

CAG: Rlys not up to tackling disaster

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New Delhi: Indian Railways seriously lacks in disaster management preparedness, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has pointed out in its latest report, tabled in Parliament on Friday.

It finds that the railways is not geared up to respond to accidents and disasters on many counts. There is inadequate provision of safety aids. There is shortage of trained manpower. It lacks proper communication equipment to even inform about the incident. There is serious dearth of trains equipped with rescue and relief system and even those that exist are unable to reach in real time the place of incidents as they are not in a state of readiness.

It has strongly urged the railways to set up a crack team of disaster management which would reach disaster sites promptly and assist divisions effort in rescue and relief work.

“The railways is not prepared to deal with all kinds of disasters, the zonal and divisional disaster management plans lacked cohesiveness and were not comprehensive. The infrastructure was not only insufficient but was also poorly located and not maintained adequately at many places,” the report said.

Referring to the “post incidence response” of the railways to various disasters, it noted that it “was neither

able to rapidly access the disaster sites with its rescue and relief equipment nor leverage the infrastructure of the civic/private agencies through effective co-ordination agreements”. “Organised assistance provided within the golden hour was the exception than the rule,” the CAG said.

The report illustrated several situations when there was delay in arrival of rescue and relief equipment. Even during the 2006 bomb blasts on Mumbai trains, the special disaster management trains equipped with cranes and medical staff called ARTVs could not reach for rescue operations.