

Table of Contents

Introduction	i
Policy Guidelines	iii
USAID Organization Chart	v
I. General Responsibilities	
Individual Team Member Checklist	I-1
Team Support Checklist	I-3
Working with the Media	I-4
A. Rules for Dealing with Reporters	I-4
Documentation	I-5
Accountability and Liability	I-6
Safety	I-7
Administration	I-8
A. Time Records	I-8
B. Per Diem and Vouchers	I-9
C. Procurement and Contracting	I-9
II. Assessments	
Introduction	II-1
A. Purpose of an Initial Assessment	II-1
B. Types of Assessments	II-3
1. Situation (Disaster) Assessments	II-3
2. Needs Assessment	II-4
C. Assessment Team Composition	II-4
D. Elements of an Assessment	II-4
E. Data Collection Methods	II-6
F. The Keys to a Successful Assessment	II-8
G. Assessment Process Main Points	II-9
H. Assessment Recommendations and Their Impact on Recovery	II-10
OFDA Assessment Cable Reporting Formats	II-11
A. Slow Onset Disaster Cable Format	II-11
B. Fast Onset Disaster Cable Format	II-15
Assessment Checklists	II-20
A. Victims/Displaced Population Profile	II-20
B. Health and Nutrition	II-21
1. Health	II-21
2. Nutrition	II-23
C. Water	II-24
1. Displaced Population Situation	II-24
2. Functioning Water System Disruption	II-24

D.	Food and Agriculture	II-25
	1. Food	II-25
	2. Agriculture	II-27
E.	Shelter	II-29
	1. Affected Population Profile	II-29
	2. Materials	II-29
	3. Distribution	II-30
F.	Search and Rescue	II-30
G.	Sanitation	II-31
	1. Displaced Population Situation	II-31
	2. Non-displaced Population Situation	II-31
H.	Logistics	II-32
	1. Airports	II-32
	2. Civil Aviation	II-33
	3. Alternative Aircraft	II-33
	4. Seaports	II-33
	5. Transfer Points	II-35
	6. Trucking	II-35
	7. Railroads	II-35
	8. Warehousing	II-36
I.	Coordination Capacity	II-37
J.	Infrastructure	II-37
	1. Communications	II-37
	2. Electric Power	II-39
	3. Water/Sewerage	II-39
	4. Hydro Facilities	II-40
	5. Roads and Bridges	II-41
	Populations at Risk	II-42
A.	Introduction	II-42
B.	Immediate Response	II-42
	1. Protection of Displaced People	II-42
	2. Organizational Considerations	II-43
	3. Material Assistance	II-43
C.	Water	II-45
	1. General	II-45
	2. Assessment and Organization	II-46
	a. Assessment	II-46
	b. Personnel and Material	II-47
	3. Needs	II-48
	a. Quantity	II-48
	b. Quality	II-49
	4. Immediate Response	II-50
	5. Water Sources	II-51
	a. Surface Water	II-51
	b. Ground Water	II-52
	c. Rain Water	II-52

	d. Sea Water	II-53
	e. Water Source Considerations	II-53
6.	Storage	II-53
7.	Distribution	II-54
8.	Treatment	II-55
	a. Storage	II-56
	b. Sand Filtration	II-57
	c. Chemical Disinfections	II-57
	d. Boiling	II-58
D.	Food and Nutrition	II-58
1.	General	II-58
2.	Nutrition Assessment and Surveillance	II-59
	a. Malnutrition	II-60
3.	General Feeding Programs	II-61
	a. Types of Food Distribution	II-62
	(1) Dry Ration Distribution (Take Home)	II-63
	(2) Wet Ration Distribution	II-64
4.	Supplementary Feeding Programs	II-64
5.	Therapeutic Feeding Programs	II-68
6.	Infant Feeding and Milk Products	II-69
7.	Basic Facts about Food and Nutrition	II-70
	a. Nutrients	II-70
	b. Energy and Protein Intakes	II-71
	c. Food and Diets	II-71
	(1) Protein-Energy Malnutrition	II-71
8.	Rapid Assessment of the Nutritional Status of Young Children Using the II-92 Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) Method	II-72
	a. Explanation	II-72
	b. Selection of the Children	II-72
	c. The Measurement	II-73
	d. The Results	II-73
E.	Health	II-74
1.	General	II-74
2.	Initial Health Assessment and Mortality Rates	II-75
	a. Mortality Rate	II-75
	b. Health Assessment	II-76
3.	Disease Control	II-77
	a. Immunizations	II-77
	b. Common Diseases	II-78

4	Displaced Person Health Care	II-92
a.	The Provision of Health Care	II-92
b.	Medical Supplies	II-94
c.	Health Education	II-96
F.	Displaced Person Camps: Site Selection, Planning, and Shelter	II-96
1.	General	II-96
2.	Criteria for Site Selection	II-97
a.	Social Needs	II-97
b.	Water	II-97
c.	Open Space	II-98
d.	Accessibility	II-98
e.	Environmental	II-98
f.	Soil and Ground Cover	II-98
g.	Land Rights	II-99
3.	Site Planning	II-99
a.	General Considerations	II-99
4.	Specific Infrastructure Design Considerations	II-99
a.	Latrines	II-99
b.	Water and Distribution	II-99
c.	Roads and Pathways	II-100
d.	Firebreaks	II-100
e.	Administrative and Community Services	II-100
f.	Physical Layout	II-101
5.	Shelter	II-101
G.	Sanitation and Environmental Service	II-103
1.	General	II-103
2.	Organization	II-104
3.	Disposal of Excreta	II-105
a.	Selection of a System—Immediate Considerations	II-105
b.	Immediate Action	II-107
c.	Long-Term Options	II-107
d.	Latrine Styles and Considerations	II-108
(1)	Number and Siting of Latrines	II-108
(2)	Population Density	II-109
(3)	Soil	II-109
(4)	Available Water	II-109
(5)	Drainage	II-109
(6)	Construction Materials	II-109
4.	Waste Water, Garbage, and Dust	II-110
a.	Waste Water	II-110

b.	Garbage	
(1)	Storage	II-110
(2)	Collection	II-111
(3)	Disposal	II-111
(4)	Dust	II-111
5.	Insect and Rodent Control	II-111
6.	Fires	II-111
a.	Prevention	II-113
b.	Control	II-113
7.	Disposal of the Dead	II-113
Tables		II-114
Table 1	Water Needs for Displaced People	
Table 2	Weight for Height	II-114
Table 3	Weight and Height for Age	II-115
Table 4	Examples of 1900 Kcal Rations	II-119
Table 5	Examples of Enhanced Rations	II-120
Table 6	Food Needs for Displaced Persons	II-121
Table 7	Approximate Nutritional Values of Commodities per 100-Gram Edible Portion	II-122 II-123

III. Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART)

DART Organization		
Overview		III-1
A.	Purpose	III-2
B.	Structure	III-2
C.	DART Activation and Deployment	III-3
General Checklist for All DART Members		III-3
Team Leader		III-5
A.	Press Officer	III-7
B.	Safety Officer	III-10
C.	Liaison Officer	III-12
Logistics Coordinator		III-13
A.	Supply Officer	III-14
B.	Transportation Officer	III-16
C.	Aviation Officer	III-18
D.	Communications Officer	III-20
Operations Coordinator		III-22
A.	Medical Officer	III-24
B.	Search and Rescue Task Force Leader	III-26
C.	Technical/Scientific Operations	III-27
Specialists		III-28
Planning Coordinator		
A.	Information Officer	III-30
B.	Field Assessment Officer	III-33
C.	Project Officer	III-34
		III-35

D. Technical/Scientific Specialists	III-37
E. Water and Sanitation Specialists	III-38
F. Health Specialists	III-39
G. Food Specialist	III-39
Administrative/Contracts Officer	III-40
A. Procurement Specialist	III-42
B. Administrative Support Personnel	III-46
IV. Forms and Instructions	
Transportation Tracking Form	IV-1
Transportation Manifest Form	IV-4
Resource Request Form	IV-7
Commodity Issue Form	IV-10
T-Card	IV-13
Field Situation Reporting Format (SITREP)	IV-15
Unit Log	IV-17
Communications Log	IV-19
V. Reference Information	
DART Communication	V-1
Aircraft Information	V-6
Aircraft Tables	V-10
Overland Transport Capacities	V-14
OFDA Stockpile Commodities	V-15
OFDA Individual Support Kit	V-15
Intermediate Support Kit	V-17
Tents	V-18
Blankets, Wool	V-18
Blankets, Polyester	V-18
Chainsaw Kits	V-18
Hard Hats	V-18
Face Mask	V-19
Gloves	V-19
Water Container, 5 Gallon Collapsible	V-19
Water Tank, 3000 Gallon, Collapsible	V-19
Plastic Sheeting	V-20
How to Use Plastic Sheeting	V-23
Personal Health and Critical Incident Stress	V-35
Conversion Tables	V-39
(Miscellaneous Information)	
VI. Commonly Used Acronyms and Terminology	

Introduction

The *Field Operations Guide for Disaster Assessment and Response (FOG)* has been developed by the U.S. Agency for International Development/Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) as a reference tool, for individuals sent to disaster sites to perform initial assessments or to participate as members of an OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART).

The FOG contains information on general responsibilities for disaster responders; formats and reference material for assessing populations at risk; DART position descriptions and checklists; forms useful for tracking and accounting activities; descriptions of OFDA stockpile commodities; general information related to disaster activities; and a glossary of acronyms and terms used by OFDA.

In the development of the FOG, OFDA has drawn on several sources for information including: the *OFDA DART Manual*, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees *Handbook for Emergencies*, the World Health Organization booklet *New Emergency Health Kit*, the United Nations Children's Fund handbook entitled *Assisting in Emergencies*, the United Nations *Guide To Food and Health Relief Operations for Disasters*, the Bureau for Refugee Programs *Assessment Manual for Refugee Emergencies*, *USAID Handbook 8* and policy paper on *International Disaster Assistance*, reference materials from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, OFDA logistical records, and *OFDA Assessment Guidelines*.

The search and rescue (SAR) component of the DART has a separate operations guide which specifically deals with DART SAR activities.

It is hoped that the FOG will serve as a useful source for a variety of field operations information, in a compact, usable format. Comments for revision can be directed to:

USAID/OFDA
Operations Support Division
Room 1262-A NS
Washington, D.C. 20523

This version of the FOG represents a revision of the original *Guide to Field Operations for Disaster Response* produced in 1992. The FOG was developed for OFDA by the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Forest Service under its International Forestry's Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP). DASP is managed jointly by the Forest Service and the USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service/International Cooperation and Development, with funds and direction provided by USAID/OFDA under USDA RSSA BOF-0000-R-AG-5091.

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Policy Guidelines

The U.S. Agency for International Development/Bureau for Humanitarian Response/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) has the responsibility to coordinate the U.S. Government's response to disasters abroad. It coordinates this response with the affected country, international agencies, other donor governments, and private voluntary organizations. This authority to provide foreign disaster relief comes from the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. OFDA provides assistance:

To preserve life and minimize suffering by providing sufficient warning of natural events which cause disasters.

To foster self-sufficiency among disaster-prone nations by helping them achieve some measure of preparedness.

To alleviate suffering by providing rapid, appropriate response to requests for aid.

To enhance recovery through rehabilitation programs.

The primary responsibility for disaster relief rests with the affected government. OFDA responds only when the affected population and responsible host agencies are unable to cope with the problem. OFDA's assistance supplements, supports, and is coordinated with that of the affected government.

It is the responsibility of the U.S. Chief of Mission to insure that the U.S. Government's assistance is based on priority humanitarian needs and is coordinated with the activities of the affected government and other donors.

To ensure that response is appropriate, timely, and cost effective, OFDA provides technical assistance in damage and needs assessments.

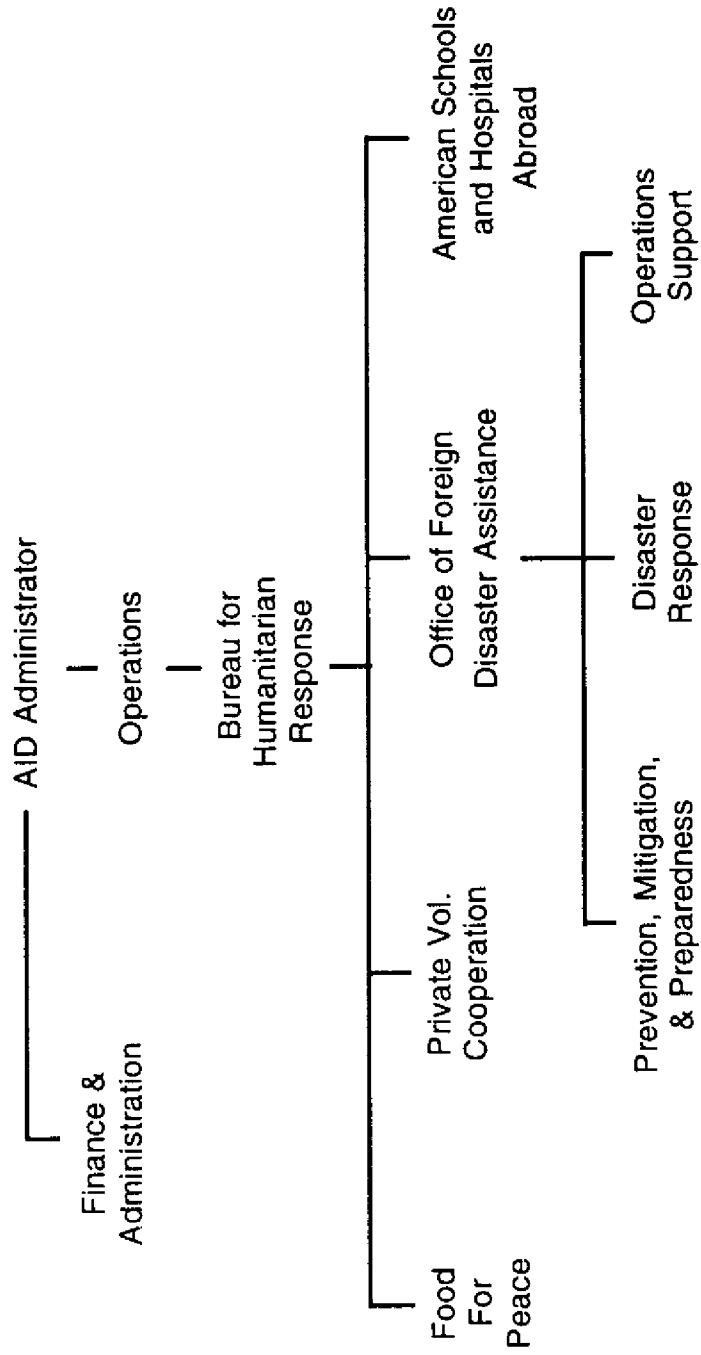
The relief which OFDA furnishes may take the form of commodities, services, transportation, monetary donations and, if necessary, on-the-ground relief, through the deployment of an Assessment Team or a Disaster Assistance Response Team.

OFDA views disaster relief provided to victims in the immediate aftermath of a disaster in the context of long-term development activities. Disasters can provide the opportunity to reduce the vulnerability of the affected community to future disasters. Rehabilitation and reconstruction, properly formulated, can do much to introduce mitigation techniques to protect against the effects of future disasters.

OFDA stands ready to continue the American tradition of concern and humanitarian assistance for disaster victims worldwide.



U.S. Agency for International Development



Chapter I

General Responsibilities

General Responsibilities

This chapter provides information on general responsibilities for individuals sent to disaster sites to perform assessments or to participate as members of a DART.

Individual Team Member Checklist

Team members should be as individually mobile as possible. Unless you are deploying as a member of a long-term DART, try to limit your personal belongings to what you can carry.

Personal Items:

- Valid passport.
- Immunization record (Yellow Book).
- Personal health items (see below).
- Adequate amount of U.S. currency/traveler's checks (check to see if you will be able to cash them) for length of assignment.
- Personal checks and major credit cards.
- Food for 36 hours (in case none is initially available).
- Drinking water for 36 hours (in case none is available).
- Four changes of clothing appropriate for the location, elevation, time of year, and kind of assignment.
- Toilet articles.
- Six extra passport photos.
- Flashlight with spare batteries.
- Alarm clock.
- Pocket knife.
- Ear plugs.

Optional Items: (Brought at your own risk)

- Camera with film, batteries.
- Pocket size binoculars.
- Electrical adapters for appliances.
- Pocket calculator.
- Swapping items (pins, buttons, pencils, stickers, etc.)

Personal Health Items and Medical Tips:

- Prescription medicine for expected length of stay.
- Medication for colds, allergies, diarrhea, athlete's foot, menstrual cramps, hemorrhoids, constipation, and headaches.
- Sunscreen (15 or higher).
- Insect repellent.

- Antiseptic ointment.
- Lip salve.
- Vitamins.
- Small scissors.
- Tweezers.
- Soap.
- Small bottle or individual swabs of isopropyl alcohol.
- Water purification tablets or system.
- Baseball cap or hat for sun and rain.
- Flip flops.
- Extra pair of glasses/contacts, and record your prescription in the back of your "Yellow Book."
- If you wear contacts, be aware of dusty conditions at disaster sites.
- Write down your blood type in your "Yellow Book."
- Don't take any of these first aid kit items in glass bottles.
- Make a copy of your "Yellow Book" and keep the copy separate, in case you lose the original.

OFDA Provided:

- DART *Field Operations Guide for Disaster Assessment and Response (FOG)*.
- Individual's office supplies.
- Position description and checklist pertaining to your assignment.
- Visa and country clearances for affected country (if required).
- Personal drug kit (if needed).
- Short-term immunizations, boosters, and malaria pills needed at time of departure (contractors check when negotiating contract).
- Travel authorization (TA) (make extra copy), travel advance, and airline tickets if travel is under OFDA. Make sure TA covers your potential needs such as car rental, local ticket purchase, excess baggage, and double per diem.
- OFDA Individual Support Kit (if needed).*
- Overseas workmen's compensation and medevac insurance (contractors only).

Information to be left with OFDA:

- Personal information sheet for personal and family emergencies.

* **Note:** DART members will usually be issued an Individual Support Kit by the OFDA logistics officer if requested. The contents of the kit are listed in the "Reference Information" chapter of the FOG.

Team Support Checklist

This checklist addresses overall team needs and complements the personal items list and the position checklists. The team leader ensures that the following team support items are acquired prior to deployment.

- [] Contact list for USAID/Embassy, private volunteer organizations (PVO's), nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), international organizations (IO's), United Nations (U.N.), donor and assisting countries, and appropriate affected country officials.
- [] DART *Field Operations Guide (FOG)*.
- [] AID decals.
- [] Team first aid kit.
- [] Camera and film/VCR tapes (35mm and television camcorder) for documenting events and DART response. (optional)
- [] Communications equipment commensurate with the assignment.
- [] Copies of reference documents pertaining to affected country (if available):
 - [] OFDA's Country Profile.
 - [] State Department background notes.
 - [] Department of Defense (EMC) document.
 - [] Mission Disaster Relief Plan (if available).
 - [] Lessons learned file.
 - [] Maps covering the affected and surrounding areas.
 - [] OFDA's Disaster History and Commodity Services Report.
 - [] Travel advisory alerts.
 - [] Public Health bulletins.
 - [] List of do's and don'ts.
 - [] Assessment guides.
- [] Copy of all cable traffic pertaining to the disaster.
- [] Copy of all directives and team support documents:
 - [] OFDA's team support funding documents.
 - [] Overseas workmen's compensation and medevac insurance for contractors.
 - [] Travel orders and itineraries.
 - [] Special authorizations and instructions from OFDA Director.
 - [] Photocopy of passports, visa, and personal information sheet.
- [] Administrative kit including:
 - [] Laptop computer with software and accessories to allow faxing info through satellite communications system.
 - [] Portable computer printer with ink cartridge.
 - [] Paper, notebooks and pens, pencils, etc.

- [] Dry marker felt pens (assorted colors).
- [] Masking and strapping tape.
- [] Spare computer paper (9 by 11 inches and 11 by 14 inches).
- [] Spare supply of appropriate forms.

Working with the Media

The team leader sets the guidelines for relations with the media covering the disaster. If a press officer is a member of the DART, he/she is the contact point with the media. If not, the team leader takes on the direct media relations function. The following rules are mainly for press officers. However, these rules are helpful to any member of the team who may become involved with answering media needs.

A. Rules for Dealing with Reporters

1. Never pick a fight with the news media.
 - They air or print every day and you don't.
2. There are no secrets.
 - Assume what you say and do will get on the air and/or the printed page.
 - While you can say things "off the record," that doesn't mean that they won't print it and give you attribution.
3. Don't assume anything.
 - Reporters may not be well-informed or technically proficient about your profession.
 - Explain terms to ensure they are understood.
4. Keep it simple.
 - Simplify and summarize your major points.
 - Write facts and data down to hand out.
 - Use English. Talk in a relaxed style that is aimed at lay persons, not subject experts. Avoid acronyms.
 - Remember that the audience is the general public.
5. Give reporters a good story to write...or they may find one you don't like and write it.
 - Listen to trends in the questions. Is the reporter asking leading questions? Are there obvious misconceptions? Offer to clarify or redirect.
6. Treat reporters professionally.
 - Treat them with respect.
 - Initiate background conversations.

- Always answer their calls immediately.
 - Leave word in your office where you will be so you can answer calls immediately.
7. Don't lie.
 - Make sure your information is accurate.
 - It doesn't have to be all-encompassing. You don't have to tell a reporter your views on everything.
 8. Before you do an interview, decide what you can discuss and what you can't—stick to it.
 9. Use humor to defuse confrontational situations.
 10. Choose your words carefully and well.
 - They will likely be reported as you say them.
 11. If a critical or controversial story is going to be written anyway, your point of view should be in the story.
 - Silence is not always golden.
 12. Repetition is the essence of retention.
 - The public will remember what they see, hear, and read repeatedly in the media.
 13. Once a story is out that you don't like, it is usually too late and fruitless to correct it.
 14. Use objective and authoritative sources of information to back up your statements to reporters, if you can.
 - Don't make charges you can't back up or make stick.
 15. Try to anticipate questions. If you can't or you don't know the answer, get back to the reporter after you are asked such questions so you can give a considered response.

Documentation

General—Team members are responsible for maintaining a **Daily LOG** of activities with which they are involved. This **LOG** should include a chronology of significant events (departures, arrivals, meetings attended, individuals contacted, work accomplished, etc.). The **LOG** should be turned in to supervisors on request. The **LOG** is turned in to the Plans function where it becomes a part of the disaster response documentation.

Each function receives and develops information that becomes a part of the disaster documentation. The following is a list of the types of documentation generated by each DART function:

Command—Delegation of authority, disaster relief objectives, press releases, safety plans, liaison plans.

Plans—Situation reports, disaster chronology (developed from individual logs and information gathered by Plans), maps, assessments, daily plans, personnel tracking

Logistics—Equipment and commodities tracking, accountability documents, equipment use information.

Operations—Work assignments, work accomplishments, assessments, maps

Administration—Fiscal accounting, rental and procurement agreements, receipts.

Accountability and Liability

General—Team members are responsible for three types of equipment and supplies at a disaster: expendable, non-expendable, and personal.

Expendable—Those items that are issued for use at a disaster site and are either used up, consumed, or possibly left at the disaster site for use by local individuals involved in continuing disaster relief efforts. Expendable items would include items such as gloves, small water containers, flashlights, batteries, hardhats, hand tools, and saw blades. When issuing expendable items to local relief workers, be sure that the items are needed for the immediate relief effort. Some expendable items have proven to be personally attractive and particularly susceptible to being used for other than relief activity purposes.

Non-expendable—Those items that are issued for use at a disaster and can be returned and refurbished for use on future assignments. Non-expendable items would include items such as radios, generators, specialized tools, and computers.

Personal—Those items such as clothing, toiletries, extra glasses, and medications that an individual takes to a disaster to attend to his/her personal needs. Cameras, binoculars, radios, and such items are considered personal items unless specifically required by OFDA. OFDA will accept no liability for the loss, damage, or destruction of personal items.

Accountability—Accountability for funds, or relief supplies, materials and equipment provided by OFDA rests primarily with the recipient U.S. mission in the affected country. If OFDA deploys a DART or an assessment team to assist the mission in the affected country, OFDA will become accountable at the field level for the distribution of all funds, supplies, equipment, and commodities used in disaster relief operations. Team members have the responsibility to account for all items that they consume, use, damage, destroy, or lose. This accounting must be done through a documentation system that tracks items from receipt through use and/or subsequent issuing onto the ultimate users or victims. Team members should always receive and keep an inventory of items for which they are responsible. Supervisors are responsible for identifying the method and level of tracking necessary for each disaster, based on direction from the team leader. Lost or damaged items must be accounted for with a written statement explaining the circumstances. When a question arises over whether an item is expendable, the team functional supervisor is responsible for making the decision. Certain disaster situations may call for issuing non-expendable items to local agencies for use beyond the deployment of the team. Such issues should be documented through a hand receipt, with accompanying written justification becoming part of the team documentation. The team leader has the final team authority to decide what will or will not be left.

Liability—Team members are liable for items lost or destroyed through poor accounting or performance. Problems arising from poor accounting or performance will be resolved with the appropriate representatives of the member's parent agency. Applicable USAID regulations will be used during the resolution.

Safety

Being aware of personal and team safety is a part of every OFDA disaster relief worker's job, regardless of his/her task at the disaster. The goal is to prevent accidents and protect the safety and health of all disaster workers on and off the job. Only if each disaster worker becomes familiar with the hazards of the job and takes the necessary steps to protect him/herself and the other members of the team, will the team maximize its potential. Some major points to remember are:

1. Report all injuries and accidents to your supervisor and the safety officer (if a team member).
2. Wear personal protective equipment when required.

3. Report hazardous conditions and other safety concerns to your supervisor and the safety function immediately
4. Familiarize yourself with the medical emergency plan and/or a medevac plan, if one has been done.
5. Be aware of potential hazards at a disaster site, such as working in or near damaged buildings, aircraft operations, vehicle operations, and unsanitary living and eating conditions.

OFDA disaster relief workers are sent to a disaster because of an emergency situation. The tasks they perform are ones for which they are trained. An emergency occurs for a relief worker and the team when a worker becomes sick or injured and must be cared for or evacuated, diminishing the effectiveness of the team to deliver the maximum assistance possible to the victims. The safety and well-being of all members is an asset to the team and the victims. **THINK SAFETY AT ALL TIMES!!!**

Administration

A. Time Records

Depending on the relationship with OFDA, team members may or may not need to keep track of hours worked by them during a deployment to a disaster. OFDA will determine what method of time-keeping is necessary. If there will be reimbursement for all or a portion of a person's time, the team member must make sure that he/she and his/her agency are clear on what method of reimbursement will be used by OFDA. Types of agreements under which team members may be serving OFDA are:

USAID-Direct Hire—See *AID Handbook 26*.

Personal Services Contractor—Reimbursement and reporting documentation determined by contract. Check with OFDA at time of contract issuance.

RSSA—Includes individuals whose salaries are reimbursed through a resources support services agreement (RSSA). Some agencies donate employee salaries up to 6 weeks. The method of reimbursement for overtime worked must be agreed to beforehand by OFDA. If overtime will be approved, claims for reimbursement must be accompanied by a time record signed by the senior OFDA/USAID person on the team. Compensation time for overtime worked is an issue that must be determined by the individual's parent agency.

Individual Working for a Contractor, Grantee or an Organization with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with OFDA (may include volunteers)—Reimbursement and reporting documentation determined by contract, grant, or MOU. Parent agencies must determine the required documentation.

B. Per Diem and Vouchers

Current GSA per diem rates and normal per diem rules will be used by all team members to determine amounts to be reimbursed for expenses incurred during a team deployment, unless otherwise specified in a contract, grant, or MOU.

Team members will fill out travel vouchers with the agency that prepares their travel authorization. Depending on the urgency of the team mobilization, a team member may travel on one or more travel authorizations, such as one for airline tickets, another for food and lodging, and/or possibly a third for a travel advance. Make sure that the agency issuing a travel authorization has a mechanism and authorization procedure in place for reimbursement from OFDA.

Team members must keep receipts for lodging that they have paid for. If a team member will be reimbursed based on actual expenses, he/she must obtain receipts for all expenses. Team members should keep a daily log of activities as well as expenses. The log is very helpful when filling out travel voucher(s). Remember, only those expenses authorized on a travel authorization can be reimbursed.

C. Procurement and Contracting

The hiring or contracting of goods and services at a disaster is the responsibility of the team leader. The team leader may delegate this responsibility to an authorized person on the team, depending on the size and complexity of the disaster. Unless authorized, team members cannot purchase, hire, contract for goods and services, or make informal commitments to do so. If a team member has any questions as to the limits of his/her procurement or contract authority, he/she should contact his/her team supervisor.