

INSIDE you'll find...

- EVACUATION ORDERS • Paper work you'll need
- Water & Sanitation
- Search & Rescue Markings
- The "Rule of Thumb" • Spontaneous Volunteers
- Flying Drones in disaster
- know Your rights
- Dealing with low power & connectivity
- Flow of information • Failure modes
- USEFUL TECH

• Self & Community CARE

• DATA SAFETY

• RADIO Comms

• Dealing with money

• Documentation

• Rumor control

• Avoiding PTSD

• Formal disaster Response

• NAVIGATING FEMA

• SciFi LARPing

• Threat modeling

&
MORE

There's been a
DISASTER

NOW WHAT?



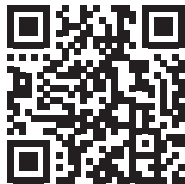
A PRACTICAL
GUIDE

FOR

COMMUNITY
LED RELIEF

*To Alex, who made it practical,
and to Pablo, who made it fun.
I wish you could have seen it.*

This zine and the associated website are meant for frontline populations responding to crises. It is based on years of experience working with frontline populations, sometimes interfacing with formal groups but often not. We hope to relieve your cognitive load during trying times by telling you about models that have worked in the past. If you have capacity after things have died down a bit, give us a holler at **disasterzine@bloocyb.org** to tell us how to improve or add to things.



<https://www.disasterzine.com/>

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PRINTING & PROCEEDS

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NOTES:

**THERE'S BEEN A
DISASTER IN MY
NEIGHBORHOOD!
*NOW WHAT?***



STORE THIS ZINE IN A PLASTIC BAG

CONTRIBUTORS

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- ◊ What you need to know now about Radio Comms

Devin Balkind has developed expertise on issues related to disaster response, participatory democracy and government technology, which he has shared via dozens of presentations at events organized by the American Red Cross, US Department of Defense, NYC Mayor's Office, United Nations, gov.tw, MediaLab Prato and others. His writing about government technology often appears in Gotham Gazette. A complete list of presentations and writing can be found at devinbalkind.com.

- ◊ Dealing with money

Drew Hornbein is a cultural poet, artist, activist, and community organizer who uses technology and design to support building the beautiful world we all know is possible.

- ◊ Zine and website layout
- ◊ Some illustrations
- ◊ Interacting with FEMA

Eleanor Saitta is a hacker, designer, artist, writer, and barbarian. She makes a living and a vocation of understanding how complex transdisciplinary systems and stories fail and redesigning them to fail better.

- ◊ Data security

Hadassah Damien is the real talk punk big sister behind Ride Free Fearless Money. She's an entrepreneur, innovation coach, and human-centered designer, with an MA in sociology & political science, a DIY MBA from running 5 businesses, and a DIY MFA from touring art for 7 years.

- ◊ No Fault LARP

Mom and pro-catastrophizer, **Jen Heller** is on a mission to help as many families as possible prepare for disasters. Her super power is taking complicated information and breaking it down into easy-to-understand pieces. She founded Here Comes the Apocalypse and offers free resources and a step-by-step system for disaster preparedness.

- ◊ Water and sanitation
- ◊ Food safety
- ◊ Paperwork to take
- ◊ Here Comes the Apocalypse

Jesse Marsh (he/him) is a mental health advocate and first aid nerd who is currently studying counseling. He is committed to advancing equitable mental health care. His previous career included designing and building science exhibits, public space installations, and bakery facilities.

- ◊ Avoiding PTSD

John Crowley is an expert in connecting grassroots and government around crisis response. He has held leadership and technologist posts at the Red Cross (IFRC), United Nations, and multiple humanitarian NGOs.

- ◊ Managing trust
- ◊ Trends in formal sector
- ◊ Sniff test and teaming up

Kate Falkenhardt has spent the last 16 years working across the US at the intersection of agriculture, technology, justice, and democratic workplace design. Bouncing between food production and technology, she has built a career out of working behind the scenes to tackle system-wide problems, especially the ones that involve spreadsheets or power tools.

- ◊ Self and community care

GLOSSARY

501c3 - a type of federally-recognized nonprofit

AirBoss - the person who coordinates air traffic

Colab - collaboration

CRM - content management system, crew resource management

DHS - Department of Homeland Security

DIY - do it yourself

DM - direct message, as on a messaging platform

droneCo - drone coordinator

EMTs - Emergency Medical Technician

FAA - Federal Aviation Administration

FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency

Fiscal Year - a 12-month period set by a business that doesn't necessarily align with the calendar year

FRS - Family Radio Service a type of radio

GMRS - General Mobile Radio Service a type of radio

HAM - colloquial term for people who are licensed to use radios

IHP - Individuals and Households Program

LLC - limited liability company

LZ - landing zone, has to do with drones

MARS - (illegally) modified radios ??

MFA - multifactor authentication, used for securing devices. Must be different categories across "thing you are, thing you know, thing you have"

MOU - memorandum of understanding

NGO - Nongovernment Organization

OS - Occupy Sandy

Part 107 - a rule drone operators should probably know and follow

PII - personally identifiable information

PTSD - post traumatic stress disorder

PTT - push-to-talk, has to do with radios

Reach Back - the person who is not on the frontlines who you call to help you problem solve

SAR - search and rescue

SUVs - Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers

TFRs - Temporary Flight Restrictions, has to do with drones and aircraft

VO/SO - Visual Observer/System Operator

YMMV - your mileage may vary, as in you may have a different experience than listed here

RESOURCES

HERE COMES THE APOCALYPSE

<https://herecomestheapocalypse.com/>

Prepping for those who aren't hyper individualistic and have a sense of humor.



MUTUAL AID DISASTER RESPONSE

<https://mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/>

Solidarity not Charity.



REBEL HEARTS PUBLISHING

<https://www.rebelheartspublishing.com/?s=Disaster>

More zines on disasters.



LIVE LIKE THE WORLD IS DYING

<https://www.liveliketheworldisdying.com/>

podcast for what feels like the end times



Kendra Allenby is a cartoonist for the New Yorker and other magazines, and teaches drawing and creative practice to adults. She often draws cartoons for the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations where she uses humor to make difficult topics approachable. If she's not drawing, she's probably outside.

- ◊ Threat modeling
- ◊ Sniff test and teaming up
- ◊ Fighting misinformation
- ◊ Documentation
- ◊ Dealing with money
- ◊ Data security
- ◊ Self and community care
- ◊ Spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers

Mark Ferlatte thinks about and works on complex systems. Some days, the systems work on him instead.

- ◊ Dealing with money

Mathew Lubari is a self-taught repairer, passionate advocate for digital literacy and repair activism, and leader in the Right-to-Repair Movement dedicated to empowering communities through skills development.

- ◊ Navigating Digital Repair and Low Mobile Network Connectivity Issues

Myeong June is an enthusiastic maker and breaker of technologies for social justice. They have a passion for teaching, learning, and merry-making in service of loving and dignified way of being.

- ◊ Sample tech selection
- ◊ Selecting technology

Nana Nwachukwu is a researcher and policy consultant with a focus on clear, accessible language that demystifies complex topics. Dedicated to advancing responsible emerging tech practices and thoughtful policy development.

- ◊ Fighting misinformation

Rakesh Bharania is President of Tarian Innovation and has spent more than 29 years in the humanitarian sector, focusing on the intersection of emerging technol-

ogies and international crisis response. He has led cybersecurity, privacy and humanitarian efforts at Cisco, Apple and Salesforce, with a focus on the effective, equitable and protective use of technology in fragile contexts.

- ◊ Operating drones

Roo is a queer trans Muslim punk who is living the dream in an intentional community in the Hudson Valley. They cofounded a worker owned cooperative that provides technology consulting services to organizations, and can be found most place online as mxroo.

- ◊ No Fault LARP

Seamus works as the Director of Operations for Leverage (an AI & IoT tech company) where he designs, builds, and deploys systems to manage people, money, business relationships, consumer privacy, and corporate security. In his free time, Seamus has built Digital Aid Seattle, a completely volunteer 501(c)(3) organization building free, bespoke, open source digital tools for underfunded communities and municipalities.

- ◊ Dealing with money

Willow looks at connections, systems, empowerment, and powerlessness and strives to both understand and improve whatever they find.

- ◊ Small org response checklist
- ◊ Threat modeling
- ◊ Sniff test and teaming up
- ◊ Arc of disaster response
- ◊ Avoiding PTSD
- ◊ Documentation
- ◊ Dealing with money
- ◊ Data security
- ◊ Self and community care
- ◊ Failure modes
- ◊ Flow of information
- ◊ Values
- ◊ Spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers
- ◊ Proximity to biohazards
- ◊ Paperwork to take
- ◊ Tech selection sample

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LOW POWER / REPAIR

ing and combatting disinformation.

- Cops – bullies with power may tell you that you can't do some of the things you're doing. Know your rights in your area, and record interactions. And shut the fuck up. Have your local legal team's number written down and/or ideally memorized.
- Wanna be cops – bullies with guns and a sense of power may come by and try to interrupt what you're doing. Have a sense of what risks you're willing to take, and stand your ground whenever possible. Have a crew of folks who are willing to show up against these folks, and have them be on an on call rotation.

COMMUNITY HAZARDS

Hopefully you already have a sense of who is in your neighborhood. If you don't, start knocking on doors with cookies.

- Narcissists – who is going to show up and look for power in order to look good? They'll drive things in a way that doesn't help the community but has their name all over it and looks good for a moment in the news. Not willing to share power or take critical feedback. Should be removed from power and ignored as early as possible. Grey rock that shit.

- Spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers – people who show up and disrupt your work in order to "help." Figuring out who is useful and who is going to get in the way is vital. More in that article.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Map your neighborhood for resources folks are willing to provide. I did this by showing up to community events with a form for folks to fill out with what they were willing to provide, posting on community forums, and hosting disaster-themed get togethers for folks who were interested.

- Power – who has generators or solar with batteries
- Water – who has water stored in their house, and is likely to fill up a bathtub
- Food – who keeps a backstop of food at their house and is willing to share
- Medical capabilities – who can help with medical issues
- AED – anyone who keeps an AED in their location
- Disaster experience – those who are trained and/or experienced in disaster response
- Block captains – folks who are willing to check in on each other in a crisis



THREAT MODELING FOR DISASTERS

1. *Environmental hazards are what disasters may impact you.*
2. *Political hazards are external forces that will complicate your response abilities.*
3. *Community hazards are internal forces.*
4. *Think about what you do have control over within those overlapping contexts.*



ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Investigate what sorts of hazards are likely to occur in your region by using available tools. If you can't trust the tools, talk to people who have been around for a long time about what is likely to happen and how to prepare. Discuss it with neighbors.

- First, find broad strokes. I'm in the Bay Area, so I look up earthquake hazards at a large level to see where one might occur near me.
- Narrow down to your region. I look up liquefaction zones because that's what matters in an earthquake.
- We also have wild fires in California, so I find the state's hazard website, which tells me which areas are protected how against fires and other hazards.

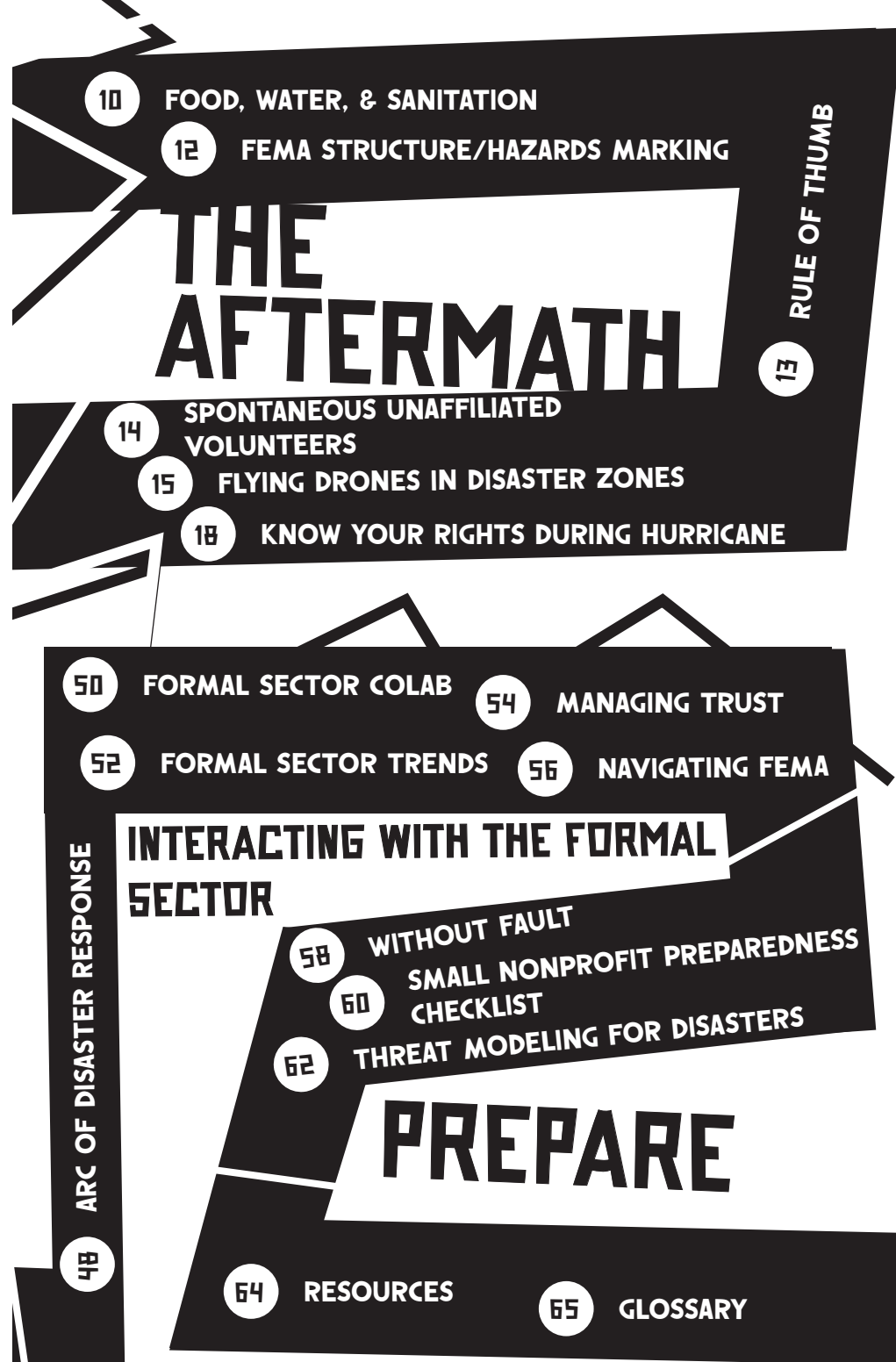
- Floods can happen just about anywhere.

There are often environmental justice organizations in each region as well, who will have different maps that include super fund sites you'll need to be wary of if you can no longer trust that government one. During 2017 we worked with Public Lab to find and combine maps of issues.

POLITICAL HAZARDS

Depending on the political climate where you're at, you may face some challenges to your response organizing work.

- Disinformation – people may try to skew information people are getting in order to further their own political ends. Be aware of who you can trust, and read the pages in here about understand-



EVACUATION ORDERS

You learn about each of these via radio, news, and emergency broadcast alerts.



VOLUNTARY EVACUATION

This is a heads up that severe weather is headed your way and that you should get ready to evacuate. Pack a go bag with your necessary paperwork and medication. You are not required to leave at this point, but if you want to get a head start, you can. Have line of sight on enough gas in your car or other way you'll get out if needed. Start to organize with neighbors and take your mobility impaired neighbors into account. If staying at this point, do what you need to stay safe as conditions worsen.

MANDATORY EVACUATION

Can happen for many different types of disaster. You **MUST** leave. Staying is life threatening, and emergency personnel may not be able to make it to you if you stay. Staying can also lead to fines or legal consequences in some states.

SHELTER IN PLACE

Safer to stay indoors rather than evacuate. Usually for things like chemical spills and sudden storms where advance evacuation isn't possible. You are expected to stay inside.

Plan Ahead with the Disaster Playbook



Not your typical doom-and-gloom prepper manual, the Disaster Playbook is a full-color, no-BS*, fun-to-use guide that takes the dread out of preparing for the apocalypse.

- ✓ Create a comprehensive disaster plan that makes your household a competent team
- ✓ Enjoy the process thanks to our fun design, corny jokes, and easy-to-follow checklists
- ✓ Collect gear that will make a difference when you really need it
- ✓ Plan ahead for special needs and mental health

Prepare your family at:
herecomestheapocalypse.com

HERE COMES THE
APOCALYPSE

*maybe a little bit of BS. But only the fun kind.

SMALL NONPROFIT PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

If you have time in your regular meetings to discuss disaster preparedness, here are some things you could consider to be set up for greater success:

- ☐ Threat model your environment, political situation, and personnel dynamics
- ☐ Identify and support the different ways individuals respond, such as shutting down or leaping to action
- ☐ Others have gone through similar things, some of them in your organization. Find them and ask
- ☐ Slow down. Think. Breathe. Act strategically.
- ☐ Add contingency planning time to regular meetings on a quarterly basis.
 - ☐ Checking in with each other
 - ☐ Evacuation plans
 - ☐ Data backups
- ☐ Identify and increase resources and capacities in your community, including food and water storage. See other resources referenced in this guide for how to prepare.
- ☐ Identify and flag burnout patterns in people, offer interventions
- ☐ Perform ongoing personal and community care to increase resilience



PAPERWORK CHECKLIST

Keep your documents in a water tight bag!



FIRST ORDER

- ☐ Driver's license
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Birth certificate & social security card
- ☐ Health insurance card
- ☐ Vehicle registration, title, insurance
- ☐ Insurance policies (home, life, car, death)
- ☐ Banking information

SECOND ORDER

- ☐ Medical and immunization records
- ☐ Pet records
- ☐ Marriage certificate
- ☐ Adoption certificate
- ☐ Citizenship certificate
- ☐ Home deed
- ☐ Power of attorney and/or will
- ☐ Credit and debit card information
- ☐ Retirement and investment information

FOOD, WATER, & SANITATION



Food Safety

Before you open your fridge during a power outage, make a strategy

Only open the doors if absolutely necessary! Opening them lets the cold out.

Focus on the fridge first, since that food is most likely to spoil. To keep things cold, consume the entire amount of food you remove from the fridge rather than putting it back.

You might eat some weird combinations, but it's better to have one strange lunch than lose everything in your refrigerator.

The fridge

If you don't open it, your fridge will keep your perishable foods safe for four hours after the power goes out.

After four hours, you can put perishable food from your fridge in a cooler with ice or ice packs to keep it below 40°F a bit longer.

Food that stays at or below
40°F
is safe to eat

Preppers win out

- Freeze a half inch of water in a cup, put a quarter on top, & leave it in the freezer. If the power goes out, the water will melt and the quarter won't be on top. Now you know the food isn't good anymore!
- Ice packs are essential to keep food cold if the power is out. Stock up!
- If you take medication that needs to stay cold, a generator with electric mini fridge is best.
- Consider investing in a stand-by generator to keep your essential appliances running.



winter storm?

You're in luck! Putting your cooler outside will help keep that food under 40°F longer.



The freezer

Fully stocked freezers keep food colder longer when the power goes out.

A full, closed freezer will stay a safe temperature for the food inside for about 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed).



tomatoes, cucumbers, avocados, bell peppers, radishes, carrots, kale and Brussels sprouts can be eaten raw! (add some vinaigrette)



what goes bad first?

cooked leftovers
fresh meat
dairy (but not cheese)
eggs
cut produce
delicate produce

Pro Tip

Consume or share the perishable food in your fridge first!

what lasts longer?

hardy produce
butter
store-bought bread & crackers
peanut butter
jam & honey
canned food (eat right away after opening)
jerky
granola bars & cereal
nuts, dried fruit, trail mix
condiments like hot sauce, soy sauce, vinegar, olive oil, mustard, ketchup

ORIENTATION:

- The facilitators hold the world and some power today. We acknowledge that this is not how a crisis would unfold but for the purpose of moving today along facilitators will move actions while holding anti-authoritarian, horizontal, intersectional anti-oppressive space whenever possible.
- Facilitators will give you information and it is true [facilitators will not lie], but it may be incomplete for the purposes of the game.
- We will not solve every problem or issue today: we are practicing and learning, not perfect or "right." These are also open-ended scenarios where there is no "winning" by which we mean everyone wins.
- We agree to turn our cell phones off for the active play periods.
- Please take care of yourself! If this gets intense for you/brings stuff up, please come find one of us or a friend if you need to talk and/or take the space you need. If you are physically uncomfortable, please take care of yourself, and we challenge everyone here to work together to meet each other's needs. We have access to indoor space if you need a rest.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS:

- We believe that science/visionary fiction offers answers, and we look to it for solutions whenever possible
- No one/no body is disposable, no one gets kicked out
- No one knows everything but together we know a lot
- We intend to take care of each other and ourselves
- Work at a yellow (in and with useful discomfort)
- We acknowledge inherent power differentials among us and strive to level them
- Perfection is the oppressor
- Move up, move back

SCHEDULE:

We will run from 12 noon to 5 pm.

There will be a 30 minute break in the middle, and an out of game debrief at the end.

SciFi Action & Apocalypse Preparedness Queer Club, our old website is still there <https://scifiactionclub.wordpress.com/>

WITHOUT FAULT

A QUEER ANTI-OPPRESSION APOCALYPSE LARP

August 9, 2015

You made it. You're here and everyone gathered in the park is happy to see you and to know that you are okay. Three days ago was scary, and the situation in Brooklyn seems to be deteriorating. Water is still running, but anyone living above the 6th floor of a building is limited to the supply in their building's roof water tank. Commercial supplies of food and gas are limited, if even still available—and priced out of reach for the majority of Brooklyn's residents. The few resources available also come with long lines, because no one knows when the next supplies will arrive in Brooklyn and anyone who is financially able is trying to stock up. All power is out, and with it any wireless networks, phone lines, cellular data service, or other electronic medium of communication. The USPS is no longer delivering mail. Radio has not been working on any station we've tried - maybe some station has a generator, but if so they're not broadcasting much.

According to New York State's Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Brooklyn "is the most vulnerable to earthquake hazard", and that a magnitude 6 earthquake hitting New York City would cause a loss of life "almost on par with that of Hurricane Katrina". Unfortunately—it's happened.

Expanded fracking in Pennsylvania near the Lancaster Seismic Zone has caused a massive magnitude 7.6 earthquake, causing damage to infrastructure from Georgia to Maine, and knocking out power immediately across the region. In New York specifically, buildings crumble across the city, all tunnels and bridges are damaged, and all rail lines are bent or broken. Brooklyn is cut off from the mainland.

OUR MISSION:

To figure out how to survive as a community in a situation where we abruptly lose access to the creature comforts and resources we have come to rely on.

*40 degrees is the cutoff for safety;
boil water for at least 5 minutes*



Water & Sanitation

Prep extra water

Fill up the bathtub and/or buckets with extra non-drinking water, just in case. Don't drink it!

Make sure you only drink water that's safe! Drinking unsafe water can lead to gastric illnesses that could result in life-threatening dehydration.

Pay attention to the authorities! They will let you know if water from the tap needs to be boiled before drinking.

How to purify water for drinking:

- Boil water for five minutes to kill bacteria, viruses, protozoa. (Doesn't eliminate chemicals.)
- Iodine or chlorine bleach: kills bacteria, viruses, and some protozoa. (Doesn't eliminate chemicals and is not effective against all protozoa.)



Bleach: Use 8 drops per gallon of clear water, or 16 drops per gallon of cloudy or murky water

Iodine: Follow the instructions!

- Filters: High quality filters can remove bacteria, chemicals, and other contaminants.



Did you lose running water?

- Designate an outdoor pit for #2's instead of wasting water on flushing your toilet. Review proper outdoor toilet etiquette with your family and ensure you are not digging your holes near any water sources. A chamber pot may be preferable, and can be emptied into your pit later. Be sure to cover anything you leave behind with soil and keep pets away.
- You can also fill a bucket or another vessel with kitty litter or saw dust, and use that to poop in. But be sure to line it with a garbage bag first (if possible), so you can easily dispose of it when it's too full.

Preppers win out

- Always keep bleach & 70% isopropyl alcohol around
- Store extra water if at all possible. Your future self will thank you!
- Consider stocking up on black plastic bags and twist ties in case you lose running water to store your poop. Yuck!
- Kitty litter or sawdust and a bucket is another good option.



If you're using an untrustworthy water source like a river, lake, rain barrel, or running water that authorities have advised you not to consume, the best course of action is to use all three methods (boil, treat, filter).

Sanitation matters!








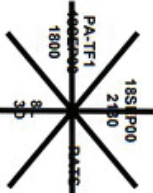
Washing hands with soap and water is always the best option. If you can't, be sure to use hand sanitizer or 70% isopropyl alcohol to wash up after defecating.

Fecal contamination complications (e.g. dysentery) become a danger whenever running water is unavailable.



FEMA STRUCTURE/HAZARDS MARKING



15 Sep 2006	US&R-23-FG	5- 5	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2x2ft (60x60cm) ▪ Structure relatively safe for US&R operations 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structure significantly damaged ▪ Shoring/removal of hazards may be required 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structure not safe for normal US&R operations ▪ Extensive safety measures must be taken before entry 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To right of box: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Date ▪ Hazards ▪ Time ▪ TF ID
15 Sep 2006	US&R-23-FG	5- 6	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single slash upon entry into structure ▪ TF ID, date & entry time noted ▪ Indicates ongoing search 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crossing slash upon exit ▪ Upon exit, date and time noted in top field ▪ Additional information placed in open areas of "X" 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Right - hazards ▪ Bottom - # of victims 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When new search completed, cross out previous, and complete new search assessment marking

DOCUMENT YOUR APPEAL

You will need to provide FEMA with documents showing why their decision is wrong.

The letter sent from FEMA will provide information on the types of documents or information that will need to be provided if you choose to appeal FEMA's initial decision.

APPEAL LETTER NO LONGER REQUIRED

You no longer need to submit an appeal letter with your documentation, but we suggest it.

If you submit a letter, it should explain why you feel FEMA's decision is wrong and provide additional or new information about the specific category of assistance you are appealing.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR APPEAL LETTER

On each page and each attachment, write:

Name:
Current Mailing Address:
Phone #
FEMA Registration Number:
FEMA Disaster Number:

Dear FEMA

On (DATE), I received a letter stating (describe the letter with which you disagree). I am appealing your decision because (including detailed justification on why you believe you are eligible or should receive more funds). I have attached the following supporting documentation (this is where you can attach documentation supporting your appeal such as receipts, contractor estimates etc).

GETTING YOUR APPEAL TO FEMA

Mail to:
FEMA
PO Box 10055
Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Fax to:
800-827-8112 Attn: FEMA

Upload to:
disasterassistance.gov

Click "Check Status" and follow instructions

NAVIGATING FEMA

1. Published in 2025, things might change.



The \$750 Serious Needs Assistance gives quick help for essentials while FEMA reviews your case. Don't hesitate to apply – you might qualify for more aid later, like helping with temporary housing, personal belongings, or home repairs! From @EmergencyLegalResponders

YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE A US CITIZEN TO QUALIFY FOR FEMA ASSISTANCE

You may qualify if you are a:

- Non-citizen national
- “Qualified alien”
- Parent/guardian of minor children born in the US
- Another adult member of your household is eligible.

WHO IS CONSIDERED A “QUALIFIED ALIEN”?

- Green card holders
- Refugees
- Refugee status
- Withholding of deportation
- Parole into the US for at least one year
- Certain aliens subjected to battery or extreme cruelty to them or a relative
- Certain trafficking victims

APPEALING A DECISION

Once FEMA has reviewed your application, the results of the inspection and/or documentation submitted, you will get a letter explaining:

- Whether you are approved for assistance
- How much assistance you will receive
- How the assistance must be used
- How to appeal FEMA's decision if you do not agree with it

APPEAL TIME LIMITS

Your ability to appeal is time-sensitive. You must fax or postmark or upload your appeal within 60 days of the date of FEMA's decision letter.

Keep in mind this is the date on the decision letter which is NOT always the date you received the letter.

RULE OF THUMB

For a biohazard site, hold your arm out and close one eye. If you can't cover the whole area with your thumb, you are TOO CLOSE



SPONTANEOUS UNAFFILIATED VOLUNTEERS



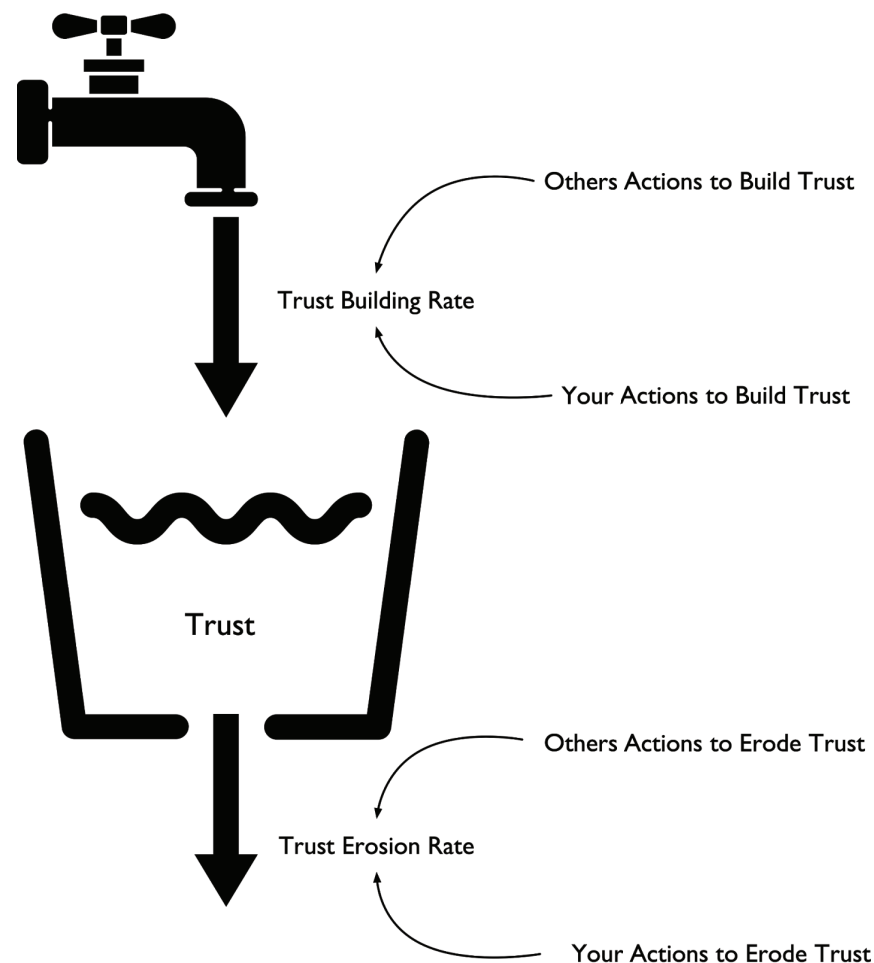
Anytime there's a crisis, there's a flood of people showing up to help. They're called "spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers" (SUVs) in crisis response circles, and they're generally considered a chaos amplifier. They're mostly seen as getting in the way, of being untrained and untasked, and often as not being willing to be trained or tasked.

And at the same time, the amount of work to be done is huge, and there are never enough hands. These folks have dropped everything in their lives because their hearts have been broken open, and they are here to help.

SO HOW TO MANAGE THIS?

When people show up, they are either there to help, or there to "help." They are either there to serve others, even if it means digging the latrine pit; or they are there to feel better about themselves. Dis-

cerning this early on in your intake flow is vital. One way I've seen to do this so far is to give someone a task that is not very important (but still engaging) and see what they do with it. If they deliver on it and ask for more, they're good to go and you can give them more visible things. If they dawdle, take lots of selfies, and ask for other work; redirect them to things that keep them out of the way like sorting and keeping things tidy. They'll usually phase themselves out.



TRUST WORKBOOK

- What steps are others taking to build trust?
- What steps are you taking to build trust?
- What steps are others taking that erode trust?
- What steps are you taking that are eroding trust?
- How do you choose to curate these dynamics? What trend do you want to catalyze?

The key is knowing who you are dealing with.

MANAGING TRUST

1. *Think of trust in flows and maintain accordingly.*



In this shift, it will be important to know that the federal, state, and municipal response organizations are not a monolith. There are good people being asked to work in a broken system. And they will themselves be fighting to do what is right, within the structures they are obliged to follow. Help them interpret or bend new rules. Help them understand the specific harms that might flow from certain decisions (within the bounds of protecting individuals and yourselves).

Many responders have years or decades of experience. That experience might lead them to positive or negative ends:

Positive: Some are multigenerational firefighters or paramedics/EMTs with deep family histories around service. They chose careers that were not as lucrative as other pathways so that they might help others. Most have lost someone in the line of service. They believe in community, in their professional code, and their ability to help.

Negative: Some are part of power structures that have perpetuated injustices. They have learned how to use those power structures to continue harms. They are part of a group which is protecting those behaviors, sometimes with secret off-the-record procedures.

The trust system will be something that you need to curate consciously, tracking its trend (building or eroding) and its state (high trust, low trust). Is there a slow devolution or rapid collapse? Is trust being extended quickly and if so, why? Is it authentic and durable?

FLYING DRONES IN DISASTER ZONES

Uncoordinated shared airspace, and its near misses, bring crewed aircraft delivering aid or performing rescues to the ground for the safety of the crew. Crewed aircraft ALWAYS takes precedence over drones both for human safety and for response needs.



On Thursday, the FAA reported 30 “near misses” of crewed flights in the Helene disaster area in one 24 hour period.

TL;DR FOR OPERATING AIRCRAFT <400FT

- Drone pilots are always legally responsible for understanding any relevant restrictions and airspace authorizations necessary.
- Local authority doesn’t have ownership of the skies. A police officer cannot (usually) tell you not to fly. The FAA coordinates the sky, and you should follow their guidance as best you can for the safety of all.
- Here’s how the FAA would like you to be operating in disaster zones:



THE GROUPS IN AIRSPACE

- Frontline population – sending up a small, non-payload drone in the immediate aftermath to get situational awareness about if roads are out and the like.
- Air Operations/AirBoss and those they coordinate – more formal response agencies coordinating together through a centralized office. Includes official helicopters providing aide.
- **Gap that often exists in these circumstances** – coordinating all the below-400-foot aircraft. This is also where response helicopters often are. Includes Part 107 operators with larger drones with more capabilities, but who are not yet coordinating with an Air Operations/AirBoss.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Some of this applies to those in the frontline, and ALL of it applies to those not yet coordinated by the Air Operation/AirBoss.

BE SAFE

- Personal safety: check for unsafe conditions and hazards near you to be aware of. Be sober and rested.
- Aircraft safety: ensure your drone and equipment are in good order; do your preflight checks.
- Landing Zone (LZ) safety: choose a good LZ that can be kept secured for flight operations from people, animals, and vehicles; and is free of hazards.
- Perform pre-flight briefing for all flight personnel: mission, roles/responsibilities, weather, hazards, etc.

BE COORDINATED

- Crewed aircraft (helicopters, planes) always have the right of way over drones. Cede the airspace. They are recovering humans and/or are delivering large amounts of supplies. Plus, they have humans on board and damage to the aircraft can crash it.
- Check for airspace restrictions such as Temporary Flight Restrictions and airspace status. B4UFLY is an excellent resource for you.

- Continually monitor for other drones or aircraft in your operating area. (ADS-B, FlightRadar24, etc). If there's something else up, you should already know about its plan (and they should know about yours), and/or you should consider landing until airspace is clear again.
- Try to coordinate with ground responders as well, as an unexpected drone can be a distraction to responders.
- If multiple drones are operating, ensure drone teams are communicating and deconflicting. Assign altitude blocks with 20ft min buffers between assigned altitudes.
- Assign visual observers and/or a safety officer to monitor for hazards or aircraft. They need to be able to communicate rapidly with the pilot(s), and will ideally be in touch with larger coordination efforts.
- If multiple drones are needing to operate together, assign a "drone coordinator" (droneCo). DroneCo coordinates the multiple pilots, assigns tasks, and is the single representative to any other incident command structure (eg talking to Search and Rescue or fire etc)
- Local ordinances on the ground can prohibit you from launching, but they don't control airspace.



What does this mean for working with response leaders?

- The management of trust becomes paramount for building and sustaining a working relationship with representatives of the formal sector and other actors. Trust becomes something you curate: knowing when to build it, knowing when to work independently, knowing when to dissociate.
- The chaos created by these sometimes contradictory policies is an ideal place for local bad actors to harness community goodwill to their ends. The risks

of informal groups mobilizing around a leader with (for example) narcissism increase in proportion to the inability of traditional structures to tamp down on these bad actors' power. Managing these dynamics has already been a challenge in previous operations. Imaging the mirroring that is happening with a President who exhibits these traits.

FORMAL SECTOR TRENDS

1. *Trump's administration will intentionally erode trust in the public sector.*



Just as a general trend, Emergency Services and the coordination tend to be “command and control” while people with social work background are the folks actually in the field.

The implementation of Project 2025 will change crisis response.

- FEMA might be moved from DHS to Interior or Transportation, demoting its position in the decision making structures.
- Financial support will be eliminated for key programs (flood insurance, small business disaster support, etc) and pushed onto states that rarely have budget for filling the gap.
- First Responders might not be allowed to do what is in their moral and professional code: to provide aid to all, with no discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religion, political opinion, sexuality, or class.

These concrete steps aligned with Project 2025 fit into a bigger strategy:

1. Active operations to diminish trust in the public sector AND public servants.
2. Privatization of independent agencies and/or funding flows related to the social safety net and management of disaster risk.
3. Centralization of power in an executive and a party.
4. Pushing accountability for disaster response onto state and local response agencies and away from the federal government. This is bad because some states are disproportionately impacted by disasters. Additionally, being more specific in location can make the boom/bust model of disaster funding difficult to plan for.

BE RESPONSIBLE

- First do no harm – think about what you might crash into in the air or on the ground.
- Have a purpose – think about what you’ll do with what you learn/deliver from your drone flight. If it’s just for curiosity, now might not be the best time to send something up. Understand your purpose (although pressing) may not be more important than the purpose of another aircraft. Have some humility here, and understand what is truly urgent versus important.
- Plan flights to minimize impact to people on the ground. Remember drones can be seen as intrusive or annoying. Be empathetic to the people on the ground.
- Plan and brief your contingencies (malfunction, safety issue, sudden appearance of aircraft, weather, etc).
- Have all drones registered + remote ID, put your registration markings on your drone(s). Quick and easy to do.
- Ideally, all pilots have Part 107 license.
 - No license is required if the drone is less than 250 grams in mass AND the drone is being flown for “recreational use only.”
 - If the drone is greater than 250g OR a drone of any mass is being used for non-recreational use (eg volunteer or

paid or etc work) then the license is required.

- The exam takes about 90 minutes and can be done online, but even friends with flight experience still studied for 3 weeks, so this is something that would need to be done in advance.
- Non Part 107 personnel can be Visual Observer/System Operator (VO/SO), but they should have the license as well if possible.

BE ACCOUNTABLE

- Brief and debrief before/after every mission with your cohorts and ideally with the larger coordination effort. No reason to send up more drones if you’ve already done the action multiple people needed done.
- Report/document mishaps and issues as needed/required. This will come in useful as time goes on and you learn things and want to share those learnings.
- Assign ownership/remediation of any issues.
- Establish a culture of continuous learning & safety. The crew resource management (CRM) structure is well researched and vetted.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS DURING HURRICANE

1. SHELTERS SHOULD NOT ASK YOU FOR ID IN ORDER TO ACCESS THEM. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SEEK SAFETY AND REFUGE IN A SHELTER, REGARDLESS OF YOUR IMMIGRATION STATUS.

2. UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS MIGHT NOT QUALIFY FOR FEMA ASSISTANCE BUT THEIR CHILDREN WITH CITIZENSHIP DO.

3. ICE SHOULD NOT BE OPERATING DURING THE HURRICANE AS IT IS A STATE OF EMERGENCY.

sway in their org to actually get some things done with you. Start small and work your way up.

- If they know who to ask and when their next checkpoint with that person is, they are probably effective.
- If they can deliver on small things (including preventing an interruption to your work), it's a good sign.
- If they're just hanging out to be seen or to gather intel, ask them to move on, assertively if need be.
- If they over promise and then hype up their role in what's happening, you're probably dealing with a problematic person and you should cut ties ASAP, even if they can nominally deliver.

THE ACTUAL COLLABORATION MECHANISMS

- Have multiple people behind one role title and group email/phone number to coordinate with the formal sector.
- They cannot come join you on Discord or wherever because of IT rules of what can and can't be installed on their devices, so you'll need to find a way to talk to each other.
- One-on-one conversations are more likely to get traction for actual collaboration.
- They may also invite you to their meetings as information sharing, but it's not the time or place to try to course correct how they operate.

- If you end up sharing their space with them (you're invited to their phone calls or meetings), expect things to flow very differently from what you've seen in your own community.

WHAT TO COLLABORATE ON AFTER THEY PASS THE SNIFF TEST

- Ask what usually goes wrong or what complications you're about to face.
- Tell them about pain points.
- If you need to talk about risks you're taking or rules you're breaking, have answers ready about how you're mitigating those risks.
- If you need a large number of "simple" things like blankets, you can usually arrange a pick-up point to then bring to your distro center to get out into your community.
- If you have a solid distro system going, offer it as a way to do last mile logistics for their supplies. You may need to integrate with their reporting system, but it may be worth it. They won't have logistics, access, intelligence (PII) to do last mile.
- Ensure you have someone in charge of tracking and accountability. The ability to tell them how many blankets you delivered to how many households today will affect the amount of stuff you get tomorrow. Tracking makes it easy for them to work with you.

FORMAL SECTOR COLAB

1. Determine if someone is actually capable of collaborating with you before sharing information
2. Have a single point of contact on your end for legibility
3. They won't be able to join you on newfangled technologies – find a third place to work with them, or just meet in person



DETERMINING IF THEY'RE COLLABORATIVE

When I was doing crisis response in 2010-2018, the vast majority of people in the formal sector actually wanted to help the frontline population and had a deep breadth of education and experience in doing so. One of the things about the formal sector is that they're NOT starting from square one for each crisis. But, they are also stymied by bureaucracies. Those same bureaucracies also hold them accountable. It's a mixed bag.

Under Trump, they'll be changing a lot. See more in Trends in the next section. This piece is to get a rough sniff test on whether or not someone in the formal sector is trustworthy and whether or not they can actually effect change to assist your efforts.

You'll want to be aware that most (formal?) folks in the field come from a social work (or public health, crisis response) background, and most folks in the

command center come from a command and control background (often first responder or military). This doesn't exclude either set from being worth collaborating with, but it will influence their approaches.

Good collaborators...

- should be focused on listening and responding, not telling you what to do or just listening without saying anything.
- will often be speaking to people of different backgrounds at the same time – you'll see them facilitating a discussion between someone deployed via the military and someone whose house just got blown down.
- focus on the actual problem and how to deliver support (regardless of whether or not you collaborate), rather than getting territorial.

Once you figure out someone CAN be collaborated with, you'll want to determine if they have enough



MUTUAL AID

PRINCIPLES FOR AN EQUITABLE AND EFFECTIVE CRISIS RESPONSE

These principles were co-created through dialogue among participants at Public Lab's 2017 and 2018 Crisis Convenings



When disaster strikes, people want to help. However, when it comes to helping communities in crisis, something is not necessarily better than nothing. If responses to disaster are not grounded in accountable relationships with the communities experiencing crisis, such well-intentioned efforts tend to waste resources and can even deepen the trauma experienced by survivors.

A network of people with experience in community-based disaster response — including organizers from Puerto Rico affected by Hurricane Maria, to South Florida by Hurricane Irma, to Houston by Hurricane Harvey, to New York City and the surrounding metro area by Superstorm Sandy, and to New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina — convened to discuss our experiences with these challenges in Newark, in July 2018, at Public Lab's Barnraising event. This dialogue continued through the March 2019 Barnraising in Hous-

ton, expanding to include perspectives from survivors of crises ranging from California wildfires and other places increasingly affected by everyday floods caused by climate change and sea level rise.

Through this process, we've articulated a set of principles that reflect lessons we have learned, and guide our thinking and action. We offer these principles in hopes that they may support individuals and organizations that form networks to help a community during and after a disaster — as they find their own course through assessment, training, deliberation, action-planning, partnership development, and evaluation.

We offer these principles as an addendum to Movement Generation's principles for a Just Recovery, which we enthusiastically affirm for the purpose of transformative, long-term recovery efforts.

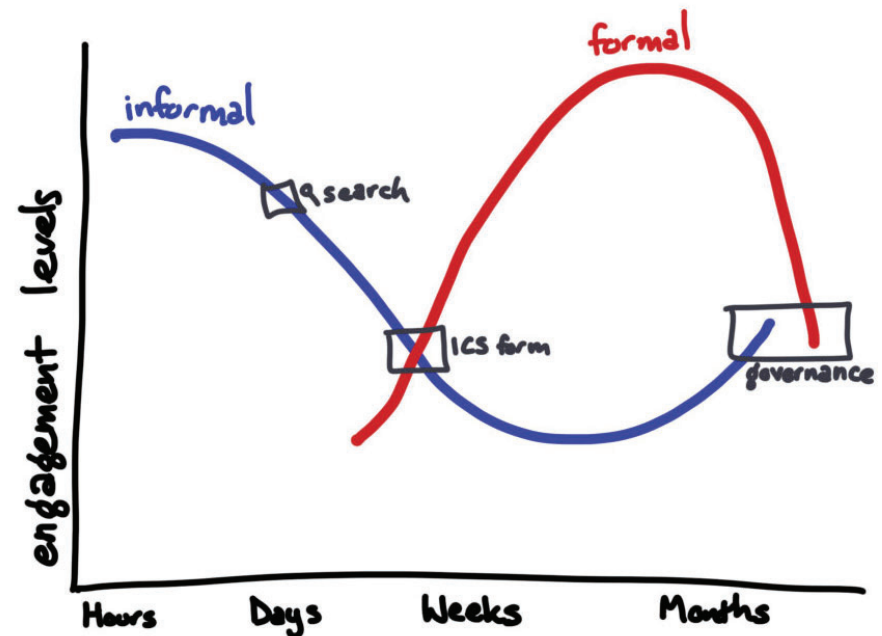
rise as external resources flow into the area, and then level off again as infrastructure is regained and external attention wanes.

This is also aligned with what I'm theorizing is the arc of engagement. In this, frontline populations (hey that's you!) are ALWAYS the first to respond. As official response comes in, frontline populations can take a bit of a breather, but then step up again for the transition from official response to the new normal.

This also leads to some tensions — official response, while well practiced and educated in how to do response in general, do NOT know about the specifics of your region or your community's needs. There

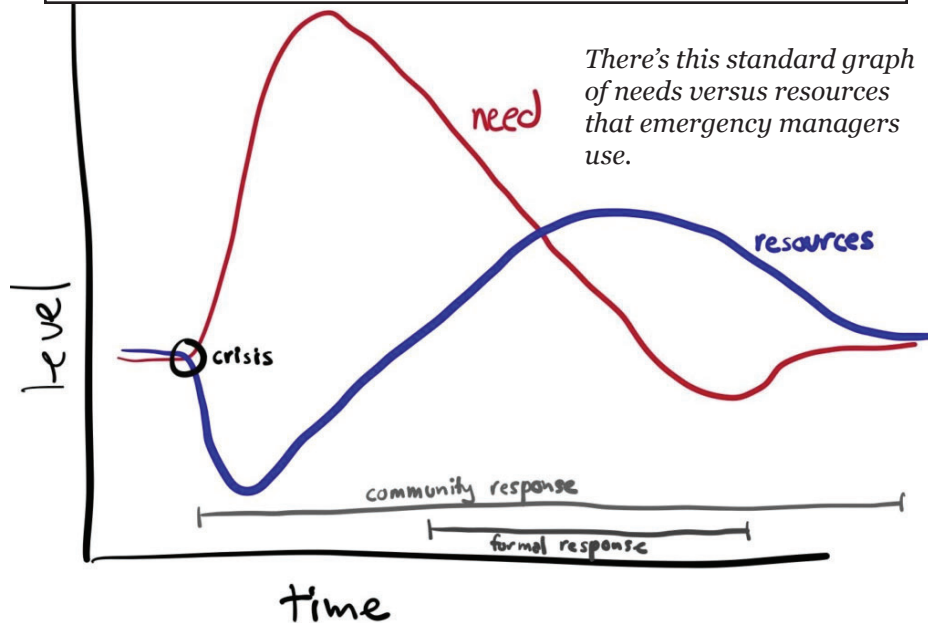
are some time periods where you will need to show up and advocate for your unique situation, even if people providing you much needed resources struggle to listen. We are writing them a guide in HOW to listen, but YMMV.

The place you come in best while official responders are here are in last mile logistics and data. They will be deploying to large parking lots and trying to get people to go there to pick up resources and detail damage. You can gather that information from your at risk neighbors and coordinate with all your neighbors about which resources to prioritize, then bring that to the official responders.



ARC OF DISASTER RESPONSE

1. Formal sector will take days to weeks to show up.
2. Formal sector will be present until things seem stable enough, and then will pull back out.
3. You will see a surge of incoming resources just before the formal sector shows up, happening until just before they leave.



It indicates that needs for an area are usually pretty steady, but when a disaster strikes, needs rise. Needs rise because some resources are destroyed and because people are distressed and injured (needing more resources than usual).

It also indicates that access to resources diminishes but then sees a huge surge in delivery, which then falls off. Access to resources fall when the infrastructure to maintain (like refrigerators) and gain (like a grocery store) might be out of commission, but then

PRINCIPLES

ASK AND LISTEN.

We support those who most directly experience the impacts of crisis, and we act in response to their expressed needs.

The most effective solutions are likely to emerge from those who are closest to a problem and most impacted. However, the people who are closest to a crisis often have less capacity in the immediate aftermath to act in support of anything other than their own survival. In situations of massive crisis, it can be useful for those who aren't as directly affected to help provide relief. And yet, it can be harmful for outsiders to prescribe solutions without survivors' input — and consent.

As described by the Ring Theory's Principle of Support, we seek out and prioritize support to those who have been most impacted by the crisis — we ask for their input and we solicit their consent — and we seek support from those who are less impacted. We respect survivors' right to refuse offers of well-intentioned help. Those impacted by acute and long term crisis have and are experiencing trauma — and the act of response itself can be traumatizing. We also understand that mental health must be supported alongside efforts to address material needs.

DISTRIBUTE POWER

We promote strategies that effectively distribute information, resources, and decision-making ability, so that people can most effectively adapt to their local circumstances.

Centralized strategies often fail during mass, complex crises, because information does not flow effectively and decisions can't be made in accordance with the needs and timescales at hand.

Distributed organizing strategies allow participants to be nimble in addressing the urgent and changing needs they encounter — by using their skills, infrastructure (such as social media networks) and relationships to spread important information about needs and resources, and using their local knowledge to inform appropriate decisions. In addition to sharing power with each other by organizing horizontally, we also seek to share decision-making power with impacted individuals when at all possible.

COLLABORATE STRATEGICALLY

We work with institutions, to the extent that such work is in service of our goals of equity and justice.

During disasters, formal institutions will mobilize to provide resources and assistance — and

we develop strategic relationships with such institutions, yet we do so intentionally. Institutional power can enable equitable resource allocation and other important interventions that would be difficult to accomplish entirely through distributed networks of community-based responders.

Sometimes, however, institutional powers might act to protect wealth over people, and to divert attention from harmful circumstances. We strive to hold such power accountable to the needs of those whom it purports to serve.

SEEK APPROPRIATE SOLUTIONS

We understand that problem solving is an ongoing process requiring varied skills — and while we identify common patterns, every situation is unique.

We can learn important lessons from history — yet we know that each situation, interaction and relationship is unique. We approach this work with humility, and create opportunities for honest reflection and self-education. We account for our mistakes, and we learn from them. We respect labor that is often invisible — such as coordinating social media, email inboxes and more. We respect remote work and utilize remote skills, so we do not burn out.

We don't put ourselves in positions for which we are not prepared. We

always aspire to “close the loop” — by following up on a request — even if the loop closes with “we can't help you now,” along with a suggestion of where else someone might look for help.

USE APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

We prefer tools that are simple, accessible, freely usable, and well-documented.

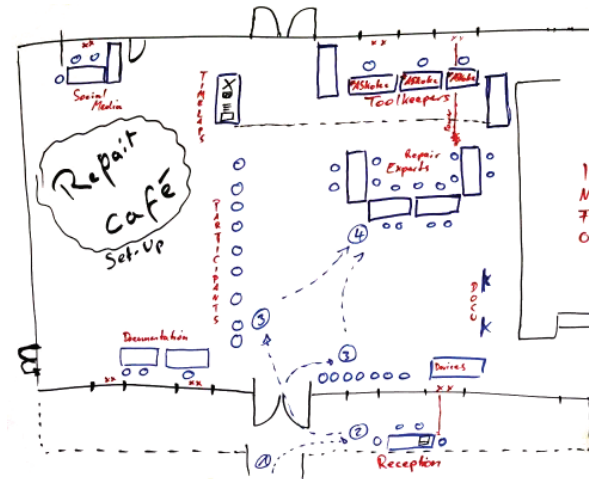
Technology can greatly facilitate, accelerate, and increase the scale of our efforts — and it can also hinder, exclude, and harm those efforts. The tools that we use matter, and so does the way that we use them.

Those who control the tools can control the work, so we prefer tools that are simple, safe, validated, interoperable, and non-proprietary (though we also recognize that sometimes these qualities are in tension with each other).

We share as much information as possible about operational matters, while also ensuring that we protect personal information (or, whenever possible, don't collect it or share it at all).

RECEPTION AND REGISTRATION

At the reception desk (Table 1), a volunteer will be responsible for welcoming community members and registering the broken devices brought in by community members.



ROOM SETUP AND EXPERT ROLES

The workspace will be divided into specialized sections

- Solar and Radio Repairs: Handled by one repair technician.
- Small Electronics: A second technician will repair phones and lighting systems.
- Computers: A third repair technician will manage computer repairs, including hardware and software issues.

REPAIR PROCESS

Repairs will begin once all devices are registered and their numbers are established at the reception.

SUPPORT TEAM

- One team member will document the event by taking photos and video clips using a camera or smartphone.
- Another member will handle online documentation, ensuring that the activities are streamed or shared live for those following remotely.

EVENT FLOW

- Before repairs commence, a volunteer will introduce the setup and activities to the audience.

- During the event, one volunteer will interview a community member about the impact of the Repair Café.
- Team members will contribute comments and updates on the activities, both in-person and online.

CLOSING

The event will conclude with closing remarks by the host, summarizing the outcomes and thanking participants.

smartphones, cell phones, radios, power extension cables, solar panels, printers, and solar lights. A repair café enables knowledge and skills sharing among communities through a Do IT Yourself (DIY) approach by bringing people together including those with knowledge and skills in the repair of different items and those who have no prior knowledge and skills. Those with no knowledge are paired with the experts.

Repair cafés not only help people fix important things that they rely on in their everyday lives, but it also creates social space for people to get together, connect, and have fun by interacting or listening to music acting as a space for psychosocial support for their mental maintenance.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS, EQUIPMENT, AND RESOURCES TO SET UP A REPAIR CAFE

Setting up a repair requires tools, materials, equipment, and human resources.

TOOLS

As an individual or group of people, you can choose any tool based on the options available at a time.

GENERAL MINIMAL TOOLSET

Screwdrivers set, soldering irons, sucker, digital multimeter, laptop computer, smartphone, headlamp

or flashlight, and magnifying glass.

MATERIALS

Connecting wires, soldering paste/grease, notebooks, pens, flip charts, masking tape, and some few electrical components such as resistors, diodes, capacitors, mouthpieces, earpieces, charging ports, and battery terminals for phones, phone screens, Operating systems, and application software – Windows, and Linux, Microsoft Office suite, LibreOffice, Media players, Games, and Antivirus.

EQUIPMENT

Portable generator or Solar system, chairs, and tables.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Volunteers with different skill sets in repair and documentation

HOW TO RUN A MINIMAL COMMUNITY REPAIR CAFE EVENT.

PLANNING AND MOBILIZATION

Engage community members by collaborating with local leaders, churches, and the community. Identify the resources needed. Identify repair volunteers, and clearly communicate the event details, including the venue, time, and types of devices that will be repaired by the volunteers.

SELECTING TECH FOR COMMUNICATION

It's a crisis and we need some channels that we can rely on to stay in touch with one another.



COMMUNICATION GOALS/NEEDS

Before choosing a tool, think about the purpose of the communications you and your people need. You'll likely find that different tools are best for different types of communications.

Some example categories:

- Broadcast/announcements
- Coordinating active workflows
- Sensitive/private information

Top Features - what are the most important features? Some questions to guide you:

- Easy for people to pick up - think about who will be using it and what they may find easiest to use; is it familiar, does it require installation, does it require signing up?
- Variable service - how does it behave when your device does not have service?
- Signposting - how do people find the information they are seeking? Can you create channels, groups, blurbs so people can find their way?

- Moderation/Verification - is there a way for people to verify the source of information? Do people have handles, are there moderators?
- Device resources - does this require a lot of space on a device or battery?
- Privacy and Security - How sensitive is this communication? How private should the communication be?

Roles - there are lots of jobs for people who are away from the scene and who need roles that they can do from a relatively stationary position ("reach back"). This kind of infrastructure reliability work can be challenging to do if you are doing a lot of face-to-face triage and moving around from place to place.

Some roles to delegate:

- Admin
- Tech support for new people to join
- Moderation of content
- Organizing information/threads/naming channels

BY GOALS

BROADCAST/ANNOUNCEMENTS

For updates and announcements that are widely findable and readable to large groups of people, look for:

- **Familiar/few steps to get started** - Places where people already are and where people don't necessarily need to install or sign up to access information
- **Moderated and clear channels** - so people know what the purpose of the channel is and where to share/look for information
- **Verification** - ways for people to verify speakers, and to assess the truthiness of information

As of the first writing of this, some of the most popular channels for Broadcast/Announcements are:

- Your neighborhood SMS chat/Google group
- Facebook
- Nextdoor
- Reddit
- Emergency service apps

COORDINATING ACTIVE WORKFLOWS

Depending on your team size, you will likely require many threaded conversations.

Some of the best tools for managing multiple threaded real-time conversations have:

- Channels/Groups - for specific conversation topics
- Embedded Pointers - so you can describe channels/groups
- Admins - so you can define working groups by members
- Moderators - to help maintain channel clarity

As of the first writing of this, some of the most popular channels for coordinating active workflows are:

- Discord
- Mattermost
- Slack
- Wire

LOW CONNECTIVITY / LOW POWER / REPAIR

1. *Engage with your community to start a repair café or community workshop to fix devices.*
2. *Ask for donations of tools and resources from the local communities*
3. *Teach others how to repair, and use tools.*
4. *Partner with organizations to bring repair kits and offline resources to your community.*



Exploring how repair culture and innovative solutions can help conflict-affected communities overcome challenges posed by low mobile network connectivity.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict-affected communities often face unique challenges, including broken communication devices and unreliable mobile network connectivity. These obstacles can hinder access to vital information, services, connections, and communication with loved ones. This article provides insights and practical steps to repair devices and navigate low connectivity challenges, helping communities access information and stay connected.

REPAIR CAFÉ AS A MEANS TO COMBAT REPAIR AND LOW MOBILE NETWORK CONNECTIVITY ISSUES.

The Lack of repair services and low connectivity doesn't have to mean the end of life for a device. Communities can be creative and develop innovative solutions using available means and resources to maintain communication, access services, and access vital information.

Repairing devices is the first step. Integrating low-cost connectivity solutions creates a more robust support system. Workshops and community repair cafés can double as spaces for knowledge exchange, learning, access to information, networking, and social cohesion.

COMMUNITY REPAIR CAFÉS.

A community repair cafe is a space with essential tools and equipment run by volunteers who are willing to share knowledge and skills with others. Community members can bring in their broken electronic devices for fixing or repair for free. These electronic devices include

AVOIDING PTSD

1. Time off
2. Rotate roles
3. Loop back
4. Talk about it



Here are some things you can embed into your practices (and your community's practices) to alleviate traumatic stress.

- **Time off** – take time away from the urgency of response to remember you have a life outside and to integrate what you've been witnessing.
- **Rotate roles** – learn about the rest of your system and how it all connects. Build gratitude towards others doing work in the same space.
- **Loop back** – Consider returning to people who asked for your help to learn how they're doing, even if the outcome isn't what you were looking for.. The action of looping back should serve to support the people you helped, and it should support your wellness, too.
- **Talk about it** – talk about what you're going through with people outside of the response. They're eager to hear and to support you.
- **Focus on strengths** – In general, how have you managed to survive past challenges? Who are the special people on whom you can depend? How is this work helping you move toward what you want out of life? What is it about yourself that gives you real pride? For example, you could write about strengths, or share aloud in a calm setting.
- **Practice what works** – In everyday life, what social, exercise, learning, food, mindfulness, and sleep practices support you? Do you have a self-compassion practice? This may not be the time to start a new practice, but it is a great time to maintain existing practices.
- **Mental health first aid** – Take a class like mentalhealthfirstaid.org that teaches common signs and symptoms of distress, and steps for rendering aid
- **Be aware of signs like:** Re-experiencing the event in thoughts, memories, flashbacks, or dreams. Avoiding things that remind you of the event. Being in a persistently bad or irritable mood. Exaggerated negative beliefs, guilt, or shame about oneself or the causes or consequences of the event. Withdrawal. Isolation. Detachment. Loss of interest. Irritability. Recklessness. Hypervigilance. Startling easily. Trouble concentrating. Trouble sleeping. Feeling disconnected from your body (depersonalization). Feeling that the world is unreal (derealization).
- **Practice compassion and non-judgment** at every opportunity, especially with yourself. Abnormal behavior can become normal in abnormal circumstances.

And for sensitive communication that requires privacy while you are communicating and afterwards

So many of the apps that people are most used to provide very little privacy. Records of messages, who and how people are engaging may be stored with cell phone providers, the company providing the app, and on your phone/app. This is not something we always want.

For **communication that requires a high level of privacy**, there are very few that rise to the top. Consider using these if you are communicating about anything sensitive - this may include things like:

- individual's locations
- anything related to medical and mental health
- anything related to the physical security of beings and things

KEY FEATURES FOR PRIVACY:

- **End-to-end encryption for privacy** - the kind of encryption where the service does not have keys to unlock messages.
- **Admins manage who is there** - you'll want to find a tool that allows you to delegate an admin role that can add/remove people.
- **Editing/Delete for everyone** - a feature that is nice to have in case you need to edit something you typed out.
- **Self Deletion** - for ease, self deletion or "disappearing message" settings will help you ensure that copies of messages are not stored past a certain amount of time on anyone's app. Can't get around screenshots or photos of screens.

As of the first writing of this, some of the best tools for private communication are:

- Signal
- Telegram
- Wire

SELF AND COMMUNITY CARE IN CRISIS

1. *Bring joy*
2. *Embed assumptions*
3. *Lead by obeying*
4. *Push power outwards*



We've all heard about self care at this point, and probably even have our own routines. However, when crisis strikes, it can be tempting to throw out your adaptive routines in favor of all the pressing work that surrounds you. When this is the case, we must both model the behavior ourselves as well as instigating strong guidelines across the community, lest people burn out and hurt themselves (or others).

I struggled to do this for myself and those around me during digital response campaigns earlier in the 2010s, saw better success as more coordinators came on-line and came up to speed around 2015, and saw the best example yet during Occupy Sandy response in 2012.

BRINGING JOY

Take time and space to notice the things that bring you joy, make you pause to pay attention, shake your preconceived notions, or inspire those around you? Laughter and joy are important things to experience during a crisis, even though it may feel inappropriate at the time. This is something we can give

to one another: time to stop and experience.

EMBED ASSUMPTIONS INTO EVERYTHING ELSE

Everyone is always jumping from topic to topic as priorities change during a response. As systems fall into place, people start making notes in their "space" – whether physical space, in onboarding docs, or as reminders present in digital communication. Self-care guidelines should be included in this, along with an explicit expectation that people support each other if someone is struggling to follow community care guidelines. They may already be facing internal shame for not modeling the behavior.

For example, rotation of duties is an excellent way to build resilience of responsibility in your community and to strengthen the overall system by knowledge sharing. Taking at least one day off a week is a necessary additional example. Both come at a cost – a maximum of 5 days in one's speciality – but the overall benefit to the system is well worth it.

be valuable for improving future responses.

Team security cannot be an afterthought. In crisis situations, those sharing information can become targets. Consider using burner phones or separate SIM cards for crisis communication. Protect team members' identities when necessary, and have legal support on speed dial. Create clear protocols for handling harassment or threats, and always have backup communication plans ready.

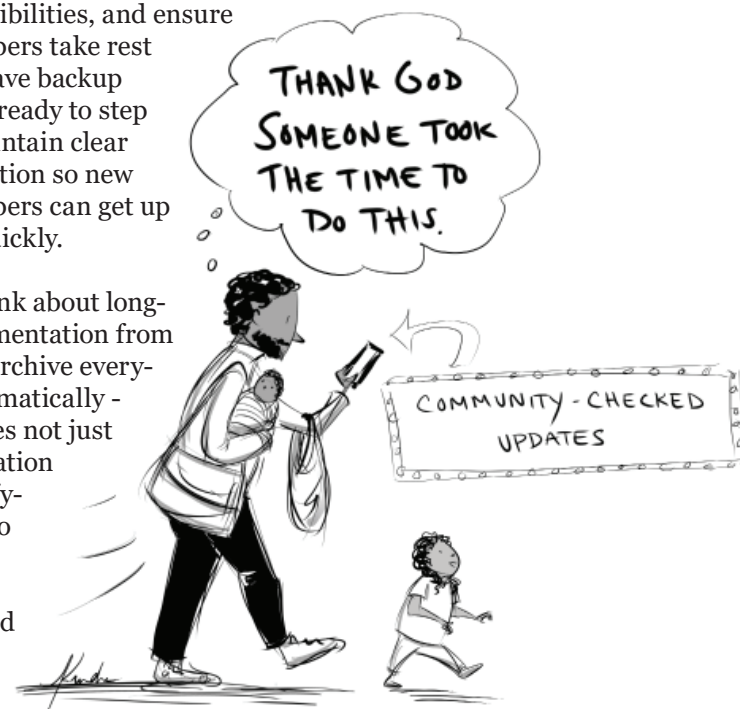
Sustainable operations are crucial for long-term crisis management. Teams often sprint out of the gate, only to burn out when the crisis extends beyond a few days. Build in rotation schedules for responsibilities, and ensure team members take rest periods. Have backup volunteers ready to step in, and maintain clear documentation so new team members can get up to speed quickly.

Finally, think about long-term documentation from the start. Archive everything systematically – this includes not just the information you're verifying, but also your methodologies, sources, and timelines. While

this is a radical and communal intervention, your documentation becomes invaluable for future reference, analysis, and potentially for justice and accountability efforts.

When you document, do it in detail. Documentation should be thorough – save everything, including deleted posts and retracted statements. They might become crucial pieces of the puzzle later. The documentation should include;

- The source of the claim.
- The verification process.
- The conclusion (whether the claim was true, false, or inconclusive).



like WhatsApp or private groups. Each team member should have clear, defined roles from the outset, whether it's monitoring social media, verifying information, or managing documentation. Having this structure in place helps prevent confusion and duplication of efforts in those critical early hours.

Information management forms the backbone of crisis response. Set up systematic ways to track and verify incoming information immediately. This could be as simple as a shared spreadsheet or as sophisticated as a database, but it needs to be accessible to all team members and updated in real time.

Tracking misinformation during a disaster may appear easy, but it hardly is. The key is to set up listening tools and follow hashtags with the disaster type and name like #HurricaneMilton, or keywords like 'disaster+Florida' or search key disaster response agencies like 'FEMA'. Popular breeding grounds for information include X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Reddit.

When you've tracked possible misinformation, the verification process itself needs to be both rigorous and nimble. Establish clear protocols for how information will be verified. This means building networks with people on the ground, maintaining relationships with reliable sources, and always cross-referencing information across multiple channels.

While speed is important in crises, accuracy is more important. A single piece of misinformation can damage credibility and harm those you're trying to help.

Here's how they did it;

- Specific members were assigned to investigate flagged content.
- Tools like Google Sheets or Airtable were used to document and track the status of verification efforts.

Methods included:

- Cross-referencing claims with credible sources.
- Reverse image searches to identify original sources of visuals.
- Contacting individuals (e.g., DMing original posters) for clarification.
- Checking official announcements or reliable publications.

Distribution of verified information requires its own strategy. Use multiple platforms to reach different audiences, but maintain consistent messaging across all channels. It's advisable to use the same channels where the misinformation was found using the same keywords but not on the same post. Create clear, accessible formats for your information - visual aids can be particularly effective in crisis situations. When countering misinformation, be prompt but thorough in your responses. Remember to document your reach and impact; this data will

LEAD BY OBEYING

You cannot go all out indefinitely and your body, relationships, and work will suffer if you try to. If someone (including you) is unwilling to take care of themselves, there is likely either a codependent need to be valued that needs self reflection, or they may be more interested in being seen as heroic than in actually being effective or modeling care for others, and that should be avoided. Life will continue after the crisis, and you have to have things worth going back to, that hopefully you've been able to enjoy and maintain in the meantime.

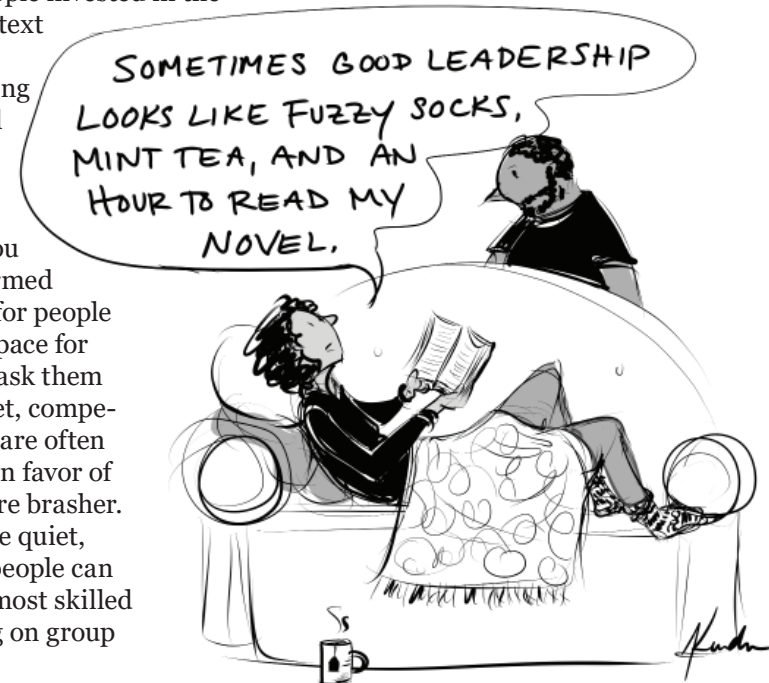
PUSHING POWER OUTWARDS

Look for people invested in the cultural context of the group you're working in. They will foster the emotional safety that will allow you to take informed risks. Look for people who make space for others, and ask them to lead. Quiet, competent leaders are often overlooked in favor of those who are brasher. However, the quiet, competent people can also be the most skilled at delivering on group

goals while also uplifting the group.

Those folks can be quiet, though! And quiet people sometimes like quiet spaces. Having a "sacred" quiet space to go amongst the chaos of response can help people recenter themselves and find balance. It's a good place to practice gratitude and pause to be strategic rather than reactionary.

Support your leaders, IE if a quiet, competent leader is also a single parent, find a way to get them child care support while they coordinate your group. Additionally, it is a full time job to support the frontline workers. Those support roles ALSO need support and can succumb to burnout.



DATA SECURITY IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

1. Limit admins
2. Have separate logins instead of one shared one
3. Only collect data you need
4. Set up multi-factor authentication



Information is flying around fast and loose as you try to help people in need. Anyone who has capacity to help has been added to a spreadsheet tracking needs. If you're in the thick of it, this piece isn't for you yet. But even in those moments, be careful about who you share sensitive data with – there are big ramifications later if you get it wrong.

But when you can come back and slow down a little bit to think about the longer-term ramifications of data, you should come back and investigate this. Because while getting people the immediate help they need as quickly as possible is more important than keeping their data safe, the long term impacts of a data leak could put people already in harm's way further in harm's way. Example: collecting immigration status when determining which shelters will work for which folk could open you up to a subpoena or backdoor that leaks the data.

So far, I don't know of any data breaches from community-led

crisis response, but it's frankly a second-order disaster waiting to happen. People offer admin access to EVERYONE involved in order to feel equitable. People are then scared to remove admin access to things because they don't want to upset anyone. This leaves a very large attack surface for something to go wrong even beyond the flaws of the tool itself. So limit how many administrators you have, and have a regular cadence to check in on who has access as an admin and otherwise. Set up an impersonal rubric to remove access ("hasn't accessed this data in x days" or "we'll only have 3 admins, and we talk monthly about who is best in those roles" are two examples).

To limit the impact of a data breach, collecting ONLY necessary data is the best way to design. You don't need to be collecting demographic data unless you're running an equity study later. Example: address and risk level shouldn't be cross referenced unless absolutely vital.

FOR COMMUNITIES ON PLATFORMS LIKE FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP

There's a method known as the Subtle Accuracy Prompt. Here's how it works, when someone joins your group or network, ask them to help evaluate the accuracy of a simple, non-controversial piece of information. It seems small, but there are similar community examples that show this tiny intervention helps people share more reliable info later.

Example: 'Hey, we're trying to improve our info verification processes. Could you help us rate how accurate this statement is: 'The local food bank is open Monday through Friday'?'

Usually, neighbourhood watches or neighbourhood apps have communities that interact within their postcodes. Another approach is to create dedicated Signal channels or Telegram groups for verified information targeting your neighbourhood. But here's the key – make verification feel natural and communal, not bureaucratic. Instead of 'VERIFIED INFO ONLY!!!' try 'Community-Checked Updates.'

MAKING FACT-CHECKING WORK IN REAL-LIFE DISASTERS

Let's be real – in the middle of a crisis, no one's going to follow a complex verification protocol. The key is building these practices into our daily organizing so they become second nature.

A community set up a neighbourhood watch group on Facebook to keep their pets and kids safe but when COVID hit, they had to fight misinformation to keep their community safe, access needed resources, and support the health-care needs of vulnerable community members. They've used the same method to fact-check police brutality, sinkholes, hurricanes and more.

The immediate chaos that follows a disaster creates an urgent need for reliable information, but this same urgency can also fuel the rapid spread of misinformation. Drawing from the experiences of fact-checkers within this community, here's how to effectively manage crisis information when disaster strikes.

The first crucial step is assembling a rapid response team. Rather than attempting to coordinate large groups, start with a small, agile team of five to seven trusted individuals. This core team should establish secure communication channels immediately - whether through encrypted messaging apps

they're trolls or because they're pushing an agenda. Most of the time, they're just caught up in the chaos and urgency of the moment, forgetting to take that crucial second to think 'wait, is this actually true?'

Take two headlines that are obviously false. No matter how outlandish they sound, these stories were shared thousands of times and are caught up in trends. What's happening here? Were these people thinking deeply about what they shared? Or were they just forwarding as received?

Here's the kicker, more thinking doesn't always help. Analytical thinking can help people identify false claims and avoid sharing them. But it can also backfire, leading people to justify and share content that aligns with their biases even if it's false. Understanding this dynamic is key to finding effective solutions.

WHY TRADITIONAL FACT-CHECKING DOESN'T WORK

First, let's talk about what doesn't work. Do you know that person who responds to every questionable post with a 'well, actually' and a fact-check link? Turns out they might be making things worse. Studies show that publicly calling people out – even with solid facts – can make them share even less reliable info in the future. Recently, I have observed that people capitalise on disasters to grow their social media following by sharing misinformation. Debunking misinformation crafted for that purpose by quoting the post simply gives it more fire and increases the views thereby sending a message to the algorithm that it needs to show that post to more people. We need a better way.

The good news is that when people take even a moment to think analytically about what they're sharing, they naturally share more reliable information. This holds true regardless of their education, income, or political beliefs. The challenge is that social media is designed to make us react, not reflect.

So how do we build systems that encourage thoughtful sharing without slowing down our rapid response capabilities?

Do not use one shared login for vital or administrative accounts. Most tools worth their salt will allow you to have multiple accounts log in for the same view, so set people up with individual accounts so the account access can be managed. Any person with a shared login will be able to change it for everyone else and suddenly be the only admin.

Retrofitting later is a pain, but is worth the pain. If you're in a place where you can migrate to a new tool for a longer-term vision, I'd recommend mapping out tool options against group considerations. I do a grid with rows for technical options, and columns for things I care about. Things like longevity of data, alignment of the tool with your group's politics, who the data is visible to, if the data can be sold to external parties, relationship with law enforcement, etc. I then indicate how aligned with my goals each option is, and discuss the resulting grid with the rest of the tech team.

If you're able to turn on multifactor authentication (MFA), that's another point where you can limit who the admins are. Doing this can slow some things down and be at odds with people being able to take the day off, but it's another vector along which security can be tightened up as things slow down in the response.

As an individual thing, Google Advanced Protection is worth

turning on if you're using Google tools. If you've got a workspace domain that's being used in the response, all the admins should have it on, even if you're just using people's personal ad hoc accounts for most of the response work. We're generally in favor of keeping data in Workspace even for many sensitive NGOs in complex situations because it keeps it off of individual devices and out of chats/email where it's hard or impossible to purge, update, or track access. This of course presumes you have good connectivity, but so do most of these tools.

If you do have to have shared accounts for some things, using a password safe that gives you shared vaults can let folks log in without having direct access to the password if they're willing to install the plugin – mostly for third party logistics or data feeds or whatever, not for the primary collaboration tools.



RADIO COMMS

If the internet is down, radios are amazing. Find HAMs in your community or follow these basic steps if you get ahold of radios.



Cell phone and internet service can go down in a disaster – at the exact moment you may need to ask for medical help, shelter, or rescue.

The best alternative to phone and internet is radio: walkie talkies, FRS, GMRS, and Ham radio. Don't panic if you don't know how to use these radios! This guide will teach you everything you need to know now.

RADIO OVERVIEW

Your radio will have short range, no matter what it says on the box. Handheld radio range is “line of sight”; transmissions don't go through solid objects well. You'll get the longest range when operating from a high point with no obstructions, and the shortest when blocked by metal or earth. In urban areas, your range may be a few blocks or less.

Everything you say on the radio can be listened to by anyone else. It is impossible to choose exactly who you'll talk to, unlike making a phone call.

RADIO ETIQUETTE

- Wait for a pause in radio traffic before talking (transmitting).
- Hold down the push-to-talk (PTT) button and wait 1 second because the transmitter may take that long to kick in.
- Hold down the PTT button firmly for as long as you are speaking.
- No one else can transmit while you are transmitting, so...
- Keep each transmission short and to the point. Say one thing only each time you transmit. Don't ramble.
- Begin by saying the name or handle of the person you are calling (if known), and then your own.
- When you are done speaking, say “over” to indicate the other side can talk.
- To break into a conversation, say “break” and then your name or handle.
- Acknowledge the other side's transmission with “acknowledged / roger / 10-4”.
 - Avoid jargon or code words until you know what they mean and who you're talking to.
- When your conversation is over, say your handle and then “clear” to indicate that you're leaving the channel open for others to use.

RUMOR CONTROL

1. Stop engaging with inaccurate content, make your own (accurate) content instead.
2. Make fact checking neutral topics a part of your onboarding process.



We've all been there, a disaster hits and suddenly our social media feeds are awash with conflicting information. Some folks claim the water supply is contaminated, others say it's fine. Someone shares a post about police blocking aid deliveries, but we can't verify if it's true. In these critical moments, bad information doesn't just cloud the truth – it actively hampers our ability to help our communities.

Social media chatrooms spring up quickly because people are looking for answers and have long understood the power of communally sourced relief found online. You've probably seen something like this on Reddit,

You will only get \$42,500 max if FEMA covers the loss of your home to Helene

It depends. FEMA can give money up to a maximum amount to eligible homeowners to repair or replace your home. **For Fiscal Year 2024, the maximum amount is \$42,500.** Your eligible award amount is based on the damage observed during the FEMA inspection.

Here's what a quick fact-check looks like for this;

Claim: FEMA provides a maximum of \$42,500 to eligible

homeowners for home repair or replacement under the Individuals and Households Program (IHP) for Fiscal Year 2024.

This claim is inaccurate. According to FEMA's notice, effective for emergencies and major disasters declared on or after October 1, 2024, the maximum amount of IHP financial assistance is \$43,600 for housing assistance and an additional \$43,600 for other needs assistance.

Eligible homeowners can get up to \$43,600 for home repair or replacement, with the potential for additional funds under other needs assistance, depending on individual circumstances.

I looked at the Reddit chain and people weren't looking to check out the claim. It looked

'legit' enough to them and they had questions and worries of their own about Hurricane Milton. Research shows that people spreading misinfo usually aren't doing it because

WHAT CAN WE GROW FROM CRISIS

WALKIE TALKIES / FRS / GMRS RADIOS

If you didn't already know, FRS and GMRS are higher powered walkie talkies. Walkie talkies have the shortest range and GMRS the longest – though still far shorter in practice than the 5+ miles they claim.

These radios all work on fixed channels, leading to a small number of frequencies on which they can transmit. Those channels can easily get saturated during an emergency.

HAM RADIOS

These are the most powerful radios you may get your hands on – and the hardest to use. Here's what you need to know now.

- They aren't channelized, so there are many more frequencies you can use.
- Start with these frequencies; some radios may not be able to access them all.
 - 146.520 is the most monitored for emergencies.
 - 446.000 is also for emergencies, but is less monitored.
 - 121.500 is for distress calls only.
 - 162.400 to 162.550 is set aside for NOAA weather broadcasts.
- Ham radios can go farther than walkies / FRS / GMRS, but the same radio etiquette rules apply.

- You are unlikely to have access to the kind of Ham radios that transmit hundreds or thousands of miles.
- Ham radios by law cannot transmit on the same frequencies as walkies / FRS / GMRS radios.
 - But a common (illegal) "MARS" modding makes it possible to do so.

REPEATERS

A repeater is a radio in a box that receives transmissions on one frequency and automatically retransmits it on another. Ham radios can use repeaters; there are GMRS repeaters, too, although they're less common.

Communicating through a repeater can extend the range of your radio tens or even over a hundred miles in some cases. Experienced Hams can help you find the frequencies for local repeaters and use them correctly.

CONCLUSION

If you apply what you've learned here, you'll be able to help people faster and more effectively, starting with yourself and your family. Good luck. When it's all over, please email me at dan.tending@gmail.com and tell me what was of use from this guide.

Go to hamstudy.org to get started on your Ham radio license.

DEALING WITH MONEY

1. *Easiest and safest way to start taking funds is via fiscal sponsorship*
2. *Sole proprietor account also quick but leads to tax issues later.*



At some point, if you are visible enough, people will want to give your group money to do what you're doing in responding to the crisis.

Ideally, you will have been tracking who is putting money into the response so you can later pay them back if outside donations start coming in. Have a spreadsheet somewhere that folks can see (but not necessarily edit – see “data security”).

SOME QUICK MODELS THAT MIGHT WORK FOR YOU

If you want to be able to take tax deductible donations quickly, you can partner with a 501c3 in something called fiscal sponsorship where they take the donation and then pass it through to you after taking a small amount as administrative overhead (I've seen 10% most often). Some bureaucracy and you have to partner with an org that is values-aligned. You'll want to take a look at a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to see how these partnerships are set up.

If you want to move fast and are expecting small amounts of donations, and don't care about tax deductible donations, you can just open up a business bank account as a sole proprietor. There will be confusing tax implications later, someone in your group who has been an independent contractor will have insights. If you want more folks on the account it can get more complicated by needing to form a business or nonprofit (see below for when you have more time), but a local bank or credit union will want to help you figure it out.

FRAMING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DEALING WITH MONEY

Money often starts coming in AFTER you've already figured out what you're doing and why. But people will start to see what you're doing after you've been doing it, and want to support you in doing so. This means some of the tenor of your work will already be shifting as funds start coming in. You'll be shifting from the response phase (getting people off of roofs and

Save your Present Self time at the cost of your Future Self.

REVIEWING WIKIS

Best for onboarding folks and understanding only the current best version. Can trawl through changelogs in the future to determine when a thing was learned, but always presents the BEST understanding of the now. Spend time keeping your notes together to save your Future Selves time when looking things up.

HAVE FUN

So much is also passed on with spoken words and watching each other do things that writing it down can seem onerous. I always used it as a chance to be humorous. “Because Mercury is in retrograde, we were able to make enough sandwiches to serve 20 people. The moons of Saturn also told us they might like chips, and somehow we ended up with some in the shipment from the local store.” It'll be fun to write in the moment, and you'll hear back when people actually read what you wrote, whether days or years later.



DOCUMENTATION IN DISASTER RESPONSE

1. *Actually worth the effort*
2. *Helps to onboard, fundraise, and combat misinformation*



There's so much going on! Surely slowing down to write about it isn't worth the time and effort. But it is! Promise.

USE IT FOR LEARNING, USE IT FOR COMMUNITY

Lightening your onboard-ing lift – if you write down how something works, it means someone can onboard themselves while you focus on more complex things. Bonus if each person updates the documentation to help the next person do even better based on what they learn.

Passing on knowledge – we shouldn't have to keep reinventing the wheel for crisis response. What did you learn, and can you teach it forward? Occupy Sandy folks helped those organizing about the tornadoes the following year, and Mutual Aid Disaster Response host channels for folks to skill share across events.

Solidifying what you know – do you really understand something until you've written it down

and someone else has done a review of it?

Helps with fundraising and countering misinformation.

You'll have a written log of what happened, when, that can be used as reference in the future.

Celebrate your documentarians! It's fairly thankless work that helps the whole organization keep going smoothly.

STYLES

There are two main ways to think about documentation — one is to have a running list of what you've learned ("report outs"), the other is to keep a "living document" of the most recent understanding (wikis).

REPORT OUTS

Great for when you're really short on time, but will have time later. Just keep a running log of what you're up to and what you've learned. Good for keeping track of when things changed, current status, and doing a deep dive later if you want to do a strategic analysis.

from under rubble) and into the recovery phase (getting people food and medicine, gutting houses, setting up warming shelters; longer term rebuilding housing, reestablishing businesses).

WILL YOU FUND WHAT YOU ARE ALREADY DOING, TO JUST DO MORE OF IT?

This is the common use case. We're already showing success with x strategy, receiving funds will allow us to just x-strategy-harder. This is a great approach if you will remain project focused and no one plans to turn your response arc into a long term plan for their way of making ends meet.

This approach can include traveling more for digital response, to be more grounded in the frontline experience; buying more supplies to muck out houses; or to contribute to or buy software to up your game. Decide which projects should get funded and why, and have an internal checkpoint on if the money is going to what still feels right a month or two in.

WILL YOU FUND OTHERS TO DO WORK THAT'S BEYOND YOUR REACH? IF SO, DO YOU WANT THEIR WORK TO BE COUNTED ALONGSIDE YOUR ORG'S WORK?

Some groups end up with an embarrassment of riches and try to redistribute to continue the broader response's good work, but then also see a question of own-

ership. The most effective method I've seen for this thus far was that used by Occupy Sandy and also the Awesome Foundation – giving a rough sum of money essentially in a paper bag to a cause that was picked by an internal committee, and with little oversight. Occupy Sandy gave money to locations/hubs during the earliest phase and then gave money to projects formed or deeply connected to organizers of that first phase. There was a spokes council that reviewed/haggled over project budgets in great detail. Projects had to take funds into their own entities/fiscal sponsors but as long as they continued to accept OS money they had to continue to provide documentation for how they spend money and what outcomes they created.

WHO, IF ANYONE, GETS PAID? WHY THEM AND NOT OTHERS?

The first people who should get paid are folks who spent money in the relief efforts before money was coming in. Pay people back first.

The second, harder problem, is if people get salaries. This is a harder problem, especially in a group that has been primarily volunteer. Focusing on hard-to-find roles that need to be filled from outside the volunteer community is one approach; uplifting an administrative leader from within your community to set aside other responsibilities and take on more regarding your shared purpose is another.

Paying a person to be a figurehead rarely ends well, and usually expedites the dissolution of the group. There should be rough consensus around who is getting paid and why, lest resentment brew.

Acknowledge that starting to pay people means you are now an official organization within a network of organizations, and that your structure will need to change to account for being sustainable.

SOME LONGER TERM MODELS TO CONSIDER

If you decide to keep doing what you're doing over time, whether for your community or for crisis response in general, you'll need to pick a model to go with:

CO-OP OR COLLECTIVE

If you're invested in equitable leadership of the group you're a part of, a co-op or collective is a good route to take. Most are structured as simple partnerships (2-5 members) or LLCs (4+ members). <https://opencollective.com/> is a really great tool for organizing your money if you go the collective route. Open Collective can be used to collect tax-deductible donations if you use a tax-deductible 501c3 nonprofit fiscal sponsor/host or can be used to collect contributions that aren't tax deductible. Failure mode: commitment it takes to reach consensus and/or lack of consensus on overall direction can lead to lack of strategic impact and

overall dissolution of the organization. Advice: be very selective with who gets a vote, and be clear on who decides who decides.

NONPROFIT

If you want to forge your own way more, rather than having a fiscal sponsor/host, you can become a 501c3. This way you can take your own donations and have more self-direction. You will have to organize a minimum 3-person board to guide the organization. It's legal for board members to get paid but it's frowned upon by the IRS who are more likely to audit you if you pay board members. This can create complications for small nonprofits who likely want board members and executive staff to overlap. The IRS regulates nonprofits nationally, but each US State's attorney general also regulates nonprofits, often requiring annual information submissions and fees. Handling all these submissions can be confusing and time consuming so finding an accountant who specializes in nonprofits in your state of incorporation is key to an easy life. Failure mode: chasing funds is exhausting and requires expertise which needs to be paid for. You'll also be at donors' whims for what they're interested in and how they like to fund things. Advice: stay fiscally sponsored until you're pulling in about a million a year to be sure you have capacity to pay for fundraising efforts in addition to your core work.

PIVOT TO EMPLOYMENT

Many people who work at large disaster response institutions such as FEMA, the Red Cross, a religious disaster response organization, or a local health department got their start as a grassroots disaster volunteer. These agencies will often hire people to do work during a disaster and often people do both grassroots work and their paid job at the same time. In fact, it can be very useful for grassroots response volunteers to have "someone on the inside" of the large institutions. As an institutional employee you can help your institution channel resources to the grassroots while building long term relationships in the field. Once the most acute phases of the disaster are over and roles start changing, there is likely somewhere for you to go: working locally with one of the many organizations doing long-term recovery work, embedding yourself in a public agency or social services nonprofits, or hit the road and build a career as a traveling disaster specialist.

BUSINESS

If you'd like to do pay-for-service more than chasing grants, forming an LLC or other business structure may be right for you. This is the one I have the least experience with, but I've seen the failure mode many times over of people trying to start businesses out of a tool they built for one crisis without

understanding how much of what they built is hyper-specific to their context and won't apply elsewhere. Also, folks are usually willing to donate their time to solve problems in crisis, and to pay taxes to cover official response. The few successful businesses I've seen in this space, and my advice to you, is to try to get contracts with official response groups to augment their efforts in a meaningful way.

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR

There are two ways to be legally paid in the USA. One way is as a salaried worker, in which case you'll receive a W2 tax form and your employer would likely automatically pay taxes from your earned wages. Another way to get paid is as an Independent Contractor, in which case you'll need to give your address and social security number to anyone paying you over a set amount (as of 2024 it's \$600). They will then issue you a W9 tax form showing you the amount they've told the government that they paid you. You will use this information when you fill out your own taxes. While this is all a pain, it's the only way to get paid "on the books" as an individual without having a business or nonprofit pay you a salary.

