

How To: Windshield Assessment

CASE STUDY

When an ice storm hit Kentucky in January 2009, the Rev. Karl Lusk had access to information because of his participation in the state's disaster response network, but he needed to know how specific congregations and their communities were doing. He and the Bishop at the time, the Rt. Rev. Ted Gulick, drove out to see first-hand the damage sustained in rural western counties – in other words they decided to do a “windshield assessment.” Before they set out, they spoke to most of their congregational contacts for an initial assessment of the storm's impact and to ask if there was anything they needed. But the drive was important because seeing the damage gave them a better idea of what was going on in the hard-to-reach rural areas that many people had no way of knowing about. It also allowed for personal contact with residents in those areas, giving the clergy a better grasp of how people were doing and what they really needed. The windshield assessment was good for creating a big picture of what was happening all over the state.

START YOUR OWN WINDSHIELD ASSESSMENT

- **Contact different government agencies and relief organizations to get a clearer understanding of what is happening and how you can help.** I talked to people at the state level so that I could get a bigger picture of what was happening everywhere. I found out who was doing what, and I also asked about *who* in the community still had unmet needs – what wasn't getting done that the Episcopal churches could do.
- **An initial phone assessment is useful to guide your windshield assessment.** We made sure our contacts knew that both Bishop Gulick and I were coming, and asked them to be present so they could walk us through their needs assessments on site. We also tried to focus our route to include places with pressing needs and no one else to help.



Biography



The Rev. Karl Lusk (right) is the Diocesan Disaster Coordinator for the Diocese of Kentucky.



Fast Facts



DIOCESE:
Episcopal Diocese of Kentucky
DIOCESE SIZE:
approx. 9,500 baptized members
LOCATION: Kentucky
POPULATION: Approx. 4,300,000
DISASTER TYPE: Ice Storm
PEOPLE DISPLACED: 8,000
DISASTER RELIEF:
Manage church partnerships to provide aid for communities affected by the 2008 ice storm



- **Contact as many people, congregations and representatives as possible to find out what they need.** Your diocesan clergy and congregational contacts have direct lines to the community. Ask them to talk to the people around them to find out what the situation is and what needs still need to be met. We made sure we spoke in person to someone from every single congregation in the diocese.
- **Map out your route and make sure you give yourself plenty of time.** We traveled west of I-65, which cuts the state in half between East and West. The Bishop and I drove for an entire day, making sure we visited not just those we had identified before as having no one else to help them, but also as many affected communities as we could.
- **Talk to as many people in-person as you can.** If there was no congregation in a certain area (about half of the affected counties) we met with regional clergy. We touched base, face-to-face, with at least one representative from each community to describe the greatest needs according to community members and their own observations.
- **Try to talk with as many different kinds of people as possible.** Not only did I talk to local city, county and state agencies, but I also spoke with as many congregational contacts as possible. I also networked using diocesan connections to meet with other community members.
- **Try to see as much as you can – go to even the most remote areas.** The Bishop and I wanted to link what we had heard from our contacts with what we saw. We even went out to the All Saints' Camp Center in Leitchfield, to talk to the people who work there about what they needed.
- **Use your windshield assessment to ask more specific questions.** With our initial phone calls and emails we learned that most everyone was suffering with impassible roads and no electricity or water. While driving we saw the fallen trees blocking roads, which meant delivery trucks couldn't make it into the towns to help with food supplies.
- **Use your information.** We used the information we collected to prepare proposals so the diocese could help communities. Some programs included:
 1. A food distribution in Hopkinsville –restock a local food pantry and hand out vouchers to those who lost food from the power outage
 2. In Fulton/Hickman County – bill and rent assistance for 16 families who lost income because places of employment were closed
 3. Restore utilities in Madisonville/Hopkins County (reconnect utility boxes or repair broken pipes) for low income families –those without insurance or cover the gap of what insurance didn't cover
 4. In Mayfield/Graves County – replace prescriptions for low-income residents that were lost because of lack of refrigeration.
 5. Through a partnership in Paducah – help families living with HIV/AIDS restock food supplies and pay for fuel or alternate housing, allowing them to conserve their last financial resources and continue to receive medical treatments.More importantly we compiled a big picture of what had happened and sent that back out to our local contacts. This way they understood the breadth of the impact and knew they weren't alone. In a way it gave them the comfort of thinking that “together we can get through it.”



Bishop Ted Gulick (right) met with the Rev. Dr. Bill Watson (left), rector of Grace Church, Hopkinsville. The Bishop delivered a check, funded by Episcopal Relief & Development, to be used for disaster relief services. These funds were distributed among 10 different local partners for projects ranging from food distribution, to replacing prescription medications.

Additional Resources



For more information on responding to winter storms see the following online resources:

- “Ice Storm in Kentucky”
- “How To: Winter Shelters”

Share your own disaster response stories or tips to help a community in need at www.episcopalrelief.org