

ANNEX 6

Checklist of hygiene practices that protect health in emergencies and disasters

The following is an extensive list of hygiene practices that protect health in disasters and emergencies. The list may be used as an aid to assessing hygiene practices and risks, and as a means of focusing hygiene messages on a few practices that influence health in a particular situation.

People's ability to achieve these protective actions depends on the availability of material resources, such as adequate clean water, soap, toilets, etc., and personal resources, such as time and energy.

Water safety

At the source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Water for drinking is collected from the cleanest possible source. ■ If necessary, a distinction is made between water for drinking and water for other uses, such as bathing, laundry, watering animals. ■ Water sources are protected from faecal contamination by fencing (to keep animals away), and by siting latrines or defecation fields at least 10–30 metres away, depending on ground conditions.
Collection, storage and use of water at household level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Water is collected and stored in clean, covered containers. ■ Water is taken from the storage container with a clean, long-handled dipper or through a tap placed slightly above the bottom container. ■ Efforts are made not to waste water.
Use of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ If there is a risk that water is not safe, it is filtered and/or chlorinated or boiled¹ ■ Water for making food or drinks for young children is boiled.

Excreta disposal

Use of designated places for defecation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defecation is avoided near water sources and water-treatment plants, uphill of camps and water sources, in fields destined for crops, along public roads, near communal buildings such as clinics, near food-storage facilities. ■ Defecation is done in latrines, trenches, defecation fields, etc. ■ People avoid going barefoot to defecate. ■ Children do not visit a defecation area alone. ■ New arrivals at emergency settlements are aware of the arrangements for defecation and the importance of complying with them.
Children's sanitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Uncontrolled defecation by children is stopped. (The faeces of young children are more harmful than those of adults). ■ The stools of young children or babies are wrapped in leaves or paper and buried or put in a latrine. ■ Young children are helped to defecate into an easily-cleaned container that can be emptied into a toilet and washed out. ■ Children are cleaned promptly after defecation and have their hands washed. ■ People who clean children wash their own hands thoroughly afterwards.

Waste disposal

Solid waste

- Refuse is not scattered about. (This encourages insect breeding and attracts rats which can be a nuisance and transmit disease).
- In the immediate post-disaster period, if organized refuse collection has not been set up, household solid waste is buried by families.
- Once collection arrangements have been made, refuse is placed in the bins provided.
- Filled bins are not left in food-preparation areas.
- Bins are kept securely covered to prevent scavenging by children or animals.

Liquid waste

- Manure from livestock is collected and disposed of as safely.
- Standing pools of polluted wastewater (from washing, food preparation, wasted tap water) are not allowed to form. (They encourage mosquito breeding, which is a health hazard).
- Children are prevented from playing in or near hazardous pools of water.
- Arrangements for disposing of liquid waste, such as using soakage pits, are understood and followed.

Vector controlPersonal protection
against disease
vectors

- Household refuse is removed regularly to avoid build-up of houseflies and rat infestations.
- Foodstuffs are kept in rodent-proof stores or containers.
- Cooked foods, which may have been contaminated by houseflies, are properly reheated to a boil.
- Clothes are laundered frequently and insecticidal shampoos are used to prevent lice.
- In areas where mosquitoes are a problem, bed nets or bedroom screens are used, if available.

Personal hygiene

Water for washing

- If possible, plenty of water is used for washing.
- Clothing is laundered regularly.
- The most readily-available water is used for personal and domestic hygiene.

Hand-washing

- All family members wash their hands regularly: after defecating; after cleaning a child who has defecated and disposing of the stool; before preparing food; before eating; before feeding a child.
- Adults or older children wash the hands of young children.

Shelter

At the disaster site

- Where people are trying to house themselves in the ruins of their previous homes, they take steps to avoid risks from the lack of structural integrity of their buildings.
- If their homes are definitely unsafe, people move.

In longer-term
emergency
settlements

- People take part in residents' committees to voice their views about the setting up and running of a camp.
- Residents participate in cleaning the settlement.
- Children do not enter dangerous areas of the settlement and, if necessary, volunteers guard unsafe areas.

Food safetyDealing with
contaminated food

- Food that has been contaminated as a result of a disaster is disposed of or, if there is a food shortage, cleaned thoroughly (possibly by submerging in an antiseptic solution) and cooked for an extended period.
- Contaminated fruit is always peeled.
- Perishable food that has spoiled is salvaged by cutting out bad bits, prolonged washing and prolonged cooking (but milk, eggs, meat and fish that have not been stored properly are discarded).

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| Food handling and preparation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Surroundings are kept clean; waste is disposed of properly; and food is stored in closed containers to avoid contamination by insects and vermin.■ Food is prepared in a clean place, using clean pots and utensils.■ Uncooked food is washed in clean water before it is eaten.■ Cooked food is eaten while still hot, and previously prepared food is thoroughly reheated.■ Kept foods are covered. |
| Feeding babies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Children up to 6 months of age are breastfed.■ Weaning foods are clean and nutritious.■ Drinks are given with a cup and spoon rather than a bottle.■ People wash their hands before preparing weaning food and feeding a baby. |
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¹To make water safe for drinking, it should be brought to a vigorous rolling boil. If boiling or chlorination are not possible at household level, then low-turbidity water may be disinfected by exposing it to bright sunlight for at least one day (Reed 1997).