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## A call to action in times of emergency

major aid agencies for several decades, these agencies know that when called upon, our commercial, warehouse and logistics teams will work together swiftly and smoothly, to rise to whatever urgent challenge is placed before them.

The ability to react quickly in a humanitarian crisis is of course vital, but there are other requirements than just speed. As obvious as it might seem, Durbin's first priority is always to listen carefully to the requirements of the agencies and to supply exactly what they need. If a wrong item is sent it can clog up vital warehouse space and furthermore it is demoralising for aid workers 'on the ground' to receive aid only to find that it is made up of pharmaceuticals and equipment that does not match their 'first needs' requirements. Not only does this waste their time, but unfortunately in these situations time often means lives as well. Another area where caution is needed is that of donated drugs. I find it heart-warming that when a major crisis situation breaks we are often approached by pharmaceutical manufacturers with offers to donate stock, but for the same reasons outlined above, we do have to evaluate such offers very carefully. It has to be stock that the agencies can use and be delivered at a time when they need it – perhaps at a 'reconstruction' rather than initial phase of an operation. Just as importantly, it needs to have sufficient shelf life to be of use. Other than taking up space, out-of-date medicines are of course very expensive to destroy!

As you would expect, each situation brings its own challenges. For example, shortly after the Libyan crisis began, our specialist charities division was contacted by a Scandinavian company who specialise in mobile hospitals. They asked us to

supply medicines, anaesthetics, bandages, disinfectants and emergency equipment that will be used in hospitals they have set up on the front line. Less than 24 hours after the request, the items were picked, packaged and delivered to them. It's amazing what can be achieved when the right processes are in place.

Over the years, Durbin has been involved in many humanitarian projects and we're proud of our involvement in all of them. Helping out in a crisis situation, where we know that we are making a real difference is so rewarding. After all, what could be more significant than saving a life? **MEH**

Since writing my last column both the war in Libya and the earthquake and tsunami in Japan have dominated the headlines of the world's media. It was also only a few weeks earlier that the Christchurch earthquake held the same position. I'm sure that, like myself, many of you have been touched by the scenes of human tragedy that have been presented on our TV screens.

It's during humanitarian crises like these where Durbin really comes into its own, and it's always satisfying to know that when called upon our well-oiled 'large-scale disaster plan' goes straight into action. I can always rely on my team to pull together and get what's necessary done. Regular readers of this column will know that Durbin has many business divisions. We have had a long history of co-ordinating relief shipments in emergency situations and we regard our experience and expertise in this area as one of the main 'raison d'être' of the company. Indeed, we hold stock of essential medicines, consumables and equipment for just these situations, and our location close to London's Heathrow airport means we are ideally placed to ship to most areas of the world at a moment's notice. Having supplied many of the

**Durbin PLC** is a British company based in South Harrow, London. Established in 1963, the company specialises in supplying quality assured pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and consumable supplies to healthcare professionals and aid agencies in over 180 countries. As well as reacting rapidly to emergency situations, Durbin PLC responds to healthcare supply needs from local project level to national scale programmes. Web address: [www.durbin.co.uk](http://www.durbin.co.uk) Email: [Lmorgan@durbin.co.uk](mailto:Lmorgan@durbin.co.uk)