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Railway officers to be trained in disaster management

The Odisha train tragedy probe had revealed that disaster response could have been faster

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The Ministry of Railways has made training in disaster management mandatory for railway officers. The move comes after investigation into the devastating Odisha train

tragedy that left about 290 passengers dead and scores injured revealed that the disaster response could have been faster.



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Disaster management has now been incorporated as an integral component of the training module for railway officers at the induction/foundation course level and also included in refresher or mid-career training programmes. The National Academy of Indian Railways (NAIR), Vadodara, and the Indian Railway Institute of Disaster Management (IRIDM), Bengaluru, would work together in imparting the comprehensive training programme, railway sources said on Monday.

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However, with the Railway Board ordering NAIR to hand over all its assets, including buildings and other infrastructural facilities, to the Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya (GSV), confusion prevails among Director-Generals/Directors of Central Training Institutes (CTIs) on the implementation of the training.

“NAIR which was functioning from 43.5-acre campus with customised infrastructural facilities designed and developed over the years has been instructed to hand over the assets to a Central university [GSV]. Any training programme would from now on require the approval of the Vice-Chancellor of the university. Since disaster Management is a priority area, there needs to be clarity on the venue and schedule of training,” a senior railway officer who formerly headed a CTI said.

More emphasis on disaster management was laid following the report of the Commissioner of Railway Safety, Eastern Circle, A.M Chowdhary who probed the Odisha train accident and said in his findings that “the initial response to such a disaster should be faster. Railway Board should review the system of disaster response in the Zonal Railways.”

He also called for reviewing the coordination of railways with disaster management agencies like the National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force etc. The Indian Railways have a Safety Organisation and an officer in the rank of a Higher Administrative Grade designated as Principal Chief Safety Officer in all Zonal Railways to ensure compliance of safety guidelines and coordinate with different agencies in the event of an exigency.

Though the railways have Accident Relief Trains stationed at major junctions across the railway network with adequate manpower and equipment to reach accident sites or any scene of disturbance, the focus would be more on restoring rail traffic. The railways rely more on the State administration and Central agencies for relief and rescue operations.

In the recent floods in southern districts of Tamil Nadu, the Tiruchendur-Chennai Chendur Superfast Express was stopped at Srivaikuntam railway stations after the railway track got breached a few hundreds of metres ahead. The first help arrived several hours later after the Indian Air Force helicopters hovered over the railway station and dropped food packets to more than 500 stranded passengers.



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