**RANGERS UNITED & READY:**

**A nonprofit organization**

**DISASTER MANUAL**

**September 2016**

**Revised January 2018**

**Revised January 2020**

\*TAKE THIS MANUAL WITH YOU IN EVENT OF DISASTER\*\*

It is also available on our RUREADY Intranet site at

**https://sites.google.com/a/ruready/yesimready**

**BRIEF SUMMARY**

**Restoring Client Services**

Our overall goal is to re-establish client services as soon as possible. Other general goals include assessing:

* Need for any adjustment of our direct services (or priorities)
* Need for new client services
* Plan for client education relative to disaster
* Need for systemic advocacy related to disaster

Also, we would expect to work with the LARA Hotline in the first phase of a major disaster, conduct outreach at major Disaster Recovery Centers, work closely with key agencies such food stamp offices and unemployment compensation offices, implement our own Disaster Ranger phone advice systems, and collaborate with partners, and work with other advocacy organizations on systemic or policy issues related to the disaster.

Covering emergencies in our existing clients’ case (and mitigating damages) is, of course, a major function during the first phase of a major disaster.

Aid needs in the first phase of a disaster generally will include:

* FEMA claims and appeals
* Disaster Food stamps
* Disaster Unemployment compensation
* Eviction defense, lease terminations and security deposits
* Insurance advice

**A SUMMARY OF STEPS TO RESTORE CLIENT SERVICES:**

* Assess status of our offices
* Communicate office re-openings and closings
* Ascertain status of staff and availability for return to work
* Assign temporary offices as needed
* Secure temporary office space and computers if necessary
* Restore computers, internet and data–expand remote connections if necessary
* Assess cash flow, need for additional funds to sustain operations
* Activate our disaster hotline which is 1-844-244-7871
* Each staff member re-assess ticklers and needs for continuance. (If not available for some reason, manager or other employee to assess)
* Determine office access to client files
* Secure client files as needed for staff use and to protect confidentiality
* Ship client files as necessary to re-located staff
* Determine need for file reconstruction
* Switching of phones
* Change of addresses with post office, state bar associations and funders
* Communications to public

**SECURE CLIENT FILES AND DATA**

**Client Files**

* Store client files in file cabinets
* As an ongoing practice, open files should be kept separately from closed files
* Before evacuation, mark your “open case file” cabinet (if not marked)
* Critical documents and files should not be left on floor
* Offices with security (such as 1340 Poydras) should leave “open case” file cabinets unlocked in case evacuation is necessary
* During our ongoing intake process, always ask for client’s cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses and ask them if it is okay to text them. This information can be helpful in re-establishing contact with clients after a disaster.

**Back Up and Print Your Client Information and Work**

Download work product and information that you need for remote work to a flash drive, google drive, or e-mail to yourself. Work in progress with deadlines should always be saved. **Take your flash drive with you.**  You can load critical documents to the Google drive and work remotely on them anywhere you can get an internet connection.

Note: unless you have very large files, most or even all of your Word files can be quickly saved to your flash drive.

* Back up your work and data from the last day.
* Print your case list.
* Print your ticklers.
* Take your flash drive, case list, calendar, and ticklers with you.

**Technology Consultant Working With Deputy Director**

* Help staff with backing up their data
* Back up tapes must be taken off-site
* Check to see if tape has actually recorded
* Manager and computer responsible person should make sure tape(s) are taken off-site, (more than one person should take a tape–do not leave tapes in car overnight as thieves target evacuees)
* Make sure Directors and Administrator have most current information on how to restore back-ups from tapes and on-line vendor

**SECURE THE OFFICE–CHECKLIST**

**Secure valuable computer equipment**

* Unplug computers and move to safe room (preferably a window less room)
* Put your name on your computer with a label
* Securely wrap computer(s) in plastic to protect against overhead leakage (check with office supervisor for plastic bags or sheets)
* Computers should not be left on the floor (best practice is to keep computer off floor at all times, not just in disaster evacuation)
* Each person should check on immediate office neighbor(s) to determine if help is needed in securing computers
* Work with Tech Consultant or office supervisor to complete “computer preparation” work for absent staff)
* Monitors may be left in your office
* If you have an office laptop and charger, take them with you

**Other office preparations**

* Draw the blinds in your office (and neighbors’ if absent)
* Put away everything possible from desktops, tables, floors, etc.
* Close the doors to all offices (leave note on door stating that computer removed/secured and office prepared for disaster)
* Equipment such as monitors, lamps and radios should be turned off every night
* Remove all your perishables from refrigerator

**SPECIAL TASKS BY ROLE**

**Managers**

* Managing attorneys should check to see if all department/office computers have been secured. As Manager, you are responsible for handling disaster preparations for any attorney under your supervision who is not at work on the date of a disaster threat. Make sure you have
* cell and/or home phone numbers for all staff you supervise.
* Tag doors with note if computer has been secured/removed, blinds drawn and office prepared

**Office Supervisor and Team**

* Assemble team to help with securing computers of staff who are not at office
* Wrap central server with plastic or plastic bag
* Servers should be properly downed and unplugged (staff other than Tech Consultant need to know how to do this)
* Assign back-up tapes to management or other staff for off-site evacuation
* Assign unused laptops to staff for use during evacuation
* Assign person to make sure refrigerator is fully emptied

**CLIENT COMMUNICATIONS**

* Cancel your appointments as necessary
* Designated person in each unit/office who should take phone numbers of clients who could not be reached to cancel appointment
* Text to update clients of office closings through Prime text feature
* RUREADY will activate our disaster line at 1-855-IMREADY for major disasters

**SPECIAL TASKS BY ROLE**

**Each Office–Intake Staff or Receptionist**

* Post sign on office doors informing public of closure
* Change recorded message to announce closure

**All Rangers**

* If indefinitely displaced, update your Ranger Association membership information on www.larangerassociation.org.

**Executive Management**

* Local media should be advised of closure
* Update office closure status or other alerts on RU Ready agency website/Facebook page
* Update LSBA Disaster Team and local Emergency Preparations Office as necessary
* Ensure that volunteers and/or summer law clerks are notified about the office status. RU Ready Pro Bono Program Manager has this responsibility.

**Agency communications**

* Take your RUREADY disaster manual with you. Make sure you know how to access the RUREADY intranet. The Louisiana Ranger Association website posts information about closings and openings.

**COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS**

**Other outreach strategies will include:**

* + - 1. Meet with local disaster recovery consortiums
      2. List contact information with media
      3. Appear on radio and TV
      4. Systemic analysis of high priority Disaster Recovery shelters or centers to staff outreach through staff and volunteers–and strive for consistent schedule
      5. Update contact information with ViaLink and United Way if office displacement is prolonged
      6. Identify partnerships with other agencies and implement outreach as appropriate
      7. Hand out flyers highlighting our disaster ranger services (models will be available on probono.net/la and in your Disaster Ranger Manual)

**Other important disaster outreach work:**

* General training on disaster-related law for all staff
* Annual staff training–refresher just before hurricane season
* Disaster brochures and training manuals need to be reviewed and updated. (Recommended package of brochures for all outreach work)
* Develop simple “disaster cards” similar to UNITY model for distribution to disaster victims
* Various recovery duties will be assigned
* Client education—post materials to web pages, Facebook, and use media wherever possible
* Staff to coordinate with Disaster Recovery Centers and LARA Hotline

**STAFF COMMUNICATIONS**

**Before the Disaster:**

* Telephone tree and email will be used to notify staff of office closure.
* Managers: Be sure you have the cell phone numbers of all staff you supervise.
* Closing will be posted on [www.ruready.org](http://www.ruready.org) web page and Facebook page
* Also, check your office e-mail for notice of closing. Make sure you
  + know how to access your email remotely. Enter webmail.RU Ready.org in
  + the toolbar of any search engine. You will also need your email
  + password.
* Take your office phone lists, e-mail lists and your e-mail/voice mail passwords with you
* Staff will be updated by email also of office closure or other alert as necessary
* If you have not updated your annual Disaster Plan information, tell your manager now and also e-mail this information to the RU Ready Administrator
* RU Ready annually updates all staff Disaster Plans. Let us know if you change your personnel plan.
* Take your RU Ready Disaster Manual or kit with you and keep one copy at home. You can also access it on the RU Ready intranet.
* Make sure you know how to access your RU Ready telephone messages remotely. For staff with VOIP systems, dial the number, enter your extension, hit \*, then enter your password. You can also turn on the option of sending messages as wave files to your e-mail address.
* Our RUReady.org web page and Facebook will be used to communicate personnel information, polices, office openings/assignments, special disaster related job assignments, etc.

**After the Disaster**:

**Staff communications on return to work**

1. A telephone tree and email will be used to the extent phones work
2. Messages on office closings, openings and post-disaster personnel policies will be posted to our RUReady.org web page and our Facebook page. Information will also be left with Ranger Services Offices.
3. Generally, our offices will be open if the local city/parish government is open.
4. Phone number for the New Orleans RU Ready office at 1340 Poydras building management is 504-529-5848.
5. Staff should be back to work when the RU Ready office they are assigned to work in re-opens.

If re-opening of your office is delayed, you should be available to report to another RU Ready location. In the event of a disaster that makes RU Ready offices inaccessible for more than a week and if you can’t communicate with the directors, you should contact other Louisiana legal services programs to help with the disaster legal services delivery system. If you won’t be back when office re-opens, you should advise your manager or other management staff

1. Be sure to let your emergency contact (relative or friend) know where you are and how you can be reached.

**If an office or staff housing are destroyed**

1. Report immediately to the Executive Director, Deputy Director, or the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) about the status of your housing options, when, and where you can return to work.
2. Report any post-disaster contact info or status of other employees.
3. Possible temporary office space will include other RU Ready offices, other ranger offices, or short-term rentals.
4. Check the RU Ready website at [www.RUReady.org](http://www.RUReady.org), Facebook page, and/or intranet site if you can’t reach the Executive Director, Deputy Director of the CFO.
5. Alternatively, contact the LARA webpage, the LARA disaster hotline or another Louisiana legal services program to leave your contact information and to find out the status of our offices. Contact information on other ranger services programs can be found at [www.xyz.gov,](http://www.xyz.gov,) and in our Disaster Manual.

**TECHNOLOGY CHECKLIST**

* System to capture passwords, available across the organization
* Directions on how to access email remotely
* Directions on how to access voicemail remotely
* Directions on how to use intranet system (if you have one)
* Directions on how to use any organization-specific system needed to work
* Directions on how to use remote conferencing system
* List of important partner websites to provide information and monitor

**PERSONAL PREPARATION CHECKLIST**

**Personal preparations**

**Before you leave the office, take:**

* Client data or work product that you backed up
* Your case list, tickler list, and personal calendar
* Notary seal
* RUREADY Disaster Manual
* Business cards
* Any directories or contact lists you may have

**In evacuating, you should take:**

* Cell phones and chargers (for you and family traveling with you)
* Driver’s license, passport, birth certificates
* Health insurance cards
* Extra cash
* Credit cards
* Check book
* Bank statement
* Insurance policies
* Last tax return
* Title/mortgage for your home, including payment addresses
* Your landlord’s phone numbers and addresses
* Business clothes (necessary for court appearances)
* Clothes for a week (attorneys- bring at least one suit just in case)
* Booster cables
* Flashlight
* Office laptop if you have one
* Office keys