

Holy Family Episcopal Church

Emergency Action Plan

Remain Calm - Evaluate the Situation - Take Action

Definition: For the purpose of this plan, an emergency is defined as, "a situation that poses an immediate threat to life, health, property or the environment."

Goal: The goal of the plan is to provide guidelines and specific actions that will enhance the safety and well-being of the staff, congregation and visitors to Holy Family.

Background: Emergencies happen and it is our responsibility to prepare for their occurrence. They often include medical events, such as heart attack and stroke, significant injury, severe weather, hazardous material release and fire.

Until recently, a church was considered one of the safest places to gather. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Recognizing this truth, the plan will also include information on how to respond to an intruder with a weapon intent on doing harm, often called an "active shooter."

Guidelines: It is universally accepted in the emergency management field that if it looks wrong, feels wrong, smells wrong or acts wrong, it probably is wrong and may be an emergency about to occur. With that in mind, we all have a duty to keep all our senses on alert and be aware of what is happening around us. What is that unusual smell? What is happening to the person in the row in front of me? Does that person in the parking lot have a gun? What is that strange sound? Is that smoke?

- try to remain calm.
- evaluate the situation.
- use your best judgment.
- take some sort of action (in most cases this can be as simple as calling out to alert others).
- if needed, ensure that 9-1-1 has been called. This is especially important if you feel you or others are in danger or if the solution to the emergency exceeds your capabilities or the resources on hand. A call to 9-1-1 from the main church line or a cell phone from the church will go directly to Henderson County. One of the first questions you will be asked is your location. It is **419 Turnpike Road, Mills River**. Because of our proximity to the main Mills River fire station, emergency fire or medical response personnel can be expected to be on site quickly. If the emergency requires law enforcement personnel, response time will be determined by the location of the nearest officer.

Whatever the situation, it is most important to remember that the first concern is always your safety and well-being, as well as that of anyone else in or around our church. Material items can be replaced; you cannot.

Key Control: Any plan to ensure that the staff, congregation, and valuable resources of the church are safe begins with control of access to the building. Therefore, the following policy is being initiated:

- The locks on the six entry doors are being re-keyed to make all current exterior door keys unusable.
- The Junior Warden, designated as the key control authority, will issue new keys to those who have a need to enter the church building when it is not staffed. In addition, a small number of extra keys will be kept by the Junior Warden for those circumstances in which a key is needed.

- The Junior Warden shall be responsible for the key inventory and any associated recordkeeping.
- The list of keyholders shall be audited yearly.
- When a keyholder leaves the parish or no longer performs the function requiring a key, it must be returned to the Junior Warden.

Building Evacuation: Depending on the type and severity of the emergency, it may be prudent or necessary to evacuate the main building, annex, or both.

Routine evacuation assembly areas are usually located at least 200' from the affected building, upwind, and away from responding emergency vehicles. The primary evacuation assembly area is the **playground**.

Once in the assembly area, those in charge should initiate a headcount to attempt to determine if all occupants have evacuated. If a known occupant(s) is unaccounted for, this information should be immediately given to arriving first responders.

Exception: The only exception to the above guideline is in the case of an active shooter where you have been able to get out of the church. If so, run as fast and as far as you can go!

In any case, do not attempt to reoccupy any church building until told to do so by those in charge.

Medical Emergency: Though any type of medical emergency can be expected, the most common are: fainting, stroke, heart attack, trouble breathing, injury due to fall, and uncontrolled bleeding.

The following actions should be taken:

- If you are a medical professional or trained in first aid, take charge of the incident.
- Use commonly accepted first aid techniques.
- Treat minor injuries. A first aid kit is available in the kitchen of the church.
- An AED is also available and stored on the wall in the kitchen.
- If the problem is beyond in-house capabilities, activate the Henderson County EMS system by calling 9-1-1. Be prepared to give the following information:
 - Your name and phone number
 - Location of the incident – **419 Turnpike Road, Mills River**
 - Nature of the problem

In most cases, professional help should arrive quickly due to our proximity to the Mills River main fire station. While waiting for help to arrive:

- Do not move the patient unless he/she is in an unsafe environment.
- Give patient nothing to drink.
- Write down as much medical history as possible: name, age, prescriptions taking, etc. Give this information to responders when they arrive.
- Station a greeter at the appropriate entry point to direct arriving responders.

Active Shooter: There are a number of steps that can be taken to reduce the chances of an active shooter emergency. They are:

- **Increase our awareness.**

If a hostile intruder plans on attacking the church, statistics indicate that he will most likely arrive after the service begins. The simplest deterrent is to close and lock all exterior doors when the service begins.

One of the assigned greeters should be stationed in the lobby during the service. Their responsibility will be to:

- Monitor any activity at the front and parking lot side doors.
- Greet and allow entry to any late arriving worshippers.

- **Increase early identification.**

A person approaching the church with an exposed weapon or who appears to be an obvious threat demands that immediate action be taken by those in the church. An in-position and alert greeter is our first and best line of defense.

- **Reduce provocation.**

Access should be denied to those who appear unstable, agitated, angry, intoxicated, or obviously carrying a weapon. If the lobby greeter is confronted by a menacing person, he should deny entry, alert the congregation and immediately call 9-1-1 for assistance.

If a potential shooter does get in, there are two options: **Fight or Flight!**

Fight: Be decisive and attempt to distract the shooter:

- Throw books at him
- Yell at him
- Tackle him

These are all risky and dangerous responses and casualties can be expected; however, the chance of survival increases by diverting his attention.

Flight: To protect yourself and others:

- If the shooter is in the sanctuary, drop to the floor, cover loved ones and children, and remain still.
- If you are in an office or meeting room, lock and barricade the entry door, turn out any lights, drop to the floor and remain still.
- If possible, evacuate by the closest door and run as far and as fast as you can.
- Do not return to the church until the scene has been secured by law enforcement.

Fire: Fire in a church is usually caused by:

- Defective utilities or appliances
- Misuse of candles
- Poor housekeeping
- Arson

If a fire is suspected or discovered, the following steps need to be taken:

- Alert all occupants. Holy Family does have smoke detectors throughout the main building, but verbally alerting others is still the best method.
- Call 9-1-1. Give the address of the church: **419 Turnpike Road, Mills River** and provide as much information as possible.
- If the fire is small and you have been properly trained, attempt to extinguish the fire with one of the portable fire extinguishers found throughout the building.
- Clear all rooms, close all doors and evacuate to the designated assembly area: **the playground**.
- Remain in the assembly area until told to do otherwise by those in charge.

Severe Weather: Severe weather can occur at any time. Of particular concern to the staff and congregation at Holy Family are the hazardous conditions produced by thunderstorms. They include damaging winds, tornados, and large hail.

In order to receive timely information about impending severe weather, a NOAA weather radio with a warning alarm and battery back-up shall be placed in the kitchen. In this location it is expected that it will be heard throughout the church, if activated.

Severe thunderstorm warnings are issued when these storms are occurring in the immediate area or are imminent. They are defined as having winds over 58 mph and hail at least 1" in diameter.

If a severe thunderstorm or tornado is imminent, the following actions should be taken:

- Any outside activities should immediately be cancelled and participants told to come into the main church building.
- Anyone in the annex should also be told to come into the main building.
- Occupants of the main building should relocate to the interior hallway leading to the annex and, if overcrowded, the restrooms.
- Sit on the floor and be prepared to cover your head and face for self-protection.
- Remain in this location until told to move by those in charge.

Suspicious Package: Suspicious packages and letters have been sent to churches by those who disagree with the beliefs of the church or hold a grudge against a staff member. Anyone who receives the mail at Holy Family should be aware of the possible indicators of a suspicious package.

The presence of one or more of the following should be cause for concern:

- Unexpected mail with abnormal delivery markings.
- Poorly typed, or misspelled written addresses.
- Visual distractions on the package such as drawings, political statements, slanderous statements concerning a staff member, or handmade postage.
- Stains or discoloration.
- An unexpected package left by an unknown person.

Action to take: If you discover or receive a package or letter you believe to be suspicious:

- Do not attempt to open it.
- Do nothing to further disturb the package.
- Calmly alert others in the immediate area and relocate to another room, closing any doors behind you.
- Call 9-1-1. You will be asked the address of your location. It is **419 Turnpike Road, Mills River.**
- Take no further action until told to do so by responding authorities.

The police and/or fire department will assess the threat and advise if an evacuation of the building is necessary. They will also contact other agencies, as appropriate, if the package warrants further investigation or special handling.

If you are told to evacuate, go to the primary evacuation assembly area: **the playground.**

Emergency Management Team: A group of church members organized to identify appropriate policies that will help to increase our ability to respond to and recover from emergency situations.

Members of Team:

Rector:	Chris Mason
Junior Warden:	Warren Spahr
Vestry Member:	Gary Carraux (Emergency Coordinator)
Two Congregation Members:	Stan Phipps, Jay Callan

Team members, other than the rector, will be chosen by the Junior Warden. One member of the team will be chosen to act as Emergency Coordinator and ensure that the following listed duties are carried out.

Duties:

- Receive input related to all aspects of the plan from the vestry and the congregation.
- Organize and schedule any related training.
- Meet semi-annually to review and revise the plan.