

***Catholic Charities  
of the  
Diocese of Davenport***



***2015  
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND  
RESPONSE STATUS REPORT***

## *Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Davenport 2015 Disaster Preparedness and Response Status Report*

In 2008 the Diocese experienced flood damage throughout the River counties and several other locations. We sought and received a grant from CCUSA to begin responding. In addition to the \$10,000 grant, CCUSA provided us with expert help, two women from Catholic Charities in Oklahoma City who had been the core of their disaster response to tornados. We also received generous donations from individual parishioners and from the other dioceses of Iowa. A Social Action volunteer who had spent some time with some of his fellow parishioners in New Orleans in the wake of Katrina, was nominated to be the diocesan representative to the recovery operations in the affected areas. The Social Action goal was to assist the recovery organizations that formed in each area, as this would be more effective than grants to individual families which would tax the near non-existent staff, and would quickly deplete the diocesan funds while having limited impacts. Instead, the diocese offered donations to the officially constituted long term recovery committees in the affected areas. Meeting with each group, we advanced funds that were used to hire disaster case management workers. These cases managers would then bring together donated funds, donated materials and labor to address the needs of the flood victims. 90% of the recovery work, from identification of cases and assessment of needs, through the actual cleanup and recovery, was accomplished by faith-based communities, which has been the pattern.

Virtually every religious denomination in the US (including the Jewish and Islamic) have a disaster response mission component within their structures. Catholic Charities USA, which specializes in disaster case management, is the Catholic component. There are the Southern Baptist mobile kitchens, the Mennonite farm building reconstruction teams, the Jewish damage assessment and reconstruction teams, Evangelical disaster assessment teams, Evangelical reconstruction teams, Later Day Saint volunteers, Lutheran disaster case management and relief just to name a few.

Until recently, disaster response and preparation has been a limited part of a part-time volunteer's efforts. However, at the urging of the Scott County Emergency Manager, the Social Action Office, accepted the challenge of resurrecting the Quad City Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) that had been in existence during the 2008 flooding but had disbanded in following years. This has led to an increasing amount of time devoted to this effort. For the previous year, the Social Action representative has been the chair of this organization that consists of the Red Cross, Salvation Army, county emergency managers and health departments of Scott and Rock Island County, and other non-profit organizations in the Quad Cities. Recently the United Way and the Community Foundation of the Great River Bend have joined, and the COAD is actively recruiting religious organizations as participants.

As Chair, the Social Action representative is also a member of the Iowa Human Resources Disaster Council under the Iowa Department of Homeland Security, and is working with the Praise and Preparedness Program of the Council. Praise and Preparedness is a program targeted to religious organizations and challenges them to a disaster preparation and response ministry. The ministry has three parts. Minimally, worship sites are encouraged to prepare for protection of the structures, contents and worshipers who may be present when disaster strikes. At the next level, protection of the families and individual worshipers are the focus. Finally, the religious organizations are urged to find a role in the larger community of which they are a part as providing trained teams of volunteers, acting as shelters, feeding sites and a number of other functions needed during and following a disaster.

In support of this effort within the diocese, the Social Action Office has attended meetings of parishes and schools when discussing multi-peril insurance inspections of facilities and the role of insurance in support of the parish mission. The office has also participated with the Diocesan Superintendent of Schools and school principals in an Iowa Department of Education program to assist schools in developing and implementing multi-peril disaster plans. The Office has also met

with two parishes in the diocese who have established disaster planning efforts, and is planning to reach as many parishes as possible in the coming year to bolster the parish plans for continuity of operations and its role in and following a disaster. The office plans similar visits to pastoral associations and other convening's of churches and religious organizations during the coming year.

To keep current on developments, legal aspects and planning, the Social Action Office Representative is taking a series of on-line Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) courses, and is scheduled to attend two on-site trainings presented by FEMA with the assistance of Iowa State University Extension Services. Where possible, the on-site training locations are selected on the basis of reaching out to as much of the diocese as possible. The next scheduled training will be at Ottumwa, and invitations will be sent out to local parishes to attend also.