

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND CHANDIGARH POLICE: POSSIBLE
DISASTERS AND ITS MANAGEMENT**
Relevant Sub-theme: Disaster Management

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ABSTRACT

A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Although the common man is not so familiar with the term Disaster Management, people today are much aware of certain phenomena like earthquakes, cyclones, landslides and now even the tsunami. Since times immemorial India has been highly prone to natural calamities. The police should see themselves as the major player whenever disaster struck. They are the first one to reach the disaster site and should be well trained and efficiently equipped for any possible disaster. The Union Territory of Chandigarh has high vulnerability to earthquakes as it lies in Seismic Zone IV. The possible disasters besides earthquake which can fall upon Chandigarh naturally is flood, and the man instigated disaster includes terrorist attacks, stampede, fires, transport accidents, industrial accidents, communal riots, nuclear explosion/radiation etc. Chandigarh like any other cities is not completely safe from any disaster and it is very important that the Chandigarh Police take precaution necessary to tackle the disaster when it strikes. Chandigarh has its share of vulnerable areas other than earthquake, sectors 28,29,31 and the industrial areas like the phase I and II are highly prone to industrial disaster which includes chemical spill, fire, poisonous gas leak etc. This paper humbly tries to highlight and discuss the possible disaster and its management in Chandigarh and the role of Chandigarh Police.

Key Words: Disaster, Chandigarh, Police, Disaster Management.

INTRODUCTION

A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. No matter how developed a country is, it is always prone to disaster. The word *disaster* is derived from Middle French *désastre* and that from Old Italian *disastro*, which in turn comes from the Greek pejorative prefix *δυσ-*, (*dus-*) "bad" and *ἀστήρ* (*aster*), "star". The root of the word *disaster* ("bad star" in Greek) comes from an astrological sense of a calamity blamed on the sight of planets.¹

Disasters can be classified in two types; they are i) natural disaster, ii) man instigated disaster. Natural disasters include earthquake, volcano eruption, tsunami, typhoon, cyclone, and avalanche and kill thousands of people and destroy billions of dollars of habitat and property each year. However, natural hazards can strike in non-populated areas and never develop into disasters. However, the rapid growth of the world's population and its increased concentration often in hazardous environments has escalated both the frequency and severity of disasters.

The man instigated disaster can include terrorist attacks, fires, stampedes, transport accidents, industrial accidents, oil spills and nuclear explosions/radiation. Human-Instigated disasters are mainly the consequence of technological hazards.

Disaster Management

Disaster management is the creation of plans through which vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters.² Disaster management cannot avert or eliminate the threats, but it focuses more on creating plans to decrease the impact of disasters and tries to prevent the loss of life and property to the minimal level. Failure to create an affective plan could lead to damage to

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disaster>

² www1.maine.gov/mema/about/mema_emdef.shtml

properties, life, and lost revenue. There are a number of guidelines and publications regarding Emergency Planning, published by various professional organisations. There are very few Emergency Management specific standards and emergency management as a discipline tends to fall under business resilience standards.

In India the National Disaster Management Authority is the primary government agency responsible for planning and capacity-building for disaster relief. Its emphasis is primarily on strategic risk management and mitigation, as well as developing policies and planning.³ The National Institute of Disaster Management is a policy think-tank and training institution for developing guidelines and training programs for mitigating disasters and managing crisis response.

The National Disaster Response Force is the government agency primarily responsible for emergency management during natural and man-made disasters, with specialized skills in search, rescue and rehabilitation.⁴ The Ministry of Science and Technology also has an agency that looks to the expertise of earth scientists and meteorologists for a very effective emergency management. The Indian Armed Forces also plays a very important role in the rescue/recovery operations after a disaster.

POLICE AND DISASTER

Whenever a disaster strikes the police are always the first to reach the site of the affected area. The police are always the first to respond to any disaster so it is very important the police organization to be always prepared and well trained and equipped to the teeth. Man-made disasters such as terrorist attacks, riots, accidents, etc. can cause a sense of vulnerability among the citizens. Natural disasters such as earthquake, hurricanes, floods, fires, etc. all cause specific damage and chaos. A strong police presence in all the situations eases fears and the feeling of vulnerability and helps prevent others from taking advantage of the situation. There is no specific design on the role of police in the management of disasters; police are always the frontrunner when disaster strikes. Other than helping in clearing the injured and saving life they provide security and maintain law and order at the location. They

³ <http://www.ndma.gov.in/en/about-ndma/roles-responsibilities.html>

⁴ Loc.cit.

also focus on the prevention of committing cognizable offences against the citizen, property and public tranquillity.

Possible disaster in Chandigarh

No city has the full capacity to endure and prevent itself from any disaster, disaster whether man-instigated or natural can strike anytime. Only with proper training and careful tactics one can minimise the havoc caused by it. Chandigarh, also, with all its planning and effective governance cannot fully prevent a disaster from happening.

According to the Chandigarh Disaster Management the possible disasters that can happen in Chandigarh are:

- Earth quake
- Terrorist attack
- Flood
- Accident (road, railway, air, building collapse)
- Road blockade

Areas that prone to disaster are analysed and mapped to develop a visual representation of the hazard. The analysis aims at identifying areas in which the potential impact of a disaster is higher. Based on the analysis, the following vulnerable areas in Chandigarh have been identified.⁵

Sr. No.	Industrial Location	Nature of the Disaster	Vulnerable Areas
1	Industrial Area Phase I	Chemical spills, effluent discharge, fire, etc.	Sector 28,29, Sukhna Area, Reserved Forest Area
2	Industrial Area Phase II	Chemical spills, effluent discharge, fire, etc.	Sector 31, Karshan Rehabilitation Colony
3	Industrial Area Phase III	Chemical spills, effluent discharge, fire, etc.	Mauli Jagran Rehabilitation Colony
4	Sewerage Treatment Plan	Sewer Leakage, Methane Gas	Sector 47, 48, Karsan

⁵ <http://chandigarh.gov.in/cmp2031/disaster.pdf>

	leakage, drinking water pollution, etc.	Rehabilitation Colony
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Other than this the Union Territory of Chandigarh spread over an area of 114 sq. kms has high vulnerability to earthquakes as it lies in Seismic Zone IV.

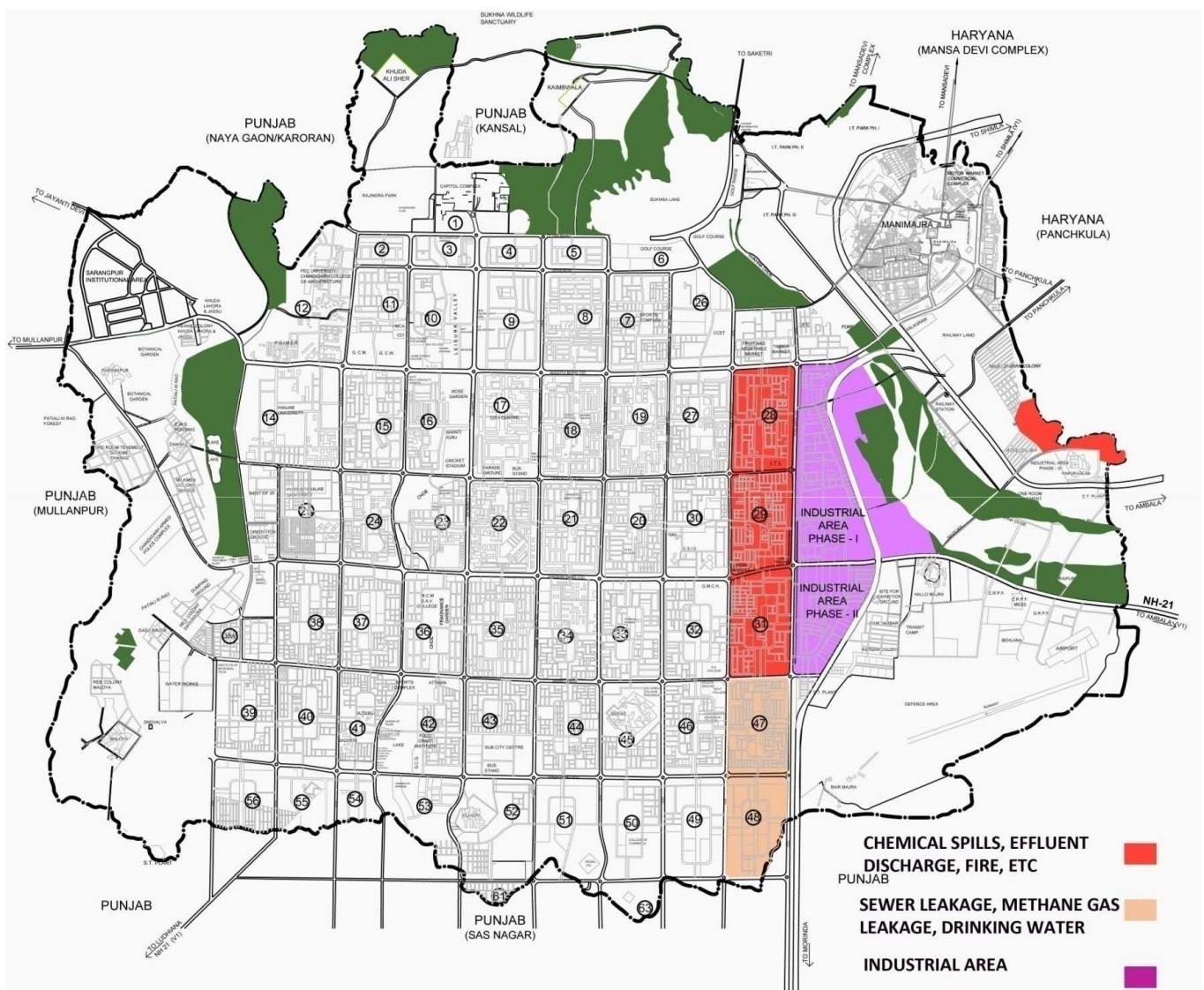


Fig i: Map of Chandigarh for analysing vulnerable areas.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

The above map is a presentation showing the vulnerable areas in Chandigarh in case any industrial hazard strikes. These disasters are man instigated disaster and are mostly nearby industrial areas. The natural disaster however can strike any place without little warning.

CHANDIGARH POLICE AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Chandigarh Police and its administration have its focus on disaster management with utmost care. Mock drills for earth quake, flood and fire are conducted and awareness is made to the citizens in a regular interval. The UT Police has a course in disaster management in their training manual readying the police personnel for any possible disaster.⁷

Chandigarh being the capital city apart from its UT status and its high density population, proximity to capital and international border can be an impactful place for man instigated disaster. The Police are needed to take precautions and careful planning to tackle the disasters. The following are the management of disaster that are taken up or can be put to use by the UT Police;

Crowd Control

Disaster situations always draw crowds. People are always hoping for a glimpse of the drama unfolding at the area. Family members and friends of the victims show up, hoping to glean information about their loved ones. The police cordon off areas and work to keep crowds under control. If the crowds are in control the situation can be contained easily. Chandigarh being a high density population has crowds beaming up easily, whenever there is farmer's agitation piling up in Chandigarh, the peaceful nature of the city is disrupted. The UT Police's main emphasise during this situation is to control the crowd effectively.

Public safety

⁷ <http://chandigarhpolice.nic.in/police-training.html>

Public safety is one of the utmost priorities of the Police. During the crisis the police personnel might search for the injured or those who need help. The injured can be offered transportation, emergency medical care and be a medium between citizens and rescue personnel. In a very recent case in Chandigarh the Sukhna Lake area has been cordoned off from public entrance as one of the geese inhabited at the lake was found to be positive for the bird flu (H5N1) test. The UT police kept a strict vigil that no enter the place and made sure the geese are not fed by the people. The eggs and other poultry products exported from the City are restricted by the administration.⁸

Directing Traffic

When a disaster strikes a city, chaos among the residents and commuters is bound to happen, the traffic are sure to hold back and packed jam the roads. Disasters damage infrastructures such as electricity, trees, building, etc. making an unsafe situation for traffic and pedestrians. The police can close unsafe roads where downed wires, trees or flood situations might make travel unsafe. They direct citizens through nonworking traffic lights. They reroute random traffic to safer roads and try to keep out all unnecessary traffic. They can put roadblocks in the areas where the crisis is underway.⁹ The UT Police has witnessed large number of crowd bringing their agitation to the road blocking the traffic and caused hindrance and chaos to the commuters. Though no particular disaster has struck the City, the large agitated crowds are mainly caused by the farmers protesting against the administration. The UT Police plays an important role here in containing the crowd and be prepared to take up the necessary action in case it turns up to a mob.

Organising Search Teams

Disastrous situations often lead to family members being separated. If these citizens take the matter at their own hand and started searching by them, results might not be fruitful for they lack technique, resources and experience. The police can set up search teams and put together systems where loved ones can check on one another. They can set up command centres where the victims and family may be reunited.¹⁰ The Chandigarh Police when the disaster strikes

⁸ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/Avian-flu-hits-Chandigarh/articleshow/45556667.cms>

⁹ http://www.ehow.com/about_5349005_role-police-disaster-management.html

¹⁰ *ibid*

can come up with coordinated plans to conduct search teams to find the missing persons and locate the injured. Here technology can be a great help and sniffer dogs can be put to use to search the stranded people.

Keeping a Vigilant eye

There are always people who take advantage of a chaotic situation. When people are evacuated from homes or neighbourhoods, houses are unsupervised and unprotected; opportunities to commit crimes are ripe. Police presence helps secure the unattended houses and prevent from looting. There is always a high possibility that such incident might happen in Chandigarh also, the Police here should always keep a vigilant eye on the suspects and patrolling of the areas should be conducted round the clock. The CCTVs should be put in order also in case there is shortage of manpower.

CONCLUSION

Since the police is one of the key factor in managing the disaster, their feedback/ assessment is very important in updating the plans for the future. Police organisation should always see itself as a major player in disaster management. It will continue to have the first responder role for its proximity to the incident site and relationship with the people. Therefore it has to bring about change in its approach and should always keep updating with the changing trends and ever evolving technology. They should be highly equipped with the latest technology so that they can effectively carry out the work and overcome the problems they face while tackling any disaster. It has to adopt disaster management function as a one of its primary functions. The local police must be trained, equipped and supported with legislation and subsequently they can play supporting role to the specialist forces if and when they encounter with bigger emergency cases. On many occasions Special Forces are not required and the local police may retain the primary role to help the needy.

The respective State Governments should start the formation of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) in accordance with structural similarities of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) as soon as possible. Though some State has already started SDRF, they should be improved constantly to face the disaster. Disaster usually affects the critical infrastructure

such as road, telecommunication, health centres, school, electricity supply etc., so the focus should be on these major vulnerable parts.

Police can provide protection to the agencies which are involved in restoration of such infrastructure because people who are rendered jobless after disaster may hinder the process. The UT Police though with all its planning and infrastructure has not come across with a disaster of high magnitude. They should continue to update their training module in terms of disaster management and should continue to upgrade their infrastructure. The UT Police should go hand in hand with the disaster management course of Diploma and Master's Degree in Panjab University, Chandigarh.

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