

How to Use This Reference

Introduction

Disaster Preparation

During the Disaster

After the Disaster

Introduction

The Disaster Response Handbook is a resource for county Extension agents and other Extension faculty to use to advise the public on coping with disasters. Disasters come in many forms, such as tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, drought, ice storms, disease outbreaks, fire and, more recently, terrorist acts. As you review this **Disaster Response Handbook**, you should understand that it has been developed as a resource guide and that Extension faculty are not expected to be experts in all the areas listed in the handbook. This book features a number of fact sheets grouped by disaster. It also lists Disaster Assistance Contacts at the local, state and national levels. It is imperative to continue to update this handbook as fact sheets are revised. The handbook is designed so that items can be easily duplicated and distributed to the public as needed.

Disaster Preparation

County agents should develop a relationship with the local Office of Emergency Management (OEM) director and advise OEM of the resources you have in the CES Disaster Response Handbook. The County Judge can facilitate this relationship. You should plan for a disaster, when possible, so that Extension resources can be used to their fullest extent. Adequate preparation and education can reduce the chaos associated with most disasters. Unfortunately, most Extension educational efforts will be conducted during and after the disaster because of the unpredictability of disasters.

When time permits educational activities prior to an impending disaster, county agents should make the most of the time available. Contact the local Office of Emergency Management director and inform OEM of the types of educational assistance that can be expected from Extension, depending on the disaster. Media will usually be very receptive to placing educational materials in the paper and on the air if an impending disaster, such as an ice storm, is predicted. Issues such as food safety, preserving food

without electricity and the use of generators for supplemental power would be examples of topics that could be exploited prior to a predicted ice storm.

During the Disaster

With the exception of droughts and floods, most other disasters are short-lived in duration. The Disaster Response Handbook has significant information that should be brought to the attention of the local OEM director for a given disaster. Awareness of problems being experienced by disaster victims can help gear the educational effort much as it does with other Extension educational programs that address a specific problem. Coalitions with agencies at the local level and the Red Cross should be established to help disseminate educational information.

After the Disaster

Most of the county agent's efforts will likely be focused on education after the disaster. Because so many disasters are associated with power failures, it may be very difficult to reproduce and disseminate educational information. Again, working closely with coalitions of the Red Cross and other emergency personnel may be the best way to disseminate educational information.

There will be much more opportunity for educational assistance to disaster victims after a disaster since it may take weeks or months to clean up the damage. This handbook has many fact sheets that deal with cleanup and helping clientele get back to a normal life. It is also recommended that you evaluate your disaster efforts using input from the local citizens similar to the way you evaluate other Extension educational efforts.

Identification of other possible fact sheets and educational information that need to be developed to address future disasters should be brought to the attention of the appropriate specialist.