

TESTIGOS CRISTIANOS DE JEHOVÁ

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January 6, 2012

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Disaster preparedness and response

Dear Brothers:

This letter replaces the letter dated July 6, 2006, to all congregations regarding disaster preparedness. That letter should be removed from the congregation permanent file of policy letters and be destroyed.

Because of the increasing number of natural and man-made disasters, as well as the potential for acts of terrorism or armed conflict, we wish to remind you of the importance of being prepared, regardless of whether or not this seems likely in your area. This letter outlines important steps that should be taken now and in the case of a disaster.

The bodies of elders should take the following steps in preparation for a disaster: (1) Maintain an up-to-date list of emergency contact information for all publishers. Review it every year. Make sure each elder has a copy. (2) Have a plan that outlines how to care for those with special needs and what assistance they may require in an emergency. (3) Provide contact information for your traveling overseer to all of the elders. (4) Annually review this letter and the information on disasters in the *Shepherding* textbook, chapter 12, paragraphs 24-26. (5) Plan how to protect and preserve congregation records and confidential files.

Annually, one of the local needs parts on the Service Meeting should be used to review with the congregation the steps they need to take to prepare for the possibility of a disaster, including the following basics: (1) Have important documents ready for immediate evacuation. (2) Have a three-to-five day supply of emergency items, including food, medication, and safe drinking water, that can also be quickly taken in an evacuation. (3) Be prepared to evacuate and know where to go. (4) Follow the directions of local authorities and the elders. It is best if the congregation can stay together. The references listed at the end of this letter may be referred to during the local needs part as appropriate.

In view of the foregoing, each elder should make the following notation next to paragraph 24, chapter 12, in the *Shepherding* textbook: "See letter dated January 6, 2012, to all bodies of elders regarding disaster preparedness and response."

We hope this information is of assistance in your efforts to care for the needs of our brothers. Be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Testigos Cristianos de Jehová

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cc: Regional Building Committees
Traveling overseers

PS TO THE COORDINATOR OF THE BODY OF ELDERS: Please assign a capable elder to present a talk using the outline “Be Prepared When a Disaster Strikes”. This talk should be presented during the “Local Needs,” the week of February 4, 2013. Since 15 minutes must be set aside to present this talk, the timing of the other two Service Meeting items should be adjusted accordingly. Thank you for taking note of this matter.

PS TO SECRETARY: This letter should be retained in the congregation permanent file of policy letters. You may wish to update the congregation copy of *Index to Letters—For Bodies of Elders* (S-22) at this time as well.

REFERENCES FOR DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

September 2007 *Awake!*, pages 4-7, “Is God Responsible?”
January 2007 *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 4, “Are You Prepared for a Natural Disaster?”
June 2006 *Awake!*, pages 14-19, “Heeding the Warnings Made a Difference”
July 22, 1995, *Awake!*, pages 4-8, “Man’s Fight Against Disasters”

REFERENCES IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER

September 2007 *Awake!*, pages 8-9, “Disasters Are Nearing Their End”
August 2006 *Awake!*, pages 23-25, “Young People Ask . . . How Can I Help Those in Need?”
June 22, 2003, *Awake!*, pages 12-14, “Young People Ask . . . How Can I Cope When Tragedy Strikes?”
August 22, 2001, *Awake!*, pages 4-7, “Post-traumatic Stress—What Is It?”
August 22, 2001, *Awake!*, pages 7-10, “Traumatic Stress Will End!”

CHECKLIST OF EMERGENCY SUPPLIES WHEN DISASTERS STRIKE

Instructions:

- Prepare a durable and easy-to-carry backpack with items that you have chosen. Most of these items can be found in large supermarkets.
- Prepare your own list of emergency items, using this list as a model. Perhaps not all the recommended items are practical for you or for the area in which you live. You may need to include additional items, such as those for elderly or disabled persons who have special needs.
- Verify the contents of your backpack periodically (perhaps every six months).
- Do not forget regular items that are not permanently located in your backpack (such as mobile phone, ID card, passport or refrigerated medicines)



CONTENTS		EXPIRY DATE	VERIFY DATE	EXPIRY DATE	VERIFY DATE
ITEMS THAT WILL NEED TO BE PLACED IN THE BACKPACK	<i>Personal documents (ID card o passport)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Debit and credit cards</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Mobile phone</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Medicines</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
ITEMS TO BE PLACED INSIDE A WATERPROOF BAG	Matches		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Copies of house keys and car keys		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Cash		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Map of the area		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Contact details of immediate relatives		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Week's supply of personal medication		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Dosage and prescription of medication		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Contact details of your local doctor		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
VARIOUS ITEMS	Dynamo-powered torchlight		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Radio		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Extra batteries		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Multipurpose penknife		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Plastic waste bags		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tin opener		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
CLOTHING	Warm clothing		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Comfortable and hard-wearing shoes		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Waterproof coat		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
EXTRA ITEMS FOR SMALL FIRST-AID KIT (*)	Disinfectant (small dosage)		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Water-treatment tablets		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disposable gloves		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Thermal blanket		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Scissors		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tweezers to remove splinters		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
3-DAY SUPPLY OF NON-PERISHABLE PROVISIONS	Bottled water (1.5 l per person/day)		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Foodstuffs		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Tinned foods		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	High-energy bars		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nuts		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
OTHER ITEMS			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

* **Typical contents of small first-aid kit (which can be obtained in large supermarkets):** Gauzes for wounds, alcohol-based cleaning fluid, adhesive bandage, dressing (several sizes), sanitary towels, extending bandages, elastic bandages, reusable bandages, plasters.

BE PREPARED WHEN A DISASTER STRIKES

Note to speaker: We may all be affected by a disaster. Encourage the audience to act in harmony with Bible principles. When considering the third subheading, have the *Checklist of Emergency Supplies When Disasters Strike* distributed and explain the purpose and use of this list.

WHY WE NEED TO BE PREPARED? (3 min.)

Jesus foretold that natural disasters and those caused by man would be a feature of our times (Matthew 24:3, 7, 8)

Jehovah prepares his organization as a whole to act quickly when disasters or emergencies arise

Disaster Relief Committees are set up to help victims of natural disasters, civil strife, etc.

Every Bethel home has up-to-date contingency plans and carries out emergency drills each year

Jehovah teaches us so that we can avoid many of the losses caused by such disasters (**read Proverbs 21:5**)

BE PREPARED AS A CONGREGATION (2 min.)

Bodies of elders take the necessary steps to care for the needs of the brothers

Each elder has a list of emergency contact details for each publisher and the circuit overseer

The elders have a plan that includes how to care for those with special needs

They review this plan each year, which includes emergency drills and reminders to the congregation

BE PREPARED INDIVIDUALLY (8 min.)

Families and individuals are encouraged to take practical steps to be prepared when a disaster strikes

During Family Worship Evening, give consideration to the recommendations offered

Establish what measures need to be taken

Prepare your mind for a possible evacuation, and be sure you know where to go (**read Luke 12:15**)

Have a durable *personal* backpack ready with important documents and a supply of emergency items (at this point, distribute a copy of the *Checklist of Emergency Supplies When Disasters Strike* to all in attendance, and review the *Suggested List of Emergency Supplies When Disasters Strike* that appears at the end of the outline)

The purpose of this list is to help prepare and verify the contents of our *personal* backpack

The list is based on general recommendations offered by relief agencies and experts

Some items can be placed immediately in our backpack, whereas others will need to be placed in the backpack when an emergency arises (mobile phone, ID cards and passport, medicines, etc.)

The list has been prepared to help us write down the expiry date of all perishable items, and to make two verifications of the contents

If we receive warning that a disaster is imminent, pay close attention to the instructions provided by the authorities and the elders (Romans 13:1; Hebrews 13:17)

THE BENEFITS OF BEING PREPARED (2 min.)

How will we react when a disaster strikes? Being prepared will allow us to remain calm and take immediate steps

Heed the instructions offered by the local authorities (**read Romans 13:5, 6**)

Contact the Group Overseer, even if we are well and do not need assistance

In these last days, we may become victims of a disaster. Be sure to follow the recommendations offered

Doing so individually, as a family and as a congregation will protect us, giving evidence of our respect for the precious gift of life

TO BE COVERED IN 15 MINUTES

Suggested list of emergency supplies when disasters strike

- Durable and easy-to-carry backpack
- Copy of all important documents in a waterproof sleeve (ID card, passport, etc.)
- Extra set of car keys and house keys
- Cash
- Bottled drinking water and non-perishable food
- Torchlight, AM/FM radio, mobile phone, extra batteries
- One-week's supply of medication, indicating prescribed dosage, prescriptions, and the name and telephone number of your local doctor (be sure that medicines have not expired)
- First-aid kit
- Comfortable and hard-wearing shoes, warm clothing and waterproof coat
- Information on rendezvous, how to contact family and relatives and a map of the area

NOTE TO SPEAKER: The *Suggested List of Emergency Supplies When a Disaster Strikes* is based on the recommendations provided by renowned international relief agencies. It can be adjusted as needed.

NOTE TO THE ELDERS: Preparing a Yearly Emergency Drill

The drill should not last longer than 20 minutes, should not be held during a meeting and should count on the presence of all the attendants (it would be appropriate for some elders to be present also)

The drill should cover the following aspects:

Identification of evacuation signs and routes, emergency exits, the location of fire extinguishers and any other means of protecting the building against fire

Establishing a safe place outside the building (without obstructing traffic) where the congregation can assemble in case of an evacuation

Prepare a simple report on the drill, indicating the date, names of all participants and an evaluation of the results. All participants should sign the report, a copy of which will then be kept in the file of each congregation involved