



**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**  
**ON**  
*Functioning of Disaster  
Distress Helpline  
of NDRF*

National Disaster Response Force  
Government of India

“Make preparations in advance ...  
You never have trouble if you are prepared for it.”

*Theodore Roosevelt*

# Foreword

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A disaster is unexpected and often brings out strong emotions. When disaster strikes, people react with increased anxiety, worry and anger. With community and family support, most of disaster victims can bounce back in short time. Some may need extra assistance to cope with unfolding events and uncertainties.

The psychological impact these events have on a significant proportion of people who experience them suggests/illustrates the need for a Disaster Distress Helpline with the capacity to provide disaster crisis counselling. The Disaster Distress Helpline +919711077372 of NDRF shall be providing immediate counselling/assistance to anyone who needs help in connection with the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief when affected by disaster.

I am confident that the trained counsellors of NDRF staffed to manage 'The Disaster Distress Helpline' shall treat every caller and texter with respect, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and empowerment. This Helpline shall be open and affirming to all regardless of race, ethnicity, and country of origin, immigration status, sex, gender identity, ability, age, sexual orientation, economic status, faith or creed. This should include survivors of disasters, loved ones of victims, first responders, rescue, recovery, and relief workers, clergy, parents and caregivers.

I am sure that the Disaster Distress Helpline of NDRF shall be able to successfully address the recovery issues with full range of psychological and emotional needs of the community through the provision of support and counselling when needed. It should be remembered that successful recovery acknowledges the linkages between the recovery of individuals, families and communities.

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# STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE ON FUNCTIONING OF DISASTER DISTRESS HELPLINE OF NDRD

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 A disaster is an event triggered by natural and manmade causes that leads to sudden disruption of normalcy within society causing widespread damage to life and property.
- 1.2 The Disaster Distress Helpline shall be a telephone number at Head Quarter DG NDRF, New Delhi dedicated to provide round the clock immediate crisis counselling or rescue for the disaster victims who are experiencing life threatening situation as well as emotional distress during any natural or human-caused disaster. To provide information regarding where about of victims to their relatives/dear ones, to guide victims in distress, to reduce stress/anxiety/other depression-like symptoms, this service shall be made available for all residents in Indian States and its Union territories.

## 2. AIM:

The aim of this SOP is to provide general guidelines for activating Disaster Distress Helpline in an efficient manner to Emergency Operation Centre, HQ NDRF for attending to the distress calls of disaster victims who are in the need of help of NDRF during any disaster/emergency.



## 3. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this SOP is to deal with functioning of Disaster Distress Helpline at HQ DG NDRF at the time of rescue and relief operations being done by NDRF in case of any natural or manmade disaster in the country. The SOP prescribes guidance and assigns responsibility to NDRF officials for extending all possible help to disaster victims to ensure prompt response during disasters.

## 4. OBJECTIVES:

The objective of this SOP is to establish operating procedures for addressing all the disaster distress call of the disaster victims and extend all possible help. The objectives of the Disaster Distress Helpline are:

- a) To provide information regarding where about of victims of disasters to their relatives/dear ones.
- b) To provide guidance/telephonic assistance to victims who are encountered with crisis situation during any disaster.
- c) To provide counselling to victims for reducing stress/anxiety/other depression-like symptoms.

## 5. SCOPE:

- a) To define a 'Standard Operating Procedure' for functioning of Disaster Distress Helpline.
- b) The SOP applies to all elements of the Emergency Operation Centre, HQ NDRF and all responders for performing disaster response operations in the disaster prone areas.
- c) This SOP is a guideline and shall be subject to be reviewed periodically.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a) **Executives/Supervisors/Commanders:** It shall be the responsibility of all the Executives/Supervisors/Commanders at all levels of the chain of the command who are involved in the disaster response to ensure that all aspects of this SOP are adhered to.
- b) **Emergency Operation Centre:** It shall be the responsibility of the all the officials who shall be on duty in Emergency Operation Centre, HQ NDRF to extend all possible help to the disaster victims.



- c) **Responders:** It shall be the responsibility of all the responders to know, understand and follow the directions of the SOP in the letter and spirit. This detailed SOP lays down, in a comprehensive manner, the specific actions at each action point required to be taken at HQ DG NDRF as well as at OSOCC (On Site Operation Coordination Centre) level for emergency telephone counselling during disasters.

## 7. EXECUTION :

This SOP endeavours to facilitate a communication bridge in between victims or their relatives and to assist victims in distress. The role of the Disaster Distress Helpline should be to act as a healing touch on the traumatized victims or their relatives. The various phases of activation of the Disaster Distress Helpline are explained below in detail, describing the concrete actions:-

### a) Pre Incident

- i. **Notification of Number:** One mobile number i.e. +919711077372 installed in the control room at HQ DG NDRF, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi is notified as Disaster Distress Helpline number. In addition, one Landline Number is also required for Disaster Distress Helpline of NDRF which can also be used for forwarding the calls to the VOIP through QD(VSAT) installed in the OSOCC as and when required.
- ii. **Establishment of counselling team:** A dedicated staff should be detailed for management of Disaster Distress Helpline number. Total nine personnel should be detailed to manage disaster distress helpline number in three shift duties. The composition of one team is as under-
  - Insp/Sub Insp (call operator) - 01
  - HC/Ct (desk operator) - 01
  - 02 persons each in one shift of 08 hours(6 personnel) to attend all the calls on mobile # and Landline #
  - 01 person each in one shift of 8 hours(3 personnel) who should be tasked to monitor the social media covering all Messages/Calls/ Facebook/Twitter etc through Laptop/Desktop.
  - Total personnel in the Disaster Distress Helpline Number Operating Team-11

### b) Post Incident

- i. **Activation Phase:** The Disaster Distress Helpline number will be provided to the electronic & print media and to be displayed on NDRF website immediately after induction of NDRF teams in any disaster management operation in the country under the direction of DG, NDRF.



- ii. **Operational Phase:** Immediately after activation phase, the counselling team starts responding to the distress calls on Disaster Distress Helpline number.
- iii. **Post Operational Activities:** Even after completion of rescue and relief operation in case of any natural or manmade disaster, victims require some assistance in terms of reducing stress/anxiety or other depression-like symptoms. During this phase, stress management treatment can be provided to needed persons by the team available on disaster distress helpline number.

## 8. PREPARATION PHASE:

8.1 Disasters mostly occur without any warning and as such the team of disaster distress helpline number should have a fair preparedness to provide immediate response, for counselling of victims/their relatives. Team of disaster



distress helpline number should be capable in attending the calls round the clock. The Insp/Sub Insp detailed for attending the calls should be soft spoken, having good communication skills, patience approach to handle distress calls, should have good knowledge about indigenous techniques to be used in disaster management. (If required, local language Interpreter assistance can also be taken by the team). HC/Ct detailed for recording/forwarding the details of caller should have good knowledge of operating social media like e-mails, SMS, Whatsapp or any other means. He should have knowledge of operating other communication means like QDA, satellite phone etc.

8.2 **Installation of Desk of Disaster Distress Helpline Number:** The desk of disaster Distress Helpline Number should be installed in control room of HQ DG NDRF. One computer with internet facility should be provided to the team. One smart phone compatible with computer should be provided to the team. In addition, one Landline should also be installed. In addition, recording facility for all calls should be recorded.

8.3 **Training:** Call operators (03 Insp/Sub Insp) should preferably under gone basic MFR, Flood rescue course and stress management course.





- 8.4 Desk Operator (03 HC/Ct) should have trained in operating all communication means available in NDRF like QDA, Satellite phone etc.
- 8.5 All the staff which would be deputed in the control room for duty of dealing with the 'Disaster Distress Helpline of NDRF' should be imparted with the training on the soft skills related to the job.
- 8.6 **Contact Details:** The team of Disaster Distress Helpline Number should have directory of NDRF to facilitate any requisite number in the process of counselling to victims/their relatives. Such directory should be updated on regular basis.

## 9. ACTIVATION PHASE:

9.1 The team of Disaster Distress Helpline Desk will perform the duties in 8 hour shift (2 each in one shift). Duty officer in NDRF control room will be the over all in-charge of the Disaster Distress Helpline number desk. Call Operator (Insp/Sub Insp) will attend the distress calls for counselling of victims or their relatives.

### 9.2 Duties of Call operator (Insp/Sub Insp) will be as under:

- a) He will be responsible for attending all calls on disaster distress helpline number.
- b) He should listen and understand the requirement of victim carefully.
- c) He is responsible for asking complete details of the caller/victims.
- d) He should provide moral support/indigenous method to negotiate upcoming crisis like flood/landslide etc to the victim if required. He should immediately, inform the SAR teams along with address which would be responding in the nearby areas where there is a requirement of taking immediate rescue action.
- e) In case victim is injured and asking medical help then he should tell improvised method to the victim in case of blood loss/fracture/any other problem before informing to the nearest field hospital available at disaster site. He should prepare a separate list of victims on which prioritized action is required.
- f) Other list of calls received from the relatives of the victims regarding whereabouts of victims may be prepared separately.
- g) After completion of any disaster management operation, he is responsible for preparing summary and feedback.
- h) During post disaster period, he should attend the call of victims and should counsel them for post traumatic distress disorders if any.
- i) He should provide the summary of distress calls to the duty officer of control room for further press release at the end of shift (the format is annexed with the SOP).

- j) He is responsible for up keeping of phone so that the phone should be functional round the clock.

**9.3 Duties of Desk operator (HC/Ct) will be as under: He will assist Inspector/SI in performing his duties.**

**9.4 Duties of Social Media Operator:**

- a) He will prepare the lists of distress call on computer.
- b) The storage of data recieved through verbal messages/SMS/e-mails/ WhatsApp/Twitter etc. should be cloud based so that any update either from HQ NDRF or from OSOCC is in real time and well scrutinised.
- c) The data should be stored in the performa (Performa is annexd with the SOP).
- d) He is responsible for requisite up keeping/maintenance of the computer .

**9.5 The format of information box required may be as under:-**

- a) Name, phone number & address of Victim
- b) Whether he is alone or in group (nos. of other persons in group)
- c) Date & time since he/she is trapped in crisis situation.
- d) Contact number of the caller/ victim's relative.
- e) The medical condition of the victim (whether immediate medical assistance is required or otherwise).



**10. OPERATION PHASE:**

**10.1 General:** The three teams of Disaster Distress Helpline Number Desk will perform the duties round the clock.

**10.2 Do's**

- a) Confirm correct identification of victims or their relatives.
- b) Note down the correct address and contact number of caller.

- c) Emphasize on victim's safety during counselling.
- d) Console/provide moral support to the caller by assuring him/her about help to be extended to victims.
- e) Correctly assess the risks/hazards at the place of victims.
- f) Advise indigenous medical techniques to victim if actually needed.
- g) Pass the information to OSOCC immediately in case of any emergent help needed to the victim.
- h) Always advise safe actions to the victims.
- i) Always respect each other and respect victims.

### 10.3 Don'ts

- a) Don't advise unsafe actions even in very emergent situation.
- b) Don't disappoint the victims.
- c) Don't give any false assurance to victims.

## 11. POST OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

11.1 After de-induction of NDRF teams from the disaster affected area, still there is need of providing support to victims to come over post traumatic distress disorders. Hence any victim suffering such disorders may call on disaster distress helpline no and ask advice. The team at DDHND will provide counselling accordingly. If any expert advice is required in a particular case, help of medical officers of NDRF may be obtained.

11.2 After completion of the operation, a summary of distress calls will be submitted by the team to DC (Ops). The report will include the following points:

- a) **Call received from relatives of victims**
  - i. Phone calls
  - ii. SMS
  - iii. WhatsApp
  - iv. E-Mail
  - v. Any other means

**b) Call received from victims**

- i. Phone calls
- ii. SMS
- iii. WhatsApp
- iv. E-Mail
- v. Any other means

**c) Details of action undertaken on information**

**d) Lessons learnt**

**e) Suggestions**

**11.3 Appreciation of the team at Helpline Desk:**

The efforts of all the personnel involved in the helpline desk should be appreciated by means of good entries/ cash rewards/appreciation letters as the case deemed fit, if they prove their utility for the humanitarian cause..



**11.4 Review of SOP:** The review of SOP will be done annually, in consultation with the team of Helpline Desk. Any amendments required in the SOP will be forwarded to HQ, NDRF with justification for approval of competent authority and updating of SOP. The changes in the SOP will be circulated to all concerned within a month.

**11.5 Case Study:** Review regarding Disaster Distress Helpline Calls and action taken, achievements, drawbacks, etc. will be carried out within a week on completion of any operation and a report in form of case study will be prepared and submitted to DIG (Ops). Review will ensure that all loose ends are tied up so that counselling of victims would be more effective in future.

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## HELPLINE INFO PERFORMA

To : In-Charge of Osocc

Info : Local NDRF Battalion, DIG of the Concerned Zone

From : Disaster Distress Helpline Number Desk (DDHND), HQ DG NDRF

No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date & Time \_\_\_\_\_

DDHND Srl. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Victims \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Caller \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Status of Victim Like Whether Victim is Trapped or Untraced or Injured Need Immediate Medical Assistance etc.

Area/Address Where Victim is Trapped \_\_\_\_\_

Any Specific Requirement of Caller \_\_\_\_\_









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