Responding to a natural disaster

After major natural disasters, for example earthquakes, volcanoes, avalanches, flooding or tropical storms, it is often difficult to respond quickly with aid to help the people in the areas affected. There are several reasons for this.

Look at some of the reasons below:

- Accurate maps are not always readily available.
- Few helicopters are available to take in rescuers.
- Many bridges are destroyed and so road and rail access is limited.
- Bridges are weakened and cannot support heavy weights.
- Telephone links are disrupted.
- Many roads are blocked by debris.
- Night time rescue is hindered by power lines being broken.
- Information is not always readily available in remote locations.
- Governments do not always have resources to help.
- It takes time for other countries to respond.

Work with a partner. Cut up the reasons above and put them in order. You should start with the most significant reason to explain why aid is often slow to respond to a disaster and work down to the least significant.

1. Compare your order with another pair. Discuss reasons for any differences between your lists.

2. Research one specific recent natural disaster. Include maps in your answer; you could make use of atlases, Google Earth and/or Google maps etc.
   - Assess how well you think the speed of response was to the disaster.
   - What aid was supplied?
   - Explain reasons for any delays that occurred.
   - Present your research to the class.

3. Make suggestions on how aid responses can be improved.

Extension task: Research one charity organisation that has given aid for disaster relief in the past.
Responding to a natural disaster

Teaching notes:

This activity sheet can be used for work on any natural disasters and so can be used very flexibly.

Pupils:
- make reasoned assessments
- use research skills
- build up a case study
- show evidence of knowledge and understanding
- use atlas skills
- use Google maps
- give a class presentation
- participate in discussion

Use activities 1 to prompt discussion for response to any natural disaster being studied.

Use activity 2 when studying any named natural disaster; adapt the question e.g. for a named earthquake or a named hurricane event. Alternatively, ensure that there is a good range of disasters covered if you are using as a broader research activity.

It can be set as a homework activity.
It can be set as an individual or group activity.
Presentations can be as posters or PowerPoint.

Use activity 3 as an individual activity or for a class discussion.

Extension task: The websites of charities are usually well presented. However, with KS3 groups it would be worth checking the websites prior to use in case distressing images have been uploaded.

An overview charity website is available at: http://www.n-d-a.org/nda-charity.php and the Disasters Emergency Committee is at http://www.dec.org.uk/