



 You are the Help Until Help Arrives

The Crucial First Hour

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Agenda

Why This Topic Matters

The first 60 minutes after a disaster are critical. The decisions you make can dramatically affect survival, safety, and community outcomes.

What You Will Learn

A structural approach to actions you can take- and what to avoid- in the first hour after disaster strikes, when help is unlikely to arrive immediately.

Be a survivor, not a victim

This training focuses on empowerment: being prepared to act with calm, clarity, and purpose...not fear or panic.



Why the First Hour Matters

FIRST RESPONDERS ARE OFTEN DELAYED

In large-scale disasters, 911 and first responders are often overwhelmed, delayed, or unable to reach affected areas for hours or even days.

INFRASTRUCTURE MAY BE DAMAGED

Roads, bridges, power lines and communication systems may be disrupted, limiting mobility and emergency access.

YOU ARE THE HELP UNTIL HELP ARRIVES

Civilians become the first line of defence for survival and safety. Your actions in the first hour matter deeply.

FOCUS ON EMPOWERMENT, NOT FEAR

This is about readiness, not fear. With a plan, you can respond calmly and effectively under pressure.



First-Hour Framework



PROTECT YOURSELF, THEN YOUR FAMILY

Before helping other, secure your own safety. Put on PPE, assess for injuries, and anticipate further danger like aftershocks.

ASSESS THE ENVIRONMENT

Perform a rapid scan for fire, gas leaks, water damage, unstable structures, and other immediate hazards.

CONTROL LIFE-THREATENING HAZARDS

Address fires, major bleeding, and electrical threats. Only intervene when it's safe to do so.

HELP, COMMUNICATE, ORGANIZE

Check on others, share verified information, and assign basic roles. Stability and coordination matter.

Protect Yourself

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Pause and breathe: take a moment to calm and center yourself. A few seconds of deep breathing can reduce panic and help you think clearly.

Check for injuries: quickly assess yourself for breathing, pain, or disorientation. Don't ignore shock symptoms like dizziness or numbness.

Put on PPE: sturdy shoes, gloves, and a flashlight are vital. Even household items like garden gloves or hiking boots can help.

Expect aftershocks or secondary hazards: be ready for additional tremors, debris falls, or flare-ups. Stay alert for changes in your environment.



Check on Family

MAKE SURE YOUR FAMILY IS SAFE

Locate family members: make sure everyone is accounted for and away from immediate hazards.

Asses for injuries: treat life-threatening issues first and only move them if the environment is unsafe.

Protect: keep everyone together, put on sturdy shoes, and prepare for aftershocks.

Stay calm and reassure each other: simple, confident communication helps keeps everyone focused.



Assess Surroundings

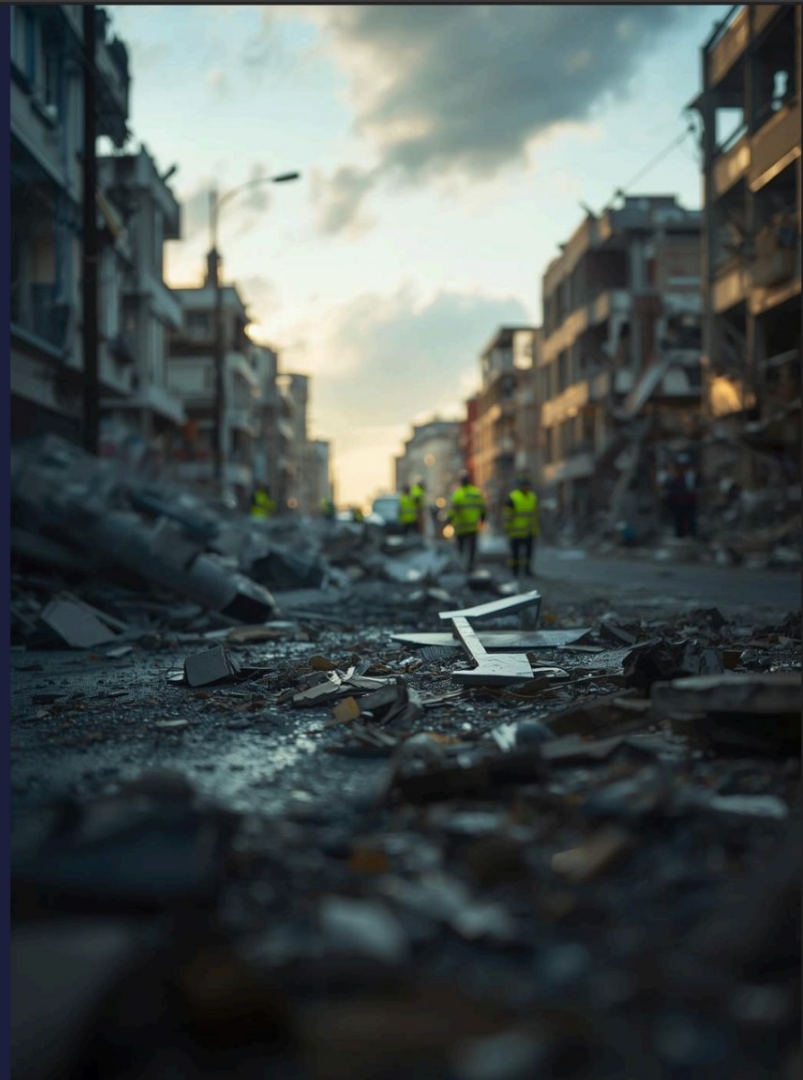
RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

30-second hazard scan: quickly evaluate your immediate area for signs of fire, gas smells, water leaks, structural cracks, and power line hazards.

Look but don't touch: avoid trying to move or repair anything unless it's life-threatening and safe to handle.

Top hazards to identify: fire, sparks, gas odor, water flooding, falling debris, and downed power lines are high-risk indicators.

Actively avoid danger zones: mark dangerous areas physically or mentally, if safe, and steer others away. Prevention reduces casualties.



Immediate Impacts

FIRE AND SMOKE

GAS LEAKS

DOWNED POWER LINES

STRUCTURAL DAMAGE



Psychological Effects

SARAH JOHNSON

Disaster Response Coordinator

"In the aftermath of the disaster, the overwhelming anxiety and **fear of uncertainty** among survivors were palpable. Many struggled to process their experiences, and look for those individuals with a plan to restore a sense of safety and community in those crucial first hours."



Help, Communicate, Organize

RAPID ASSESSMENT

A swift evaluation of the situation enables responders to identify **immediate needs** and prioritize resources, ensuring that the most critical areas receive attention first.

LIFESAVING MEASURES

Implementing quick lifesaving actions can significantly improve survival rates, addressing injuries, and providing necessary medical care to those affected during the chaotic early moments.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is crucial for coordinating response efforts, allowing responders to share information, mobilize resources, and keep affected individuals informed and supported during the crisis.

