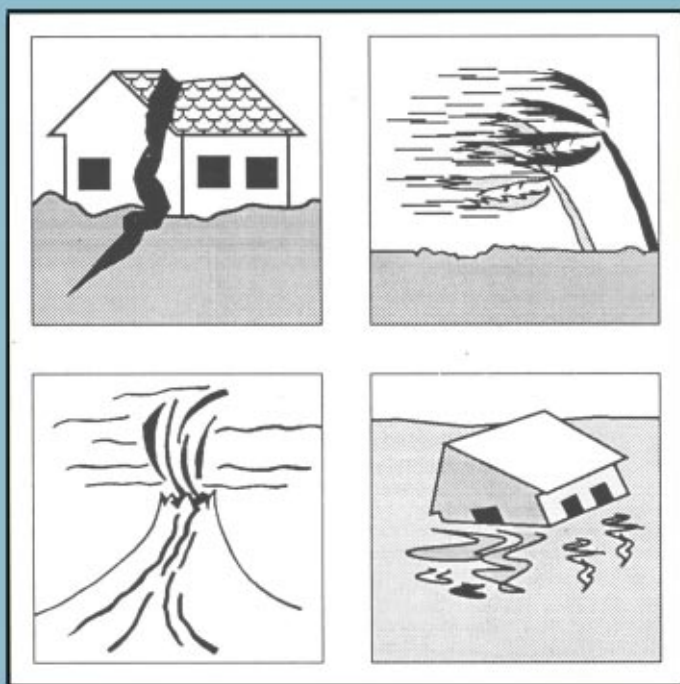

DISASTER PROCEDURES

A MANUAL FOR
PAHO/WHO
FIELD OFFICES



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August 1993

PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND DISASTER
RELIEF COORDINATION PROGRAM**

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INTRODUCTION

The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) is mandated to cooperate with the countries of this region to reduce the effects of emergency situations on health through its programs for disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness, and to support the efficient management of international assistance measures when emergency situations arise.

The mandate of PAHO's Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Program (PED) is *"to define the policy of the Organization, to formulate plans of action for the various types of disasters, to make an inventory of the human and other resources available, to train the necessary personnel, to prepare and disseminate the appropriate guidelines and manuals, to promote operations research to meet the needs of the countries in disaster situations, and to ensure that this unit establishes effective coordination with the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator, the International Red Cross, and other national and international bodies providing disaster assistance"* (Resolution X of the XXIV Directing Council).

In dealing with disaster situations in member countries, in addition to continuing to provide normal technical cooperation, the Organization also has a mandate to assist the health authorities and the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UN/DHA), as established in Directive HQ/FO-93-09, 10 May 1993.

DEFINITION

A major disaster or emergency is any phenomenon, whether natural or manmade, that produces a mass disturbance in the normal systems that provide health services and that poses such a large and immediate threat to public health that the country affected requires external assistance in order to deal with the situation.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PAHO/WHO REPRESENTATIVE AND THE FOCAL POINT

IN NORMAL SITUATIONS

- ☑ To designate a staff member to serve as the permanent focal point and to form part of the United Nations Disaster Management Team (DMT). The functions of the PAHO/WHO Representative and the focal point are to promote disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness activities and to coordinate such activities with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies including:
 - ⇒ Cooperating in setting up or strengthening national programs for emergency prevention, mitigation, and preparedness in the health sector.
 - ⇒ Ensuring that PAHO/WHO staff members and their national counterparts are properly trained in the basic principles of disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness.
 - ⇒ Promoting and maintaining direct working relations with the National Emergency Committee, the Civil Defense Organization, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Committee of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Finance, the Red Cross, and other appropriate governmental and non-governmental organizations, in addition to maintaining a list of the focal points in these institutions.
 - ⇒ Promoting intercountry cooperation agreements.

IN DISASTER SITUATIONS

- ☑ Immediately establishing close contact with the Ministry of Health, the UNDP Resident Representative, and the national agency responsible for overall coordination of emergency response actions.
- ☑ Providing the affected government with PAHO/WHO technical cooperation in:

- ⇒ the assessment of needs for external support carried out by experts from the Office of the PAHO/WHO Representative and the regional program.¹
 - ⇒ supporting the mobilization of resources from bilateral and international organizations.
 - ⇒ support in the form of satellite communication equipment (exclusively for communication abroad).
 - ⇒ technical and logistic support for inventorying and managing supplies (SUMA).
 - ⇒ implementing safety measures for United Nations personnel in high-risk situations.
- Transmitting the following information to PED by the most rapid means available (fax, telephone, etc.):
- ⇒ type and magnitude of the disaster
 - ⇒ expected health problems
 - ⇒ extent of the damages suffered by the health services
 - ⇒ whether or not the human and material health resources available in the country are sufficient
 - ⇒ the assistance required from the international community, indicating the priority and providing a *qualified opinion*
 - ⇒ actions taken by PAHO/WHO in the country (this information should also be transmitted to UNDP for inclusion in their Situation Report (SITREP)).
- Advising the authorities of the country and the UNDP Representative, DHA, with regard to the formulation of priorities and requests for external support. This implies visits to the field.
- Formally submitting to the UNDP Resident Representative a copy of the information required by Headquarters for consideration in the situation reports that DHA/Geneva transmits to the donor agencies.
- Sharing information with the regional and local levels and with the representatives of the financing agencies and relief organizations, and exploring their interest in providing financing through PAHO/WHO.
- Maintaining objectivity and impartiality in order to direct the international community toward priority areas for the affected population.
- Informing PED confidentially if the results of the assessment carried out by the PAHO/WHO personnel differ appreciably from official reports issued by the government.

¹ The Subregional Advisor to PED will be sent to the affected country for each "internationally recognized" disaster (Directive HQ/FO-93-09).

PERSONNEL MATTERS

PROVIDING ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL PERSONNEL

At first notice of an emergency situation the PED Subregional Advisors will be sent automatically to the affected country within their area of responsibility. The PAHO/WHO Representative will notify the Ministry of Health that this is PAHO's normal operating procedure in emergencies.

Additional personnel from other field offices or Headquarters will be mobilized, as required, to strengthen the PAHO/WHO Representative's Office in the affected country and to ensure that a multidisciplinary group is available to provide technical cooperation in priority health areas. The decision to mobilize this personnel will be taken by Headquarters in consultation with the PAHO/WHO Representative, communications permitting, during the period immediately following the emergency situation. The decision will be based on whatever preliminary information is available at the time.

SAFETY OF PERSONNEL

For the purposes of protecting staff members and their dependents, the provisions of Section II.14 of the PAHO/WHO Manual will apply, with due regard paid to the United Nations Field Security Handbook.

As a rule, the UNDP Resident Representative is the person designated to protect the safety of the United Nations staff and their dependents. Any disbursements made for the purposes of protecting staff, their dependents, and their property will be charged to the allotment under which the staff member in question is covered.

In emergencies arising in connection with civil conflicts, the PAHO/WHO Representative should pay special attention to maintaining cooperation in essential technical areas, using key staff members who are willing to work under difficult conditions. After consulting with the Director, the PAHO/WHO Representative may request that the designated United Nations staff member obtain authorization from the Secretary-General so that staff members who have

volunteered may remain in service after instructions have been given to evacuate United Nations personnel.

In the event of a serious emergency, the PAHO/WHO Representative is authorized to repatriate PAHO/WHO fellows, short-term consultants, or temporary advisors residing in the country at the time of the emergency if, in his/her opinion, conditions so require. In this case, any disbursements made will be charged to the allotment to which the respective activity was assigned.

The PAHO/WHO Representative may make repatriation exceptions in the following cases:

- ⇒ when an individual has practical knowledge, experience, and familiarity with local conditions which are particularly useful for the country or for the Organization.
- ⇒ when an individual is willing to provide his services and to work under difficult conditions.
- ⇒ when the Ministry of Health consents to have fellows, short-term consultants, and/or temporary advisors cooperate during the emergency.

The persons referred to above, authorized by the PAHO/WHO Representative to provide services, will receive short-term remuneration under the terms of a personal services contract drawn up by the Representative.

In the event of a major emergency that interrupts international communications, the PAHO/WHO Representative is authorized to allocate funds and/or make disbursements to respond to the emergency without verbal or written authorization from Headquarters. However, he/she should so inform PED and the corresponding unit in Headquarters as soon as communication has been reestablished.

PROCUREMENT OF EMERGENCY RELIEF SUPPLIES

Emergency supplies provided by PAHO/WHO should assist in solving the most pressing public health problems that arise during and immediately after the emergency. The PAHO/WHO Representative should avoid using the Organization's resources for relief supplies that can be provided more efficiently by other donors.

If possible, services and supplies should be obtained locally.

The PAHO/WHO Representative will inform the UNDP Resident Representative and PED/Headquarters of any large local purchases so that this information can be shared with other donors and with the public information media.

Where response time is critical and the amount of the local purchase in question exceeds the delegated procurement authority of the PAHO/WHO Representative, the PWR will carry out the purchase immediately, and will submit a copy of the purchase orders or contracts with bid documents and a bid evaluation, or a Sole Source Justification, as applicable and an Emergency Procurement Justification, to APO within two weeks of the dispatch of the purchase order.

If supplies are not available or cannot be obtained locally, the PAHO/WHO Representative will send a request for immediate purchase, by fax, electronic mail, or other available means of communication, addressed to the attention of APO/PED. It is important to provide all the information requested as completely as possible to avoid delays caused by the need for clarification. Please include an Emergency Procurement Justification, indicating that this is an emergency procurement for disaster relief for (explain the situation), in order to ensure that the purchase will be given priority status and will follow special emergency procedures at Headquarters.

In the absence of prior arrangements, the PAHO/WHO Representative will contact the national airline (or another airline, if necessary) and take the necessary actions so that the airlines will provide free transportation for PAHO/WHO supplies and/or personnel, and will immediately advise APO and PED.

FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Emergency technical cooperation and the provision of relief supplies will be financed in order of priority:

- ⇒ Through donor agency contributions made specifically for emergency situations.
- ⇒ Through the reallocation of PAHO/WHO country program funds. With the approval of the Ministry of Health, the PAHO/WHO Representative may authorize up to US\$20,000 out of these funds for emergency expenditures.
- ⇒ From intercountry allotments (ICP or MCP), with the approval of the allottee.

Extrabudgetary funds allocated for emergency preparedness may not be utilized for disaster relief.

When it is necessary to mobilize external resources rapidly, the PAHO/WHO Representative will:

- ⇒ make timely use of the experience of PED (HQ and subregional advisors) to mobilize resources rapidly for emergency activities, reconciling the priorities of the donors with those of the health sector.
- ⇒ explore the interest of the local representatives of bilateral or international agencies in supporting specific activities.
- ⇒ report to PED/HQ on the interest expressed by the donor agencies at the local level in order to provide follow up to the decision-making level at the respective headquarters.

Normal procedures for the presentation of projects will be temporarily suspended. The Organization will not charge Program Support Costs (PSC) for relief projects in emergency situations.

In the event of a major emergency or disaster, the Director may provisionally suspend the normal administrative procedures for recruitment of local personnel,

duty travel, and local purchase of supplies directly related to relief or immediate rehabilitation activities, although every possible effort should be made to comply with the established procedures. This provision will become effective automatically in the event that communications with Headquarters are interrupted as a result of a serious emergency.

The United Nations General Assembly has assigned the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) the responsibility of “Serving as a central focal point with Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerning United Nations emergency relief operations and, when appropriate and necessary, mobilizing their emergency relief capacities...” (United Nations General Assembly Resolution 46/182, 14 April 1992). The United Nations coordinator in the country serves as the Representative of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) .

PAHO/WHO is responsible for coordinating the health component in the Americas.

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