UNIT 9 DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ARMED FORCES, POLICE, PARA-MILITARY FORCES, NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME AND SCOUTS

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9.1 LEARNING OUTCOME
After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Appreciate the role and responsibilities of Armed Forces, Police, Fire Brigade and Para-military Forces
  Describe the role and responsibilities of National Service Scheme, National Cadet Corps, Scouts and Guides; and

- Discuss their interaction with government agencies during disaster situations.

9.0 INTRODUCTION
Armed forces are created to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of the nation and to safeguard the borders from outside aggression. However, along with internal and external threats, natural and man-made disasters could have serious effects. Armed Forces play an important role, when the disaster situation is beyond the control of civilian authorities. Para-military organisations also help the administration in times of calamity. Police, Fire Brigade, National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS), Scouts and Guides render assistance during disasters. These forces might not have much role in
disaster preparedness but have important responsibilities in handling of disasters. We shall be dealing with the various facets of this activity in this Unit.

9.2 ROLE OF ARMED FORCES

India has high mountains and coast line at its borders. To defend the borders, it has well trained and equipped armed forces consisting of army, air force and navy. In USA and certain other countries, navy personnel are referred to as marine personnel. All the three wings of armed forces are commanded by Chiefs of Staff, who jointly report to the President of India through the Ministry of Defence. The President is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The Chiefs of Staff Committee ensures efficient coordination among the three wings of the armed forces and keep them fit through vigorous training and exercise.

Any disaster can devastate the economic pillars of the nation. This will indirectly undermine the national security. The armed forces by virtue of their professionalism play a key role in crisis situations. The link between disasters and security comes to fore in an indirect manner through the deployment of armed forces for disaster relief. The primary role of the armed forces is to preserve the national interest by safeguarding the territorial integrity of the nation against external threats. Their secondary role is to assist the civil authorities in handling internal threats, maintenance of essential services, and also to help the central or state governments during calamities. However, troops and equipment cannot be pulled out from their places of deployment at random in response to a requisition for such aid, lest our national security interests are jeopardised by their sheer absence from the specific areas of their primary responsibility (Mammen, 2004).

The army being the largest force with its repository of expertise in human and technical resources, provides support, control, and restores the infrastructure in case of a disaster. The air force has a prime role in evacuating people from disaster situation, and providing relief commodities. The navy renders assistance in the form of provision of boats and divers especially in the coastal areas. The armed forces’ role in disaster preparedness is not much, but matters a lot in the aftermath of disasters especially in relief situations.

The armed forces are generally requisitioned when the situation is beyond the capacity of the existing administration to handle the crisis. The specialised nature of the structure of armed forces, presence of technical specialists in various areas enables it to perform the tasks in an effective and organised manner. Trained and disciplined personnel is the strength of the armed forces. In addition, the armed forces being the repository of specialised communication, transport, engineering resources, this helps in restoration of essential communication. Also they play a key role in provision of emergency medical treatment to the injured and sick and their evacuation to civil hospitals.

The organisation of the armed forces is structured to react quickly and respond rapidly in a fully self contained and highly mobile fashion. The armed forces have the built-in capability to launch itself into any kind of emergencies in a short notice. As a result of being trained and ready to perform their traditional defence tasks, the armed forces are well-organised and manage to provide, when required, support to a full range of relief services during disasters of severe magnitude (Patranabis, 2004).

Portions of material for this Unit are adopted from the Report of the High Powered Committee on Disaster Management, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, New Delhi, 2001.
In India, armed forces have always been in the forefront in situations of disasters, be it floods, cyclones or landslides. The Malpa landslides, Orissa super cyclone, Bhuj earthquake, recent earthquake in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed immediate response by the armed forces in moving to inaccessible areas to reach the pilgrims, evacuate them and provide immediate relief.

Institutional arrangements for managing disasters are the heart of disaster management systems. There is a pressing need for improving and strengthening existing institutional arrangements and systems to make the initial response to a disaster more effective and professional. Some of the areas where improvement is urgently needed are, comprehensive planning for disasters, including the integration of relevant armed forces formations into disaster management planning at all levels from district to state and central government. Some beginning has been made in this direction. Armed forces officers at the appropriate levels in various states are interacting with their counterparts on different aspects of disasters during the Civil Military Liaison Conferences. The armed forces have already initiated efforts towards human resources development through Disaster Management Courses and propose to establish a Faculty of Disaster Management at Pune.

The resources and capabilities at the disposal of the armed forces can be extremely useful in a crises situation and therefore, the district and state plans should incorporate the role expected of them so that the procedure for deploying them is smooth and quick. Their role in providing the Emergency Support Functions such as communications, search and rescue operations, health and medical facilities to the victims, transportation, power, food and civil supplies, public works and engineering and information and planning at the time of disasters is extremely beneficial. Since various agencies operating in the field of disaster management rely on the armed forces for timely assistance it is but needed that disaster specific training be provided to the personnel and incorporated into their training programmes.

A Special Disaster Relief Unit is being considered to be located in the Home Ministry under the charge of a Secretary level officer who would be the Secretary to the Group of Ministers. The details of such a set up would be worked out in due course for incorporation into the Disaster Management Plan in consultation with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. An appropriate organisational set - up at the state level to cope with incoming relief and rescue measures is an urgent necessity, so that in disaster situations of colossal magnitudes, no time is lost in directing incoming relief and rescue measures to the exact locations where they are required.

9.3 ROLE OF POLICE

The police has a multi-faceted role to play in disaster situations. Mishra (2001) analyses the role in two forms, namely primary and secondary. According to him, the police discharge the following roles:

Primary Role

The primary role of the police is basically evident during the management of the actual disaster situation. The important aspects of their primary role during a disaster include search, rescue, provision of life support systems, mobilisation and deployment of resources, communication system, security and maintenance of law and order.
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Secondary Role
This role essentially covers the pre-disaster scene. It is here that a gap exists in theoretical formulation of disaster management and its practical implementation on the ground. In any disaster management scene, the role of the police becomes very crucial. There is a need to incorporate their role formally in any management plan. This role eventually refers to the preparatory stage of disaster management exercise. Any planning for disaster management with prior signals must take stock of police resources and the role they can play in contingency planning. Preponderance, planning, preparation, performance are the four points that an efficient disaster manager has to remember. Since the police play an altogether different role in any disaster situation, they must concentrate more on the following aspects in order to be successful in their operations. Police must orient themselves fully to cope with any disaster situation. Special training programmes need to be organised to sensitishe the force for disaster-like situations followed by regular mock exercises.

Mobilisation of Manpower
For any disaster occurrence that shows prior signals; the police must take stock of their own resources and mobilise extra resources and manpower required to meet the exact disaster situation. Crowd of spectators, infiltration of media, visit of VVIPs and senior officers, traffic jams, inadequate communication, logistic support for victims and relief operators, and ineffectiveness of various other agencies during relief and rescue work are some of the impediments that the police are confronted with in a disaster situation.

The police hence has a critical role to play in disaster situations. It is mobilised to reach the site of disaster immediately with a view to carrying out relief and rescue operations in coordination with other agencies. It is also the responsibility of the police to maintain security and law and order at disaster locations where there might be chaos and miscreants may take advantage of the situation. Police personnel deployed for such relief operations prevent occurrence of cognisable offences including all offences against property, human body and public tranquility. The police communication system is made available for transmission and receipt of messages in connection with disasters. The police also regulate movement of victims, rescue and relief, medical assistance, and supplies. At the time of Gujarat earthquake in 2001, there were no search and rescue teams with trained dogs. A number of police personnel have since been trained in search and rescue work.

It is being perceived that essential elements of disaster management should be incorporated in the training at entry point of service to all police personnel. A code of conduct need to be prescribed for the police personnel to be observed strictly by them in any disaster situation and the contents thereof shall be notified for general information of the public. It shall be the duty and responsibility of the police personnel deployed for relief operations to prevent commission of cognisable offences including all offences against property, human body and public tranquility.

9.4 ROLE OF FIRE SERVICE
Fire management has emerged as a critical issue in urban planning due to the rising frequency of fire incidents leading to huge losses. Fires are very common in slum and squatter settlements in large cities and in high rise buildings. In a larger context of urbanisation and industrialisation, calamities play the role of igniting more dangerous and uncontrollable disasters like fires. During the Kobe Earthquake a large number of buildings
that could resist seismic forces were largely damaged due to post disaster fires. Apart from fires in cities, towns and villages, there are forest fires, mine fires, and disaster / accident related fires.

When it comes to the first response on the site of emergencies, the Fire Services of the country play a vital role. As provided by the Constitution of India, Fire Services is a State subject and they are placed under the control of the local bodies. The Director General Civil Defence Home Guards and Fire Services, a unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs, is the nodal Ministry that coordinates the fire service activities in the country. The service provides coverage to only 30 per cent of the community, which is grossly inadequate for our population. In small towns and villages no fire services are available which generally have to come from far off places. Managing fires is more technical than perceived. There is a need for a comprehensive study in risk evaluation of each single area, preparation of risk mapping plans for each zone, study of preparedness level in terms of special equipment and training of personnel, foolproof communication system and periodic mock drills.

Unlike what is generally understood, the role of Fire Services is not just limited to being a fire fighting service but it also plays the role of a disaster preventive agency specially in urban areas. It can provide basic search and rescue services and can also coordinate in event of a disaster situation with other agencies like the police and health services. In order to further strengthen the capacity for responses, the fire services are proposed to be developed into multi-hazard response units. The government is considering strengthening to provide services up to sub-divisional level to all state, capitals and metropolitan cities.

The normal fire season in India is from the month of February to mid June. India witnessed the most severe forest fires during the summer of 1995 in the hills of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The fires were very severe and attracted the attention of whole nation; an area of 677,700 ha was affected by fires. The quantifiable timber loss was around Rs. 17.50 crore.

Mine Fires
Mine fires are caused due to spontaneous heating of coal and carbonaceous matter in the rocks. In coal mines the fires could be underground fires which have remained underground or may become surface fires, fires in coal benches in open cast mines, fires in overlying rock mass, fires in overburden dumps or fires in coal stacks. Such fires in the coal fields not only consume huge quantity of coal but also do not permit exploitation of coal in adjoining areas and in underlying coal seams. Combating mine fires, especially the underground fires that have remained underground and those that have become surface fires, is a costly proposition.

The fire fighting capabilities are indeed very essential, but these are mostly curative measures. More importantly, preventive measures are required to address this critical issue effectively and efficiently. Hence, for efficient control and management of fire disasters it is essential to implement proper land-use zoning, land subdivision and building regulations. The National Fire Service College (NFSC) in Nagpur is the premier institution that offers a course in Fire Engineering and Technology for in-service personnel and for fresh candidates.

Efforts are also being made to impart fire education to the public. Every year Fire Service Week is organised from 14-20 April, during which public education programmes through
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various methods such as public lectures, demonstrations, mock drills etc are launched. There are two NGOs – the Institution of Fire Engineers (India) (IFE) and the Loss Prevention Association of India (LPA), which play a key role in imparting fire education and training of fire service personnel, and creating awareness amongst public.

The Delhi government in the aftermath of the recent earthquake has stepped up efforts to strengthen the Fire Service personnel. It has already procured certain specialised equipment for fire service personnel like Snake Cameras, Hazmat Vans, Cutters, Bawzers etc. (The Times of India, 2005).

9.5 ROLE OF PARA-MILITARY FORCES

Traditionally armed forces have been entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the external security of the country while the police has been entrusted with the internal security and law and order. However, with the growth of population and increasing demands for catering to protection of industry, vital installations, VIP security, riots, specialised agencies have been created by the Government of India. Some of the specialised para-military organisations are:

- Border Security Force
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police
- Territorial Army
- Assam Rifles
- Coast Guard
- Central Reserve Police Force
- Central Industrial Security Force
- Rapid Action Force
- Railway Protection Force
- National Security Guard
- Home Guards

Law and order is a state subject and the police are under the command of the state government. All para-military forces, including Civil Defence Organisation are under the control of the Government of India. These para-military organisations are deployed to assist the local police whenever necessary. The para-military organisations are also useful in times of disasters. The Collector or local administration can request the commander of the para-military organisations to help if the situation demands. The role of para-military forces is important as they may be called upon for additional assistance in situations requiring it. The Government of India is in the process of training and equipping of eight battalions of Central Para-military Force as Specialist Response Teams and constituting National Emergency Response Force (NERF). These eight battalions have been restructured into specialist teams; each team consisting of 45 personnel including structural engineers, medical officers, para-medics personnel, communication personnel etc. It is envisaged to have 144 teams in all which will be located in various parts of the country to facilitate quick disaster response.
Central Industrial Security Force

Each of the specialised agencies listed above has specific functions as their names indicate. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) was created for security of the assets and key personnel of the central government industrial organisations i.e., public sector undertakings. The CISF has an important role, particularly in disasters involving industrial units or locations. The security work of the airports in India is also assigned to the CISF.

Rapid Action Force

Rapid Action Force (RAF) is a specialised agency created, to deal with disaster situations, which are beyond the capability of the local administration and quick action is needed to tackle particularly during riots or civil unrest. It is quickly flown to the place of incident.

Civil Defence and Home Guards

The central government may make rules regarding utilisation of Civil Defence Corps in disaster response such that they remain in a state of continuous preparedness. A comprehensive role for these services should be formalised in a harmonised structure for disaster management. Each of these services should be integrated into the State disaster management plan and work under the concerned State department for disaster management. The State Disaster Management Acts being enacted should include Civil Defence as one of the agencies for relief and rehabilitation.

India has a large network of civil defence and Home Guards Volunteers. The existing strength is about 1.2 million. However, this organisation has not so far been associated with disaster mitigation, preparedness and response functions. It is proposed to revamp the civil defence organisation to enable them to discharge a key responsibility in all facets of disaster management including preparedness.

The Chief Wardens of Civil Defence in every town should be accorded appropriate status in civil administration hierarchy especially with regard to their role and importance in disaster management. Their services when utilised should be properly recognised. There should be a multidisciplinary unit, which will come into action for activating and following up various functions and responsibilities entrusted to Director General of Civil Defence in case of emergent situations. Civil Defence, Home Guards and Fire Services should be placed under the administrative and operational control of the state level disaster management agency.

Ex-servicemen

Every year nearly 60,000 defence personnel including approximately 3,000 officers join the ranks of ex-servicemen in our country. The majority of them retire at a young age between 32 to 50 years. Their total number is estimated to be 5.5 million out of which over 1.5 million are registered. They constitute a national asset - a vast human reserve that is disciplined, trained and developed to exacting standards. This potential force needs to be brought into the national disaster management structure and assigned an appropriate role in the overall response mechanism. The High Powered Committee (HPC) had recommended that this be carried out at the stage of preparation of state, district and local level disaster management plans. Ex-servicemen could be employed for creating disaster task force at the local level.
The National Service Scheme (NSS) was introduced in India in a formal way in 1969. The central theme, which Mahatma Gandhi tried to impress upon his student audience time and again, was that they should always keep before them their social responsibility. The foremost duty of the students should be not to treat their period of study as one of the opportunities for indulgence in intellectual luxury, but for preparing themselves with dedication in the service of those who provided the sinews of the nation with the goods and services so essential to the society. The Education Commission of 1965-66 recommended that students at all stages of education should be associated in some form of social service. In 1969, the NSS Programme was launched in 37 universities covering all States. Some other similar programmes prevailing presently are:

- Youth Against Dirt and Disease
- Youth for Rural Reconstruction
- Orissa Cyclone Relief Work
- Gujarat Earthquake Relief Programme.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 has recognised the role of NSS in serving the community. The main objectives of NSS are:

- Understanding the community in which they work
- Identifying the needs and problems of the community and involving themselves in problem-solving process
- Developing among the young a sense of social and civil responsibility
- Utilising their knowledge in finding practical solutions to individual and community problems
- Developing competence required for group living and sharing of responsibility
- Gaining skills in mobilising community participation
- Acquiring leadership qualities and democratic thoughts
- Developing capacity to meet emergencies and natural disasters; and
- Practicing national integration and social harmony.

The broad areas of its activity are:

a) Environment enrichment and conservation
b) Health, family welfare and nutrition programme
c) Programmes aimed at creating an awareness for improvement of the status of women
d) Social Service programmes
e) Production-oriented programmes
f) Relief and Rehabilitation work during natural calamities
g) Education and recreation
Nehru Yuvak Kendra

Now one of the largest grass roots level organisations of its kind in the world, Nehru Yuvak Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) was established to harness and channelise the power of youth on the principles of voluntarism, self-help and participation. On the present reckoning, youth form nearly 35 per cent of the total population which has crossed one billion mark. India's youth also account for 35.8 per cent of the world's total youth population. This is a vital vibrant and dynamic human resource bearing on the future of not only India but also the entire world.

The NYKS has 500 district officers, 46 regional offices, 18 zones, 1000 youth development centres and over 181 thousand village-based youth clubs enrolled under it. The purpose behind these clubs at the grass-root level is to form village-level voluntary action groups of youth that may come together with concern for the poorest of the poor.

The strength of NYKS lies in 5000 national service volunteers and nearly 8 million youth volunteers through a vast network of Youth Club and Mahila Mandal at the grass-root level. Through NYKS these village-based organisations have become local pressure groups as well as catalytic agents for socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental transformation. These groups have in fact become Functional Action Groups with rural sustainability and self-reliance as their hallmark. When viewed in these terms, the role of NYKS could be defined as that of not merely an organisation but a mass movement that can play an important role in disaster management.

9.7 ROLE OF NATIONAL CADET CORPS, SCOUTS AND GUIDES

The National Cadet Corps (NCC) came into existence on the 16th July, 1948 according to the NCC Act XXI under the Ministry of Defence with the following objectives:

1) Develop character, comradeship, ideals of service and capacity of leadership in the youth of the country;

2) Stimulate interest in the defence of the country by providing service training to the youth;

3) Build up a reserve to enable the Armed Forces to expand capability in a national emergency.

The NCC was given an inter-services image in 1952 when Air Wing was added followed by the Naval Wing. In 1952, the NCC curriculum was also extended to include community development as a part at the behest of Jawaharlal Nehru. In December 1972, an evaluation committee was set up under the chairmanship of Dr G S Mahajan, Vice Chancellor of Pune University which recommended the following aims for NCC:

1) Development of leadership, character, comradeship, spirit of sportsmanship and ideals of service.

2) Creation of a force of disciplined and trained manpower which, in a national emergency, could be of assistance to the Army.

3) Provision of training to students, with a view to developing in them officer-like qualities, thus also enabling them to obtain a Commission in the Armed Forces.
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The activities of the NCC fall under the following categories:

a) Institutional Training
b) Community Development
c) Youth Exchange Programme
d) Sports
e) Adventure Training.

In view of the important role of NCC in disaster management, there is a need to emphasise on:

- Physical fitness including their participation in adventure, sports and games to make them eminently suitable for assisting the country in such situation.
- Activities to shape defence force aims and objectives. As defence forces are many a times required to work in disaster management area, the NCC also tries to give some similar inputs to NCC cadets, and some training inputs are there in their activities which enable them to provide services such as first aid.
- Develop trained and disciplined NCC personnel to help the country in the eventuality of disaster emergency.

Role of Scouts and Guides

The founder of scouting movement in the world was Lord Baden Powell. The Boys Scouting and the Girls Guiding as movements started in India in 1909 and 1910 respectively. The Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG) came into being in 1951 by the merger of earlier organisations. "Be Prepared" is the motto of Scouts and Guides.

There is a graded system of training of Scouts and Guides. After learning and acquiring certain skills, they have to pass examinations and are awarded certificates and badges. The lowest level is called Tender Foot, then Second Class, moving on to First Class. There are about 90 Proficiency Badges, like First aid, Rescuer, I-landyman, Pioneer, on passing of which Scouts and Guides get Certificates and Badges. More the Proficiency Badges they pass, better it is; as they learn different skills. If a Scout or Guide completes all the requirements for President's Scout or President's Guide, they are awarded President's Scout or President's Guide Badge and Certificate by the President of India under his own signature.

Scouts and Guides are trained in knots, first-aid, swimming, river crossing, path finding, camping, trekking, direction finding, estimation, construction of simple bridges, community service and many more arts, crafts and skills. In tune with their Motto, Scouts and Guides are trained to be prepared for any eventuality in life, even disasters. They are also trained to be good team players. They learn how to survive in difficult situations and also get acquainted with the techniques of minimising response time in the event of disaster. Due to their training Scouts can be good resource in disaster scenarios.

9.8 CONCLUSION

There are strong linkages between disasters and national security; therefore we should safeguard our security interest as well as efficient management of likely disasters. Armed
Forces are highly trained and disciplined organisations which have been very usefully deployed in disaster situations. There needs to be specialised training of armed forces in disaster management. The coordination mechanisms between armed forces and civilian authorities need to be institutionalised.

The police has an important role in maintenance of law and order, particularly in disaster situations. Police personnel deployed for such relief operations prevent occurrence of cognisable offences including all offences against property, human body and public tranquillity. The fire brigade not only provides fire fighting services, but also helps in evacuation, search, rescue, and many other ways.

There are many para-military organisations which are specialists in their fields provide specialised services during disasters. Home Guards have a vast network of trained volunteers. NCC, NSS are also helpful in disasters. Scouts and Guides having their motto as “Be Prepared” are always prepared to help in all sorts of ways during disasters.

9.9 KEY CONCEPTS

Assam Rifles: It is a para-military force. Currently there are 33 battalions of Assam Rifles under the control of Ministry of Home Affairs. It was initially known as Cachar Levy formed under British colonial rule in 1835. It was formed as a police unit to protect settlements against tribal raids and other assaults as British rule slowly moved to northwards. The name of the Unit has changed many times to Assam Military Police to Frontier Police. Assam Rifles was assigned as a new name in 1917 as recognition of their part in World War I. One of the tasks of the Unit, after independence was to assist in resettlement activities in the aftermath of 1950 Assam earthquake. In 1962, Assam Rifles were the front line troops in beginning of the Chinese-Indian war. They also maintained their peace-keeping roles in the North eastern India in the face of tribal unrest and insurgency. (en.wikipedia.org)

Border Security Force: It was created in 1965 to replace multiplicity of state police forces guarding the borders. Its function is to guard borders in the North West and North East sectors, instil a sense of security in the people living in border areas and prevent cross-border crime, smuggling and counter insurgency. It has a role in provision of calamity relief, medical and other relief for residents of far-flung border areas.

Bawzer: It is a fire tender with triple the capacity of an ordinary tender.

Coast Guard: It is an independent armed force of the union which was created in 1978 with the enactment of the Coast
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Guard Act of 1978 by the Parliament. It is responsible for enforcing National Laws in the waters under the National jurisdiction and ensures safety of life and property at sea. It is entrusted with the responsibility of entering the provisions of enactment in force in maritime zones, assisting the customs and other authorities in anti-smuggling operations, preserving and protecting the maritime environment etc.

Chiefs of Staff Committee: The Committee comprises the Chiefs of Staff of the three wings of defence Forces. They are Chiefs of Army, Naval, and Air Staff. The senior most of the three chiefs serves as the Chairman and reports to Defence Minister.

Home Guards: An organisation of trained volunteers who could be summoned in case of need for civil defence or disaster situations. They are under the overall command of the Director General of Civil Defence.

Snake Cameras: A camera at the end of an extended walking stick to gauge extent of damage or people buried inside the rubble.

Hazmet Vans: These are hazardous material vans for chemical disasters which are equipped to check the type of gas, whether noxious or not.

9.10 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


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9.11 ACTIVITIES

1) Find out about the units of the Armed Forces in your local area. Contact the Commander of the unit, and enquire about disaster preparedness plans the trigger mechanism (act to initiate) to activate the plan, and the coordination mechanisms they have with the civilian authorities.

2) Contact the Police Officer of your local area, and enquire about the disaster preparedness plans. If there is a disaster in your area, how would the police handle it? Does the police have a mechanism to take help from the local citizens? Attempt to focus on these aspects.