

## Citizens as First Responders

Emergency situations and disasters can take many forms. Hurricanes, floods, fires, earthquakes, car accidents and missing persons situations are not just the makings of television news stories. These events can occur at any time. The first responders to an accident or emergency often are not trained professionals but citizens and community members who are already on the scene.

Your life and the lives of others may depend on your ability to respond during an emergency situation. As a first responder to an emergency or accident scene, you may be the only one to provide information and assistance until the authorities arrive.

- A first responder must ensure their own safety before helping others, but the following actions can help you manage the situation if you are the first on the scene of an emergency or disaster:  
Observe: First evaluate the situation. Are there injured individuals? Fallen power lines? Physical damage to nearby buildings or other structures? In addition to assessing the situation, you need to identify any potential dangers to you or other responders as a result of the emergency.
- Call for help: Do not assume that someone else will call the authorities. Call immediately and share your observations. Also, ask others in the area for help – especially if there are injured persons involved.
- If caring for a victim, remember A, B, C, D:
  - **Airway:** Make sure the individual's airway is open and unimpaired.
  - **Breathing:** Is the victim breathing
  - **Circulation:** Does the victim have a pulse? Are they bleeding?
  - **Delicate:** Be careful. Any mishandling of the neck or lower back after impact or injury can cause significant problems.

- Stay calm: In order to help the situation and assist those involved, you need to remain calm, make rational decisions and stay focused.
- Secure the area: If you have located an injured person or discovered a dangerous situation, you will want to secure the area. If possible, direct traffic or pedestrians away from the area and protect the injured.
- Prepare for emergency crews: Do not leave the area. Make sure there is ample room for emergency vehicles to arrive. This might mean directing traffic or moving debris.
- Gather information: Ask witnesses to stay and give a report to authorities. Ask injured persons to give their names. Provide as much information as you can to emergency crews.



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