

# Christian Disaster Relief Handbook

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## *Christian Disaster Relief of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite*

As the main objective of THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST is to save souls from eternal doom, so all of her services rendered, regardless of race, color, or creed, shall be with this one and all important goal in mind.

So likewise, THE CHRISTIAN DISASTER RELIEF, with its volunteer workers and officers are to render a willing service to those suffering from disaster, performing humbly in a manner that will point all concerned to a Christian way of living.

THE CHRISTIAN DISASTER RELIEF is to consist of:

1. A five member board of directors elected by the conference for a five year term.
2. Two coordinators in each group of congregations which form a district. These coordinators are elected by the conference for a five year term.
3. One or more local agents appointed by each congregation.

The duties of the above mentioned officers are as outlined in the following pages...

## *Christian Disaster Relief Board of Directors*

The Christian Disaster Relief (hereafter called CDR) board shall have complete control of the operations and functions of the organization.

They shall have authority to set in order any changes or improvements for the benefit of the organization, to call meetings periodically (of coordinators, agents and others) to discuss the same.

CDR Board Structure:

The CDR board consists of four brethren elected from the United States and one from Canada. The chairman, secretary and US treasurer are chosen annually within the board from the four US members. The Canadian member is the Canadian treasurer for the duration of his term.

## *Principles of CDR*

1. As the name implies, we are a Christian Disaster Relief organization, constrained by the love of Christ to provide relief to unfortunate victims of disasters.
2. We willingly work side by side with other organizations and we should remember to show a proper respect for their beliefs. We strongly recommend full cooperation with them on joint projects insofar as we are able to do this without compromising the true faith. We do not, however, encourage formal, long term partnerships with them, believing that we shall remain separate as the people of God.
3. **While we endeavor to practice impartiality when assessing the needs of the distressed, our foremost objective is to assist less fortunate victims first, especially seeking out the aged, widows, the poor, and those with disabilities. The needs of the wealthy that are covered by insurance could be assessed individually on their merits. Bear in mind that a disaster many times causes the hearts of rich and poor alike to reach out for emotional support. At a time such as this CDR can be a real witness, reaching out to all the suffering ones in the spirit of compassion.**
4. At all times and above all else, our primary and fervent objective shall be to humbly promote the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ and His chosen bride. We need to be ready at any time to "give an answer of the hope that lies within

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us.” We encourage distribution of Gospel literature & Bibles available from Gospel Tract and Gospel Publishers. A ready supply of suitable tracts should always be on hand, together with a few Bibles for possible distribution.

### *Qualifications for District Coordinators and Congregational Agents*

1. Brethren whose lives are an example of dedicated Christian living, and who love their neighbors as themselves.
2. Brethren who have shown an interest in CDR projects, as well as in current local and national disaster events.
3. Brethren who can be reached at any time by the phone number(s) listed in the Yearbook or the Conference Committee booklet and whose circumstances permit them to promptly investigate the disaster area. Then, as the need may require, they will organize a group of volunteer workers who shall, in Christian love, provide assistance in relieving the distressed.
4. Brethren who are qualified and willing to negotiate with government officials and other charitable organizations as the need may arise.

May we be willing and ready to shoulder our responsibilities with enthusiasm and humility.

James 3:17: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

### *Responsibilities of Congregational Agents*

When disaster strikes within the USA or Canada, the local agent closest to the scene is generally expected to initiate the investigation. At times, the project may be deemed too large for the local area to handle and the CDR board will be called upon for assistance. Otherwise, the local agent shall, with appropriate discretion and counsel, be responsible for the project. This responsibility would fall into four main categories:

- a. Investigation: when a disaster occurs, investigation should be initiated promptly by two or more brethren. Since the project will only go forward if volunteers become available, be cautious with making promises to initiate relief work. A good motto to have is “under promise and over deliver”!
- b. Preparation: Organizing and beginning the relief work. This could include negotiations with local government and/or other charitable organizations, arranging transportation, meals, lodging, tools and supplies that might be required. Congregational Agents, when called upon by the District Coordinator, are responsible to organize groups for travel to disaster areas. Ensure that there are sufficient funds for the necessary purchases. Unless other arrangements have been made, expenses can be forwarded to the appropriate CDR board treasurer for reimbursement. While CDR will assist with travel expenses, we encourage local congregations to also contribute. Contact the CDR Treasurer for the current travel expense report forms.
- c. Effective action: Supervision of the workers and focusing on keeping the project moving forward to completion. Again, this should include ongoing & open communication with supervising organizations and the CDR board.
- d. Completion: Bringing the project to a proper close, which could include returning tools to rightful owners, ensuring that promised work orders are complete, etc. This should be done in close connection with the supervising organization.

#### *Other Agent Responsibilities:*

- *Congregational agents are responsible to the District Coordinator, when called on, to organize groups for travel to disaster areas.*
- *We encourage using local deacons to assist in arranging economical travel.*

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- *Proper identification should be used when entering disaster areas. Congregational agents should keep a supply of nametags, windshield cards and magnetic vehicle signs on hand. These items are available at no charge from CDR, with the exception of the magnetic signs which are sold at ½ of cost price.*
- *It is the responsibility of the agent and his congregation to have on hand a supply of bibles and tracts for distribution in the event of a disaster.*
- *Ensure that each group travelling to a CDR project is accompanied by a responsible adult. Congregational leaders are responsible for the conduct of their group enroute and for the duration of their stay.*
- *Be sure to pass all CDR materials on to the next elected agent in your congregation.*
- *Please note that CDR does not advance money for anticipated expenses.*

### *Responsibilities of Area Coordinators*

1. If the disaster relief workload becomes more than the local congregation can handle, the congregational agent will call the Area Coordinator for further assistance. The Area Coordinator will notify the CDR Board and communicate with surrounding congregations calling for as many brethren as the situation might require. Larger disaster relief projects may require the CDR board to contact other area coordinators for additional volunteers.
2. The area coordinators then become responsible for the logistics of providing volunteers for the project. This could include communication with the disaster site coordinator to determine the ongoing need for workers. When a travelling group of volunteers originate from several congregations, the area coordinator may need to assist with appointing a group leader, with organizing transportation, and ensuring that there are sufficient finances for the anticipated travel. Unless other arrangements have been made, the travelling group leader will forward these expenses to the appropriate CDR board treasurer for reimbursement.

3. If a disaster occurs at some distance from any congregation, the CDR board, the area coordinators, local agents or any concerned brother could, with proper counsel, investigate the need.
4. Keep the lines of communication open, from the investigative stage to the coordinating of volunteer workers. Keep the CDR board and your fellow workers informed on a regular basis.

### *Responsibilities of the Site Coordinators*

1. The site coordinator will assume responsibility for the day to day function of the disaster relief project. This would include adequate communication with the supervising organization(s):
  - a. Take time to listen to disaster victims, they have an important story to tell. If you plan to assist them in any way, be sure they understand your intentions.
  - b. Be prepared to scout around the disaster area and line up work orders, keeping in mind the priorities listed above with regards to the less fortunate victims being the first to receive assistance. Work orders handed in from others may need investigation to determine their worthiness. Included in this publication is a sample work order form.
  - c. Become familiar with the rules and regulations of the supervising organization.
2. Orientation of arriving volunteers:
  - a. Each volunteer should wear a clearly printed CDR nametag.
  - b. Each work team should have a designated leader, and all requests and suggestions from the group should be referred to him and he, in turn, can bring it to the site coordinator's attention.
  - c. Describe the rules of the camp and the nature of the work. No volunteer is to leave the designated camp area without first notifying the site coordinator.

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- d. Encourage respect for authority, especially towards the supervising organization.
  - e. Include an emphasis on safety at the job site, such as proper use of power equipment, masks, goggles and gloves etc.
  - f. Emphasize that all due respect be given to personal property. **What seems like junk to the volunteer may be all the distressed victims own. Keep the mood upbeat and never make demeaning remarks about the victim's property. Unclaimed articles are not to be removed from the disaster site.**
3. It is important to have sufficient work on hand in order to keep the volunteers occupied. At the same time, ensure that breaks from the work are taken at proper times, especially in hot climates.
  4. Daily personal needs of the volunteers:
    - a. Proper nutrition will make for happier workers. Sandwiches for the noon jobsite lunch are adequate; however, the evening supper should preferably be a balanced hot meal. Drinking enough liquid becomes especially important in hot climates.
    - b. Ensure an adequate supply of food for the kitchen staff to prepare meals.
  5. Encourage the volunteers to take time for a song and a prayer with the distressed upon completion of individual jobs.
  6. If circumstances require an overnight stay, we shall endeavor to have a daily devotional led by our brethren.

### *Responsibilities of Team Leaders and Volunteers*

1. Team Leaders:
  - a. Follow the instructions of your disaster relief superiors with a willing heart and due diligence. Exercise patience, which may be needed at times while they try to coordinate the work load.
  - b. Work side by side with your team as much as possible, it will encourage them to put forth more effort.

- c. Keep your men occupied while on the job, keeping in mind this is a volunteer project and you may not always be able to achieve top efficiency.
  - d. A warm and caring attitude toward the distressed victims if they are at the site is more important than early job completion. Take time to visit with them. Bring tracts and Bibles for possible distribution and a songbook for a time of prayer and song with the distressed before you part.
  - e. It is your responsibility to ensure that your team takes adequate breaks, with proper liquid intake during hot weather.
  - f. Be alert to possible medical distress occurring among your team members.
2. Volunteers:
    - a. **All members in good standing with the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, that are able to put in 6-8 hours a day of physical labor, qualify as excellent volunteers on a CDR project.**
    - b. You are a very important part of the CDR project! With a sincere Christian attitude coupled with enthusiasm, respect for authority, and a desire to help the distressed, much can be accomplished!
    - c. On most projects, you will be expected to bring gloves and other protective clothing, as called for by your disaster agent.
    - d. Always remember: Safety First! Use appropriate caution with power tools. Safety equipment suitable for the job at hand should be used. Disaster sites will frequently have dust and mold present, use appropriate masks at all times when working in these areas. Unnecessary heroism should be avoided.
    - e. You have left your home and job to be a volunteer and a witness. Be very patient & considerate of your team leaders, it is no easy task to coordinate a group of men. Humble suggestions may be helpful, however, follow the instructions of your team leader even when they might not seem the best to you.

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- f. **Keep yourself occupied while on the job site, working as vigorously as you are capable of.**
- g. On projects where you stay for several days, you may be expected to work only 6-8 hours per day. The leisure time after supper may seem long, especially for those who are accustomed to retiring later in the evening. Please show all due respect to those who retire early by passing the time quietly, especially in the vicinity of the sleeping area. It is very important to respect the rules of the hosting organization.
- h. **Do not claim as your own any articles found on the jobsite. Always handle other people's property with all due respect.**
- i. CDR time is given voluntarily. Sometimes donations of money or articles are offered in appreciation for work done. With appropriate consultation, these may be accepted. Note that all gifts and donations received become the property of CDR. Smaller monetary donations could be retained by the local agent for current or future CDR project expenses. Larger amounts should be forwarded to the appropriate CDR Treasurer to be deposited into the Conference Fund.

Amendment to medical emergency costs question:

As of May 1, 2014

CDR will assist with expenses resulting from medical and health issues while in the service of CDR up to a total of \$3,000. CDR Volunteers should ensure that they have resources to cover extra emergency medical expenses that may be incurred in the disaster area.

### *Answers to common questions.*

Q: Does CDR pay for equipment rental?

A: Yes. Use discretion with equipment rentals and contact your supervisor before renting larger items.

Q: Who pays for equipment repairs?

A: Equipment repair costs will be reviewed and paid on an individual basis.

Q: Who pays for medical emergency costs on the CDR project?

A: CDR will pay medical costs; however, medical insurance and Church Aid plans should be used first.