



Chapter 7. Part 3. Disaster Preparedness

Chapter 7: Environmental and Situational Emergencies

Part 3: Disaster Preparedness

(Understanding how to provide first aid and emotional support in disaster situations such as earthquakes, floods, fires, and more.)

1. What is a Disaster?

A **disaster** is a sudden event—natural or man-made—that causes **widespread damage, injury, and loss of life**. Examples include:

- **Natural:** Earthquakes, floods, cyclones, landslides, droughts
- **Man-made:** Fires, building collapses, chemical spills, terrorist attacks

In such events, professional help may be delayed. **Trained first aiders can make a critical difference** in survival and recovery.

2. First Aid in Disaster Scenarios

A. General Priorities in Any Disaster:

1. **Ensure your own safety first** (e.g., falling debris, live wires)
2. **Call for emergency help** (112 in India)
3. **Perform triage** – assess who needs immediate help

B. Disaster-Specific First Aid Actions

△ Earthquakes:

- Evacuate if safe or stay in a **“triangle of life”** (under a table, near a wall)
- Treat bleeding, fractures, crush injuries
- Be aware of **aftershocks**

□ Floods:

- Help victims reach **high ground**
- Watch for **drowning, hypothermia**, snakebites
- Boil drinking water; risk of **water-borne disease**

□ Fires:

- Assist in **evacuation using low-crawl technique**
- Cool **burns with water**, do **not remove melted clothing**
- Avoid smoke inhalation—cover nose/mouth with cloth

□ Cyclones / Storms:

- Shelter indoors; close windows
- Watch for **head trauma, falling trees**, electrocution
- Keep dry and warm post-storm

3. Triage in Disaster Situations

Triage means sorting victims based on urgency of care:

Category	Color Code	Example	Action
Immediate	Red	Major bleeding, airway block	Treat first
Delayed	Yellow	Fracture, conscious burn	Treat secondarily
Minor	Green	Bruises, walking wounded	Help them assist others
Deceased/expectant	Black	No pulse, severe trauma	Do not spend time here first

4. Psychological First Aid (PFA)

Disasters cause not only physical harm but **emotional trauma**—fear, anxiety, grief, or shock. Psychological First Aid (PFA) is **not counselling**, but immediate emotional support to help the person feel safe, calm, and connected.

A. Goals of PFA:

- **Reduce distress**
- **Stabilize the individual**
- **Support coping** and functioning
- **Refer** to mental health support if needed

B. Key Principles (The 5 “L’s of PFA):

1. **Look** – Observe for signs of trauma or shock
2. **Listen** – Let them share, without judgment
3. **Link** – Connect them to services, family, or shelter
4. **Live** – Encourage returning to normal routines
5. **Learn** – Provide factual, reassuring information

C. Common Signs of Psychological Distress:

- Confusion, blank stare
- Crying, trembling
- Aggressive outbursts
- Withdrawal, silence
- Physical symptoms: headache, stomach upset

D. How to Help:

- Speak **calmly and slowly**
- Use their **name**, ensure safety



- Offer water, a blanket—**basic comfort**
- Be present—**don't leave them alone**
- Avoid false reassurance like “Everything will be fine”

□ Children and elderly are especially vulnerable. Offer more time, touch (with consent), and security.

5. Self-Check Questions

1. What is the first action to take when reaching a disaster scene?
2. Name one critical difference in first aid for flood victims.
3. What does PFA stand for?
4. In triage, who gets a red tag?
5. Should you promise that “everything will be okay” during a crisis?

ANSWERS:

1. Ensure your own safety
2. Risk of waterborne diseases—boil water
3. Psychological First Aid
4. Life-threatening injuries needing urgent care
5. No—offer realistic support, not false promises

□ Key Take-Home Points

- Disaster preparedness is not just about bandages—it's about **calm, structured action under pressure**.
- Learn to **prioritize victims** and give lifesaving care before professional help arrives.
- **PFA helps prevent long-term emotional harm** after trauma.
- Always work as a team and be aware of **post-disaster hazards** (infection, collapse, shock).