

Guide for Preparing an Emergency Action Plan

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Background

An emergency action plan is a mechanism which establishes tasks that must be carried out during each phase of an emergency and a procedure for accomplishing each in the proper sequence. In general, an emergency operations plan:

- Structures the response of an organization so that everyone knows what is expected and at what point each event should happen;
- Structures the response so that each succeeding activity builds upon the previous; and
- Structures the response so that material aid needs can be accurately assessed and the critical ones met on a priority basis.

An emergency action plan for a government must meet the following additional requirements:

- The plan must allow the government to respond quickly but cautiously so that it will not be committed in such a way that long-term reconstruction and development objectives will be delayed or made difficult to achieve;
- The plan must be flexible enough so that the changing needs of a situation can be reassessed at the appropriate time;
- The plan must structure the response so that accurate information can be developed upon which to base the next series of actions;
- The plan must concentrate the most appropriate resources of the government at the most appropriate time and place;
- The plan must provide a basis for coordinating the resources and activities of the foreign donors and voluntary agencies.

For optimum success the plan should be linked to preparedness activities. All organizations who play a part in the plan should be familiar with the complete plan and procedures and should receive training in the specific tasks each must perform.

### Concept for an Emergency Action Plan

The Emergency Action Plan establishes a series of sequential actions and routines for each group in the emergency response structure. The plan should be prepared in loose-leaf form and should contain:

- A graphic presentation (such as a flow chart) outlining the activities of the plan and presenting a quick reference to the sequence of events.
- A set of checklists for actions to be taken at disaster operations headquarters.
- A set of checklists for actions to be taken in the field.
- A description of the procedures to be followed during each phase of the emergency.

The plan should list activities according to the proper phase of the disaster or threat. The following categories are recommended:

- Alert Phase - Initial preparations when a threat is identified.
- Warning Phase - Actions taken when a threat is certain (ex.: evacuation).
- Emergency Phase - Full emergency response after a disaster has occurred.
- Transition Phase (Rehabilitation) - The gradual change from relief operations to set the stage for longer term recovery programs.
- Reconstruction Phase - Physical and economic recovery.

### Sample Action Plan

The following page presents a sample extract from an Emergency Action Plan.

SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR AN EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

PART I - INTRODUCTION

- Chapter 1. Instructions  
2. Amendment procedures

PART II - TASK SEQUENCE

- Chapter 3. Flow Chart (Note: recommend PERT, not CPM)  
4. Task outlines

PART III - EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- Chapter 5. Procedures and guidelines for disaster operations center  
6. Procedures and guidelines for government departments  
7. Procedures and guidelines for non-governmental agencies

PART IV - CHECKLISTS

- Chapter 8. Checklist for Disaster Operations Center  
9. Checklists for central government ministries  
10. Checklists for local governments  
11. Checklists for disaster assessment team  
12. Checklists for emergency services

PART V - RESOURCE INDEX

- Chapter 13. Summary of standing agreements (updated annually)  
14. Print-out of stockpiles and supplies  
15. Print-out of available technical specialists

