

Perceptive Traverse through Disaster Management Education

Dr. Nimmi Maria Oommen

Assistant Professor of Education

Titus II Teachers College

Tiruvalla, Kerala

Dr. Suramya Mathai

Assistant Professor in Social Science

Titus II Teachers College

Tiruvalla, Kerala

ABSTRACT

Education is not only about acquiring knowledge. It is also about applying the knowledge for the betterment of the society. The incorporation of disaster risk management in the education sector is crucial in order to increase awareness of the effects and causes of disasters. Schools that take action to manage risks contribute to a culture of prevention, which is essential in the sustainable development process of countries. Indeed, it reduces disaster risks and strengthens the capacities of the most vulnerable communities to respond to emergencies. When a disaster occurs, education restores everyday life and gives people hope for the future, in addition to helping satisfy basic humanitarian needs and transmit essential messages that promote security and well-being. This theoretical article navigates through the diverse aspects of disaster management education

Key words: Disaster management education, students, schools

Introduction

As future citizens of every society, it is the accountability of each school student to bring about major changes in the society as a whole through their dedicated efforts. In procession with the fears that the future beholds, the obligation will be on students to do their best to mitigate the damaging effects of a natural disaster. Gaining strength from their acquired bookish and practical knowledge, students play a major role in not only devising well-informed plans to face an eventuality but also in handholding victims of a disaster through their timely intervention. This is where their presence comes to the fore as part of an effective “**Disaster Management**”. Disaster Management, also called as Crisis Management is a methodical process to safeguard the lives and property of people from unforeseen natural and man-made crises. All in an attempt to reduce the loss caused by a calamity, the student community teamed with groups of teachers has made its strong presence felt in assisting communities to better deal with exigencies. Many instances of students saving the lives of their fellow mates and strangers have become an inspiration for everyone to do the best they can to reduce the suffering caused by a devastating episode.

The major precept

Acting on Information – The Best Way to Manage an External Crisis

Education is all about assimilating information. And this information comes from books and experiences. Far away from experiencing this benefit are the illiterates who live in remote villages. Such people are the

ones who are susceptible to nature's fury which can come in the form of an inundating flood or a shaky earthquake.

Ways for promoting Disaster Management Education

1. You can spread the word about disasters along with certain measures that can be taken to handle them better
2. You can productively utilize your holiday time by organizing mock camps, throwing light on the "do's" and "don'ts" of a natural calamity or accident
3. Setting up and becoming a part of "rescue teams" can come as another worthwhile move to save people during an emergency
4. You as a volunteer should ensure that the victims do not panic during the emergency. This will to a great extent put things into perspective alongside reducing the after-effects of the crisis
5. First-aid training imparted to students is a good damage-control mechanism that a well-informed group of students can implement.

Donations to Victims - Studentsrole

As a timely response to a Disaster Management, you as a student volunteer can take up the responsibility of saving lives. Being a volunteer to such a group will help you offer your support to the troubled souls who rely on external help.

While your first move is to identify and locate the survivors, your next move is to call for help by informing the civic service providers.

Last but not least is to provide resources in the form of medicines, food, water, shelter and clothes to the injured. In order to achieve this goal, you can actively engage in donation camps.

Trying to do your bit to lessen the inconvenience of a disaster, you can not only collect funds but can also bring about awareness among communities to part with their old clothes, blankets, and books to the victims.

On humanitarian grounds, you can also request others to supply consumables like milk and biscuits to the disaster victims.

Some natural disasters can be predicted; giving schools enough warning to evacuate or take other safety precautions, but others can happen unexpectedly or go through rapid changes that suddenly put a school in danger. The first step schools should take in preparing for these types of emergencies is to assess the natural disaster risks in their areas.

School Emergency Preparedness: Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies

Many natural disasters can be predicted and tracked, but earthquakes tend to strike without warning. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, 17 major earthquakes (7.0+ magnitude) and one great earthquake (8.0+ magnitude) are expected to occur in any given year along with millions of small earthquakes worldwide. While smaller quakes might not have much impact on a school, it's important to take precautionary measures in case a large earthquake happens.

Earthquakes at School

Getting Your School Prepared

Thoughtful planning and preparation can help ensure the safety of students and staff should an earthquake occurs during school hours. These tips can aid in the preparation process.

Consider the buildings.

Schools are built to code at the time of their construction, and many older school buildings might not meet earthquake protection standards. Seek out an architect to evaluate the building and point out areas that could be reinforced.

Secure furniture.

Any tall shelving, audio-visual equipment and heavy computer cabinets should be secured to the wall. Try to avoid placing heavy objects on shelves or other surfaces where they might fall during severe shaking.

Create a cache of emergency supplies.

In a serious earthquake, it could be awhile before it's safe for students and staff to leave the building. Have a plan to shelter in place for two or three days, including plenty of emergency food, water and first aid kits.

Drop, cover and hold on.

Make sure students are familiar with safety procedures, like taking cover under their desks until the quake subsides. Have a class discussion on earthquake preparedness at the beginning of each school year.

Hold earthquake drills.

This is necessary to ensure an immediate and proper response. Earthquake drills also help administrators figure out where the process needs to be reevaluated.

Practice evacuation plans.

Aftershocks are very likely. Solid evacuation plans should get students out of the building within minutes and offer a safe meeting place for all classes.

Be prepared for search and rescue.

In addition to earthquake drills and evacuation procedures, staff may need to conduct search and rescues. However, before entering the building, staff should make sure that they aren't going to put themselves in danger. If one or more outer walls or the roof is collapsed, or if the building is leaning, staff should wait for search and rescue professionals.

Fires at School

Schools typically have a strong warning system in place for fires that will set off alarms throughout the building, turn on a sprinkler system and contact emergency services. Anyone on campus can pull manual fire alarms as well. Always be prepared to evacuate the building immediately, even if you can't see or smell the fire. Wildfires take some time to grow, which can provide ample warning time to get students to safety. However, they have a propensity to shift suddenly, so even a fire that seems far away should be taken seriously and addressed with speed.

Getting Your School Prepared

Whether a fire threat comes from inside or outside the building, student and staff safety is the top priority. Smart planning and preparation for various types of fire threats can help schools prevent fires and, when prevention is not possible, respond to them appropriately..

Plan ahead

Make sure a sound evacuation and response plan is in place before school begins. The plan should be understood by everyone involved and straightforward in its implementation.

Ensure safety in all areas

Check to see if all safety recommendations are being followed. This includes having the proper number of sprinklers, fire alarm pulls, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in the building.

Prominently display school blueprints

Laminated blueprints displayed in prominent places, such as right inside main doors, can help fire-fighters navigate the school in an emergency.

Choose a meeting place

A fast-moving fire can create chaos, and some students might get separated. Make sure everyone knows where to meet outside, such as a particular parking lot.

Provide clear instruction

Before the first fire drill, make sure all students understand what they must do and why. Go over the rules of evacuation. Go further by practicing "stop, drop and roll."

Practice fire drills

The Federal government requires drills at least once per month. Help students stay calm by reminding them that it is a drill and that they know what to do.

Encourage drills at home

Remind students that drills should be practiced at home as well. Teaching them the basics of getting low, touching the door handle before opening a door and how to “stop, drop and roll” can help them educate their family members.

Follow all wildfire recommendations

Protect the school by creating a “survivable space” around buildings. Also ensure building materials are fire-retardant, and work with local officials to bring the building up to proper codes.

Know Your School’s Emergency and Disaster Plans

Every school has an emergency and disaster plan. If students aren’t informed during orientation, they can ask for details from the campus safety office. Pay special attention to these aspects of the plan:

- The alert system and how it contacts students
- Various campus-wide alarms or alerts and what they all mean
- Assembly points for evacuations
- The best areas to shelter in place
- How to reach campus security in the event of an emergency

Keep an Emergency Kit in Your Dorm, House or Apartment

Schools are generally prepared to help students when disasters hit, but it’s still a good idea for students to be equipped with emergency kits. When building their kits, students should include these items:

- Flashlight
- A one-week supply of prescription medications
- Several gallons of water – about one gallon of water per person per day.
- Emergency or ready to eat meals
- Extra batteries for electronic devices
- Portable cell phone charger

- Personal hygiene & sanitation products
- First aid kit
- Battery or hand-crank weather radio
- Emergency whistle
- Cash
- Emergency blanket
- Extra set of clothes
- List of important phone numbers

College Students: How to Be Prepared When Emergency Strikes

The increased independence that comes with being in college also comes with more responsibility, especially when it comes to emergency preparedness. While college dorms do conduct emergency drills and provide information on what to do during natural disasters and campus threats, students need to make sure they also know what to do if emergencies happen while they are in class, away from their dorms or living off campus. Reading up on school emergency procedures, making sure that emergency supplies are available, knowing the campus layout and getting familiar with school resources, like campus police, resident assistants and health services can help college students be safe and prepared in emergency situations.

Know Your Emergency Contacts

Emergency contact information allows students and emergency responders to notify important individuals and loved ones in the event of an emergency. Students can store their emergency contacts in their phones or write them down, but it's a good idea to have the most important ones memorized. Consider including these:

- The local off-campus police department (emergency and non-emergency numbers)
- The on-campus police department (emergency and non-emergency numbers)
- Parents
- Any siblings or other family members
- The school emergency department or office

- Roommate(s)

Conclusion

The biggest hurdle in emergency preparedness is understanding the importance and need for training. In emergencies people don't rise to the occasion, they sink to the level of their training. Training is the most important piece of the emergency preparedness puzzle, so schools should focus more of their safety budgets on training staff. Many schools, universities etc. are focusing much of their security and emergency budgets on physical security features. Administrators should seek expertise in the design phase of the process. Often the architects designing schools have little to no experience with security. When the process is done the schools are left with security features they have not been properly trained to use. In addition, emergency plans must be examined and adjusted to ensure they match the new school features. Parents' natural reaction to respond directly to the school occurs because they have not been given information on where they should respond to be reunited with their children. It is crucial for schools to not only identify suitable relocation sites but also to identify staging areas at each relocation sites. These staging areas can be used by parents to gather prior to reunification.

References

- <https://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources/emergency-preparedness-in-school/>
<https://www.edsys.in/role-of-school-students-in-disaster-management/>
https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12649/pdf/sci-eng_sdm_handbook.pdf

