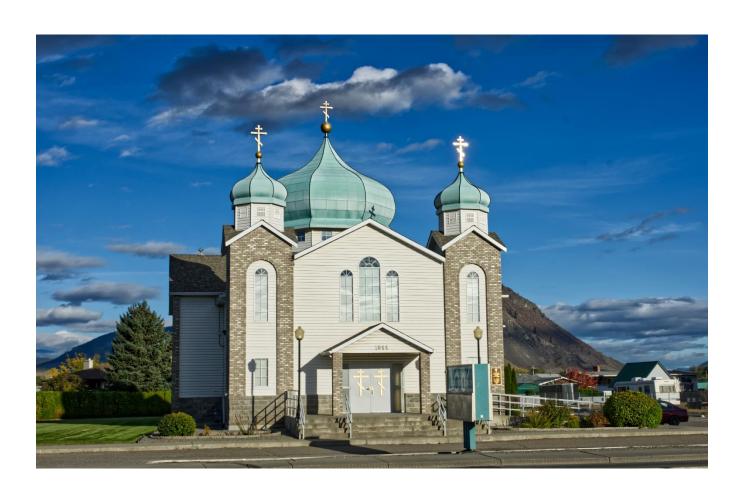# A Guide to Developing a *Parish Disaster Preparedness Plan* for Ukrainian Orthodox Churches

Being prepared for the worst!

1. Introduction

What would happen if your church unexpectedly was damaged or destroyed? Places of worship have become high risks, due to not only natural disasters such as wildfires, floods and tornadoes, but also targets for arson and vandalism.

Therefore, it is important that each parish have a plan for such a contingency or disaster. This plan is the *Parish Disaster Preparedness Plan* (or *Emergency Preparedness Plan*, *Disaster Plan, etc.*).

Each parish should develop and maintain a comprehensive *Disaster Preparedness Plan* that:

- Includes emergency readiness and response procedures
- Includes protocols to reduce the risks of personal injury and damage to your property
- Enables your place of worship to continue to deliver faith services and programs in temporary premises
- Allows you to restore your building with minimal interruption and as cost-efficiently as possible
- Enables you to retain key staff, volunteers and parishioners who may have to move on if normal operations cease for an extended period
- Preserves your reputation and good standing in the community.

The information gathered and kept in the Plan will also be invaluable if it is necessary to close and decommission the church. The key information provided will facilitate an orderly and efficient closure process.

The best time to make a plan is when the parish is still viable and successful, rather than when things are going badly. This Plan should include putting aside funds for possible contingencies and closure activities, both which can be costly.

2. Plan Components

The Plan and *Disaster Preparedness Manual* should be introduced to staff and volunteers of the church before a disaster strikes. This Manual should have a couple of important points in it.

- Steps for action in a case of a disaster should identify how the parish will gather, where it will gather, and how an evacuation will proceed.
- Contact information to be used in case of an emergency should be provided. This information includes who should be contacted in the case of a sudden event, as well as phone numbers of the employees, volunteers, and congregants of the church.
- Information systems should be backed up ahead of time and kept in a separate, safe place.
- Include a detailed diagram and labeling of the building layout. Building blueprints are helpful in a situation when the building needs to be evacuated quickly.
- An *Emergency Box* should be kept in a safe and secure place away from the church building. It should contain all the necessary things that will be needed in case something happens to the church building. This box should contain the emergency preparedness manual, contact information of all employees, backup files of data, copies of church documents, computer software copies, spare set of keys, and basic supplies such as paper, tape, and pens.

Once the Manual is created, new parts can be added to the original plan as needed over time. It is good to check on the plan every six months, or when major changes occur. Update the content with the most current information.

- The Manual can also contain a set of potential scenarios and ways that they can be handled.
- Disaster drills should be conducted regularly following a review of the Manual. This will make sure that any weaknesses in organization and understanding of the plan are seen and improved.

3. Creating the Plan

At first, a few leaders will see the importance of the *Disaster Preparedness Plan*. However, in order for a plan to be truly useful, the clergy, parish leaders, congregation council and staff must become aware of, and committed to, its importance.

Over time, everyone should be committed to its importance for the ongoing utilization of the Plan. Even so, as circumstances change, the Plan will need to be updated, refreshed and re-introduced to the community.

3.1 Step 1: Create a team

Put together a good team. The preparedness team should consist of a variety of individuals who know the congregation, its structures of authority and resources. If the preparedness team is representative of the congregation and dedicated to collaboration, the work can be divided among its members who can, in turn, enlist others to help accomplish some of the tasks.

Over time, the response team will be responsible to take action when the time of disaster comes. The response team includes individuals who will be key decision makers and implementers; will be activated in times of impending crisis or disaster; and, will continue to function until the situation is resolved. Tasks include making timely critical decisions; overseeing communication within the congregation and with the media; working with the insurance carrier; and whatever else becomes necessary to deal with a particular disaster.

As you create your plan, consider what information needs to be available, where and for whom. Include this on your worksheets as instructions for communication. The team can decide what information might better belong in a section of the appendix made available only to leaders, as opposed in the main text of the plan.

3.2 Step 2: Assign responsibilities

Since a disaster can occur at any time, early in their work the preparedness team should begin to assemble a response team for when disaster strikes. This team includes individuals who will be key decision makers and implementers of the congregation's preparedness plan when there is an emergency or disaster.

While the response team should reflect the unique circumstances of the congregation, it should include at least the following roles.

- ***Chief decision-maker***. Since, in times of crisis, some decisions may need to be made when there is no time to convene a committee meeting, it is important to have a designated chief decision-maker. This person will attempt, whenever possible, to keep the backup

decision-maker well-informed and include him or her in the process; involve others in making the decisions; and keep as many as need to know in the loop.

- **Backup decision-maker**. This person functions when the chief decision-maker is not available or when asked by the chief decision-maker to do so. This person stays informed of what the chief decision-maker is dealing with.

- **Parish legal counsel**. This person may or may not be a member of the congregation. Duties may involve overseeing and identifying the legal issues surrounding human resources, governance, property and more.

- **Media spokesperson**. This person will communicate accurate, timely information to the media, which helps to both tell and control the story.

- **Insurance liaison**. This person interacts with the insurance company.

Other roles on the team may include such things as turning off the utilities and securing the church building and property, and overseeing communication within the congregation.

This response team may also maintain and update a list of other people whose knowledge and experience can be of assistance in times of need, such as: medical practitioners, emergency personnel, those who know CPR, have first aid training, can assist in restoration of business operations, technology expertise, etc.

The response team should designate a crisis control center (the place the response team will meet if a disaster threatens or occurs) as well as a secondary location.

3.3 Step 3: Take inventory of assets

After collecting the inventory of congregational assets, make sure that in addition to electronic copies, you also have hard copies. Some should be kept offsite in multiple secure locations. The electricity may go out for a long time. One of the offsite locations may not be accessible.

Human assets

1. *All members and contact information*. Note in the directory or prepare a sub-list of those who are particularly vulnerable. Make relevant notes about specific needs and contact information for those who need to know, or are responsible for this person's welfare. For example: the elderly, physically or mentally challenged people, people who are isolated, or have limited resources, etc.

2. *Clergy, staff and key volunteers and their contact information.*

3. *Parishioners with disaster related skill/certifications and other resources*. These folks can be useful in times of disaster. For example, first responders, those who speak the languages of surrounding population, clergy, social workers, counselors, people who can provide childcare. Identify who has completed background checks and abuse clearances according to your congregation's policy.

4. *Outside groups and church affiliates that use the building and their contact information*.

5. *Partners in the community with contact information*. For example, other communities of faith, schools, businesses, organizations, synod, local government contacts, etc.

Physical assets

1. Make and regularly update a list of all physical property including church records and data systems. In addition to making a physical list of these assets, take pictures or make a video. As you do this, make note of any repairs needed or issues to be addressed.

2. Consider whether any of these material assets should be archived, and, if so, do it.

3. From the above list identify equipment and other physical resources important to disaster response such as vehicles, generators, kitchen, shower, large space for outdoor worship, etc.

4. Make a list of items that should be removed if the building is threatened, where they should be taken and by whom.

5. Make a list of items to be given special protection if the building is threatened, what steps are to be taken and by whom. (Example: computer should be wrapped in plastic and lifted off the floor.)

6. If there are special codes or passwords needed to operate any physical assets, make a list of those and indicate how to access these.

7. Locate or produce a blueprint or drawing of the church facility. Mark the location of first aid and survival kits, fire extinguishers, utility cutoffs, building exits, alarm controls, fire-safe storage, and "safe spots" (example: windowless interior hallways or areas of reinforced structure where people may shelter).

8. Collect and document information about any auxiliary buildings that the parish may own and/or operate, e.g., halls, bell towers, storage sheds, outdoor toilets, etc.

9. Document all relevant information regarding any associated cemeteries, e.g., location, number of burials, where records are kept, who is responsible for care, etc.

Financial assets

1. What accounts, investments, credit cards, lines of credit and loans does the parish have?

    a. Where are they located?

    b. What is the contact information?

    c. Who can access them (i.e. have the passwords and signing authority)?

2. Where are the physical and electronic financial records and how are they backed up?

3. What steps does the congregation take to ensure that the funds are protected from mismanagement?

4. What accounts are held with CRA (Canada Revenue Agency), local or provincial taxes and registrations and licenses?

Ministries / community assets

Identify any ministries, including groups within the congregation, groups that use the building regularly and activities that take place within the facilities or under the auspices of the congregation (e.g., worship, Christian education, quilters, prayer group, food bank, women's and men's association, fund-raising groups, and so on).

3.4 Step 4: Assess vulnerabilities

A *vulnerability* is a condition where the church building or grounds are open to attack, damage, have weaknesses, or are susceptible to damage or adverse events. The response team should look discerningly at the vulnerabilities inherent in the property and functioning. Some of the vulnerability issues can be mitigated with intentional upkeep and attention.

Preventative measures

1. How do you ensure that property is kept in good repair?

2. Who is responsible for making sure that regular maintenance and upkeep happens?

3. What is the process for identifying needed maintenance, approving expenditures and executing repairs?

4. What steps have been taken to enhance the security of the building and grounds, e.g. security cameras, alarms, signs, etc.?

Vulnerabilities

What physical vulnerabilities exist in the physical plant? What measures are in place to prevent:

- Accidents
- Arson
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Mitigate liability

Insurance

Identify insurance coverage levels for:

- Injuries and accidents
- Damage to property
- Data loss and damage, ransomware
- Fiscal mismanagement
- Misconduct or abuse

> One significant vulnerability is the declining and aging membership in many of the UOCC parishes. If the parish leaders die or become incapacitated, and have not recorded/documented the critical information, closing and decommissioning the parish becomes very difficult and costly. Therefore, it is important that all parishes, especially those at risk of closing, document and ensure the necessary information is available and readily accessible.

What inadequacies or vulnerabilities need to be addressed even if you cannot resolve them immediately?

3.5 Step 5: Identify partners, agreements and resources

When disaster threatens or strikes, there is an immediate need for action. The more relationships that are forged and information that is gathered ahead of time, the more efficiently a community can prevent or minimize damage and suffering and bring order out of chaos.

Government

Find out what programs the local, provincial and national governments can offer. Make a list of the services and programs you might benefit from and whom to contact. Get to know key local contacts in the police department, fire department, emergency management office, etc.

Local partners

Identify other communities of faith and organizations with whom you might partner in times of crisis and disaster. Get to know their leaders and resources and brainstorm ways you can be of help to one another and the community. Consider drawing up at least simple statements of understanding about specific ways you could assist one another.

UOCC and Eparchy

Find out how your district, Eparchy or UOCC can help if your parish experiences a crisis or disaster. Keep a list of who to contact, and their contact information. Also consider foundations and community resources such as the Red Cross, Food Bank, and other charities.

3.6 Step 6: Create a communications plan

Clear communication is critical during times of disaster, but it is often significantly more difficult than usual. Power and telephone lines may be down causing disruptions in phone and electronic communication. External communication to members of the congregation, the media and the general public is important. Equally important is internal communication between the response team members and others who may be participating in emergency or continuity of operations.

Develop a plan for how communications should flow to and from leadership, and within the network of responders and the congregation during emergencies and times of disaster.

Include but do not limit yourself to the following:

1. *Stay alert to possible threats*. Identify how the response team, those in charge of ministries and activities, and those within the church facilities will be alerted to possible threats.

2. *Communicate with leaders during emergency and disaster*. Identify how the response team, those in charge of ministries and activities, and those within the church facilities will communicate in times of threat or actual disaster. Identify how the response team will communicate with emergency management, other community partners and congregation members. Offer alternatives that take into account whether or not electrical power is available.

3. *Communicate with members of the congregation*. Phone trees, electronic messaging, methods that don't rely on electricity or cell towers could include message boards at the front of the church, flyers posted at grocery stores or community bulletin boards.

3.7 Step 7: Emergency operations

In times of emergency, those present will need to listen to the directives of the designated leader of the activity until someone with more authority arrives and communicates with the group. If emergency responders (fire, police, ambulance, etc.) arrive, directives of their leaders take precedence and are to be followed. Procedures created before the event can help mitigate the panic and chaos that is possible with these unforeseen events.

Make plans for the following situations.

1. ***Evacuate****: all occupants must leave a specific area*. When writing your directives, consider various levels of occupancy, such as weekdays, evenings, Sunday mornings, etc. Decide what steps are to be taken and a rendezvous location for groups. Provide signs for the evacuation routes and place in logical locations. Decide on how and when to practice these procedures.

2. ***Lock down****: all occupants inside a facility must remain inside and prevent any unauthorized person from entering the building*. A lockdown may occur when a dangerous situation or person may be within or in the vicinity of the building (e.g., robbery has taken place in the neighborhood and the suspect is still at large.) Consider who needs to be trained in lock down procedures (e.g., office staff, Sunday school teachers, pre-school staff.)

3. ***Shelter in place****: all occupants stay within a facility, perhaps for an extended period of time*. Those present in the facility may be ordered to stay in the facility when an emergency or disaster occurs in the nearby vicinity and it is not safe to leave the building. For example, a storm may take down power lines or trees or cause a flash flood which makes the roads impossible to navigate safely.

4. Implementing the Plan

Once the Plan is prepared, it is important to obtain official congregational approval and then ownership of the plan. Usually this will be done through the congregation council or at an Annual General Meeting (AGM). Acceptance of the plan may be more efficient if the preparedness team has kept leadership and members of the congregation involved and informed in the process of preparing the plan.

Once the plan is approved, the preparedness team should plan to educate the community about the plan and encourage practice, review and make periodic adjustments.

It is important to practice the plan regularly since people may forget the steps, circumstances may change, new people may join and the leadership of outside organizations may change.

As the congregation lives out the disaster preparedness plan, new insights will emerge, vulnerabilities and assets may change, relationships will grow in the surrounding community and the plan will necessarily change.

5. Disaster Preparedness Plan Template

We have prepared a series of forms to assist your parish to organize and record the critical information necessary to prepare the Plan. This will enable your parish to use the Plan to continue to operate, and/or close and dispose of its assets.

When all the relevant data has been collected, please make copies of the Plan and ensure that they are kept in a safe, secure and accessible place (e.g. another parish member and/or your parish priest).

The information in the Plan MUST be reviewed at least annually (perhaps at the AGM) or when there are significant changes at the parish. The updated information should then be distributed to the appropriate parties for safe keeping and easy access.

Parish Disaster Preparedness Plan

Parish Name

Physical Location

Plan Date

Parish Basic Information

BASIC INFORMATION

Parish Name:

Street / rural address:

City, township, rural municipality:

Land title:

Legal description:

GPS co-ordinates:

Epararchy:

Eparachy District:

Parish contact name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Website:

Contact information and location of parish records:

PARISH COUNCIL/BOARD

President
Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Secretary
Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Treasurer
Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Technology/technical support
Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Disaster Response Team

CHIEF DECISION-MAKER

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

DISASTER MEETING LOCATION

BACKUP DECISION-MAKER

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

SECONDARY MEETING LOCATION

PARISH LEGAL COUNSEL

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

MEDIA SPOKESPERSON

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

OTHER PERSONNEL & ROLES

Inventory Assets – Immovable

RELIGIOUS / SACRED ASSETS

**Church buildings | Belfries | Bells
Memorial Crosses
Monuments on affixed bases**

Location: (Address | GPS co-ordinates)

Contact name (person with keys and authorized access):

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Cemetery Properties:

Location: (Address | GPS co-ordinates)

Contact name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

List and describe any other buildings on the church property (garage, sheds, outhouses, belltowers, etc).

SECULAR ASSETS

Rectories that are not attached to the church:

Location: (Address | GPS co-ordinates)

Contact name (person with keys and authorized access):

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Church halls:

Location: (Address | GPS co-ordinates)

Contact name (person with keys and authorized access):

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Other properties (houses or land):

Location: (Address | GPS co-ordinates)

Contact name (person with keys and authorized access):

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Inventory Assets – Cemetery

BASIC INFORMATION

Cemetery Name:

Street / rural address:

City, township, rural municipality:

Land title:

Legal description:

GPS co-ordinates:

Contact name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Is the cemetery registered with the province? If yes, provide details.

Location and contact information for cemetery records:

CEMETERY MAINTENANCE

Identify those responsible for administering cemetery maintenance.

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Are there any contracts in place for the maintenance services? Provide details.

MAINTENANCE FUND

Is there a maintenance fund in place for the cemetery?

Account number:

Account location:

Signing officers:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Inventory Assets – Movable

RELIGIOUS / SACRED ASSETS

Vestments for priests, deacons, and altar servers
Liturgical books and marriage books
All articles used in celebrating liturgical services:

- Chalices
- Spoons
- Lance
- Antimension
- Star
- Discos
- Censors
- Small bells
- Tabernacle
- Candle holders including stands for votive lights
- Candles or oil lights
- Altar linens
- Altars, Tetrapod
- Iconostas
- Icons & Holy pictures, liturgical fans
- Vessel for blessing of water at Feast of Jordan or Praznyk
- Banners and flags
- Chandeliers if they have icons or other religious symbols on them
- Crosses (hand crosses, processional crosses, standing crosses, etc.)
- Shroud, plashchanytsia, other symbols of the crucifixion
- Hand bells, large outside bells (electrically or manually controlled.

SECULAR ASSETS

- Church contents that are not of religious significance: pews, chairs, chandeliers (without icons)

- Hall/kitchen contents – dishes, utensils, pots/pans/roasters, appliances

- Home contents from rectories that are not of religious significance

- Vechicles, yard equipment, other assets.

PHYSICAL ASSET INVENTORY

Date last inventory conducted:

Person(s) who took and/or has access to the inventory data:

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Locations of physical and electronic copies of the physical assets inventory:

PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

Items to be removed if building is threatened.

Items for special protection if building is being threatened.

Inventory Assets – Human

HUMAN ASSETS

Indicate contact person and storage location for each contact list inside the church building and in any external locations.

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

Contact person:

Telephone:

Email:

Physical copies location:

Electronic location/passwords:

How are members with special needs identified in the directory?

STAFF / VOLUNTEER DIRECTORY

Contact person:

Telephone:

Email:

Physical copies location:

Electronic location/passwords:

PEOPLE WITH DISASTER RELATED SKILLS AND/OR RESOURCES USEFUL IN TIME OF DISASTER

Name:

Skills:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Name:

Skills:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Name:

Skills:

Telephone:

Email:

Address:

Inventory Assets – Community

PARISH AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

List any groups or organizations that operate within your parish (woman groups, fund-raising groups, etc.)

Name of group:

Contact person(s):

Contact number(s):

Contact email(s):

Services provided to parish:

List any groups or organizations that operate within your parish (woman groups, fund-raising groups, etc.)

Name of group:

Contact person(s):

Contact number(s):

Contact email(s):

Services provided to parish:

List any groups or organizations that operate within your parish (woman groups, fund-raising groups, etc.)

Name of group:

Contact person(s):

Contact number(s):

Contact email(s):

Services provided to parish:

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

List any groups or organizations that use your parish or its facilities (church basement, meeting rooms, hall, kitchen, catering services, etc.).

Name of group:

Contact person(s):

Contact number(s):

Contact email(s):

Services provided by parish:

List any groups or organizations that use your parish or its facilities (church basement, meeting rooms, hall, kitchen, catering services, etc.).

Name of group:

Contact person(s):

Contact number(s):

Contact email(s):

Services provided by parish:

List any groups or organizations that use your parish or its facilities (church basement, meeting rooms, hall, kitchen, catering services, etc.).

Name of group:

Contact person(s):

Contact number(s):

Contact email(s):

Services provided by parish:

Inventory Assets – Financial

ACCOUNTS / INVESTMENTS

Bank / Company:

Account number:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone & email:

Who has access/password?

Who has signing authority?

OTHER NOTES:

LOANS AND OTHER LIABILITIES

Bank / Company:

Account number:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone & email:

Who has access/password?

Who has signing authority?

OTHER NOTES:

LINES OF CREDIT / CREDIT CARDS

Bank / Company:

Account number:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone & email:

Who has access/password?

Who has signing authority?

OTHER NOTES:

BOOKKEEPER / ACCOUNTANT

Name of Firm and/or Bookkeeper:

Address:

Contact person:

Phone & email:

Who has access/password?

Accounting software:

Where are financial records kept?

OTHER NOTES:

Regulatory and Legal

Federal Government Taxes

    Account #:

    Contact:

Provincial Government Taxes

    Account #:

    Contact:

Town, Municipal or County Taxes / Fees

    Account #:

    Contact:

Workman Compensation Board

    Account #:

    Contact:

Eparchy/Provincial Membership Fees

    Account #:

    Contact:

National Membership Fees

    Account #:

    Contact:

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA)

    GST Account #:

    Charitable Status Account #:

    Contact:

Land Titles

    Account #:

    Location:

    Contact:

Parish Registration under provincial legislation (Socities Act, etc.)

    Account #:

    Legislation name:

    Contact:

List any other regulatory obligations, accounts and contact information.

Services and Suppliers

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Electricity and Power:

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Natural gas, propane or heating fuel:

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Water and sewer:

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Telephones / mobile phones:

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Internet / webhosting:

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Security and alarms:

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

VENDORS AND SUPPLIERS

Snow removal / landscaping / grass cutting

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Heating, venting and air conditioning

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Plumbing

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Electrical

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

Repairs and maintenance

    Provider:

    Account:

    Contact:

List any other vendors and suppliers where the parish has accounts. Provide names, accounts and contact information.

Vulnerabilities

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

How do you ensure that the church building and property are kept in good repair?

Who is responsible for making sure that regular maintenance and upkeep happens?

What is the process for identifying needed maintenance, approving expenditures and making repairs?

When does the congregation's process work best? When does the process break down?

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

VULNERABILITIES

What physical vulnerabilities exist in the parish's physical plant?

VULNERABILITY:

Steps needed to address:

VULNERABILITY:

Steps needed to address:

VULNERABILITY:

Steps needed to address:

VULNERABILITY:

Steps needed to address:

INSURANCE COVERAGE

Identify insurance coverage levels for:

- Injuries and accidents

- Damage to property and premises

- Data loss or corruption, ransomware

- Misconduct or abuse

- Fiscal mismanagement

STEPS TO BE TAKEN:

OTHER POTENTIAL RISKS

List other potential risks facing the parish, and the steps needed to address:

Partners, Agreements & Resources

GOVERNMENT

Name of position, office or agency:

Services provided:

Contact name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Website:

GOVERNMENT

Name of position, office or agency:

Services provided:

Contact name:

Phone:

Email:

Address:

Website:

INSURANCE

Insurance company:

Policy #:

Contact name:

Phone numbers:

Email:

Address:

How a claim is made:

LEGAL COUNSEL

Firm name:

Contact name:

Phone numbers:

Email:

Address:

Services provided:

LOCAL PARTNERS

Partner name:

Services provided:

Contact name:

Position:

Phone numbers:

Email:

Address:

OTHER RESOURCES / SERVICES