



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are an officer working for the fire department in a city. One day, a massive fire breaks out in a building belonging to a coaching institute having classrooms where more than 1000 students are stranded. Also, the building lacks proper fire safety measures and adequate exits. Panic ensues as students inside the building desperately try to escape the flames and smoke, resulting in some individuals resorting to jumping off the building to save themselves.

As you arrive at the scene, you are faced with the following dilemmas:

- (a) How do you prioritize the rescue operations, given the limited resources and time available?
- (b) How do you deal with the ethical and legal implications of the building owner's negligence and violation of fire safety norms?
- (c) How do you handle the emotional and psychological impact of witnessing such a tragic incident on yourself and your team members?

16 Jun, 2023 GS Paper 4 Case Studies

Approach:

- **Introduction:** Start your answer with introducing the case
- **Body:** Mention stakeholders and ethical issues involved, and Course of action as asked in the Question.
- **Conclusion:** Summarize the key points and conclude your answer.

Introduction:

You are an officer working in fire department who responds to a huge fire in a coaching institute where over 1000 students are trapped. The building has no fire safety measures or enough exits, and some students jump off the building. You have to decide how to rescue the students, deal with the building owner's negligence, and cope with the trauma.

Body:

Stakeholders	Ethical Issues
Firefighters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Duty vs Personal Protection▪ Prioritizing whom to save first
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keeping calm and not endangering others' lives▪ Relying on the firefighters and other emergency services for rescue and medical assistance

Building owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Violating fire safety norms and endangering the lives. ▪ Cooperating or resisting with authorities on the investigation.
Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enforcing or neglecting fire safety laws and standards for buildings. ▪ Prosecuting or letting go the building owner for the negligence.
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helping or ignoring a tragic incident ▪ Supporting the firefighters and other emergency services

▪ **Course of Action:**

1. How do you prioritize rescue operations, given the limited resources and time available?

▪ **First Priority - Rescue the students:**

- Prioritize rescuing trapped students exposed to fire and smoke inside the building.
- Follow operational guidelines: rescue from low to high risk, minimizing risk to rescuers.
- Utilize ladders, aerial platforms, or ropes to reach students near windows, balconies, or injured from jumping.
- Create safe exit routes using forcible entry tools, ventilation techniques, or hose lines for students inside.
- Coordinate with police, ambulance, and civil defense for scene security, crowd control, and medical assistance.

▪ **Second priority - Contain the Fire:**

- Contain and extinguish the fire and prevent its spread.
- Consider factors like combustible materials, fire barriers, and wind conditions.
- Use suitable tactics and equipment (water, foam, dry chemicals) based on fire type and location.
- Monitor fire behavior and building stability, ready to withdraw if needed.

▪ **Third priority - Overhaul operations:**

- Protect property from further damage caused by water, smoke, or heat.
- Remove any remaining hot spots or hazards.
- Investigate the cause and origin of the fire.
- Interview witnesses to gather information.
- Use technology like drones and advanced vision camera.

2. How do you deal with the ethical and legal implications of the building owner's negligence and violation of fire safety norms?

- Building owners and developers can be held liable for negligence and violations of the National Building Code of India 2016 (NBC 2016).
- The fire department has a responsibility to report violations or hazards they observe during their operations, such as lack of fire safety measures, inadequate exits, or improper storage of flammable materials.
- The fire department should cooperate with other authorities involved in enforcing or investigating the case, such as building inspectors, health officers, or prosecutors.
- The fire department should provide recommendations or suggestions for improving fire safety in the building or similar premises in the future.
- The fire department should consider the ethical implications of their actions during rescue operations.
- The fire department should follow operational guidelines based on best practices and evidence-based research.
- The fire department should respect the dignity and rights of victims, their families, and the public.

3. How do you handle the emotional and psychological impact of witnessing such a tragic incident on yourself and your team members?

- Witnessing a tragic incident can have a profound and long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on firefighters and emergency responders.
- Symptoms experienced by firefighters may include anxiety, anger, guilt, sadness, nightmares, flashbacks, and difficulty concentrating.
- These symptoms can affect both their personal and professional lives and may lead to more serious conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, substance abuse, or suicide.
- Fire departments should provide support and resources to help their members cope with such incidents.
- Implementation of a comprehensive critical incident stress management program is essential, including pre incident education, on scene support, post incident debriefing, defusing, peer support, counselling, referral services, follow up care, and evaluation.
- Encouraging firefighters to seek help when needed and promoting a healthy lifestyle with physical activity, social interaction, relaxation, and coping skills is crucial.
- Recognizing and appreciating the efforts and achievements of firefighters and fostering a culture of trust, respect, and teamwork within the department is important.

Conclusion:

- As a fire department officer, prioritizing rescue operations, addressing legal and ethical implications, and providing emotional support are crucial. By focusing on saving lives, taking appropriate legal action against negligence, and offering psychological assistance, we can minimize the impact of tragic incidents and promote safety.

PDF Refernece URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-7891/pnt>

