

COURSE : DISASTER MANAGEMENT (MA/ MSc PART I)

Paper : V

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Topic : Damage Reports

Damage Reports

There is a clearly defined sequence to the process of managing information. In this sequence, each step is as important because on it depends the effectiveness of the subsequent step. The information at various stages of the disaster assessment process is in the form of different reports. The reports vary in terms of their timing and detailing.

The Major Types of Reports are:

Flash Report (sometimes called First Information Report or SOS Report)

Flash Report should be submitted very quickly. Its purpose is simply to confirm that the disaster has taken place and that steps are being taken to cope with it and to give a first indication of the sort of external relief that might be required, and to inform the sources that further reports would follow shortly. Initial Report Initial Report should follow the flash report as soon as possible (within a matter of hours). Its purpose is to inform the recipients of the severity of the disaster and, more importantly, by relating the severity of the disaster to coping capacities, provide the information needed to start mobilising resources from outside the affected area for timely help. The report should therefore, briefly summarise:

- The severity of the disaster (without necessarily providing precise figures)
- Actions being taken locally
- Local coping capacities (including locally available resources)
- The immediate priorities for external relief, where it is required and in approximately what quantities
- The best logistical means of delivering that relief, and
- a forecast of possible future developments including new risks

As per the situation, the needs and priorities will change over time. An assessment only describes the state of affairs at the time the assessment is made. An initial assessment should, therefore, also establish the system for subsequent reports.

Interim Report

Interim Report should build on earlier reports providing additional and more precise information. To begin with interim reports should be submitted every 24 hours at the same time every day (the time being determined by the recipient according to needs) and thereafter, at intervals decided by the recipient. As time goes by, the emphasis of interim reports shifts from the needs for relief to the needs for rehabilitation and reconstruction (for example, repairs to damaged structures, restoration of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and industrial production). It is not necessary to repeat what has already been said in earlier reports unless the earlier details require updating. Interim reports should provide forecasts (with inputs from specialists and people who have experience of previous disasters) and highlight information, which may not otherwise be obvious to the recipients

Specialist or Technical Reports

They provide supplementary technical details by/for specialists (for example, engineers and officials responsible for emergency health care).

Final Report

This will be a summary of:

- What happened;
- How the response was managed; and
- The lessons learned

In preparing a report, the writer should put himself in the position of the people to whom he is reporting and ask himself, "What do they need to know in order to

meet their responsibilities and to make the right decisions?” A report should not be packed with unnecessary data, nor should it be delayed because of insufficient information. It is better to say, “we do not have as much information as we would like but, on the basis of what we do know and our experience, in broad terms, the situation is as follows and we estimate the needs to be in the following range... we shall provide more details as soon as we can”. The details provided in reports should be consistent. Conflicting reports from different sources can cause confusion. Desirably, reports from one level of administration to another should be in a consolidated form.

Damage assessment is an important tool for information regarding the extent of a disaster’s impact, and forms the basis for immediate rescue and relief operations, as well as long-term rehabilitation and recovery programmes. Rapid assessment techniques are applied for quick assessment and immediate relief. Detailed damage assessment is a follow up activity that is more elaborate and helps plan longer-term interventions. Damage is mainly in terms of Human lives lost; Injuries, Disease, Livestock lost, Land and its attributes such as crops and structures, Infrastructure, including buildings and roads etc. Assessment of damage is required in terms of area covered, intensity of damage, households affected, and finally all this has to be converted in terms of economic loss, and represented in terms of rupees lost and required for restorative activities. Damage assessment reports are prepared at various stages of the disaster response process, and provide various levels of details depending on the timing of assessment. It is always advisable to have advance preparedness of damage assessment and reporting systems, and to have consistency in the approach and the formats of the damage reports. This goes a long way in ensuring good information communication leading to rapid and efficient disaster response.