

# Disaster Response Plan Elements & Protocol



**Natural disasters, including fires and severe weather events have heavily impacted our cities, families, and communities over the past several years. This example protocol resource is intended as a starting point for sailing programs to follow in cases of force majeure.**

Understanding a disaster in the context of this document: a high-impact event that overwhelms normal response capabilities and may require outside emergency services. The outcome may include major property or environmental damage, life-threatening conditions, or even loss of life. For the purposes of this document, a disaster nearly always results in long-term operational, financial, or reputational impact.

US Sailing and its partners have many points of contact to answer questions you may have and there are several other relevant free resources available to you:

[Burgee Program Safety Resources](#)

[Risk Strategies Hurricane Season Preparedness & Recovery Guide for Sailing Organizations](#)

[Risk Strategies Hurricane Activation Plan Template](#)

[Community Sailing Committee](#)

[Regional Sailing Association Committee](#)

## Key Elements for Disaster Response

- Risk Assessment**
  - Above and beyond your standard program risk assessment
  - Identify potential disaster: storms, collisions, fire, major mechanical failure, capsizes, medical emergencies, etc.
  - Evaluate likelihood and impact
  - Categorize risks (natural, technical, human error)
- Emergency Contact List**
  - Staff and Board of Director phone and email information
- Chain of Command & Responsibilities**
  - Define clear roles (e.g. Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Communication Lead)
  - Appoint alternates in case key personnel are incapacitated
  - Include who makes decisions and when to escalate
- Communication Protocols**
  - Above and beyond outlined protocols
  - Satellite phone and EPIRB use offshore and/or decreased communication ability
  - Pre-set check-in intervals and emergency signals
- Evacuation & Rescue Procedures**
  - Coordination with search and rescue
- Medical Response Plan**

*This resource was created in collaboration with the US Sailing Community Sailing Committee.*



- Access to telemedicine or remote medical consultation
- Shelter and Safe Harbor Plan**
  - Pre-identified safe harbors or mooring spots
  - Procedures for securing vessels in extreme weather or facility loss
  - Shore evacuation plans if needed (e.g. tsunami, wildfire)
- Logistics and Resource Management**
  - Inventory of safety gear and survival supplies
  - Backup power, food, water, and navigation tools
  - Fuel and spare parts for vessels
- Training and Drills**
  - Scenario-based exercises for complex emergencies
- Documentation and Reporting**
  - Internal timeline tracking document for damage(s) and reporting to insurance or authorities
- Recovery and Continuity Planning**
  - Vessel recovery and/or salvage procedures
  - Psychological support resources for participants and families
  - Timeline for resuming operations
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance**
  - Adherence to maritime laws and safety regulations
  - Insurance requirements and liability considerations
  - Coordination with local and national authorities

## Example Disaster Response Protocol

- Establish Point(s) of Contact**
  - Set a rally point if you are displaced
  - Set a point of contact - designate staff or volunteer lead
    - i. Contact Regional Sailing Association Committee via your local [Regional Sailing Association Representatives](#)
    - ii. Contact Community Sailing Committee - [communitysailing@ussailing.org](mailto:communitysailing@ussailing.org)
  - Establish a tool for recording that is shareable and easily editable
- Determine immediate needs**
  - Clean-up, boat relocation, or other necessary physical labor
  - Temporary storage, facility, equipment needs
  - Personal support for staff or volunteers
- Safety & Assessment**
  - Provide an approximate date to complete a damage assessment; initial damage documentation should happen as soon as possible for insurance and funding
  - Assess potential safety hazards that need to be mitigated quickly

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- Availability of assistance that could be offered (realistically and in the short-term)**
  - Organize volunteers - task someone with this role. Collect emails, phone numbers, or any other necessary contact methods
  - Create a list of supplies, materials, equipment for repair or replacement
  - Evaluate need for temporary access to another dock, slip, or building
  - Refer to member or outside resources for possible assistance from (including but not limited to) insurance professionals, legal professionals, electricians, plumbers, engineers, and surveyors.
  
- Financial & Logistical Considerations**
  - Share fundraising efforts that may be underway that can be supported or promoted
  - Publish donations - both fiscal and tangible
  - Arrange for transportation or delivery of needed items
  
- Communication & Coordination**
  - Share your Point of Contact with others
  - Post needs through internal networks and social media
  
- Respect the Process**
  - Determine the parameters for assistance that will not interfere with insurance or restoration efforts
  - Publish/post any specific requests that respect your internal processes while still accepting support
  
- Long-Term Support**
  - Create a list of long-term needs that may require assistance, e.g. rebuilding, restoring programs, re-engaging youth sailors and families
  - Establish a timeline/schedule for reporting to your stakeholders, community, supporters over time, e.g. 30 days, 60 days, 100 days, or longer
  - Task a volunteer or team of volunteers to assist with how and when to express appreciation to those who contributed to the restoration of your program, building or other needs

This protocol was created in response to the devastating disasters occurring throughout the US, and most especially between 2022 and 2025 that impacted many organizations across the eleven Areas within US Sailing.

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