



Earthquakes



Turkey: Building AFAD National System

From Fragmented Response to Coordinated Action

Turkey transformed its disaster approach by creating AFAD, a unified national agency coordinating all aspects of disaster management - from prevention and preparedness to response and recovery.

The Challenge

Before AFAD, Turkey disaster response involved multiple agencies with unclear roles, leading to coordination problems during crises. The 1999 Marmara earthquake revealed these gaps dramatically. Different ministries and organizations worked in silos, slowing rescue efforts and aid distribution.



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Creating AFAD

In 2009, Turkey established AFAD as a single coordinating body under the Prime Minister's office. AFAD brought together expertise from civil defense, emergency management, and earthquake preparedness into one streamlined organization. They created a national emergency response plan with clear roles for every agency.

How It Works

AFAD operates at three levels: national headquarters in Ankara provides strategic coordination, 81 provincial directorates manage local response, and a network of trained volunteers supports operations. They maintain emergency stockpiles of tents, blankets, and supplies across the country. When disaster strikes, AFAD activates a 24/7 coordination center, deploying resources and managing response from rescue to recovery.

Volunteer Power

AFAD built a citizen volunteer system, training tens of thousands in search and rescue, first aid, and emergency response. These volunteers become first responders in their own communities, providing crucial help in the critical first hours after disaster.

Key Lesson

Effective disaster response requires clear coordination, prepared resources, and empowered communities. By unifying command and training citizens, nations can respond faster and more effectively when crisis strikes.