

## **KBC DR Chaplaincy Operations (A Day in the Life of...)**

What is taught in the *SBDR Chaplain Training Manual* (Revised December 2016) is foundational knowledge to the understanding of what a disaster is, and how human reactions to disasters can create and intensify the emotional, physical, and spiritual crisis response to a disaster. It also describes what the ministry of chaplaincy is, and many aspects of showing compassion, comforting grief, and story listening in the context of serving as a Disaster Relief Chaplain. We greatly appreciate the diligent work that has gone into the manual, and since there is no way to teach every aspect of the manual in its entirety in a couple of days, we strongly encourage you to read it in its entirety.

What we have found over the years is that much of the knowledge needed to function well as a Disaster Relief Chaplain is found in the pages of the manual. We have also found most of our new chaplains want and need more information in regard to the more practical aspects of responding and serving as a Disaster Relief Chaplain. Therefore, we have put together this supplement and the “*Day in the Life of...*” teaching session as an addition to complement the *SBDR Chaplain Training Manual*. The purpose is to help new chaplains have a better grasp of both what to expect in the field, and what is expected of them as they begin to respond as a chaplain.

Every disaster relief response is different – so there is no way that we can cover the details of every possible scenario, option, or challenge. What we hope this will do is give you a snapshot and a framework of the general structure, best practices, and optional ways of ministering in the context of serving as a KYDR chaplain. As with everything else we do in DR, your Blue Hat will lead and guide you as a volunteer chaplain and will make the final decisions when there are questions, differences of opinion, or multiple options.

### **Overview of the Callout/Response**

Your first indication of the need for a KYDR Response will often come from the news. A hurricane brewing in the Gulf of Mexico, a storm front that will potentially bring tornados or high winds, a forecasted winter storm, etc. This is the time to begin thinking about if you are available to respond, and if so, begin praying about whether or not God is calling you to respond to this need. As soon as there is information to share, the KYDR office will send out texts, emails, and notifications on the *Vic/Net* App with details of the information they have available.

**Please read** the notifications **carefully, completely, and respond accordingly**. If there is advance notice and the **possibility** of a DR callout, there will be an ALERT notification sent out. This usually does not require any response from the volunteers, but asks for you to begin thinking about your **availability**. If there is a probability of a response, a STANDBY notification will be issued. This asks for you to think about if you can commit, and to be prepared to deploy once instructed. Teams are typically being built during STANDBY status.

The next notification you will see will either be GO or NO GO. If it is GO, you will be asked to respond accordingly. If it is NO GO, then you do not need to respond to the notification. If it is NO GO, it could revert to either ALERT, STANDBY, or STAND DOWN.

If there is a callout, the status will change from ALERT or STANDBY to GO, with details of dates, place, and types/numbers of volunteers needed. As soon as you know that you are available and willing to respond, you will need to click the link in the email or *Vic/Net* App and answer the questions accordingly.

If it is an **out-of-state response**, carpooling will be arranged by your **Blue Hat**, and they will contact you as soon as possible. If it is an **in-state response**, then carpooling is **not arranged**, but you are free to contact volunteers you know that are going and arrange that on your own. Please be patient as information may not come as quickly as you would like.

Speaking of vehicles, there is almost always a need for chaplains to have access to a vehicle while on a response. On site, we never send chaplains out by themselves, so you will always be with at least one other chaplain. If you are driving to the response site and are willing to use your vehicle while there, please let your Blue Hat know. If you are riding with someone else to the site, or if your vehicle is not available while there, please let your Blue Hat know this as well. This will help them make the ministry plan for the week.

If there is no indication of callout for chaplains, you are encouraged to respond in one of the other ministry areas being called out in which you are qualified. If you do this, please take with you the identifying items you would normally take if you were responding as a chaplain (lanyard, chaplain's badge, chaplain t-shirt, vest, etc.). You may get there and there is a need for you to serve specifically as a chaplain.

In terms of packing, there is a good list of items that you may/will need in the *SBDR Intro to DR Manual* in Appendix Five. You can find that manual at [www.kybaptist.org/kydrmanuals](http://www.kybaptist.org/kydrmanuals)

## **Overview of the Onsite Response**

Upon arrival at the site, you will need to let your Blue Hat know that you have arrived, and also check in with the Incident Command Post and fill out appropriate paperwork. While serving as a chaplain, you will have a Blue Hat – whether it is a Chaplain Blue Hat working with a team of chaplains, or perhaps the Staff chaplain on the Incident Command Team (IMT), the Operations Chief on the IMT, or you may serve under a recovery or feeding Blue Hat. Regardless of the leadership plan at each particular response site, your Blue Hat will likely meet with you in the evenings for debrief and story sharing and will meet with you in the mornings (before you go out) for assignments of the day.

**Types of DR Chaplaincy Ministry Activities** The types of things that many other DR Volunteers **do** (running chainsaws, pulling brush, tarping roofs, cooking/serving food, etc.) are much more visible – both to the public and to other DR Volunteers - what DR Chaplains **do** is not always quite as clear. While this is by no means a comprehensive list of everything you might be called upon to do, it will hopefully give you a better understanding of what some of those things might look like.

- **Partnering with Assessors** – A wonderful way to serve as a DR Chaplain is to partner with an assessor as they go out to do damage assessments ahead of the recovery teams. Most often the assessor is the very first point of contact for those who have been affected by disasters. While the assessor walks the property, takes measurements, and pictures, etc., can be a good time to talk with the homeowner. Be sure not to be disruptive to whatever questions the assessor might have for the homeowner to help get the assessment completed.

You probably will not have a lot of time with each individual homeowner while there with the assessor, but this can be a great first contact with folks that you may also be able to follow up on later in the week.

- **Check in at Job Sites with Recovery Teams** – While the practice in the past was to “imbed” chaplains with recovery teams, similar to the practice of the military, it was found that if a chaplain was “imbedded” with a recovery team, once they talked with homeowner and possibly neighbors, the chaplain was restricted from going on to another area as they had traveled in with the team. So, our practice now is to give chaplains the information in the mornings on where recovery teams will be serving that day, and the chaplains then go out and check in with the teams and visit with the homeowners.

If there is a need for neighborhood canvassing in that location, the chaplains are able to do that while they are there. Once finished at a particular location, the chaplains are then free to move on to check on another team(s), and/or move on to some other ministry location. If the team that they checked on in the morning finishes that job and moves on to another job in the same day, the chaplains should then check on the team at the new location. Of course, recovery team Blue Hats are always encouraged to call on chaplains to come to a particular location when needed.

*\*Note* – When checking on recovery teams, you are free and encouraged to help the team out for a few minutes by dragging brush, carrying debris or ruined household items, helping to load the trailer, etc. It is good for you and encouraging to the team members to have a fresh pair of hands to help, even for a few minutes. Just remember that the physical work of the recovery team is not your primary purpose for being there. Do not get so caught up in the physical work that you neglect the ministry (spiritual) purpose of your presence.

- **Door to door canvassing** – Depending on the nature of the disaster, there may be multiple houses on the same street or same neighborhood that were affected by the disaster. A prime example would be a coastal storm surge flood (hurricane) where every house on the street was flooded. Usually in cases like this, there are multiple people at home working on their homes, out in their yards, or helping their neighbors. This can be a great opportunity to walk the streets and stop and talk with folks. Ask how they are doing, how they were affected by the disaster, and **listen** to their stories. **Always** offer to **pray** with/for them. You may/may not feel led to share the Gospel with them, just be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading.

- **Feeding Lines** – During disasters, we are often called upon to do mass feeding. In situations where survivors are “driving through” to pick up meals, you may be assigned to work the feeding line as a chaplain. As people wait in line you can talk with them there and ask how they are doing, how the disaster affected them, etc. If the feeding line is run for multiple days (they usually are) then you may see the same folks over and over and get the opportunity to build relationships with them.

Be sure to not interfere with the process and/or “hold up the line.” If you find a need to carry on a longer conversation, ask them to pull over to the side out of the way where you can talk with them further.

- **Public Places** - This is an area that is wide open to a variety of opportunities, depending on the disaster, location, and culture. Walking the downtown business area of a small town, or stopping in at a nursing home or hospital. Certainly, there are privacy cautions, but you will find that most folks are more open to talking and telling their stories than we might think. The local City Hall or County Courthouse might be a good place to stop in and check on folks. You will want to follow your Blue Hat's lead on this, but there are many opportunities to make yourself available for the ministry of presence.
- **Large Stores** – The local *Wal-Mart*, grocery stores, or big box home improvement stores like *Lowe's* or *Home Depot* can be good places to “run into” folks who want to talk and share their story. Grab a shopping cart and put a roll of paper towels in it and walk around the store and be open to God-ordained opportunities to minister.
- **Other public places** – Shelters and Agency Clearinghouse and Resource Centers can also be good places to minister. Your Blue Hat will know where these are and if they are open to you coming by.
- **First Responders** – First Responders are on the front lines of every disaster and have been from day one. Law enforcement, firefighters, and EMS are usually a little slower to open up to chaplains, but if you can stop by the fire station or police station and drop off some cookies or other goodies (from the Feeding Blue Hat), it can go a long way to open up those lines of communication.
- **Care for DR Volunteers** – Last to be listed, but certainly not least, are our very own DR Volunteers. Depending on the nature of the disaster and the aftermath of the cleanup, disaster relief work can be very hard – physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually on DR Volunteers as well.

On almost every response, you will see volunteers who are out for the very first time, or maybe their first time with this kind of disaster, or maybe they have never seen this level of destruction before or met a family as hard hit as the family they helped that day. Even long-time experienced volunteers can get their “bucket full.” Be aware and available as the need arises and as the Holy Spirit leads you to minister to DR Volunteers.

One of the best things you can do as a chaplain is to intentionally sit with different volunteers at meals at the host site. Our tendency is to congregate with those we know and like, but try to seek out those who you do not know well and get to know them. You do not have to be a social butterfly, but some of your best ministry opportunities may come in the meal and relax time.

### **Some Basic Principles of DR Chaplaincy Ministry**

- One of the most important things to remember in chaplaincy ministry is that there is no rush, and there is no regimented schedule. As you minister to someone in the field, be 100% with them the whole time. Do not be checking your watch, checking your phone, or looking over their shoulder to see what others are doing. Be fully with them until it is time to bring that contact to a close. There is no “extra credit” for turning in the highest number of ministry contacts or bibles handed out or gospel presentations. Our ministry is not about the numbers.
- One of the things that is very important to remember is that before you come on a DR Response, you should be in the spiritual habit of listening to and being responsive to the Holy Spirit’s leading. If you wait until you are on a DR response to begin a daily quiet time with the Lord, or to try to start the habit in the field of praying often, you will not be able to fully hear and obey the Spirit’s call. And once you are on the field, so much of what we do requires the sensitivity to hear the Holy Spirit’s leading and be obedient to what He calls us to do.
- In that light, we need to have our spiritual eyes and ears open – so that we can watch and listen for God-ordained opportunities. If you depend on Him to lead, guide, and direct you, He will certainly do it. And as we speak of listening, the single most important thing for you to do with survivors is **compassionately and intentionally listen**. Listen for ways that you can connect with and serve them. An important thing to do is review *The Art of Story Listening* Unit, beginning on page 37 of the SBDR Chaplain Training manual from time to time.
- Do not forget to keep a close watch on your own spiritual fitness for ministry – before, during, and after a response. The Spiritual Fitness Guide in the appendix of this manual is a great tool to use to help you gauge your own spiritual health, and know when you need to take a break, or even ask for help. Self-care is vitally important for chaplains.
- Before you serve, you need to read and be familiar with the *Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. A copy has been provided for you in the Appendix of this notebook. As a Southern Baptist Chaplains, we are committed to serving, leading, teaching, and ministering by the doctrinal principles found in the *BF&M, 2000*. If you find that you are in disagreement with any portion, let one of your DR Chaplain Leaders know, and let us get that resolved before you go out.

If you have any questions or concerns as you are serving, be sure to talk with experienced Chaplains you are serving with and your Blue Hat.