Phases of a Disaster

Disaster response includes planning for action throughout the phases of disaster: Readiness, Rescue, Relief, Recovery and Review. In smaller disasters, these phases can move quickly, in larger ones, they can span several years. Typically each phase takes ten times longer than the previous phase.

Response Phases

- Readiness
- Rescue
- Relief
- Recovery
- Review

UMCOR's work focuses on the Readiness, Relief and Recovery phases of a disaster. Here are some ways UMCOR becomes the heart and hands of United Methodists and compassionate people everywhere when disaster strikes.

Readiness

Being prepared is key to an effective disaster response ministry. Compassionate and skillful response requires planning and building relationships with community members before the disaster.

UMCOR's Work During Readiness:
UMCOR provides training in the US and internationally to help United Methodist, Methodist and other organizations to prepare for disaster.
US Disaster Preparedness Training
International Disaster Preparedness Training

Rescue

This phase occurs in the initial hours and days after a disaster. The focus is on saving human life.

UMCOR's Work During Rescue:
Although UMCOR does not participate in search and rescue activities, UMCOR is actively preparing its response during this phase. Communication and fund raising are UMCOR's primary activities.
As knowledge of the disaster, its impact, and survivors' need are assessed, UMCOR works to raise the resources for an appropriate and sustainable response.

UMCOR does partner with some organizations, such as Global Medic, that participate in international search and rescue operations during this phase of the disaster.

Relief

The next phase of the disaster is focused on providing survivors with their basic needs: water, food, shelter and clothing. Work also includes securing the disaster site so that recovery work may begin.

UMCOR's Work During Relief:
UMCOR works with local partners to coordinate immediate assistance and coordinates shipments of relief supplies from UMCOR Depots.

In the US, UMCOR-trained Early Response Teams arrive to prepare damaged property for further repairs and reconstruction. Additionally, UMCOR-trained Care Teams provide hope and healing to survivors. UMCOR also works with annual conferences to develop their response ministry.

Internationally, UMCOR works directly on the ground and though partner organizations to provide food, water, shelter and other basic necessities while planning for the recovery phase begins.

Recovery

This longest phase of disaster response can take several years, depending on the scope of the disaster. Survivors face a myriad of challenges as they work toward restoring normalcy. Recovery includes helping survivors find long-term solutions to their needs. This can include reconstruction or relocation, support for livelihoods or securing employment, transportation and especially restoration of hope.

UMCOR's Work During Recovery:
This phase is the focus of UMCOR's disaster response work. UMCOR is well-equipped because of our mission, values, connections and resources to address the long-term recovery needs of survivors. To achieve this, UMCOR works in partnership with affected communities—whether in the US or overseas—combining UMCOR's knowledge and resources with those of the local community. There is much work to be done in the months, and even years, after the disaster occurs. UMCOR is often the last to leave, continuing to work with survivors as they adapt to their "new normal" following disaster.

In the U.S., UMCOR works with United Methodist annual conferences to support their recovery programs. UMCOR provides resources for long-term disaster ministries including funding, training, mentors, volunteers, and relief supplies.

Internationally, UMCOR focuses on supporting those efforts that will benefit survivors for the long term. Where needed, UMCOR will establish an office in the country where the disaster occurred to provide ongoing assistance throughout the recovery phase. UMCOR's programs focus on sustainable recovery, which involves survivors in their own recovery.

Review

Evaluating disaster response is an important part of demonstrating accountability and preparing for the next disaster.

UMCOR's Work During Review:
UMCOR supports annual conferences of the United Methodist Church by providing tools and resources to evaluate their long-term disaster response ministries. Review helps UMCOR to mitigate – or lessen the impact of - future disasters, so we are better prepared to minister to the needs of survivors. This information also helps UMCOR tell the story of how your gifts and service have helped people recover from disaster.