



## EMERGENCY REST CENTER TRAINING COURSE

The NDIN Emergency Rest Center Course trains volunteers from houses of worship seeking to self-activate as Emergency Rest Centers (ERC). ERC's are prepared to offer hospitality, risk communication and safe haven to the public during emergencies or mass evacuations. When taught in collaboration with a local office of emergency management, this course can also help develop a network of houses of worship which coordinate services with government or non-profit human services providers.

Offering hospitality and safe haven to neighbors and strangers alike is a common value shared by all faith communities. In times of crisis, houses of worship can provide a welcoming space, a safe place to rest, a drink of water, and critical information to guests whose own resources may be limited by current circumstances that are beyond their immediate control.

### EVENTS THAT MAY CREATE THE NEED FOR SAFETY AWAY FROM HOME:

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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • <b>BLACKOUT</b>                 | • <b>WATER MAIN BREAK</b>     |
| • <b>TERRORIST ATTACK</b>         | • <b>SEVERE HEAT WAVE</b>     |
| • <b>CIVIL UNREST</b>             | • <b>EXTREME COLD WEATHER</b> |
| • <b>CATASTROPHIC FIRE</b>        | • <b>HURRICANE</b>            |
| • <b>FLOODING AND WIND DAMAGE</b> | • <b>TORNADO</b>              |

*During any activation as an ERC, a house of worship will be able to maintain its religious activities and outreach/social service programs, provided that it does not proselytize ERC guests or require guests to participate in religious activities of any kind.*

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| <b>EMERGENCY REST CENTERS PROVIDE THESE SERVICES:</b>  |  |
| ◆ <b>HOSPITALITY TO ALL</b> who come seeking refuge, in a welcoming and bias-free environment    |  |
| ◆ <b>TEMPORARY REFUGE</b> for the public during an emergency (using 50% of capacity)             |  |
| ◆ <b>FULLY ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES</b> for the disabled (including bathrooms)                      |  |
| ◆ <b>WATER</b> and disposable cups (Tap water is acceptable.)                                    |  |
| ◆ <b>SPIRITUAL/EMOTIONAL CARE</b> (Proselytizing or requiring religious activity is prohibited.) |  |
| ◆ <b>BASIC FIRST AID</b> (First Aid Kit adequate for the total capacity of the facility)         |  |
| ◆ <b>EMERGENCY INFORMATION</b> shared with cultural and linguistic competency                    |  |

### PRIORITY LOCATIONS FOR EMERGENCY REST CENTERS

While an Emergency Rest Center may be needed anywhere in a community during a crisis, the three most likely causes for activation are power outages, extreme weather or evacuations. Evacuations requiring temporary refuge for people being moved by mass transportation into or out of an affected area are particularly critical. Optimal locations for ERCs are:

- ◆ Near designated evacuation routes or mass transportation hubs
- ◆ In areas prone to flooding or other natural hazards
- ◆ In areas close to terrorism targets
- ◆ In areas prone to blackouts (particularly for extreme heat or cold weather sheltering)
- ◆ In neighborhoods with a high concentration of elderly or special needs populations

## EMERGENCY REST CENTER TRAINING COURSE (continued)

### GUIDELINES FOR AN ERC

To serve as an Emergency Rest Center, a house of worship must meet basic requirements for safety established by local department of health and emergency management offices. An ERC should attempt to maintain a memorandum of understanding with local emergency managers or VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) and observe local protocols for activation and deactivation in times of crisis.

This ERC Training Course recommends that a house of worship:

- Maintain a NDIN-trained ERC Volunteer Management Team at all times
- Maintain the capability and capacity to offer all required services
- Maintain an emergency communication partnership with local emergency managers
- Create and maintain a Congregational/House of Worship Disaster Plan
- Recertify with local partnerships annually

### FOCUS OF TRAINING:

Skill development that equips volunteers and volunteer managers from houses of worship to:

- Welcome guests in times of crisis with compassion, reassurance, and calm
- Ensure public safety and basic comforts like water, bathrooms, and snacks
- Provide accurate, official messages to inform guests about the emergency situation
- Provide age-appropriate communication with respect to diverse languages and cultures
- Offer basic emotional and spiritual care with empathy and understanding
- Maintain a guest census and basic service records
- Coordinate and communicate with local emergency managers during operations of the ERC
- Provide basic first aid as needed

### STEPS TO BECOMING AN EMERGENCY REST CENTER

1. **DO A NEEDS ASSESSMENT:** Is an ERC needed in your community?
2. **DO A FACILITIES ASSESSMENT:** Is your building handicap-accessible? properly equipped?
3. **GET APPROVAL OF YOUR LEADERSHIP.** Get the support of your house of worship leaders to be an ERC or ask your emergency managers to develop an ERC program in your community.
4. **CONTACT NDIN TO SCHEDULE A TRAINING** in your house of worship or community.
5. **RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS** to participate in the training and then manage and staff the ERC.
6. **PARTNER** with a disaster interfaith, Citizen Corps Council, emergency manager or VOAD.
7. **DEVELOP A CONGREGATIONAL DISASTER PLAN.** NDIN can assist if needed.



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**BUILDING DISASTER-RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**