

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS DURING DISASTERS

1 PREPARATION AND TRAINING:

- Ensure you have adequate training in disaster reporting and first aid.
- Familiarise yourself with the specific risks and challenges associated with the type of disaster you're covering.
- Develop a comprehensive safety plan before you start your assignment.

2 RISK ASSESSMENT:

- Assess the risks associated with the disaster area, including potential dangers from debris, unstable structures, hazardous materials, weather conditions, and civil unrest.
- Stay informed about the disaster's progression and any evacuation orders or warnings from local authorities.

3 PROTECTIVE GEAR:

- Always wear appropriate protective gear, including helmets, vests, gloves, and sturdy footwear.
- Consider carrying a gas mask, goggles, and ear protection if covering situations with potential chemical or biological hazards.

4 COMMUNICATION:

- Maintain communication with your manager, and establish a check-in system to ensure your safety is monitored.
- Carry backup communication devices such as satellite phones or two-way radios in case regular cell networks fail.

5 IDENTIFICATION:

- Clearly display press credentials and identification to avoid confusion with emergency responders or authorities.

6 EVACUATION PLAN:

- Establish a clear evacuation plan with designated meeting points and escape routes.
- Always have a reliable means of transportation ready in case you need to leave quickly.

7 BUDDY SYSTEM:

- Whenever possible, work with a colleague or "buddy" who can watch out for your safety, and vice versa.

8 WEATHER AND ENVIRONMENT:

- Stay informed about weather conditions and dress appropriately for extreme heat, cold, or wet conditions.
- Be cautious of changing weather patterns that can exacerbate disaster situations (e.g., flash floods during heavy rainfall).

9 STAY INFORMED:

- Continuously monitor news updates and information from local authorities for any changes or developments.
- Pay attention to the behavior of the crowd or affected individuals to anticipate potential dangers.

10 RESPECT BOUNDARIES:

- Respect disaster zones, cordons, and restricted areas designated by authorities.
- Do not interfere with emergency responders or obstruct their work.

11 FIRST AID:

- Carry a basic first aid kit and be prepared to administer basic medical assistance if needed.
- Know how to treat common injuries and illnesses that may arise during disasters.

12 MENTAL HEALTH:

- Be aware of the potential psychological impact of witnessing traumatic events. Seek support and counseling if necessary.
- Practice self-care and take breaks when needed.

13 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- Be aware of any legal restrictions on reporting in disaster areas, such as curfews or limitations on access.
- Respect the privacy and dignity of victims and their families.

14 ETHICAL REPORTING:

- Maintain objectivity, avoid sensationalism, and verify information from multiple sources.
- Obtain consent from individuals before recording or interviewing them, especially in sensitive situations.

15 KNOW WHEN TO RETREAT:

- If the situation becomes too dangerous, prioritize your safety and retreat to a safe location.
- Report your location to your newsroom and follow your evacuation plan.

* Remember that each disaster situation is unique, and it's crucial to adapt your safety measures accordingly. Always prioritize your well-being and the well-being of those around you when reporting in disaster-affected areas.