



# WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

July 6, 2006

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Re: Disaster preparedness

Dear Brothers:

As part of the sign of the last days, Jesus indicated that the number of disasters would increase. (Matt. 24:7, 8; Luke 21:11) It is therefore the course of wisdom for each congregation to plan accordingly. (Prov. 21:5; *km* 2/97 Question Box) In this way, if a disaster strikes in your area, the needs of the brothers will be cared for and neighbourly love may be shown. (Luke 10:27b; Gal. 6:10) The following instructions will help you in this regard.

**Prepare in advance:** The congregation secretary is responsible to maintain an up-to-date list containing the home address and telephone numbers (including mobile phone numbers) for each publisher. If your home address or telephone numbers change, please promptly inform the secretary. He will work closely with the Congregation Book Study overseers in making sure that the contact information for the book study groups is current. A copy of this list will be given to each elder. If a ministerial servant serves as a book study servant, he also may receive a copy. This list is to be kept confidential.

In Britain we are not subject to major disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and hurricanes. Nevertheless, there have been disasters caused by floods, landslides, etc. There is also the ever-present threat of terrorist activity. If all are aware of the steps to be taken in order to lovingly care for the brothers then these can be quickly implemented should such an occasion arise.

**Disaster warnings:** When the public is advised in advance of danger, each book study overseer should check on the welfare of the publishers assigned to his group and be sure that they are prepared. He should provide a brief report to the presiding overseer, who is responsible to coordinate the congregation's preparation and disaster response. This is the general procedure that should be followed in any type of disaster. How much is done will obviously depend on the type of disaster, the amount of time that is available, and the local circumstances.

**If a disaster strikes in your area:** Christian qualities should readily come to the fore, moving you to care for your family's immediate physical needs. (John 13:35) Help any others who are in distress. As soon as possible, try to establish contact with your book study overseer or, if he is not available, another congregation elder. Explain your circumstances and present location.

As a first step to disaster relief, the book study overseer will attempt to contact each family in his group, preferably in person. He should assess the damage and determine what help is needed. Afterward, he should inform the presiding overseer of the situation of each household. If someone has been injured, the book study overseer should provide whatever assistance he can under the circumstances. Perhaps he can help them get to a medical facility for treatment, or there may be a brother or sister in the area with some medical background who can offer some emergency care. The presiding overseer and book study overseers will co-operate together to care for the publishers and to be sure that they have the food, clothing, shelter, and household supplies that are needed. How about the elderly, the infirm, and those with special needs?

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

July 6, 2006

Page 2

On behalf of the body of elders, the presiding overseer will take the lead in communicating with the circuit overseer. He will apprise the circuit overseer of any injuries, any damage to the Kingdom Hall or to the homes of the brothers, and any special needs. He will also co-ordinate the efforts of the local elders to give spiritual and emotional support to the congregation. The elders should arrange to resume congregation meetings as soon as possible.

The circuit overseer will maintain good communication with the presiding overseers so as to determine what is being done to help the brothers. He is responsible to telephone the branch office with a report of the local situation and to convey any special instructions back to the elders.

The branch office will co-ordinate any large-scale relief measures that may be needed. After a proper assessment has been made, the branch office will determine whether a relief committee should be formed. If one is formed, the responsible brothers will be notified.—*jv* p. 310.

You can see from the foregoing that the book study overseers, the presiding overseer, the circuit overseer, and the branch office are instrumental in caring for the safety and welfare of the congregation. All of us should co-operate fully with them. This will contribute toward good communication and will result in needed assistance being rendered as soon as possible.

**If a disaster strikes elsewhere:** Never underestimate the good effect your prayers can have on the brothers in an area that has been struck by a disaster. (2 Cor. 1:8-11) You may also feel motivated to express your concern through a donation. In this connection, the November 2005 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 3, stated: “It is recommended that donations for humanitarian and relief assistance be made to the worldwide work. This fund is used for relief efforts as well as for advancing the spiritual needs of the Christian brotherhood. If, for some reason, a person wishes to make a relief donation separate from contributions to the worldwide work, it will still be accepted and used wherever there is a need for relief assistance. However, it would be appreciated if such donations are made without restrictions as to where and how the funds may be used.”

Some may be interested in sending materials or supplies to the disaster area. Please do not do so unless this has been specifically requested by the brothers in charge. This will ensure an orderly relief effort and the proper distribution of goods. It would also be appreciated if you did not telephone the branch office unnecessarily, as this can tie up telephone lines that are needed to handle incoming calls from the disaster area. Depending on the needs and circumstances, the branch office will initiate communication with the congregations regarding what relief assistance is needed.

In the event of a disaster, you can be assured of Jehovah’s support and comfort. Let us put our full trust in him as our refuge. (Ps. 62:8) Please be assured of our continued prayers and our warm Christian love and greetings.

Your brothers,

*Watch Tower B. & J. Society*  
OF BRITAIN

c: Travelling overseers

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

July 6, 2006

Page 3

PS to body of elders:

The February 1997 *Our Kingdom Ministry* Question Box makes this point: “The elders and ministerial servants play a crucial role in providing relief assistance. If advance warning of a disaster is given, as with some major storms, these brothers should ensure that everyone is in a safe location, and if time permits, should obtain and distribute supplies that may be needed.”

If the homes of any of the brothers sustain extensive damage arrangements should be made for them to be cared for in the homes of other brothers. This would be on a temporary basis until the extent of the damage has been assessed, what will be required to repair the damage, and the estimated time schedule determined. Please note that Kingdom Halls should only be used as a last resort, since they do not offer basic needs of adequate toilet facilities, etc. Also, if a number of people are using the Kingdom Hall as a place to live, this makes it very difficult to use the building for its intended purpose. Of course, if a situation becomes desperate and time runs out to find sufficient suitable accommodations, we would never want to allow our brothers to be put in harm’s way by refusing them protection at the Kingdom Hall. Still, any arrangements of this nature should be for last-minute emergency situations only, and the brothers should be relocated as quickly as possible to accommodations better suited to care for their needs.

This letter should be read to the congregation at the first Service Meeting after its receipt. The elders should then meet to consider this postscript. Thereafter, the letter should be retained in the congregation’s permanent file of policy letters. *It should not be posted on the noticeboard.*