

Avoiding Disaster Deaths Excerpts

According to the Avoidable Disaster Deaths (ADD) framework, disaster deaths can be broadly classified into three categories (although these distinctions are not always clear in real life):

1. Preventable avoidable deaths
2. Amenable avoidable deaths
3. Disaster risk governance–related avoidable deaths (Ray-Bennett, 2025, p. 3).

As Ray-Bennett (2025, pp. 49–50) explains, “Amenable and preventable deaths are caused by a lack of timely and preventive measures, while disaster risk governance deaths occur due to weak disaster risk governance measures.”

For individuals interested in developing their own case studies, please refer to the following matrices:

1. Matrix of Causes and Circumstances of Avoidable Disaster Death (Ray-Bennett, 2025)
2. Matrix of Causes and Circumstances Surrounding Drowning Death (Ray-Bennett et al., 2025)

A few examples of avoidable disaster deaths are presented below. These examples are excerpts from the research monograph:

Ray-Bennett, N.S. (2025). *Avoiding Disaster Deaths: Why Do So Many People Die?* Springer Nature, Switzerland.

Disaster Risk Governance-Related Avoidable Deaths

Case 2:

“A 21-year-old migrant worker from Ratnagiri was working in Nalasopara in Maharashtra to fend for her family (Suryawanshi, 2020). During the lockdown, she and her family walked on foot for almost 230 km in scorching heat to reach their home. Unfortunately, she collapsed and died on the road due to extreme heat and exhaustion” (Suryawanshi 2020; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.107).

Case 7:

“A 32-year-old man in West Bengal's Howrah district died hours after he was beaten by police for stepping out of his house to buy milk during the nationwide lockdown (The Wire Staff, 2020). According to his family, the man died of the injuries sustained during the police's assault on him. The victim was rushed to a local hospital, where he was declared dead. The police have denied the claim that the man died due to the lathi-charge (baton-charge) and instead blamed a

cardiac arrest, saying the deceased was already suffering from heart ailments” (The Wire Staff 2020; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.107).

Case 9:

“A 17-year-old migrant girl from Madhya Pradesh ended her life after she and her four siblings were left starving for two days during the lockdown (Nation, 2020a; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.108).

One Police Inspector said an inquiry revealed that this migrant family from Madhya Pradesh had no food for the last two days. The neighbours gave them food, but the girl was ashamed of her plight and was humiliated to beg every day. According to the Police Constable, when her father was away in search of work, the deceased asked her siblings to go out. She hung herself in their tiny room” (Nation, 2020a; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.108).

Preventable Avoidable Deaths

“A young, meritorious student of class X took her life by setting herself ablaze, according to her parents (Sambad English Bureau 2020a; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.110). The girl could not attend the online classes during the lockdown, which made her very gloomy. The autopsy would be conducted later at the State-run Medical College hospital and would be handed to the family to conduct the last rites. The girl's father was a casual labourer and on account of the lockdown, had no work. Hence, he lacked money to repair their TV or buy a smartphone for the online classes” (Sambad English Bureau 2020a; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.110) - **Case 1**

“An 82-year-old woman was found dead inside a toilet in the same hospital where she was admitted according to the senior police inspector and her relatives (Sambad English Bureau 2020b; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.110). The woman had tested Covid-19 positive on May 27 and had been admitted to another hospital before she was shifted to the current hospital. Her relatives informed the police that she was missing on June 2. In a video message, the deceased grandson appealed to the Chief Minister to probe into the incident and punish those found negligent or guilty” (Sambad English Bureau 2020b; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.110) - **Case 2**

“According to a district superintendent of police in Andhra Pradesh, at least ten alleged alcohol addicts (three of whom were beggars and two were rickshaw pullers) died after consuming sanitiser as an alternative to liquor (PTI 2020; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.110). All the deceased were alcohol addicts, and its non-availability due to the extended COVID-19 lockdown forced them to go for the alcohol-based sanitiser, according to the District Superintendent of Police. According to these police personnel, they are investigating whether the sanitiser had any other toxic content. To assess this, they have sent the stocks for chemical analysis” (PTI 2020; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.111). - **Case 9**

Amenable Avoidable Deaths

“The body of a newborn baby was recovered from the bag of his parents at a transit centre for migrant workers in Odisha. The baby's parents worked at a brick kiln in Uttar Pradesh. After the lockdown was enforced, the couple registered to return to their village by train. The baby was born in a hospital in Uttar Pradesh a day before their departure. The couple boarded the train the next day with their newly-born baby boy. Late at night, they noticed that the baby had stopped crying and found he had probably died of suffocation in the overcrowded train. Apprehending that other passengers might force them out of the train for carrying the dead baby, the couple put the deceased in one of their bags. After reaching their destination the couple were shifted to a transit centre. In the evening, the body was found by someone at the centre and police were informed. Police seized the body and interrogated the couple. After the postmortem, the couple were sent to their village along with the body. Further investigation will follow once the postmortem report is handed over to the police” (Odisha 2020; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.108) - **Case 1**

“In the Ganjam district of Odisha, a critically ill man died despite the arrival of the 108 ambulance (PNN, 2020). His family members watched him die helplessly after a 108-ambulance refused to carry the person to the hospital, suspecting him of suffering from COVID-19. According to the deceased son: "The 108 ambulance employees said the 104 ambulances will arrive at our house and carry my father to the hospital. But the 104-ambulance reached here late, and in the meantime, my father was dead." After the media highlighted the issue, The Ganjam District Collector issued an order stating that all 108/104 ambulances will be used for shifting suspected COVID-19 cases to the appropriate health facility during emergencies in adhering to IPC guidelines of COVID-19” (PNN 2020; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.108) - **Case 2**

“A 30-year-old pregnant woman requiring urgent medical attention in the eighth month of her pregnancy died in Ghaziabad (Nation, 2020e). The deceased and her husband travelled from one hospital to another for 13 h. Eight hospitals, including the government ones, had allegedly turned them away. The deceased brother-in-law said: "We want justice [...]. A penalty on hospitals is not justice. [...]. A patient should get admitted to a hospital and get treatment. [...] Life and death are in the hands of the Almighty, but at least they can try. [...] Nobody should die because of lack of treatment or health care" (Nation 2020e; in Ray-Bennett 2025, p.110) - **Case 5**

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