



## **Children's Ministry Volunteer Handbook**

Fellowship Community Church  
Mt. Laurel campus

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**FCC Children's Ministry** applies to any volunteers who work with children as part of any ministry or program at Fellowship Community Church. Our ministry to children exists to provide a safe, loving place for kids to get to know Jesus, to love Him as Lord, to serve others in their own sphere of influence, and to enjoy God. We desire to be kingdom builders, heart transformers, and culture shapers. We desire to do this all by the grace and to the glory of God.

### **FCC Children's Ministry Goals:**

1. **Content:** It is our goal that no matter what the focus or content of the time with children, they will get to know who Jesus is and know His love through the Christ-filled relationships with peers and volunteers.
2. **Volunteers:** It is our goal to recruit and support volunteers from within the church body who feel God is calling them to serve, love and care for children and children. We work to open new opportunities to train, encourage and equip volunteers. We aim to provide a ministry of excellence with a team of volunteers who strive for excellence for the glory of God.
3. **Children with Special Needs:** FCC special needs ministry seeks to bring hope to all community members with unique needs and to include them in the overall life of the church. Therefore, FCC Children's Ministry desires to support families with children with special needs in all of our ministries and programs. This support is specific to the needs of each child and our capacity to provide effective assistance in the appropriate environment.

# Core Values of FCC Children's Ministry

## 1. **God Exalting**: To cherish the infinite treasure of God himself

We want kids and children to know that they have a big God. We want them to see a God who is much greater and more desirable than all the little gods that have been created by people. Eternal life is eternity with God and our infinite, inexhaustible pleasure in heaven will be found in God himself. We want to fuel spiritual desire by revealing the greatness of God.

2. **Grace Oriented**: To live with humble, grace empowered hearts through the power of Christ. The opposite of humble, grace empowered hearts is a performance-based Christianity that leads to pride, and our failure to see the depth of the sin of our own hearts. Our hearts are humbled when we recognize the sinfulness of our own hearts and our complete inability to please God apart from the cross. The most effective messenger of Christ is one whose heart has been broken through a full understanding of his or her own sin and the greatness of God's grace.

## 3. **Truth Centered**: To embrace the truthfulness and power of God's word.

We believe in the infallible, unchangeable truths of God's Word. We can speak unequivocally and with the utmost confidence in God's Word as truth.

## 4. **Family Driven**: To partner with parents in developing fully devoted disciples of Christ

Parents have the primary responsibility and by far the greatest influence spiritually in the life of their child. If a parent is not on board in the process, our chances of success are severely limited. We need to partner with parents, walking alongside them to encourage their child's journey of faith.

## 5: **Missions Mindedness**: To find ways to reach out to our neighborhood, our country and our world with the message of God's grace in Christ.

We want to cultivate a mission's mindedness, extending the hope of Jesus Christ to our world.

## 6: **Kid Friendly**: To create environments where our young people feel valued and loved.

Jesus loved children. He went out of his way to show his love for them drawing them to himself, holding them, inviting them into all the important places of his life. He valued their hearts and taught us that we could learn many valuable lessons from them. We want to make the space for them safe and fun!

## 7. **Spiritual Modeling**: To encourage our leaders and helpers to cultivate a life of dependency on and love for God

We want to encourage every volunteer to live out of their own experience with God and from a life of connectedness with God.

# General Policies for FCC Children's Ministry Volunteers

## STAFFING AND SUPERVISION

For the safety of the children (infant through 5<sup>th</sup> grade) and for the protection of all volunteers, at least two adults or one adult and one teen age 13 or older will be present with each group of children except in the case of an emergency OR when otherwise deemed appropriate for unique situations. **No child is left alone without supervision after drop off through pick up as outlined below.**

## DRESS CODE

As a volunteer you will more than likely be active, leaning over children and sitting in smaller chairs. Please wear appropriate, modest clothing that allows this activity level safely.

## CONFIDENTIALITY/CELL PHONES/SOCIAL MEDIA

In order to maintain confidentiality and be fully engaged with children, the following is prohibited:

- Use of personal cell phones while with children, unless using it as part of lesson ex. Play worship music.
- Disclosing personal information about children to others outside FCC Children's Ministry.
- Taking photos or video of children as well as texting, posting photos, or information about children on personal social media.

## IDENTIFICATION/ CHECK IN

We require all volunteers check in at the kiosk themselves and wear the name tag visibly on his/her clothing.

Parents are responsible for checking in their children at the kiosk and receive a name tag. Infants to children grade 1 will also get a corresponding pick-up tag. Ensure that each child has their name tag on their clothing in a visible manner.

If a child comes to the group without a parent and/or name tag, the volunteer should take that child to the KIOSK and get assistance in checking that child in properly.

## DROP OFF/ Greeting of children and parents

- Children should never be dropped off in a group without volunteers present. This is the responsibility of parents.
- Greet parents and children with a smile when they come to class & introduce yourself.
- Complete quick visual health check and speak to parents if child is visibly ill and has symptoms of illness (see Health and Wellness section).
- Assist children from separating from parent if needed, by guiding gently with a soft but firm tone.

## See Nursery Handbook for:

- Child Check-in specifics: allergy and potty training labels, tags for diaper bags

## **PICK-UP**

We require parents of children in NURSERY through Grade 1 to show their pick-up sticker to the leader at the door when they pick up their child. The adult who is picking up their child **MUST** have the corresponding tag with numbers matching the numbers on the name tag that was placed on the child.

### **BE CONSISTENT ON PICK UP SECURITY**

It is our desire to be 100% consistent on the parent pick up policy. We want children to be safe, and it is important that all volunteers and parents work to enforce the tag/pick up policy. Remember, you may be unaware of the custody situations and although you may know the parents, **ONLY** release children to the adult with the matching tag.

**NO MATTER WHAT THE AGE – PLEASE STAY WITH A CHILD UNTIL THEY MEET THEIR PARENTS.**

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

### **GENERAL**

**Hand sanitizer** is available in all rooms/ spaces and in the check in areas. Please use it liberally as children enter and throughout your time together. Hand washing/ sanitizing should take place before eating, after toileting, and after any interactions with bodily fluids.

Rooms are cleaned each week. Please notify the Ministry Director of any items that may need additional attention in the room.

### **ILLNESS**

We want to provide a healthy environment for both volunteers and children. We ask parents as well as volunteers themselves to not volunteer in their designated capacity if he/she or their child has any of the symptoms outlined below in the last 24 hours.

**Volunteers:** If you are feeling sick or have been in the last 24 hours, please stay home and get well. Call/ text your ministry leader as soon as possible so we can find a substitute and reschedule you.

If you become ill while actively volunteering, contact the Ministry Leader right away by either finding them yourself or asking the second adult/ helper in your group to find them. Do not leave the children unattended at any time.

**Children:** For the protection of the children and families, we ask parents to adhere to these guidelines when determining if you should bring your child to church or ministry event.

If a child is visibly ill with any of these symptoms at time of arrival, please remind parents of the policy and let them know that the child cannot attend at this time.

If a child becomes ill while in FCC Children's Ministry, contact the parent immediately using the phone number for the parent on the child's name tag. Remove the child from the group, if you can safely, to a more isolated area while supervising him/her. Provide care and supervision to the child until the parent arrives.

**DO NOT ATTEND FCC Children's Ministry, if you have one or more of any of the following symptoms in the last 24 hours:**

- Fever over 99.6 degrees F
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Ongoing cough
- Unexplained rashes
- Skin infections
- Eye infections or discharge in/around eyes
- Any COMMUNICABLE diseases or contagions such as pink eye, lice, chicken pox, mumps, measles, etc.

## **CHILD INJURY**

If a child is injured while participating:

- Assess injury and separate child from other children if able.
- Administer first aid if injury calls for this level of care. There are small first aid kits in each room closet and one in the gym lobby next to the snack machine.
- If the injury involves the child hitting any area of the head, have child sit down and call the parent immediately due to potential for concussion.
- If more care is needed above basic first aid, have second adult/helper find the Ministry Leader for assistance.
- If care is needed immediately, call 911, the Ministry Leader, and the child's parent in that order. The parent's phone number is listed on the child's name tag.

## **RESTROOM**

**See Nursery Handbook for:**

- Diaper Changing/ Restroom Procedures
- Handwashing

## Policy for age 3 through 1<sup>st</sup> grade

Volunteers should take their assigned children to the bathrooms in groups when possible. This reduces the need for one child to go individually.

- First check the bathroom to see if there is anyone already present. Wait if necessary to allow your children in. Enter the bathroom with the children, but keep the door propped open.
- One leader can monitor the girl's bathroom while the other monitors the boy's bathroom. It is permissible for preschool boys to use the girl's bathroom as well. Stand in the doorway so you can monitor the hall as the children exit and are gathering.
- **NEVER** be in the stall of a restroom with a child with the door closed.
- Have one child enter an individual stall at a time.
- Ensure that each child washes his/her hands after using the bathroom.
- The children should return as a group to their room.

If a child says they need to go to the bathroom individually, ask other children if they need to also go. Either have one leader stay with the group and the other take the few children to the bathroom or decide to take all the kids to the bathroom as a group, if you have not already done so. Follow the steps as noted above.

## Policy for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and up

Children this age can be excused to go to the bathroom independently unless the child has special needs that may make this unsafe. Make sure the children ask permission to use the bathroom and ensure you are aware of the length of time he/she is missing from the group. Send a volunteer out to find the child if he/she does not return in a reasonable amount of time.

**DO NOT USE the restroom yourself while younger children are present.**

## Discipline

The goal of our children's ministry is to foster learning about God in a fun and safe environment. Often discipline can be handled by redirecting the child to a more constructive use of time and energy. Keeping children engaged will usually eliminate the need for a lot of discipline.

However, children must also understand that sometimes it is necessary to listen to lessons or instructions for an activity. It's important not to disrupt group time and therefore distract others from participating as well. While "Discipline" is necessary, all interaction must carefully consider a child's integrity and fragility. All children will be treated with gentleness, respect and understanding. Physical punishment such as swatting, shaking, or making the child perform severe physical tasks will never be used.

Intervention is always age appropriate with the least restrictive action taken first.

## **Options for minimal intervention:**

- Redirection to another activity
- Verbal prompt
- Physical prompt such as touching shoulder
- Visual prompt such as signaling
- Change a child's seat
- Stop activity until all children are listening and focused
- Establishing rewards or system to encourage listening and participation

## **WHEN DISCIPLINE IS NEEDED, Follow these steps:**

- First offense – give the child a verbal warning stating the consequence if the infraction is done again. Consequences can be such things as a time out, moving seats, taking away a toy.
- Second offense – Remove the child from the situation, and in the hall or outside the group explain in a gentle manner why his or her behavior is inappropriate. (This is a great time to point them to God's Word.) Pray with the child asking and seeking God for direction and control.
- If necessary, give time out. TIME OUT should be limited to 2-3 minutes, and be done by seating the child in a chair in the corner, where the child is removed from play with the other kids, but not isolated alone.
- If these measures do not work and have been tried in this order, bring the child to the Ministry Leader or Pastor. After discussion with the child and volunteer, the Ministry Leader will discuss the situation with the parents if needed and develop a follow up plan of action.

**REMOVING A CHILD FROM CLASS:** If a child uses foul language or purposefully harms/injures another child, remove the child from the group and seek the Ministry Leader. The incident will be discussed with the child. The Ministry Leader will decide whether the child should be allowed to reenter the group that day. Parents will be notified of the incident and a follow up plan of action will be made.

## **APPROPRIATE/INAPPROPRIATE AFFECTION**

FCC Children's Ministry is committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment for our children that protects them from abuse and adults from misunderstandings. We are stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate so that:

- (1) decisions are not left up to the individual,
- (2) volunteers are comfortable to show positive affection, and
- (3) individuals can be identified who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children.

**APPROPRIATE AFFECTION:** Love and affection are part of life together. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection include:

- Brief Hugs
- Pats on the head, shoulder or back
- Handshakes, high-fives or fist-bumps
- Verbal praise
- Putting arm around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with a small child
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during prayer
- Bending down or sitting to meet a child at eye level
- Gently holding a child's shoulders to redirect behavior
- Holding a preschool/nursery-age child when crying
- A child under 4 (or a child who may be older but has special needs) may sit in a volunteer's lap for a few minutes and then be moved to a seat beside the volunteer.

**INAPPROPRIATE AFFECTION:** The following forms of "affection" are unacceptable in the church ministry setting.

- Embracing a child for extended amounts of time
- Kissing
- Holding children over 4 years old on the lap
- Holding or carrying a child over 4 years old who is not in need of physical help or has special needs
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas, other than for appropriate diapering, toileting or dressing
- Showing affection to a child in an isolated area
- Caressing knees or legs
- Wrestling and/or tickling
- Any type of massage by an adult to a child or child to an adult
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Snapping bras or touch of underwear
- Private gifts of money or toys directly to a child



# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

FCC Children's Ministry' goal is to provide a safe, secure and loving environment for children so that parents are comfortable leaving them in our care. Therefore, we have a policy that demonstrates our desire to prevent child abuse in our ministry, protect our volunteers from misunderstandings, as well as to stop child abuse as we become aware of it.

All the procedures in this handbook including those on safety, discipline, and appropriate affection are in practice to prevent child abuse and give boundaries as well as to protect volunteers. Each volunteer is trained in these procedures and given this handbook.

## SUSPICION OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- Any persons in a position of trust, which includes adults working with children or youth in a church ministry, suspecting that there has been any form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect by any paid staff, volunteer or parent/guardian against a child or youth are required to report to the authorities. By New Jersey law, any persons in a position of trust are required to report their suspicion. Failure to report can result in a criminal or civil liability.
- Suspicion can come from witnessing abusive actions, something a child says, seeing unusual bruising/marks, or from the actions of a child.
  - Report your suspicion of abuse to the Director or Pastor Ministry Leader.
  - As church staff, they will work with the volunteer to report the suspected abuse to the NJ Abuse hotline. Documentation of the suspicion and reporting will remain confidential within the appropriate authorities in our FCC administration.
  - Reporting is anonymous to the state hotline.
- Volunteers/staff who are being told by a child/youth of possible abuse and/or neglect should:
  - Remain calm.
  - Tell the child or youth that you cannot keep this information secret and will have to report it to the authorities.
  - Assure the child/youth that telling was the right thing to do. As much as possible, put the child at ease and let him/her know that this concern will be addressed.
  - Do not question or interview the child/youth. Just let the child tell his/her story. This is an investigation procedure to be completed only by trained NJ State professionals.
  - Immediately document as much factual information as possible including physical indicators, behavioral indicators, comments made by child, etc.
  - Following documentation, report immediately to the Children's pastor, Director of Children's Ministry or other pastor who will, jointly with the individual, complete the report.
- Do not discuss the information shared by the child with any other volunteer, family member, or other parents. It is important that all information about the suspected child abuse (victim and abuser) be kept confidential.

Familiarize yourself with the definitions and descriptions of child abuse as defined by "The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse" listed below.

## DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE: PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, EMOTIONAL, AND NEGLECT

As defined by “The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse”:

**Physical Abuse** – Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage, or death.

### **Physical Abuse Indicators are:**

- Suspicious wounds, such as surface injuries, the imprint of an instrument, burns, wrapping or bondage injuries, and unusual bruising patterns that appear on areas of the skin that are less likely to be bruised accidentally.
- Multiple wounds in different stages of healing.
- Bruises in clustered patterns.
- Suspicious fractures (especially to the nose or face).
- Overall appears to be in poor health.
- The child isn’t able to tell you how they got injured, or their story is not believable in relation to the injury.
- The child may be either aggressive or withdrawn.
- The child is jumpy, on edge, or fearful.
- The child seems overly eager to please adults or wary of adults.
- Child seems very afraid to go home or frightened of their parents.
- The child seems very afraid of getting in trouble.

**Sexual Abuse** – The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person, as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, or pornography. It may be done for sexual gratification of the older person, out of need for power, or for economic reasons.

### **Sexual Abuse Indicators include:**

- Pain, itching, bleeding, swelling, or bruising in the genital or anal area.
- Blood in the child’s underwear.
- Frequent bladder infections.
- STDs Pregnancy in pre-teen girls.
- The child complains about headaches and sickness.
- Sudden change in the child’s normal behavior, starts acting different.
- Depression or suicidal, running away.
- Regression to more childlike behavior.
- Changes in relationships to adults, such as becoming more clingy or more avoidant.
- Lower school engagement and lower achievement.
- Exhibits sexually provocative behavior or becomes promiscuous.
- The child has or talks about friends that are unusually older.
- The child talks about having sex or being touched.
- The child is extremely avoidant of undressing or physical contact at school.

**Neglect** – The failure to provide a child with basic needs, including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also, abandonment and inadequate supervision.

**Neglect Indicators include:**

- Gaunt, underweight
- Unattended health concerns or medical problems, such as skin infections or coughs.
- Poor hygiene, body odor, or unkempt appearance.
- Inappropriate clothes based on the weather (e.g., doesn't own a jacket in a snowy climate)
- Lack of supervision or abandonment.
- Fatigue; falls asleep in class or seems listless.
- Clinginess
- Depression
- Begs and steals (food or property).
- Says there is no one home to take care of them.

**Emotional Maltreatment** – A pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and a sense of self-worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation; also providing no love, support or guidance.

# FCC Children's Ministry Emergency Action Plan

## Emergency Cell Numbers List

Emergency Coordinator/ Children's Ministry Pastor: Pastor Tim Hunt  
(856) 816-5126

Ministry Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

### Be Prepared:

- Always know the number of children you have in the group at all times.
- Make yourself aware of the location of the fire alarm pull station closest to your room.
- Know the evacuations routes posted inside your room.
- Know any assistance a child may need to evacuate quickly, such as pushing a wheelchair or having to carry him/her.
- Know how your room door locks or does not lock.
- Know the closest exits to leave the building.
- Know the procedures so that you are more likely to stay calm and not panic.

### Fire Emergency

When a fire has been discovered in the building.

Activate the nearest fire alarm pull station.

Call 911 to notify the fire department.

Notify the Ministry Leader or Pastor

Upon being notified of a fire emergency by hearing an alarm or personal notification, occupants must:

- Gather the children into a line. **Count children carefully** and confirm count with another volunteer. Small children should be instructed to hold hands as they exit. Have one adult at the front of the line and one adult at the back of the line. Calmly exit the room. Be sure to double check to make sure all children are out of the room. Do not worry about leaving personal items behind.
- Leave the building using the designated escape routes, these are posted in every room and give a primary route marked in a red line and a secondary route marked in blue dashes. Use the Primary route unless otherwise directed. The secondary route is to be used if the primary route is blocked or inaccessible for any reason.
- Grades 2-5 Assemble on the hill by the prayer garden at the rear of the building.
- Age 3 – 1st grade assembles INSIDE the prayer garden. Stay with your class.
- Be sure to have each group separated so we can make sure we have the right number of children. Count children again once outside. Keep children in a line while waiting. **DO NOT let them form groups or scatter.**

- Once outside the Ministry Leader will check the roster on Planning Center to take a detailed account of each group.
- Wait for further instructions and for parents to arrive to pick up children.
- Ensure you use the same Pick-Up procedure as usual, matching pick up tags with the child's name tag numbers.

#### **IF USING THE NURSERY SPACE:**

- Gather the children into a line. **Count children carefully** and confirm count with another volunteer. Take clear backpack hanging by door. Remove rope and instruct the walking children to hold onto designated rope as they exit. Have one adult at the front of the line and one adult at the back of the line. Carry or use foldable wagon to transport all children not able to walk on own through the exit. Use all volunteers available to carry children if necessary.
- Calmly exit the room through the external exit door. Be sure to double check to make sure all children are out of the room. Do not worry about leaving personal items behind. The secondary exit route marked on the posted room exit plan should be used, if external exit door is blocked or inaccessible.
- Assemble INSIDE the prayer garden. Stay with your children.
- Be sure to keep nursery children separated from the older students so we can make sure we have the right number of children. Count children again once outside. Keep children in a line while waiting. **DO NOT let them form groups or scatter.**
- Once outside Lisa Meyers or Pastor Tim Hunt will check the roster on Planning Center to take a detailed account of each class.
- Wait for further instructions and for parents to arrive to pick up children.
- Ensure you use the same Pick-Up procedure as usual, matching tags with the child's name tag.

### **Dangerous Intruder Plan: Lock Down**

Upon understanding that there is a potentially dangerous intruder in the building by either witnessing or hearing danger and/or being verbally told of the danger, occupants must:

Be a SEAR:

See- have situational awareness, what do you see or hear that says danger?

Escape/ Evade- Decide on which option is best quickly

Act- Run or Hide to get away from danger quickly

Reassess- changing events may mean change in decisions

**The best immediate action is to run from danger OR immediately hide through lock down.**

ESCAPE: If you are in front of danger or in same open area as danger or know where the danger is and have time to escape the building- the best option is to run away from the danger. Gather the children as quickly as you can and run to closest exit away from the danger. Take children as quickly as possible to the safety of the "Bethlehem" area, a distance away from the building to keep away from danger.

**IF USING THE NURSERY SPACE: Remember there is an external exit located in the nursery room.**

LOCK DOWN: If you are away from the danger, unaware of actual location of danger, and /or the danger is not in your immediate room, the best option is to Lock down.

- Lock room doors from inside. If the door does not lock, use furniture to blockade the door so that the intruder cannot enter.
- Turn off lights.
- Cover room door with poster or paper.
- Huddle children away from door and in an area not visible from windows in the doors. You can also use a table turned on its side to hide behind. Goal is to have the room look as if it is unoccupied if someone looks in.
- If in Nursery space:
  - Place sleeves (located on hooks) over the A closer on each of the hallway doors to lock them.
  - Huddle children in the nursery bathroom or in an area not visible from the windows in the hall doors. Cover window in the bathroom door with poster or paper. Have the children sit down on the floor.
- Keep children quiet. Silence your cell phone.
- Double check attendance.
- Pray over and with children.
- NO NOT UNLOCK THE DOOR for anyone. Police or Pastor or Ministry Leader will unlock the door when area is determined to be safe.
- DO NOT release any children to parents until ALL SAFE has been given. Parents will need to sign for their children before teacher can release them.

**CALL 911:** Once you and your children are in safe area, call 911. It is important for authorities to get as much information as possible. Tell the operator exactly what you hear and see as well as your location within the building. This is very important for the police to know as quickly as possible.

## **SEVERE WEATHER AND NATURAL DISASTERS**

### **Tornado:**

- Stay calm and await instructions from the Emergency Coordinator or the designated official.
- When a warning is issued by sirens or other means, seek inside shelter.

Consider the following:

- Small interior rooms on the lowest floor and without windows (Library/Media Room).
- Hallways on the lowest floor away from doors and windows, and rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick or block with no windows (Hallways going from gym to sanctuary).
- Stay away from outside walls and windows.
- Use arms to protect head and neck.
- Remain sheltered until the tornado threat is announced to be over.

## **Earthquake:**

- Stay calm.
- If building starts to shake, DROP, COVER, AND HOLD ON.
- DROP to floor away from overhead fixtures, windows, filing cabinets and electrical power.
- Assist people with disabilities in finding a safe place.
- Find and go under COVER of a desk, table or next to an interior wall without windows.
- HOLD ON to any grounded object to keep you from being tossed or slide.
- Evacuate (after earthquake has taken place?) as instructed by the Emergency Coordinator and/or the designated official.

## **Flood:**

If indoors:

- Stay calm and be ready to evacuate as directed by the Emergency Coordinator and/or the designated official.
- Move to high ground.
- Follow the recommended primary or secondary evacuation routes to be evacuated to safer areas.

If outdoors:

- Climb to high ground whether outside or within a building and stay there.
- Avoid walking or driving through flood water.