

First Things for Disaster Recovery

Here is a short list of some of the main things you will need to be thinking about beyond the initial health and safety issues that your public safety organizations will be dealing with.

- 1. Set up a Disaster Recovery Fund as soon as possible while your disaster still has media attention.** Your giving portal should allow for the use of credit and/or debit cards for donations. The Initiative Foundation can work with you to set up such a fund within hours of a disaster. Contact us at 320-632-9258 or 218-820-1094 (cell) if you are part of our 14 county region and would like assistance to set up a fund.
- 2. Promote your fund through the media and online.** Pictures and stories of how it is affecting individuals and families are best. Initiative Foundation communications staff can assist you with this if needed.
- 3. Let people know what you need. In general cash is king,** other unsolicited, and often unneeded, gifts can be hard to handle and manage.
- 4. Arrange for one common number for folks to call for assistance** and have a system in place to track needs and who is responding to those needs (online Crisis Cleanup is one example). The 211 system or the number of a local nonprofit willing to answer calls and do case management are both possibilities as is your local Community Action Agency or Lutheran Disaster Response.
- 5. Set up a relief station where people can come to get assistance, give assistance or get questions answered.** Coordinate with your emergency manager to have at least one disaster response coordination meeting each day where all organizations working on the response can share their progress and needs. This gives you a common site where volunteers can check in and donated water and food can be received and distributed.
- 6. Remind people to be careful if they are looking at hiring companies to assist with their clean up and repairs,** not every company has their best interest in mind. Working with local well established companies or those vetted by their local government or through the Better Business Bureau is best.
- 7. People should check with their insurance companies about what is and isn't covered** as they are looking at making repairs.
- 8. People should be made aware that the State or Federal Government is unlikely to assist them with paying for home repairs or cleanup** as most disasters will not reach levels that would make individual assistance available. When they hear that the State of Minnesota is declaring their area a disaster that usually means the State will assist with the cost of repairing public infrastructure, not private property.
- 9. If there is significant private property damage that is affecting vulnerable populations (low income, disabled, non-English speakers) ask your local or county Emergency Manager to contact the Minnesota Duty officer at the Department of Public Safety at 1-800-422-0798** and ask for the Volunteer Resource Coordinator to activate Minnesota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MNVOAD). MNVOAD will start conference calls to coordinate help from disaster relief

organizations (see resources for more about MNVOAD and the type of help their members can offer).

10. If you have businesses that have recovery needs the Initiative Foundation economic development staff and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) may be able to help meet those needs. Let the Initiative Foundation know if there are companies that should be contacted or refer them directly to the Foundation through Jeff Wig, Vice President for Economic Development (jwig@ifound.org) or 320-631-2006. See the resource section for other business recovery resources.