

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS LIFE LONG VISION



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The Fire Services in the country observe National Fire Service Day on 14th April. This day is observed to pay homage to the Firemen Martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the course of duty and to inspire fire fighters of today to dedicate their services in saving life and property from the ever increasing hazards of fire.

In order to generate fire safety awareness, the theme selected this year for Fire Service Week is –

FIRE PREVENTION

DO IT FOR LIFE

While it is necessary to pay attention to the day to -day major hazards of fire it is also necessary for the community to broaden our vision and expand our preparedness to face other disasters as well.

The increasing incidence of disasters across the globe is creating a devastating impact on the lives, property and livelihoods of people. Disasters impede development and consume resources earmarked for growth and welfare. A holistic approach towards managing disasters is emerging that integrates the prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response activities. Governments are gearing up to prevent, be prepared and respond to disasters.

Disasters make even the mightiest nations fragile. This has enhanced the need for disaster preparedness. A culture of preparedness is emerging as one of the key strategies of reducing risks. Preparedness is necessary to strengthen the abilities and capacities to predict and wherever feasible prevent disasters, lessen the impact, and facilitate response to handle the consequences of disasters at various levels.

Disaster Preparedness entails varied forms of actions on various fronts. One such measure is the formulation of disaster preparedness plans not only at the national, state and district levels but also percolating to the community level. People-centred approach to disaster preparedness that builds community's capacities is gaining significance to enable people cope and recover from the impact of disasters. Any effort that goes along with the community has a larger sustainability, Preparedness efforts need to be directed towards those sections of the community, which are the most vulnerable. Since disasters impact not only human beings, but also livestock, housing and infrastructure, the biggest challenge is to ensure adequate preparedness on these fronts.

India is among the five countries in the South Asian region that meet many of the criteria for disaster preparedness and has a legal framework in place. The Disaster Management Act 2005 enacted by Parliament provides a framework for the effective management of disaster and for matters connected with it. Preparedness involves different set of activities before, during and after the disaster.

Preparedness Activities before the onset of Disaster

- Formulation of disaster preparedness plans at national, state, local and community levels.
- Generation and disseminating information through mass media about the potential hazards, their frequency of occurrence and associated risks.
- Installation of appropriate forecasting and warning systems.
- Strengthening of physical infrastructure.
- Evacuation of people to safer areas.

Preparedness Activities during the Eventuality

- Provision of food, Shelter, medical and first aid services.
- Security arrangements to prevent occurrence of untoward incidents.

Post-disaster Preparedness Activities

- Rescue operations for affected.
- Proper relief distribution including food, clothes and medicines.
- Restoration of communication system.
- Damage assessment and immediate financial assistance.

The entire approach towards management of disasters, which has all along been relief-based, is undergoing transformation. Presently there is emphasis on adopting a developmental approach to disaster management. This involves ensuring readiness on the part of several stakeholders to predict, and where possible, prevent disasters, reduce their impact and cope with its consequences.

Whether disasters are natural or human-induced, its impact is felt, many a times, for a long time. It is therefore, essential that any support operation be designed and implemented with a long-term perspective. In the past, we have been at the mercy of nature and fate, but today, we possess the knowledge, capacity and capability to lessen the worst impacts of disaster.

Irrespective of whether it is an ‘act of God’ or human-induced, disasters create mass destruction and impede developmental work. The ways of tackling the occurrence of

disasters, earlier have been reactive in nature. Presently, governments all over the world are adopting a Proactive and holistic approach to disaster management.

The disaster management activity attempts to integrate several interrelated components in an orderly and co-ordinated manner. This includes activities before or pre-disaster, during and after the occurrence of disaster.

Disasters, as we all are aware comprise certain elements such as the event, vulnerability of people and destruction. The vulnerability of individuals and communities wherein their lives are threatened and destruction caused to the community's property, infrastructure etc. is tested during such events. This brings out the significance of developing disaster preparedness mechanism and processes to neutralize and reduce the vulnerability of people and minimize loss of lives and property.

It is being realized that investing in disaster preparedness can save lives and property and reduce relief assistance costs. Hence, preventing and preparing for disasters is important. This implies taking actions which can be taken up individually as well as collectively that tend to minimize the adverse effects of hazard. The more effectively the activities are carried out in advance, the more readily will it be possible to take required action during the emergency phase and reconstruction, rehabilitation and recovery phases.

Disaster preparedness is a multifaceted activity. It involves preparation and operationalisation of preparedness plans, community-based preparedness plans, and appropriate use of information technology, remote sensing, disaster mapping, Geographical Information System (GIS) and other mitigation strategies.

Preparedness for disasters done meticulously implies half of the problem is solved in advance. Preparedness requires meticulous planning as a small mistake would result in loss of large number of lives. For example, the earthquake that struck Gujarat on the 26th of January 2001 was considered the biggest recorded tremor in India since the Calcutta earthquake of 1737. While the epicenter was in village Lodai, District Kutch, the impact was felt through much of Gujarat and adjoining States.

**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS IN PEACE
TIME EMERGENCIES**

Emergencies do not come with a warning. To handle emergency situations of any magnitude the community is required to know the basics of various types of emergencies to ensure quick action and safety knowledge and practice of the various types of peace time emergencies would make the community familiar and alert to face any eventuality.

FLOODS

Evacuate & move to higher ground



If You are at Home

- Stay put but be ready to evacuate immediately if the Police/Fire Service advise you to do so.
- If you think it is dangerous to remain at home, contact the Police/Fire Service (giving name & address) for assistance and evacuate immediately.
- Move to higher ground away from open areas, streams and storm drains.
- Switch on the portable radio for updates from the State or Dist. authorities.

Abandon stalled car in rapidly rising waters



If You are in a Car

- Be alert to signs of flooding.
- Do not drive around barricades as they are put up for your safety.
- If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, abandon it immediately and try to get to higher ground.
- Call the 101 or 100 if help is needed.

LIGHTNING

When a thunderstorm threatens your area, get inside a home, building or automobile and stay away from metal objects and fixtures.

Don't talk on corded phones



If you are at Home :

- Avoid showering or bathing. Plumbing and bathroom fixtures can conduct electricity.
- Avoid using a corded telephone, except for emergencies. Cordless & cell phones are safe to use.
- Unplug appliances and other electrical items such as computers and turn off all air-conditioners. Power surges from lightning can cause serious damage.

Take shelter



If You are Outside :

- Take shelter in a building or vehicle.
- In open areas or forests, seek shelter in a low area such as under a thick growth of small trees.
- If you are in an open area, crouch into a ball on the ground.
- In open water, head for shore.
- If you are on a bicycle, motorbike or golf cart, get off.
- People in a group should spread out.

Get ashore



Avoid doing these when lightning occurs :

- Using the telephone, electrical appliances and electronic equipment.
- Standing under tall trees.
- Staying in the open or on high ground.
- Holding metal objects.
- Being near metal fences, pipes or rails.

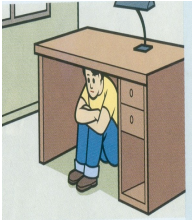
WHEN A EARTHQUAKE OCCURS

Be cautious of gas leaks



- Do not use candles, matches or other naked flames during and after the earthquake, as there might be a gas leak.

Take cover



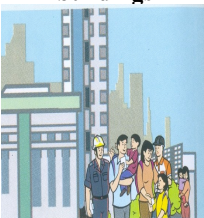
- Keep calm.
- Take cover under a desk, table or against interior walls. Stay away from windows, doors, walls, display shelves and anything that could fall and hurt you, like lightnings, furniture or fixtures.

Don't be alarmed by activation of fire safety devices



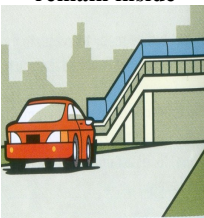
- Do not be alarmed if the electricity is cut off or fire sprinklers and alarms are activated.

Keep away from buildings



- If you are outdoors, stay away from buildings and overhead electrical cables.
- Remain in the open until the earthquake stops.

Stop vehicle and remain inside



- If you are driving, stop as quickly as safety permits. Stay in your vehicle.
- Avoid stopping near or under trees, buildings, bridges, overpasses or overhead electrical cables.

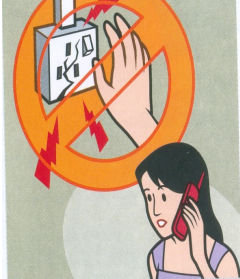
AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE STOPS

Leave in an orderly manner



- Do not rush for the exit or it may start a stampede

Don't touch damaged wiring



- Do not touch any damaged electrical wiring. Also, report any gas leaks.
- Give help to those who are injured or require your assistance. Call the 101 / 100, if necessary.

Check for structural defects



- Check your home for any structural defects and inform Municipality, Panchayat (Local Bodies) for assistance.

ENHANCING YOURS SURVIVABILITY IF TRAPPED UNDER DEBRIS / RUBBLE



General Guidelines if You are Trapped :

- ☞ Stay put and protect your head and face from shattered glass or falling objects by grabbing a coat, blanket, newspapers, box etc.
- ☞ Move away from hazardous areas or unstable objects, and if possible, put on a pair of sturdy shoes to protect your feet from broken glass.
- ☞ Brace yourself against walls without glass windows or mounted shelves. Crawl under a sturdy table, desk or bed as that will provide you with air space and protection against falling objects.

- ☞ If you are in a safe area, stay there. Do not attempt to use the stairs or elevators as there are dangers like falling debris, damaged stairways or exits, and power outages in elevators and stairwells.
- ☞ Use a flashlight to attract attention. Do not turn on light switches, or light matches, fires or gas stoves etc. unless you are sure there is no danger of a gas leak.
- ☞ If you are pinned down by debris, periodically move your fingers and toes to ensure blood circulation and prevent blood clots.
- ☞ Maintain a high morale by thinking of your loved ones. This will keep your quest for survival and fighting spirits high.
- ☞ Keep calm, be alert and respond to rescuers' calls. Do not shout unnecessarily as you may weaken yourself.
- ☞ Attract rescuers' attention with a flashlight or by calling out if you are sure someone is around.
- ☞ Consume food and water from the refrigerator if it is near you. If you need to eat and drink from an open source, beware of shattered glass and other debris in it. Moderate your consumption to enable the food to last longer.

TSUNAMI

Destructive nature of a tsunami



What is a Tsunami ?

A tsunami is a series of enormous waves formed in the sea or near the coast generated by violent undersea disturbances such as earthquakes, induced movement of the ocean floor, landslides and underwater volcanic eruptions.

Most tsunamis are caused by earthquakes in the sea that induce movements in the sea floor. From the area where a tsunami originates, waves travel in all directions over great distances. In deep waters the tsunami wave is not noticeable but when it approaches the shore, it increases in height.

All tsunamis are potentially dangerous and can be extremely violent and damaging when they hit the shore.

Sea recedes suddenly



Warning Signs to Look Out For

- If you are at the beach or near the ocean and feel the earth shake, run immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for a tsunami warning to be given.
- The sudden draw down of the sea level resulting in a receding shoreline, sometimes by a kilometer or more, is a sign of a preceding or in-between crest of tsunami waves. Head for high ground as quickly as possible.
- Do not approach the beach to investigate.
- If you are advised to evacuate, do so immediately.

Do not stay and investigate



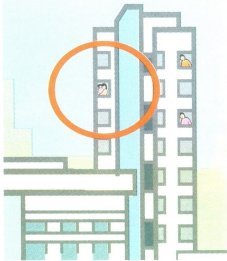
WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU ARE CAUGHT IN A TSUNAMI

Move quickly to higher ground



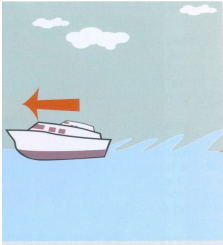
- Homes and buildings located in low lying coastal areas are not safe.
- Do not stay in such buildings if there is a tsunami warning.
- Move quickly to higher ground.

Seek shelter in reinforced buildings



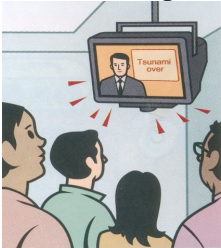
- The upper floors of high multi-storey, reinforced concreted buildings can provide refuge if there is no time to quickly move inland or to higher ground.

Move out to deeper waters



- If you are on a boat or ship and there is time, move your vessel out to deeper waters.
- If there is severe weather, it may be safer to leave the boat at the pier and move to higher ground.

Wait for the ALL CLEAR signal



- Stay away from the area until it is safe.
- Do not be fooled into thinking that the danger is over after a single wave – a tsunami is NOT a single wave but a series of waves that can vary in size.

CYCLONE PREPAREDNESS TIPS

PREVENTION TAKEN BEFORE A CYCLONE HITS:

- Check that your home is in a sound condition.
- Trim away any tree branches hanging over your roof.
- Clear your property of any loose items (eg. Sheet iron, wood etc.)
- Know your Community Disaster Plan.
- Prepare an Emergency Kit containing:-
Portable radio, Torch, Fresh water, Canned Food, Matches, Fuel lamp, Cooking Utensils, Portable Stove, Water-proof bags, and First Aid Kit.
- Keep list of emergency phone numbers handy, like Police, Fire, Ambulance, Gas and Electricity.
- Find out how and where to turn off power, gas and water supplies.
- Store you important documents in a fire/water-proof container.
- Get your Household and Contents insured.

PREVENTION AT THE TIME WHEN CYCLONE HITS :

- Store all your loose items inside.
- Find your car and park it under solid cover.
- Close all the Doors, windows and shutters.
- Disconnect all electrical appliances and turn off the Gas.
- Stay inside and shelter inside the strongest part of the building.
- Continue to listen to your portable Radio for updates and advice.
- If wind suddenly drops, don't assume that the cyclone is over, violent winds will soon resume from the opposite direction.
- Wait for the official **ALL-CLEAR SIGNAL**.

PREVENTION TAKEN AFTER CYCLONE :

- Don't go outside until officially advised it is safe to do so.
- Check for any Gas Leaks.
- Don't use electrical appliances if Wet.
- If evacuated, don't return to your home until advised it is safe to do so.
- Beware of fallen Powerlines, damaged bridges, buildings and trees.
- Don't enter flood waters.
- Continue to listen to your local radio for official warnings and advice.

Enlightened Citizens are requested to extend a helping hand by obtaining copies of the Special booklet brought out by the Department in connection with the Fire Prevention Week 2008 and disseminate its contents among friends and family.

Remember: Readiness is your only Protection

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