

## **4 Steps to Follow as You Respond to a Natural Disaster**

[Music begins]

Narrator: While we hope it never happens, natural disasters do occur. Here are four things to consider as your program responds to a natural disaster. First, focus on safety. During a natural disaster time is of the essence. Avoid distractions that can waste time. Focus on the safety of the children and other personnel. Account for all occupants and provide first aid as needed.

Step 2 is implementing your established protocols. You have practiced, now support the designated staff as they manage their key tasks. The incident supervisor, safety coordinator, and communication coordinator all have important jobs to do. Remain calm and follow their directions. When the immediate danger has passed, and the occupants have been evacuated, assess the condition of the facility. A quick visual inspection may alert you to imminent safety concerns. Respond to these accordingly.

Local building inspectors may conduct a more thorough evaluation and use inspection placards to alert you to safety concerns and restrictions. A red Unsafe placard declares your facility as destroyed and cannot be entered. A yellow Restricted Use placard indicates major damage which requires more detailed examination and repairs. A green Inspected placard indicates that the building may be occupied without restriction. Cleanup can begin.

The communication coordinator should submit an initial written report to their Head Start Regional Office within 24 hours of a disaster. It is critical to keep your Regional Office informed and updated as conditions change so that the Regional Office can mobilize assistance. Natural disasters happen but with careful planning, you can mitigate their impact and more quickly return to service.

[Music ends]