



Shine A Light. Stay Aware.

**Protecting Our
Communities in the wake
of natural disaster**

During a time when many are dislocated, distracted, and unaccounted for, predators may take advantage of the fact that “another missing person” would likely go unnoticed. Historically there has been an increase in exploitation and even cases of trafficking following natural disasters. Traffickers and predators can exploit these conditions by promising food, shelter, and other resources, sometimes posing as disaster responders or social service professionals to gain trust.

Disasters exploit and compound vulnerabilities often associated with trafficking, such as poverty, food insecurity, and gender-based violence. Human trafficking is a crime of opportunity.

While we don't want to incite fear, we want our communities to stay mindful that **traffickers are opportunists and look for vulnerable populations**. Let's continue to rally together, look out for one another, and stay aware of what is going around us.

Anyone who works in emergency and disaster response should have a basic awareness of suspicious activity.

POTENTIAL RED FLAGS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- ▶ Child or teenager with older person who is not related to them often in combination with: Seeming fearful, uncomfortable, or submissive to that person OR having inconsistent stories
- ▶ Unfamiliar/suspicious individuals lurking or “scouting” areas where vulnerable women and children gather (areas such as shared shower houses or sleeping spaces)
- ▶ People offering resources in exchange for coming with them to another location
- ▶ Attempts to isolate an individual or separate them from a larger group
- ▶ Third party control of identity documents

SAFETY TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS + LOCALS:

- ▶ Travel in groups of 3-4 minimum, preferably with a trusted male
- ▶ Always be aware of your surroundings and follow your gut
- ▶ Remember: You do not have to agree to assistance from anyone who makes you uncomfortable, and you do not automatically owe them anything for their support or assistance
- ▶ Use wisdom and discretion with anyone who approaches you or offers to assist you. Ask questions about their affiliation, and confirm they are approved to be there OR are trustworthy support.

BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL TRAFFICKING SCHEMES

SEX TRAFFICKING

- ▶ Offers to stay at a stranger's home instead of a shelter
- ▶ Offers to make quick money to help support family and get back on one's feet
- ▶ Offers of drugs when clinics and other services are closed during and after the disaster
- ▶ Anyone requiring you to hand over your ID for an undisclosed period of time

LABOR TRAFFICKING

- ▶ Work that comes with perks that seem too good to be true (immigration assistance, extravagant wages)
- ▶ False rebuilding or construction jobs advertised on social media
- ▶ Traffickers posing as disaster responders at distribution sites and offering employment
- ▶ Anyone requiring you to hand over your ID for an undisclosed period of time

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT TRAFFICKING OR SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY:

Immediately contact local law enforcement. Avoid putting yourself in a potentially dangerous situation and follow the instructions they provide.