

# Emergencies Happen. Does Your Church Have a Plan?

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*St. Charles County, Missouri* – Tornadoes, flooding, winter storms, fires, active shooters and widespread illnesses are just a few of the many dangerous and disruptive events that could severely impact our community. If these events were to occur, many would look to nearby faith organizations for support.

"Like we saw during the response to the May tornado through St. Charles County and the flooding along the Mississippi River in June, the people and faith organizations within our community are eager to help in times of need," Sheila Harris-Wheeler, chairperson for St. Charles County's Community Organizations Active in Disaster coalition said. "With this workshop, we will outline steps that church leaders can take to protect their congregations and to provide assistance to others once they know their members are safe."

To help congregations develop a plan that can help mitigate damages, recover quickly and provide community support, a collection of agencies in Lincoln, St. Charles and Warren counties will present a Faith-Based Emergency Planning Workshop on Thursday, Jan. 23, 2014 (8 a.m. to 1 p.m.). Hosted at the Community Commons inside the St. Charles City-County Library District's Spencer Road branch (located at 427 Spencer Road, St. Peters MO 63376), the workshop will provide area churches and faith leaders with tools to develop an emergency preparedness plan.

Representatives from each church attending the workshop will receive a binder and materials that will provide the first steps to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters, health outbreaks and other emergencies. Along with the organizational binder, individual attendees will also receive information on support resources and agencies available to help in times of need. Featured presenters will be:

Reverend Randy Gariss, College Heights Christian Church (Joplin, MO)

"Reflections on a Fateful Day – the May 22, 2011 tornado"

and

Dan Steska, UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief)

"Taking the First 10 Steps to Creating a Church Preparedness Plan"

The event is open to faith leaders and security/health teams from all denominations. However, as space is limited, the planning committee asks that no more than four individuals per church register. To register for this free workshop, please visit

<https://www.eventbrite.com/event/8532162929> or contact Doug Bolnick by phone at 636.949.7408. Registrations must be completed before Jan. 17, 2014.

The ability for the community to become better prepared for events that could occur and to recognize a plan of action to respond once they do will go far towards a strong recovery in the future. A preparedness plan that is consistent with the goals and objectives of the organization can aid in this recovery, as long as the plan offers clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the membership and that all management personnel and membership is familiar with the activities.

Agencies presenting the Jan. 23, 2014, Faith-Based Emergency Planning Workshop include the American Red Cross, Barnes-Jewish St. Peters Hospital, Baue, the Community Council of St. Charles County, Community Organizations Active in Disaster, Crider Health Center, Lincoln County Government, the Lincoln County Medical Center, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, the St. Charles County Citizens Corps Council, St. Charles County Government, Sts. Joachim and Ann Care Service, St. Peter Catholic Church, the Salvation Army and Warren County Government.

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