



Contractor Orientation to Catastrophic Disaster Work

Catastrophe/disaster restoration work is unlike either building construction or demolition. Planning for a successful project begins before the peril strikes, and many issues must be considered before undertaking this type of work.

The information in this pamphlet is based on interviews with Restoration Industry Association (formerly ASCR) members who are actively involved in catastrophe response. While it is by no means all-inclusive, it will help to identify some of the major issues involved in this type of work. In a disaster zone, one job usually leads to another. With thorough planning and understanding of the business and personal risks in this work, the experience can be very rewarding. Business owners and their employees will return home safely and have the satisfaction of knowing that they helped restore a community and improved the conditions of the people who live there.

First Considerations

- Unless you have been invited into the disaster zone by a client, it is best to stay home.
- When working away from base, get local contacts. Seek local operators who are willing to partner with you.
- Do you have the necessary licenses for the disaster zone?
- Will your insurance coverage extend to the disaster zone?
- Do you have enough coverage, and the right types, for disaster restoration work?
- Do you have adequate resources – lines of credit, cash, manpower, equipment.
- Do you have crew leaders and project managers who have been trained in the essentials of disaster restoration?
- Do you have necessary PPE (personal protective equipment) for employees and training in its use? Equipment includes suits, masks, respirators, decontamination showers, etc.
- Are inoculations up-to-date for your deployed personnel (e.g., tetanus, Hep. A, Hep. B, cholera)? Consult with a physician before deployment.
- What's your contingency plan if a catastrophe hits in your home market while you are deployed?
- Disaster restoration is chaotic. Can you operate, both personally and professionally, in chaotic situations?
- How will your staff cope with being away from home for weeks at a time?
- Are you liquid? CAT work does not feature progress payments; insurers have been known to take up to a year to release funds.
- Are you resourceful? You may have to scramble for food, lodging and gas.
- Anticipate infrastructure damage that will hinder your ability to move within the disaster zone.
- Have a communications plan. Cell systems and radio nets may be down or overloaded.
- How will you pay your staff in the zone?
- How will you restock supplies? Where will you find supplies and how will you get them into the zone?
- Have an exit strategy. Know how much work you can afford to take on, your fixed costs, and how the client will be able to pay.

Resources and Manpower

- On Site Personnel – CAT (catastrophe) coordinator, estimators, project managers, technicians, sub-contractors, temporary laborers, administrative staff, office manager, controller, IT person
- Satellite phones
- GPS systems (landmarks and street signs are frequently missing)
- Housing or lodging for team – hotels, houses, trailers, campers
- Bottled water, food/MRE's, camping supplies, cooking supplies, food storage.
- Vehicle fleet and fuel credit cards
- Lines of credit with banks and major suppliers. Credit/purchasing cards for personnel.
- Minimal Tools & Equipment – PPE, Tyvek suits, rubber gloves, face masks, respirators, blowers, air movers, generators, fuel, dehumidifiers, HEPA vacs, wet vacs, hardhats, clothing, name tags (you'll need to be able to ID your personnel in the chaos), etc.
- Train your personnel in sanitary safety issues and hazmat recognition.
- Gasoline and/or diesel fuel for generators and vehicles
- Storage facilities for supplies and equipment

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Other Considerations

- Pre-engagement site inspection by company owner and a key supervisor is essential to make contacts and assess the situation. Take at least one week's worth of supplies.
- Understand your required resource commitment and the impact to your business at home.
- Establish relationships with your supply vendors and banks before deployment.
- Staff must be committed, compassionate and hard working to handle disaster restoration work.
- Disaster zones have a reputation for "raiding". Realize that once you start a job, there will be other companies trying to take the job and/or your people away from you.
- Know exactly how you're going to get paid before you start the job.
- Know your costs. Know how much work you can take in the zone and when you have reached your limit of risk.

The Restoration Industry Association (RIA) is the only international, professional trade association for the cleaning and restoration industry. Its national and international member firms specialize in cleaning, treating and repairing damaged buildings and their contents. RIA sponsors education, training and certification programs. For more information, visit www.restorationindustry.org.

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