

FEMA Region 1 – Talk Shop Engaging Faith Communities



FEMA

-
- Agenda
 - Religious literacy vs. competency
 - Landscape of faith communities
 - Capability and Capacity of Faith Communities
 - Language
 - 10 tips for engagement
 - LEADER method and engagement tip sheets



FEMA

Defining Religious Literacy & Competency

Religious Literacy

A basic understanding of the history, sacred texts, beliefs, rituals and current manifestations of multiple faith traditions.

The ability to understand the intersection of religious people and the social, political and cultural life of the larger communities they inhabit.

Religious Competency

Knowing how to navigate and engage each faith community as a trusted, knowledgeable and effective partner in a disaster setting.

One doesn't need to become a scholar of religion to improve religious competency.

Aim for "a little of Column A, and a lot of Column B"!



FEMA

Religious Competency in Disaster is Key to Effective Partnerships

- Religious competency is:
 - Providing culturally and religiously appropriate disaster services to the whole community.
 - Knowing and understanding the community where you work.
 - Understanding the needs, concerns and missions of your partners both locally and nationally.
 - Relationship-building that is trustworthy and sustainable.
 - Being more effective in the field.
- Religious competency is not:
 - Checking the box.
 - Being politically correct.
 - Meeting so-called “inappropriate” needs.



FEMA

Why Is Engaging Faith Communities In Disaster So Important?

Religion plays a central role in the lives of most Americans:

- 78% of Americans are affiliated with a religious tradition.
- 60% of Americans turn first to their religious leaders for advice and direction after a disaster.
- There are approximately 355,000 congregations in the U.S., compared to 105,000 schools/universities.
- FEMA has had a focus on strengthening faith-based partnerships since 2006.



FEMA

Why Is Engaging Faith Communities In Disaster So Important?

Faith-based players lead the disaster response landscape:

- A majority of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) national members have a religious affiliation.
- Local congregations are among the most visible and likely sources of aid and information post-disaster.
- Many disaster lifecycle operations are led, funded, and staffed by faith community volunteers and NVOAD members.
- Faith-based players are central to recovery efforts.



FEMA

Knowledge Transfer: Religious Composition in Region 1

Adults in the Northeast



Religious composition of adults in the Northeast



FEMA

Capability and Capacity of Faith Communities in Disaster

- **Mission to Serve:** Help people cope and recover
- **Trust:** Moral authority and legitimacy
- **Resources:** Space, people, money, logistics, communications, national affiliates, other capacities
- **Knowledge:** Language, cultural competency and an intimate knowledge of people and communities
- **Networks:** Reach beyond their own congregations into larger geographical areas (houses of worship may serve congregants from other neighborhoods)
- **Programs:** Human services, disaster volunteers
- **Staying Power:** Longevity in community recovery



FEMA

Learn Faith Communities' Own Terms

You demonstrate competency and genuine interest in stakeholders when you use terms that resonate with them and are inclusive.

<p>Clergy Refers only to ordained, often <u>Christian</u> leaders. Not all religions have clergy (e.g. Sikhs, Muslims).</p>	<p>Religious Leaders Term which includes leaders of <u>any religious tradition</u> whether ordained or not.</p>
<p>Church The building where most <u>Christian</u> denominations worship.</p>	<p>House of Worship The building (church, gurdwara, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc.) where adherents of a given religion worship.</p>
<p>House of Worship The <u>building</u>.</p>	<p>Congregation The <u>people</u>.</p>



Learn Faith Communities' Own Terms

FBO, NGO, CBO Terms rarely used by faith communities when referring to themselves (avoid).	Faith-based Social Services Programs run by faith-based orgs (e.g. soup kitchen, shelter, job program).
Faith Community/Religious Sector Amalgamation of many groups with varying beliefs (avoid).	Faith Communities Acknowledges existence of many groups with varying beliefs.

- **Ecumenical:** Relationship between different Christian traditions.
- **Interfaith:** Dialogue and relationship between different faith traditions
- **Multi-faith:** Multiple faiths coming together for a common purpose



FEMA

Emergency Management's Language

When doing **outreach to faith communities**, consider the **following language**:

- Faith communities, not faith community or faith sector
- **Religious leaders, not clergy or clergies**
- Congregations, not FBOs or CBOs
- **Houses of worship, not churches**
- Multi-faith, not interfaith or ecumenical

Example: Use “Multi-faith religious leader meeting” instead of “interfaith clergy meeting”.



FEMA

10 Field Skills for Successful Engagement



FEMA

Visual 1.11

The First Principle: If unsure – ASK

The First Principle of religious competency:
If unsure, ASK.

When you do not know or are unsure of something, remember to practice active listening and ask questions.



FEMA

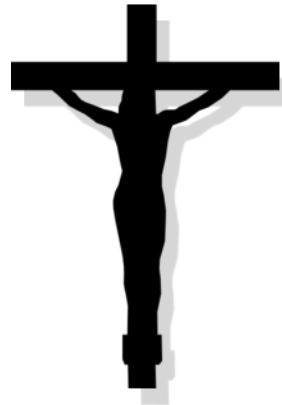
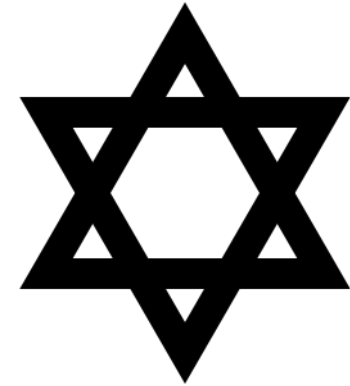
1. Identifying Religious Symbols

- Religious symbols on or near homes may help you identify who was/is living in the home.
- These may serve as starting points for determining appropriating feeding, interaction, mass care, mass fatality management, and appropriate days of the week to reach out.



FEMA

Activity: Common Religious Symbols



FEMA

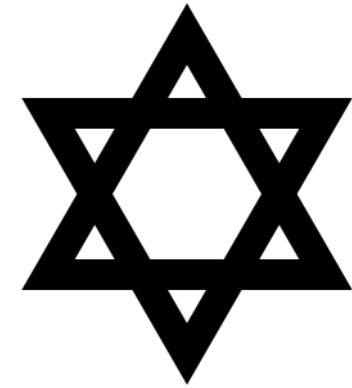
Activity Answers: Common Religious Symbols



Christian Cross (Christianity)



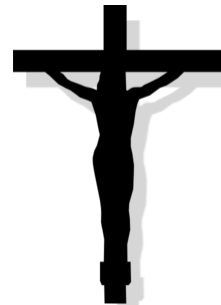
Buddha (Buddhism)



Star of David (Judaism)



Ganesh (Hinduism)



Crucifix (Roman Catholicism and
Christian Orthodox churches)



Star and Crescent (Islam)



FEMA

1. Identifying Religious Symbols on Houses of Worship

- Many houses of worship (buildings) have changed denominations or faith traditions after being built – use caution making assumptions based on building appearance.
- Some houses of worship (buildings) may serve more than one congregation (community).
- Each congregation may be made up of a distinct population (language, ethnicity, another religious tradition) and may need to be approached separately.



2. What Clothing to Wear

- When in doubt, dress more formally.
- While not mandated by FEMA policy, appropriate dress can yield more successful outcomes during engagement.
- Dress appropriately for your audience as a matter of respect and demonstrating religious competence.
- Wear modest or traditionally appropriate clothing when entering houses of worship (generally: business casual / business attire).
- Modest generally means clothing that covers shoulders, knees, and elbows. FEMA short-sleeve polo shirts and shorts would not be appropriate for some houses of worship.
- Many traditions expect both men and women to fully cover legs.



3. First Meeting Customs and Etiquette

- Many traditions emphasize rituals or relationship building before discussing business.
 - This could include traditional hand washing, sharing tea, a meal, receiving a blessing, or engaging in informal conversation.
 - It may be considered rude to start discussing business without first going through these steps.
 - **These are not professions of faith.**
- Start slowly by listening and “go with the flow”; following the lead of the religious leader you are meeting with.
- Make efforts to remain for the full duration of meetings or be clear upfront about time constraints.



4. Door-to-Door Outreach

- The person who answers the door may be a religious leader, staff member, or lay community member – use caution making assumptions based on dress/appearance.
- Style of dress is often a cultural preference and those with distinct religious traditions from the same country of origin may dress similarly.

Example: The sari, a long cloth drape, is commonly worn by Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim women in many countries of Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka.



FEMA

5. Greeting Religious Leaders

- Appropriately addressing religious leaders signals to communities that their leaders are respected partners.
 - Showing respect does not equal endorsement of their beliefs, nor it is a personal profession of your faith.
- Address leaders using their proper title (e.g. Father, Imam, Pastor, Rabbi, Reverend, and Venerable).
 - If unsure, ask “What should I call you”? Or “How should I address or introduce you to others?”

Note: Use a religious leader’s formal title in introductions and public gatherings (Pastor Smith), even if you have developed a personal relationship (Pastor Bob).



6. Initiating Physical Interaction

- In general, it is best to wait for a leader/religious person to initiate physical contact.
 - Some religious leaders (e.g. monks in some Buddhist traditions) should not be touched.
 - Some religious leaders should only be touched by members of their religious tradition.
 - Some religious leaders will not touch or shake hands with a member of the opposite sex.
- Be prepared with an alternate gesture, such as placing the right hand on one's own heart when being introduced.



7. Footwear and Head Covering Etiquette

- **Footwear**

- One should remove shoes upon entering a gurdwara (Sikh temple), mosque, or temple (Hindu or Buddhist) to respect the way community members treat their space.
- This practice may be customary in private homes.

- **Head coverings**

- Men should offer to cover their head upon entering Jewish or Sikh houses of worship (often there are coverings provided).
- Women must cover their hair upon entering the prayer space of a mosque or gurdwara (women who are not comfortable covering hair may still enter other spaces of mosques).
- It is expected that one remove a hat upon entering a church and many other houses of worship or sacred spaces.



8. Scheduling Meetings

- Choose neutral areas (e.g. social hall) and avoid using sacred spaces of a house of worship when possible.
- Use religious holiday calendars to avoid scheduling meetings on holy days (calendar apps are available).
- Ask for meetings on days and times not usually designated for worship (usually Tuesday through Thursday – many Christian leaders take Mondays as their day off).
- Schedule meetings with multiple faith communities on days free from scheduled prayer or other required gatherings (avoid Fri noon through Sunday).
- Be flexible with timing during periods of fasting (e.g. Lent - Christian, Ramadan - Muslim).



9. Provision of Food

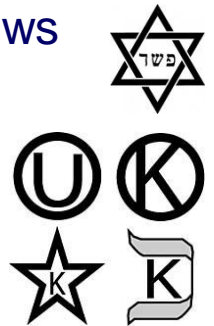
Halal (Muslim)



- Many Muslims follow religious dietary laws written in the Quran, defined by the Arabic terms halal (permitted) and haram (prohibited).
- Halal food sources include meat that has been ritually slaughtered (zabiha), while pork and alcohol are examples of items considered to be haram.

Kosher (Jewish)

- Most Orthodox Jews, many Conservative Jews, and some Reform Jews follow Kosher dietary laws.
- Food that is acceptable meets the standards of *kashrut* (kosher) and includes cows, sheep, goats, chickens, turkeys, ducks and most fish. Shellfish and bottom feeding fish are not kosher.
- Kosher connotes both the type of food as well as how the animal is slaughtered, prepared, and served (use separate area, utensils, plates).



10. Outreach in the Context of Worship Services

- Ask before participating in worship and prayer services (e.g. lighting candle, burning incense).
- Avoid touching religious items or books unless instructed to do so.
- Keep sacred books off of the floor.
- If at any time you feel uncomfortable, politely decline participation and follow-up after service.
- Ushers, when present, can offer guidance for seating, worship participation, and other customs and protocols.



More Resources: Faith Community Engagement Tip Sheets

More detail can be found in the Tip Sheets accompanying this course.

FEMA Tip Sheets for Faith Community Engagement
Engagement Guidelines: Sikh Leaders

These guidelines are provided to inform and assist disaster personnel in competently engaging Sikh (pronounced "sick") communities and leaders during disaster preparedness, response and recovery operations.

FEMA Tip Sheets for Faith Community Engagement
Resources and Tools for Religious Literacy and Competency

Building religious literacy and competency is an ongoing process, with a wealth of self-directed study resources as well as classroom training available. A good starting point is taking a religious literacy self-assessment quiz and then proceeding to self-study with a focus on the religious traditions you work with. Just as it is not possible to become fluent in all languages, one cannot be fluent in "religion" as a whole; and therefore faith-specific resources are also listed for reference on the reverse side of this Tip Sheet.

Starting Points:

- Apps**
- Religious Holiday Calendars**
- Spiritual Calendar**
- General Religion Info**
- Religion-Specific**
- Kosher Restaurants**
- Zabihah: Halal Restaurants & Monkeys**
- Veg Travel Guide for Vegans & Vegetarians by HappyCow**
- Assess Your Own Level of Religious Literacy**
- U.S. Religious Knowledge Quiz**
- 15 Question Quiz (Appendix in Stephen Prothero's Book, FOCUS on Faith: What Every American Needs to Know—and Does!)**
- Books on Religious Etiquette and Interaction**

Engagement Best Practices:

- LEADER Process: Creating an Engagement Plan
- Cultural Competency Tips
- Resources and Tools

Engagement Guidelines: Religious Leaders

- Buddhist Leaders
- Christian Leaders (7 tip sheets):
 - Black Church Protestant
 - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon)
 - Evangelical Megachurch
 - Latino Protestant
 - Orthodox Christian
 - Protestant
 - Roman Catholic
- Hindu Leaders
- Jewish Leaders
- Muslim Leaders
- Sikh Leaders

Thank you

Questions?

Michael Corey
Emergency Management Specialist
FEMA Region 1
michael.corey@fema.dhs.gov



FEMA