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Would You Be Prepared?

Carina Franca posted on May 22, 2013 10:00

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SEVEN LESSONS THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:
1. **Having an Emergency Plan** ~ It is critical that every organization has a well thought out emergency plan for each facility. Even Jesus taught the principle of having a plan to prevent loss before it occurs. {Matthew 24:43} These types of tragic events can occur like a “thief in the night”. When the alarm sounds it is time to take action; there is no time then to start the planning process!

2. **Being Aware of Your Surroundings** ~ As part of your emergency planning have you included awareness training for all individuals? What should be done if something looks out of place, if a suspicious item is found at a church activity or someone unknown is lurking on your premises or seems out of the norm? Employees, volunteers, church members and students need to be alert for items or actions outside the scope of normal events and report what they observe to the appropriate leaders or authorities.

3. **Train Your Employees, Volunteers and Others** ~ Emergency plans cannot just be well detailed guidelines kept in a notebook on the shelf in the office. They must be a living document which become internalized by your employees, volunteers, church members and students. When the alarm sounds will your people know how to immediately respond? Have you taken the time to train your employees and volunteer leaders on what to do in the event of an emergency? If not, why not?

4. **Practice, Practice… Practice Your Plan** ~ To internalize emergency planning requires a commitment to both training and practice. Once you have taken time to train your leaders it is essential to conduct practice drills on a regular basis. Is it too much to ask your pastor to set aside 15 minutes on a Sabbath morning to conduct an emergency safety drill? Schools have safety drills on a monthly basis so students know what to do and how to follow directions that could save their lives. Likewise, adults need to know how to evacuate your buildings or shelter in place in the event of an emergency. There is no greater act of stewardship than practicing life safety skills even as part of a worship service.

5. **Know You will be on your Own** ~ Often times when an emergency strikes you are on your own until the storm passes or first responders can be on site to begin the rescue efforts. It is estimated that even the best fire and police response can take 3 to 5 minutes to arrive on scene. Major storms can often times overwhelm the capabilities of first responders and you will need to rely on your own first aid skills and emergency supplies. Now is the time to work with your local fire and police agencies to have them assist in your emergency planning. Invite them to walk through your facilities and help to identify appropriate evacuation routes and safe zones within your buildings to shelter in place and the type of necessary emergency supplies to be kept on site.
6. **Stay Calm and Take Action** ~ When you hear the alarm or receive a storm warning always remember, TIME is of the essence! In a fire emergency you often have less than two minutes to safely evacuate all occupants from the building before the area on fire becomes uninhabitable due to extensive heat, smoke, flames and poisonous gasses. Being alert to weather-related warnings can allow time to activate your emergency plan and take the appropriate evacuation or shelter precautions as may be warranted. Staying calm will help to minimize panic and will help others follow appropriate directions that can lead them to safety. The acts of well-trained individuals have saved the lives of many during these recent events.

7. **Have Confidence in God and Others** ~ When disaster strikes a well-trained staff can have confidence they are doing the best thing possible for their survival. Students in Moore, Oklahoma, were assuring teachers they were okay as they sheltered in place. Well trained teachers had confidence in one another as they moved from their classrooms to more secure areas following the instructions being given calmly and confidently over the public address system by a colleague. Many lives were saved due to the brave actions of individuals who had been trained and practiced their emergency drills many times over not knowing when disaster might strike. In times like these, when we have done everything within our human power ~ lest we never forget the promise that “The angel of the Lord encamps around about them that fear him, and delivers them.” Psalms 34:7 NIV

Adventist Risk Management encourages all denominational organizations to take time today to review your emergency plans to be sure they are current, train staff members on how to respond and practice safety drills on a regular basis. If you would like more information on how to develop an emergency plan for your facility, please visit our website: [www.Adventistrisk.org](http://www.adventistrisk.org) where you can download the following emergency planning resources:


So today’s question: Has your organization taken the time and necessary steps to prepare its people on how to respond in the event of an emergency? Is life safety part of your ministry plans? Would you be prepared? Think about it and take Action.
By Arthur F. Blinci,
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