

DISTRICT DISASTER RESPONSE TEAM REPORT

In the last triennium there have been numerous and significant opportunities for the Rocky Mountain District - Disaster Response Team (RMD-DRT) to show God's mercy within the Rocky Mountain District. I took over as the Disaster Response Coordinator after the last District Convention.

In October 2014, Rev. Michael Meyer, LCMS Disaster Response, lead a training class for Lutheran Emergency Response Team (LERT) members at Hope Lutheran Church in Aurora. We will be conducting more training classes in the future with the hopes of creating regional disaster response coordinators. Below are some of the disaster response occurrences within our district over the last triennium, the District's Disaster Response Team activity and financial support.

New Mexico Wildfires

The summer of 2012, New Mexico saw some of the most significant wildfire action in that states history. One such area affected was across Lincoln County, New Mexico and surrounding areas in the Little Bear Fire. Shepherd of the Hills, Ruidoso was not affected nor was the pastor or any members but they became the hands and feet of mercy in their community by distributing \$10,000 in aid to families affected.

Colorado - Waldo Canon Fire

The Waldo Canyon fire was a forest fire that started approximately 4 miles northwest of Colorado Springs, Colorado on June 23, 2012 and was declared 100 percent contained on July 10, 2012. The fire burned in the Pike National Forest and adjoining areas, covering a total of 18,247 acres (29 square miles). The fire caused the evacuation of over 32,000 residents of Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs and Woodland Park, several small mountain communities along the southwestern side of Highway 24, and partial evacuation of the United States Air Force Academy. There were 346 homes destroyed by the fire. U.S. Highway 24, a major east-west road, was closed in both directions for over two weeks. The Waldo Canyon Fire resulted in insurance claims totaling more than \$453.7 million dollars making it the most destructive fire in Colorado state history, as measured by the number of homes destroyed, until the Black Forest Fire surpassed it almost a year later when it consumed 486 homes and damaged 28 others.

The following year severe thunderstorms resulted in mudslides and high runoff causing damage to US Highway 24, closing the highway and flooding downstream in Manitou Springs and Colorado Springs' Westside.

None of our Churches or Pastor's homes were affected. However, member's homes from several congregations were damaged or destroyed. Our Synod and District approved grants helping people affected by the fire. Our Pastors help with grief counselling, sifting ashes and helping emergency responders and persons affected by the fire in many ways.

Colorado - Black Forest Fire

The Black Forest Fire began near Highway 83 and Shoup Road in Black Forest, Colorado around 1:00 p.m. on June 11, 2013. As of June 20, 2013, the fire was 100 percent contained, 14,280 acres (22.31 square miles) were burned, at least 509 homes were destroyed, and two people died. This became the most destructive fire in the state's history, surpassing the 2012 Waldo Canyon Fire which also began near Colorado Springs. Most of the Waldo Canyon blaze actually was in the city limits, while Black Forest is an unincorporated area of El Paso County north of the city. The evacuation area covered 94,000 acres (147 square miles) acres, 13,000 homes and 38,000 people.

As of June 13, the Denver Post reported, 457 firefighters were working the fire line, including agencies from around the fire, the Colorado Air National Guard, and select personnel from fire suppression teams on Fort Carson and the

nearby United States Air Force Academy. Army helicopters and Air Force tankers were instrumental in providing assistance in fighting the fires.

None of our Churches or Pastor's homes were affected. LCMS and RMD Disaster Response approved emergency grants totaling \$175,750 helping people affected by the fire. Local congregations such as Family of Christ, Rock of Ages, Holy Cross and Immanuel along with our pastors, helped in various and significant ways in distributing this aid along with providing grief counseling, sifting ashes and helping emergency responders and persons affected by the fire.

Our Pastors reached out to the NALC Black Forest Church and helped their members during the recovery period.

Colorado - Front Range Flooding

This was a natural disaster occurring in Colorado, starting on September 9, 2013, a slow-moving cold front stalled over Colorado, clashing with warm humid monsoonal air from the south. This resulted in heavy rain and catastrophic flooding along Colorado's Front Range from Colorado Springs north to Fort Collins. The situation intensified on September 11 and 12. Boulder County was worst hit, with 9.08 inches recorded September 12 and up to 17 inches of rain recorded by September 15. This is comparable to Boulder County's average annual precipitation of 20.7 inches.

The flood waters spread across the Front Range of almost 200 miles from north to south, affecting 17 counties. Governor John Hickenlooper declared a disaster emergency on September 12, 2013, in 14 counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Boulder, Denver, El Paso, Fremont, Jefferson, Larimer, Logan, Morgan, Pueblo, Washington and Weld. By September 15, federal emergency declarations covered those 14 counties as well as Clear Creek County.

Nearly 19,000 homes have been damaged, and over 1,500 have been destroyed. The Colorado Department of Transportation estimates that at least 30 state highway bridges were destroyed and an additional 20 are seriously damaged. Repairs for damaged bridges and roads expected to cost many millions of dollars.

Estimates are that the flooding caused at least 25,000 families to evacuate. Nearly 19,000 homes have been damaged, and over 1,500 have been destroyed. The Colorado Department of Transportation estimates that at least 30 state highway bridges have been destroyed and an additional 20 are seriously damaged, with repairs for damaged bridges and roads expected to cost many millions of dollars.

LCMS and RMD Disaster Response approved emergency grants in excess of \$850,000.00 helping many families bridge the gap between insurance coverage and costs to repair their homes. Numerous district congregations mobilized volunteers and resources provided by LCMS and RMD Disaster Response to help in relief efforts such as Mt. Zion, Boulder, Mt. Hope, Boulder, Mt. Calvary, Estes Park, Eternal Savior, Lafayette, Trinity, Sterling, Trinity, Greeley, Redeemer, Ft. Collins and Messiah, Longmont. In addition, our Pastors helped by distributing gift cards for groceries and fuel to affected families at the Lyon's FEMA Center. Eternal Savior in Lafayette set up a hosting area in their Church's basement capable of sleeping and serving meals for up to 30 volunteers on a weekly basis during the summer months. We have worked extensively with several sub-committees of the Boulder County Long Term Flood Recovery Group. We provided tools and supplies to the Town of Lyons for volunteers to use. Volunteers from our congregations have helped in other Counties and communities as well. The recovery period from the flooding in Boulder County alone is expected to exceed three more years.

There were two noted congregations that did sustain water damage from the flooding and rain episodes, Mt. Hope, Golden and University Lutheran Chapel.

High School Shooting

On December 13, 2013, a shooting occurred at Arapahoe High School in Littleton, Colorado. The unfortunate events saw the killing of two students, including the shooter. A site was established where school parents could reunite with their child once the police conducted their searches, that site was Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran. God's people at Shepherd of the Hills went into action creating safe zones for students to gather, providing comfort and support while they waited for their parents to arrive. The District Disaster Response Team provided blankets and food for student and parents as they were reunited with one another.

Southern Tier (El Paso, Texas) Flooding

In the weeks leading up to April 19, 2014 severe rain from thunderstorms caused moderate to severe flooding along low lying area from Texas to Arizona. The most severe of these was in the City of El Paso, Texas. The worst hit area was in the older, central portion of the City.

This time, one of our congregation's Church, Zion Lutheran and a church worker's home were severely damaged. LCMS and RMD Disaster Response awarded \$25,000 in emergency grants for repairs.

The Future

Disasters will inevitably continue to occur in the future. With the brothers and sisters of the Rocky Mountain District, the disaster response team of the district stands ready to assist those in their time of need, whether it be our sister congregations, church workers, church members or those within communities who are affected. Continued financial support of the disaster response fund makes it possible to be the hands and feet of mercy in times of need. The disaster response team asks each congregation to make contributions to the district's disaster response fund so that financial preparedness is accomplished and deployment of resources can immediately be made when the next disaster occurs. By the Grace of God, can our resources provide the comfort and aid needed. Your past and future support is a blessing to those affected by disaster and the district disaster response team is grateful for that support.

Submitted by:

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Rocky Mountain District