

Emergency Response Services

Disasters and complex emergencies often result in significant environmental impacts. Therefore, a key element of an emergency response is the rapid identification and mitigation of environmental risks.

Member States affected by an environmental emergency can request assistance from the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit (JEU).

The JEU can mobilize environmental experts and equipment for deployment to the affected country, conduct rapid environmental assessments, and provide remote support.

Depending on the type of emergency and requested assistance, the experts can be deployed as part of United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams or on standalone environmental emergency missions.

Key features of JEU services

The JEU can mobilize support:

- Further to a *request for international assistance* from the affected government;
- At no-cost for the recipient country;
- At short notice (within 48 hours from the request).



Duration: Environmental experts are generally deployed for a period of 2-4 weeks. Depending on the context and needs, a longer mission (up to 3-6 months) can be deemed appropriate.



Cost: The UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit does not charge any fees for its services to Member States. All costs are borne by the Joint Unit and/or the sending organization.



Type of expertise delivered by the deployed team:

- Rapid environmental assessments to identify the environmental risks and impacts of disasters, so as to prevent and/or mitigate life-threatening situations.
- Onsite sampling and analysis as required.
- Specialized expertise, including on chemical and weapon contamination and spills, industrial accidents, disaster waste management, dam breaches and overall damage to infrastructure.



Deployment process

Request: When a disaster strikes, the affected government may request international assistance to the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit through the in-country and/or regional UN focal point (or, alternatively, directly to the Joint Unit).

Alerts: Upon receipt of a request for international assistance, the Joint Unit alerts its Environmental Emergencies Roster to mobilize experts for deployment and/or its remote network of partners for remote support.

Deployment: Experts are selected by the Joint Unit among available candidates and against the mission's Terms of Reference. Teams are dispatched to the affected country.

Mission: The team supports national and local authorities in addressing the environmental dimensions of disasters.

Handover and Exit: The deployed experts present preliminary findings to national/local authorities to ensure handover before leaving the country. A consolidated report is delivered in writing within 2-4 weeks after mission completion.

For detailed information on mobilization procedures, please consult the Environmental Emergencies Guidelines (<http://www.eecentre.org/ee-guidelines/> available in English, Russian, Spanish and French).



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Preparedness

In addition to disaster response, the Joint Unit can also support countries in enhancing their overall readiness for response through preparedness missions.

Disaster preparedness refers to the knowledge and capacities developed by governments, professional response and recovery organizations, communities and individuals to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions. The extent to which the environment is considered in the pre-disaster context is decisive for the humanitarian response and recovery.

National authorities can ask the Joint Unit for assistance in enhancing their capacity to respond to environmental emergencies through training, support on contingency planning, tools and guidelines. For more information on available resources and e-learning modules, please visit EHA Connect: <https://ehaconnect.org/preparedness/> and the Environmental Emergencies Centre: www.eecentre.org

Joint Environment Unit:

The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) respond as one UN to the environmental dimensions of emergencies. The partnership assists countries affected by disasters and crises and works to enhance the sustainability of humanitarian action.

Contact information

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