

# Disaster Management

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## Improve your learning

**Q. 1. Describe any disaster that occurred in your area or that you watched on T.V.? What measures could have been taken to reduce its impact?**

**Answer :** Andhra Pradesh is exposed to cyclones, storm surges, floods, and droughts. The most recent disaster had been the flash floods caused by cyclone Vardah which occurred between 12<sup>th</sup> December and 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016. The flash floods were caused by extreme rainfall. According to the news reports, several thousand people had to be evacuated although the death toll was less.

Images on Social Media showed cars being lifted up by the strong winds. Over 4,000 trees have been uprooted, power lines downed and buildings damaged. Areas have seen severe power cuts and many roads have been blocked in the main cities crippling transportation and communication. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Army were employed to help the civilians in distress.

Although the quick and prompt actions made by the disaster relief teams saved several thousand lives, better measures can be adopted to reduce the impact of flooding in the future. These measures can include a better flood warning system. Constructing buildings and homes above the flood levels and modifying the buildings within the flood-prone zone (by keeping electrical sockets higher in the wall, etc.) can reduce the flood impact. Also, civilians living in disaster-prone zones should be given disaster management lessons to make them more prepared.

**Q. 2. How was that disaster managed?**

**Answer :** Cyclone Vardah that lashed India's east coast has once again demonstrated that India's cyclone preparedness had reached its mark. The Indian Meteorological Department was able to track the movement of Vardah with precision and issue early warnings. Cautionary advice was put out on social platforms urging people to stay safe which reduced the number of casualties as seen in Chennai during cyclone Vardha.

Delivery of food and health care via mobile hospitals, with priorities to women child & elder, were implemented. Protection of the community and their evacuation and quicker response was carried out in an exemplary manner by The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and the Army.

**Q. 3. Do you suggest any precautions to the people?**

**Answer :** Natural disasters like cyclones and floods can affect anybody at any time. This is truer for people living in areas that are prone to such disasters. The only way to mitigate the effects of such disasters is to be prepared. The following precautions can

be taken to effectively make one and by extension their family and neighbours safe during a disaster.

- 1) Anchor removable objects such as lumber piles, loose tin sheets, loose bricks, garbage cans, and sign-boards, etc. which can fly in strong winds and cause loss.
- 2) Pack essentials for yourself and your family to last a few days. These should include medicines, special food for babies and children or elders.
- 3) Store dry food and water in abundance because you never know how long you will be stuck in a certain place.
- 4) Remove dead branches or dying trees close to the house.
- 5) Board any glass windows or doors with wood so that the shattered glass does not cause harm to anyone.
- 6) If your house is securely built on high ground take shelter in the safe part of the house. However, if asked to evacuate do not hesitate to leave the place.
- 7) Keep torch batteries and emergency light handy.
- 8) Keep listening to battery operated radio because most likely the electricity will go off on its own even if you do not switch it off. It is highly recommended to switch off the mains.
- 9) Switch off the gas and electrical mains if the cyclone is affecting you.
- 10) Stay indoors and shut all the doors and windows.
- 11) When asked to evacuate, move to a designated cyclone centre with the safety emergency kit.

**Q. 4. Have you ever observed any disaster in your locality? Explain.**

**Answer :** Flooding during cyclone Vardah was observed in the locality. It started with increasing rainfall and high winds. The high winds caused several branches to break from the trees and also uprooted several others. Soon the drains in the locality started overflowing and caused water to accumulate on the streets. The water started entering the lower levels of buildings.

People who lived on the ground floors were forced to move to the higher floors. The electricity went out after some time leaving the locality in darkness. After two days of incessant rainfall, the rain stopped, but the water took another two days to recede. After the water levels went down, the entire locality was covered in rubbish and debris. There was a threat of contamination of the drinking waters as it is sourced through deep tube

wells. Also, decaying and rotting debris could have caused an epidemic, but it was prevented by the prompt action of the municipal workers who worked tirelessly to remove the dirt.

The electricity returned on the third day but the communication lines took some more time. Food was rationed with neighbours helping out each other as the stock in the locality shops were damaged. Preference was given to children, and the elders and everybody tried their outmost to make the locality functional and liveable again.

**Q. 5. How can the disaster be prevented/ managed?**

**Answer :** The main issue during the flooding in the locality was the inability of the drains to fully drain out the flood water. The drains in the locality need to be widened and kept clean to prevent such an occurrence in the future. Trees in the locality should be kept under observation, and any rotten branches should be removed. Exposed electrical wires should be covered to prevent electrocution. The locality should be kept clean, and the rubbish should be recycled in a proper manner to prevent their accumulation in the drains and future clogging. Neighbours should look out for each other and provide help to the best of their ability.

**Q. 6. Discuss elder's experience with regard to the disasters and the management and write a note.**

**Answer :** My father had witnessed the devastating 1977 Andhra Pradesh cyclone, that killed at least 14,204 people. The worst affected areas were in the Krishna River delta region. The island of Diviseema, which was hit by a six metre high storm surge, experienced a loss of life running into the thousands. Hundreds of bodies were floating in the waters, and bodies bloated beyond recognition were consigned to mass pyres.

Landslides ripped off the railway lines in the Waltair-Kirandal route. About 100 people who had left their homes to seek shelter in a church in Bapatla town were killed when the building collapsed. Fields of paddy and cash crops were submerged by the tidal waves. Thirteen sailing vessels, including some foreign ones, went missing in the storm.

About 100 villages were marooned or washed away by the cyclonic storms and the ensuing floods and a total of 10,841 killed or missing, and 34 lakh rendered homeless. According to the Janata party, at least 50,000 people were believed to have been killed by the storm, substantially higher than reported by the government.

In my father's locality, severe flooding occurred. Electricity was cut off for several days. There was a shortage of food and other basic necessities like water and medicines. Disaster management was not a well-developed entity during those times. There were no early warning systems, or cyclone shelters which resulted in the higher loss of lives.

The apathy of government officials and workers also caused a delay in getting back to normal living conditions.