-disaster.docx.

### Continuity of Operations Plan by Disaster Worksheet

Use this worksheet as a discussion and investigation tool. We've provided an online version to document your final plan.





## Health and Human Services Organizations

Most health and human services nonprofits jump into action during or after a disaster, when the community needs them most. This can require a completely different approach from an arts or educational organization, as evidenced by the food bank plan below.

### Continuity of Operations Plan by Disaster: Food Bank Example

#### Current Volunteers

Typically, 20 volunteers work each site day as follows:

- 4 volunteers prepare meal bags for 200 families in 3 hours
- 7 volunteers assist during distribution of meal bags
- 5 volunteers assist with food bank setup and stocking
- 2 volunteers assist with food sorting
- 3 volunteers assist with office duties and client intake

Note: typical shift is a *four-hour shift*

#### Assumptions

The following planning assumptions are based on a single day of operation.

In case of disaster impacting the normal workspace:

- Would need 4 volunteers to prepare meal bags for 400 families
- Would need 2 volunteers to assist with food sorting and then client intake
- Would need 1 staff to supervise

Note: typical shift would be a *six-hour shift*

#### Management staff

- 50% of management staff lives in remote parts of county
- 50% of management staff lives within walking distance of food bank
- Expect 40% of all staff to be sick/out during pandemic

#### Food bank inventory issues

- Shelf-stable foods would need to be purchased
- Inventory of key items (peanut butter, fruit) is always low
- Bags would need to be modified as inventory changes
- Increased demand for no-cook food bags
- Size and scope of disaster will influence demand

On the challenges of disaster planning:

*"Human nature works against you. We forget the pain and the tough moments as a defense mechanism. What I do is watch the news. And search out other parts of the world experiencing a disaster in order to keep motivated."*

Robert Coit  
Thurston Food Bank

*Thank you to Robert Coit and the Thurston Food Bank for sharing this information.*

### Health and Human Services Discussion Questions

Following are some of the questions health and human services organizations should consider when creating a Continuation of Operations Plan by Disaster.

What is your current rate of delivery? (# units delivered to # people in X time)
What staffing resources do you need to achieve this?
What additional resources do you need? (supplies, PPE, etc.)
What is the condition of your workplace in the case of a disaster?
What programs would you CONTINUE in a disaster?
What programs would you PAUSE in a disaster?
If transportation is interrupted, how many clients could get to your facility?
How many people would be forced to stay at your facility with no way home?
Can you offer alternate transportation service or a drop off service for clients?

## CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN BY TASK

Every organization—no matter your mission—can benefit from advance thinking on how you will keep things running in the case of a disaster. This type of planning centers on your organization's operational tasks, their urgency, and how you will accomplish them.

Here's an example to consider:

*"During that last wildfire season, we hadn't planned in advance, and all of a sudden we had to evacuate our offices. We had online access to documents, but it was hard to stay on top of the on-going business of the organization. We messed up payroll because we were on the road on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month when we should have processed payments. We missed a few bills because each of us thought the other person was tracking it. We want to make sure that we talk and plan now so we don't have that added stress next time."*



1. Can you relate to this story?
2. If you were in charge of this organization's finances, what would you put in place now to avoid problems with payroll and bills the next time?

### YOUR TURN

**On the following page, we've created a worksheet to help you gather the information you need to create a Continuation of Operations Plan by Task.** This is a good activity for a board or staff meeting.

1. Make a list of all your key organizational tasks. (The chart on the next page will help.) Think in terms of your weekly and monthly schedule. Review by department: finance, HR, technology, fundraising, direct service to client, etc. This is a good activity for a team effort.
2. Determine what the Maximum Acceptable Downtime (MAD) for each task is. MAD is the greatest length of time that you can go without performing that task.
3. Sort the list of tasks by MAD to get a sense of how they rank organizationally.
4. Start with your critical tasks. Determine a recovery strategy for tasks that must be completed within 24 hours of notice (like payroll).
5. Continue through your medium and lower priority tasks.
6. Share your *Continuity of Operations Plan by Task* chart across your organization so everyone knows what the plan is.



**Use your handwritten worksheet to complete the Microsoft Word-based online tool we've provided.** It's called COOP-by-task.docx.




## Continuity of Operations Plan by Task Worksheet

Here's a worksheet to use with your staff or board to stimulate discussion.

<b>Regular Operations</b>			
<b>Task</b>	<b>Daily</b>	<b>Weekly</b>	<b>Monthly</b>
Finance			
HR			
Technology			
Communications			
Fundraising			
Other			

### Nonprofit Disaster Plan Progress Checklist

Congratulations! You have accomplished important disaster planning for your organization. Let's track your progress.

		<b>Good</b> <i>You have begun the work to gather this information.</i>	<b>Great!</b> <i>You have completed gathering this information.</i>	<b>Does not apply</b>
	<b>Contact information</b>			
	Employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Board members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Business services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Inventory</b>			
	Office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Software	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Special equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Backups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Land and buildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Online programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alternate service sites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Final step</b>	Contact and inventory information is printed out and placed in a safe place. <input type="checkbox"/>	Contact and inventory information is printed out and placed in two safe places. <input type="checkbox"/>		
	Organizational documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Administrative documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Financial documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Final step</b>	These are printed out and placed in a safe place. <input type="checkbox"/>	These are printed out and placed in two safe places. <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Continuity of Operations Plan <b>by Disaster</b>	We have talked through scenarios for a typical disaster. <input type="checkbox"/>	We have documented plans for at least one typical disaster. <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Continuity of Operations Plan <b>by Task</b>	We have talked through key tasks and what we intend to do. <input type="checkbox"/>	We have documented plans for how we will manage key tasks in the case of a disaster. <input type="checkbox"/>	



If you've completed everything under the "Great!" column, contact us for your Safe & Ready Nonprofit badge! You can email us at [aim4action@gmail.com](mailto:aim4action@gmail.com).

# CHAPTER 4: TOOLS & RESOURCES

In the following section, we've assembled a set of useful tools and checklists to help you prepare. It's important to recognize that these checklists are not the plan; they are tools that you will use to create a plan that is specific to your situation.


## Online Templates



We've developed the following tools in Microsoft Word, making it easy to enter your information and save your plan.











Filename	What Is Included
<b>inventories.docx</b>	<b>Inventory Templates</b> Office inventory Technology inventory Software/licensing inventory Online programs Special equipment inventory Backups Land and buildings Photo or video inventory
<b>contact-people.docx</b>	<b>Contact Information Templates</b> Employee contact record Volunteer contact record Board contact record Business services contacts Insurance contacts Fundors/donors
<b>partners-resources.docx</b>	<b>Templates for Lists of Partners and Resources</b> Partner organizations Alternate work sites Neighborhood resources
<b>key-documents.docx</b>	Key document inventory template
<b>coop-by-disaster.docx</b>	<b>Continuation of Operations Plan by Disaster Template</b>
<b>coop-by-task.docx</b>	<b>Continuation of Operations Plan by Task Template</b>

## Tools

 You'll find these tools and checklists on the pages that follow. Use them to gather the information and materials you need for your plan.

- A. Disaster Brainstorming List
- B. Insurance Checklist
- C. Client Planning Questions
- D. Team Action Checklist
- E. Communications Checklist
- F. Building Checklist
- G. Volunteer Planning Questions
- H. Evacuation Checklist and Kit
- I. Technology Checklist
- J. Post-Warning Checklist

### Disaster Brainstorming List

Type of Disaster		Could this impact you?	Does your insurance cover it?	Type of Disaster		Could this impact you?	Does your insurance cover it?
	Building Fire	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Tsunami	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Earthquake	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Winter Storm	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	High Winds	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Power Failure	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Flooding	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Pandemic	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	Fallen Tree	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		Heat Wave	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

### Extended Disaster List

Use this extended list to brainstorm about other disasters or variants that might impact you. Circle the ones to discuss.

- |                              |                            |                        |                    |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Air quality hazard           | Equipment failure          | Landslide              | Sinking boat       |
| Blizzard                     | Explosion                  | Lightning strike       | Terrorism          |
| Building collapse            | Food contamination         | Medical emergency      | Tornado            |
| Chemical leak                | Gas explosion              | Medicine contamination | Train derailment   |
| Civil unrest                 | Gas leak                   | Mudslide               | Tropical cyclone   |
| Dam failure                  | Grounded vessel            | Oil spill              | Vehicle accident   |
| Derecho                      | Hurricane                  | Outbreak               | Volcanic eruption  |
| Drinking water contamination | Ice storm                  | Plane crash            | Water main break   |
| Drought                      | Infestation                | Product recall         | Wild animal        |
| Dust storm                   | Information system failure | Riot                   | Wildfire           |
| Elevator incident            | Internet outage            | Roof leak              | Workplace violence |
| Epidemic                     | Levee breach               | Sinkhole               |                    |



## Insurance Checklist

We buy insurance to help us when things go wrong. In advance of a disaster, make sure you have the right insurance for your organization, the work you do, and where you do it. In the case of a disaster, these lists will remind you of what coverage you have. Use our online tool to document your policy numbers and contact information for your insurance company, agents, or brokers.

**Date:**

<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Does your insurance cover this?</b>	<b>Action step</b>
<b>Auto</b>	Covers vehicles used by the organization and staff.		
<b>Business Interruption</b>	Covers loss of income resulting from a disruption of operations. Can include the expense of operating a temporary location.		
<b>Business Owners Policy</b>	Combines property/renters, business interruption and liability policies.		
<b>Directors and Officers</b>	Protects board of directors and staff from personal liability for actions while working for the organization.		
<b>Disability</b>	Insures the beneficiary's earned income against the risk that a disability creates a barrier to work.		
<b>Event</b>	Special insurance that covers specific dates and/or activities.		
<b>General liability</b>	Covers legal responsibility for harm caused to others resulting from things that you or your employees do/ fail to do.		
<b>Health insurance</b>	Covers medical costs of individuals.		
<b>Life insurance</b>	Pays a beneficiary in the case of a death.		
<b>Property</b>	Covers buildings and contents owned by a company or organization.		
<b>Renter</b>	Covers the contents of a building being rented.		
<b>Retirement plan</b>	Plan that allocates savings or revenue for retirement.		
<b>Volunteer</b>	Covers spontaneous and recruited unpaid workers.		
<b>Other:</b>			

## Client Planning Questions

You work with people outside of your organization. The Continuity of Operations planning process gives you space to document your regular operations and to make assumptions about how the people you serve will or will not be able to access services in the case of a disaster.

If your organization does not provide direct service and you can shut down operations during a disaster, you can probably skip this exercise.

Here are some questions to consider:

- How many people do you serve?
- How many staff members are needed to serve that number?
- How many volunteers?
- How much time is required to serve your clients?
- What space is required to serve your clients?

What else is important to consider related to your clients?

In the case of a disaster:

- How will you find out about the condition of the people you serve?
- How will you contact the people you serve? (partners, family members, media)
- Do you have a system for collecting and storing that information in a way that protects privacy?

Additional preparations:

- What additional supplies might you need in the case of an emergency? (food, bedding, medicine, special equipment, special clothing, signage, etc.)
- What are the special needs of the people you serve? (language, physical abilities, diet, mental abilities, mobility)

## Team Action Checklist

Your people matter. Preparing for a disaster is a team effort. Here are some steps for your team to get ready. Make sure you share this information with your team.

### 1. Document your team

Disasters force us to need specific information about the people on our team. We may need to know an emergency contact to get them help, or maybe their exact home address to know how a weather event has impacted them.

Actions:

- Update your database with staff information on a regular basis. Make sure you will have offsite access to your database (or a back-up) in case of evacuation.
- Record information for other key members of your team: board, volunteers, partners, etc.
- Use the Continuity of Operations process (described later in this Guide) to track information about your staff related to disasters.

### 2. Prepare your team

A team doesn't naturally know what to do in the case of a disaster. With luck, disasters happen rarely enough that we haven't had regular real-life practice in what to do. Often the make or break of disaster preparedness is how well plans have been developed, discussed, and practiced.

Actions:

- Decide on a chain of command should your leader not be available
- Set clear roles for each staff member in the case of a disaster
- Provide training in disaster-response topics (CPR, first aid, gas shut-off, etc.)
- Include disaster planning in meeting agendas, at least annually. Share this tool with staff!
- Introduce disaster planning in new staff orientations

### 3. Align your team

Cross-training can help get us all on the same page. It means there are fewer opportunities for important actions and/or things to fall between the cracks. Conduct cross-training in advance of a disaster so you have a common practice from which to work.

Actions:

- Provide a tour of your office/workplace to cross-train people on where things are.
- Create plan for shared resources, such as client files/records, critical documents.
- Agree on methods for transferring work offsite, such as back-ups, cloud access, and flashdrives.
- Make a financial plan. Disasters can cost extra funds, so you may be ready with cash, a credit card, and a general plan on the limits of what you can spend.
- Consider if any cross-training of board members is needed, such as between elected officers.

## Communications Checklist

There are four response disaster response phases to plan communication around. Each disaster is unique and must be handled in its own way.

<b>1. Detection</b> Be alert for potential disasters	<b>2. Declaration</b> Declare a disaster, which invokes the plan.	<b>3. Mobilization</b> Implement the plan.	<b>4. Management</b> Manage the plan.
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### Internal communication

Clear communication to staff and volunteer is critical to your plan. You want to make sure your people know what is going on, how it impacts your ability to carry out your mission, and what they should do in the immediate and short term.

Some actions to take:

- Decision-making: Determine who makes decision for each phase of a disaster.
- Communication system (phone tree or equivalent). Have an alternate method ready should the phones not be working.
- Staff check-in/notification system. Have a system to stay in touch past the original message.
- Client notification system. Have a system to reach clients collectively or individually, depending on the work of your organization.
- Safety signage. Print key signs in advance, such as evacuation routes, meeting sites, or supply locations.

### External communication

People outside your organization also need to know what is going on. You may have clients who rely on you or community partners wanting to help. Having a communication system for people outside your organization will help you respond when time is short.

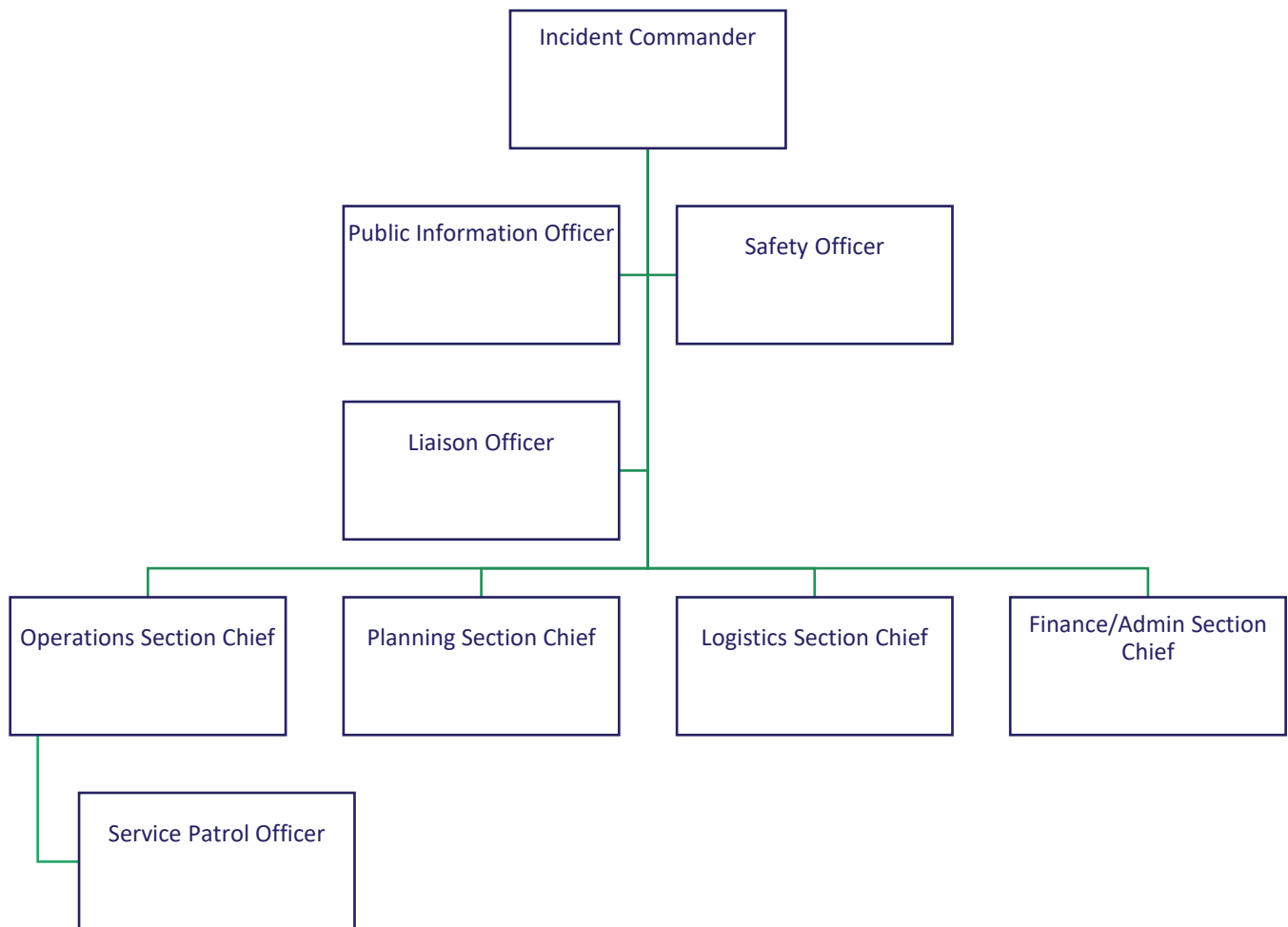
Some actions to take:


- Incident Command System chain of command (see below). Document your chain of command. This is a tool to share with key partners.
- Short email message. Be ready to drop an email, which means access to your email system, an email list, and maybe a templated email to which you can add specifics.
- Website and/or Facebook and/or Twitter message. Be ready to post a message on your website or social media page, which means access to your website and social media pages and a templated message ready to drop in.
- Phone tree to key partners or community resources. Create a communication system so you can align services and manage community assets.
- Public relations (media). Have a PR plan to engage the media. Draft key talking points.
- Consider whether you need specific communications tools or supplies:
  - Bulletin board/white board
  - Cell phones (for the organization)
  - Drums or something to bang

- Ham radios
- Megaphones/bullhorns
- Walkie-talkies
- Whistles

### INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The National Incident Management System is the Federal standard for responding to disasters. Its Incident Command System (ICS) gives you a way to organize communication and coordinate with partners. This graphic outlines the key ICS roles in the case of a disaster.



 Using this as a guide, enter names for your organization in each box or draw your own Incident Command System.

## Building Checklist

Nonprofit work mostly happens within offices and facilities. It is important to make sure our workspaces are ready for a disaster.

**Maintain the building.** Your physical space needs regular maintenance. Preparing for a disaster adds extra urgency to some of those projects that may be put on the back burner.

Here are some building-related tasks to pay attention to:

- Check vents, chimneys and roof that they don't need repairs.
- Clear drains.
- Check that signs and rooftop mechanical equipment is are attached with rust-free anchors.
- Check that windows are in good condition.
- Check that exterior doors have deadbolts and strong hinges.
- Mark gas and water shut-off valves and instructions on how to turn them off. If you need a screwdriver or wrench to do it, make sure a screwdriver or wrench are stored nearby.
- Make sure smoke detectors are working and fire extinguishers are readily available.
- Clear exits, pathways, and evacuation safe spaces (in case of earthquakes, tornados or other disasters where you "duck and cover.")
- Make sure there is no accumulation of debris that could cause damage or harm.

**Attend to your interior space, including furniture:** How you prepare your interior spaces will depend on what disaster you are preparing for. Here is a general list of tasks to consider:

- Bolt heavy cabinets, bookshelves, or other furniture to wall studs.
- Strap computers to desks.
- Make sure office, cabinet and closet doors can close securely
- Move heavy items to lower shelves.
- Remove or isolate flammable materials and toxic chemicals (like cleaning supplies).
- Check that you are using surge protectors (not power strips) on important electronic equipment. It should have an Underwriter's Library (UL) rating.
- Label fire exits and safety supplies.

**Prepare to leave quickly:** Your people may not have a lot of time to think about how to leave. Help them:

- Display office/building evacuation plans in every room and corridor.
- Display maps that show all key emergency supplies (kits, supply cache, water/gas shutoff, generator, document safe, etc.)
- Post disaster checklist of key tasks so people can determine their assignment and address issues quickly.
- Post key phone numbers (fire, police, health clinic, hospital, government offices) near facility's telephone.

## Volunteer Planning Questions

If you are lucky enough to have volunteers, you know how important they are to the successful operation of your organization. Because they are a valuable asset, it is important that you carefully plan the integration of your volunteers into your disaster plan.

There are two types of volunteers to consider:

- **Regular volunteers:** People who have regularly scheduled tasks.
- **Spontaneous volunteers (walk-in volunteers):** Individuals who step forward in a disaster to help. They may not have the skills appropriate to your regular work, but they may have other skills or assets that would be helpful.

Question	Answer
<b>REGULAR VOLUNTEERS</b>	
Do your current volunteers have skills appropriate for disaster-related work?	
Do you have a system for recruiting volunteers in case of a disaster?	
Have you documented or discussed their disaster-related skills?	
Have you provided training to help them prepare for disasters? Will you?	
Do you have someone in charge of volunteers? Who might fill that role in a disaster? Do you have access to local disaster trainers outside your organization?	
What safety or legal considerations do you need to think about?	
<b>SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERS</b>	
What activities could be assigned to spontaneous volunteers?	
What activities should NOT be assigned to spontaneous volunteers?	
What safety or legal considerations do you need to think about with spontaneous volunteers?	
Does your insurance cover spontaneous volunteers?	

Keep records of your staff and volunteers—and their key disaster-related information—in a database. This would include emergency contacts and disaster-related certifications, such as CPR or EMT credentials. We have also provided an **online tool** to help you collect this information.



## Evacuation Checklist

Maintaining your own physical and psychological well-being during a disaster is your first responsibility. These lists will help you ready yourself to take care of your own needs. That will allow you to better help others.

<b>Personal kit</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol Hand Cleaner <input type="checkbox"/> Batteries <input type="checkbox"/> Blankets <input type="checkbox"/> Can opener <input type="checkbox"/> Crescent wrench (for utility shut-off) <input type="checkbox"/> Deck of cards <input type="checkbox"/> Duct Tape <input type="checkbox"/> Extra Cash <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Supplies	<input type="checkbox"/> Food (non-perishable) <input type="checkbox"/> Garbage Bags <input type="checkbox"/> Gloves, extra clothing, sturdy shoes <input type="checkbox"/> Lights/Flashlights <input type="checkbox"/> Matches <input type="checkbox"/> Necessary medicines <input type="checkbox"/> Other tools <input type="checkbox"/> Paper, pens and markers (in water-proof containers)	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Hygiene Supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Ponchos or other rain gear <input type="checkbox"/> Prescriptions <input type="checkbox"/> Radio(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Rope <input type="checkbox"/> Thermometer <input type="checkbox"/> Utility knife <input type="checkbox"/> Water <input type="checkbox"/> Whistles
<b>If evacuating, you should take:</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Addresses <input type="checkbox"/> Bank statement <input type="checkbox"/> Birth certificates <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone <input type="checkbox"/> Chargers <input type="checkbox"/> Check book <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes for a week <input type="checkbox"/> Credit cards	<input type="checkbox"/> Driver's license <input type="checkbox"/> Extra cash <input type="checkbox"/> Flashlight <input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance policies <input type="checkbox"/> Last tax return <input type="checkbox"/> Office keys <input type="checkbox"/> Passport	<input type="checkbox"/> Title/mortgage for your home, including payment addresses <input type="checkbox"/> Work laptop <input type="checkbox"/> Additional zip drive for your laptop <input type="checkbox"/> Your landlord's phone numbers
<b>Car kit to be prepared for a disaster</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Blankets <input type="checkbox"/> Booster cables and tool kit <input type="checkbox"/> Bottled water <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit	<input type="checkbox"/> Canned food, can opener <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency flare/distress signs <input type="checkbox"/> First aid kit and reference guide	
<b>Before you leave the office, take:</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Client data or work product that you backed up on a zip drive and on paper <input type="checkbox"/> Your case list, to do list, and personal calendar	<input type="checkbox"/> Business cards <input type="checkbox"/> Any directories or contact lists you may have	



## Technology Checklist

As much as nonprofit work is about people, it also relies on technology to keep us humming. A weather event, sudden need to work from home, or information technology disruption could really delay our ability to achieve our mission if we haven't planned for it.

**Here is a list of technology-related tools to consider:**

- System to capture passwords, available across the organization
- Directions on how to access email remotely
- Directions on how to access voicemail remotely
- Directions on how to use intranet system (if you have one)
- Directions on how to use any organization-specific system needed to work
- Directions on how to use remote conferencing system
- List of important partner websites to provide information and monitor

**What else?**

We've all been in a place where we had the device but not the charger, so here's a reminder to locate, label, and remember supporting tools:

- Laptop power cords
- Cell phone chargers
- Cords needed to connect devices
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Post-Warning Checklist

Sometimes we get advance warning that a disaster might happen. You have time to prepare for an evacuation. Here are some actions to consider if you have time.

### 2 days

- Review checklists in this workbook as they relate to the disaster you are anticipating.
- Remind your staff, volunteers, and board members of your communication plan and check-in systems.
- Communicate with your landlord or property manager so you share an understanding of what is happening. Get copies of keys and security codes if you need them.
- Communicate with response partners to confirm gather points, times, and response functions.
- Check that your documentation is accessible in the cloud and that your “Go Kit” is complete, accessible, and offsite. Gather last-minute additions.
- If you will be serving people through the disaster, check your supplies and the accessibility and safety of your inventory/supplies during the disaster:
  - Water and food for all essential employees, volunteers, and clients for at least three days. (In the case of a food pantry/bank, the inventory probably needs to be for a longer period of time, such as much as 30 to 45 days of basic menu items.)
  - Spare batteries for flashlights, radios, cell phones, and other electronics.
  - Other supplies identified as necessary for your response activities.
  - Cash

### 1 day

- Remind staff to gather work materials so they can work remotely.
- Protect equipment and key materials as appropriate.
- Attend to necessary administrative functions, such as bill paying and payroll.

### Same day

- Lock all windows and doors.
- Change your phone message.
- Post contact information on your door.
- Take key documents with you as you leave.

## Resources

### Federal Websites

- A national public service campaign with information and tips to prepare for just about any disaster:  
[ready.gov](https://ready.gov) | En español: [ready.gov/es](https://ready.gov/es)
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA. Information about current disasters and disaster declarations, as well as where to apply for assistance:  
[fema.gov](https://fema.gov)
- 2015 National Preparedness Month Digital Engagement Toolkit. Information and templates on floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and power outages: [https://s3-us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/dam-production/uploads/1439921784986-d0b191184b7c227c016c1651d110ca16/NPM\\_Digital\\_Toolkit\\_2015.pdf](https://s3-us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/dam-production/uploads/1439921784986-d0b191184b7c227c016c1651d110ca16/NPM_Digital_Toolkit_2015.pdf)
- The Small Business Administration, SBA. A guide to emergency preparedness for organizations and small businesses:  
[sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business/prepare-emergencies](https://sba.gov/business-guide/manage-your-business/prepare-emergencies)
- The Internal Revenue Service, IRS. Preparing for a disaster from a tax perspective:  
[irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/preparing-for-a-disaster-taxpayers-and-businesses](https://irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/preparing-for-a-disaster-taxpayers-and-businesses)

### American Red Cross Ready Rating

- [readyrating.org](https://readyrating.org)

### Nonprofit Disaster Planning and Recovery (Techsoup)

- An extensive set of disaster planning tools for nonprofits with a technical perspective  
[www.techsoup.org/disaster-planning-and-recovery](https://www.techsoup.org/disaster-planning-and-recovery)

### Preparing homes for wildfire (National Fire Protection Association)

- [www.nrpa.org](https://www.nrpa.org)

There are many emergency preparedness resources available from government agencies and organizations at the state and local level:

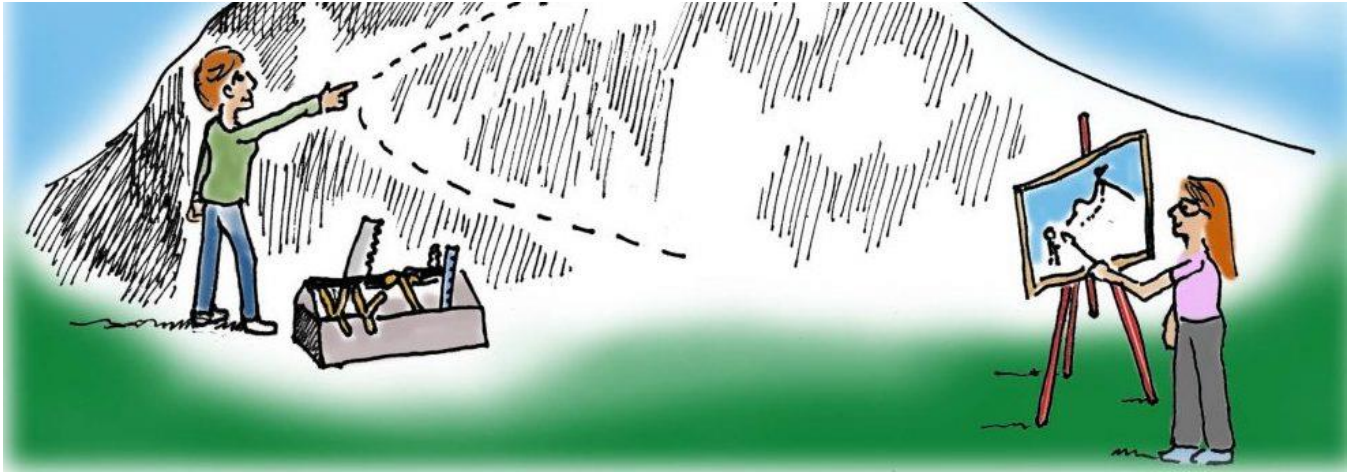
- Government agencies: City | County | State
- Other local entities (for example, fire or water management districts)
- Your state's nonprofit association. Visit the National Council of Nonprofits website to find information on your state association ([councilofnonprofits.org/find-your-state-association](https://councilofnonprofits.org/find-your-state-association))
- Local entities, like hospitals, school systems, and grocery stores often have checklists and tips available to help you plan for regional disasters (for example, earthquake resources in Washington or hurricane resources in Florida).

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# ABOUT US

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*Disaster Planning for Nonprofits* was created by Nancy Bacon and Margaret Meps Schulte.



## Nancy Bacon

Nancy Bacon is a teacher, instructional designer, and nonprofit leader known for creating learning experiences that move people to action. [www.nancybacon.com](http://www.nancybacon.com)

## Margaret “Meps” Schulte

With 35 years of experience in nonprofit and corporate communications, Meps’ mission is to deliver the right information to the right people in the right format. [www.3greatchoices.com](http://www.3greatchoices.com)

Nancy and Margaret created together a series of widely-used nonprofit learning tools: Let’s Go Legal, Strategic Planning in Nonprofits, Starting a Nonprofit, Build a Movement!, Safety & Health in Nonprofits, and How to Design for Action. **Our mission is to provide excellent, action-focused learning experiences for nonprofits.**



Download the Disaster Planning for Nonprofits toolkit and more from our Aim for Action website: [aim4action.com](http://aim4action.com).

## GRATITUDE

The wisdom of these nonprofit leaders enriched this resource. We are grateful.

Sarah Brooks, Methow Conservancy

Leon Brauner, Ocean Shores Food Bank

Trish Twomey, Washington Food Coalition