



## BELGIUM



### **General Directorate of Civil Safety** *(Direction Générale de la Sécurité Civile)*

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#### **1. Legislation :**

- Royal decree of 11 March 1954 concerning the « Civil Defence Corps »;
- Law of 31 December 1963 concerning Civil Defence, the first part of which defines the duties of Civil Defence and assigns various organisational and executive powers to the King and to the Minister of the Interior. The second part describes the basic organisation of the fire services;
- Royal decree of 8 November 1967 establishing the peacetime organisation and duties of the fire services;
- Royal decree of 23 June 1971 defining the duties of Civil Defence and the coordination of the relief work following a disaster or a calamitous event;
- Law of 8 July 1964 concerning emergency medical assistance;
- Law of 29 March 1958 relative to the protection of the population against radiation;
- Royal decree of 28 February 1963 establishing the “General rules for the Civil Defence of the population and workers against ionising radiation”;
- Royal decree of 27 September 1991 establishing the national assistance Plan in case of nuclear risk in Belgium;
- Law 21 of 21 January 1987 concerning the risk of major hazards arising from certain industrial activities (Seveso Law), its amendments and its implementing regulations;
- Royal decree of 10 June 1990 and the ministerial instructions of 11 July 1990 on the establishment of emergency and intervention plans;
- Royal decree of 11 April 1999 setting modalities for the establishment and functioning of rescue zones.

## **2. Mission :**

This is to assist the population and protect property in case of accident, disaster or natural calamity. Originally Civil Defence was meant to intervene in periods of war; however, the absence of armed conflicts has changed its role to that of an assistance service responsible also for technical coordination in the case of major disasters.

## **3. Regulation and procedure :**

By virtue of the Law on Civil Defence of 31 December 1963, the Federal Minister for the Interior organises, through the General Directorate of Civil Safety, the national means and measures of civil defence. He coordinates the establishment and application of these measures between government departments and other public bodies. He is responsible for designing federal (national) emergency plans and informing the population on the risks to which it may be exposed.

This responsibility also implies sending adequate directives to the authorities in charge at the provincial and local level, namely the governors and mayors, for preparing emergency plans.

The Minister also sets general standards concerning the organisation of the fire services and the training of their personnel.

## **4. Organisation :**

The General Directorate of Civil Safety is attached to the Ministry of the Interior; its Headquarters are in Brussels. Since 1988, a governmental coordination and crisis Centre (CGCCR)- *Centre gouvernemental de Coordination et de Crises*- ensures a round- the-clock operational readiness for the benefit of the federal authorities.

It collects, for the Minister for the Interior and the other authorities concerned, all available information on major accidents.

When a crisis occurs at federal level, coordination between the various authorities is ensured through the CGCCR.

Preventing and fighting disasters requires a simultaneous mobilisation of all the services able to provide assistance and rescue in such circumstances. These are services of the Federal State and the provinces or municipalities, but also of other public bodies as well as of the private sector.

It is thus important to draw up emergency plans which define the procedure to be followed and the action to be taken in case of a disaster situation so that the personnel and equipment can be utilized in the most effective way possible.

It is the municipalities which are responsible, in the first instance, for preventing and fighting fires and other emergency situations.

In such cases the operational units of the General Directorate of Civil Safety intervene only when the equipment available to the local authorities is not suitable or proves inefficient in fighting the disaster<sup>1</sup>, and at the request of the mayor, the chief of the fire-brigade, or the chief of police. It should be noted that the General Directorate's operational units intervene as a matter of course in case of calamity<sup>2</sup> or catastrophe<sup>3</sup>.

When the geographic area of operations goes beyond the territory of a commune but is confined within the limits of one province, the governor is responsible for coordinating the rescue operations. The Minister of the Interior coordinates, with the help of the CGCCR, the operations whose scope goes beyond a province and all nuclear accidents whatever their scale.

### **5. Staff :**

The General Directorate of Civil Safety has a staff of about 120 persons at the federal level and 650 permanent agents in its 6 operational units, based in Liedekerke, Brasschaat, Crienée, Chlin, Neufchâteau and Jabbeke, which can intervene round the clock.

A total of some 1,500 volunteer agents can reinforce the permanent staff.

Fire services number 250. They are organised at the local level and comprise approximately 16,000 firemen, 11,000 of whom are volunteers and 5,000 professionals. These fire services are grouped within 10 "rescue zones" defined by the Federal Minister of the interior in the course of 2000 in accordance with the Royal decree of 11 April 1999 laying down the modalities of their establishment and functioning.

### **6. Training :**

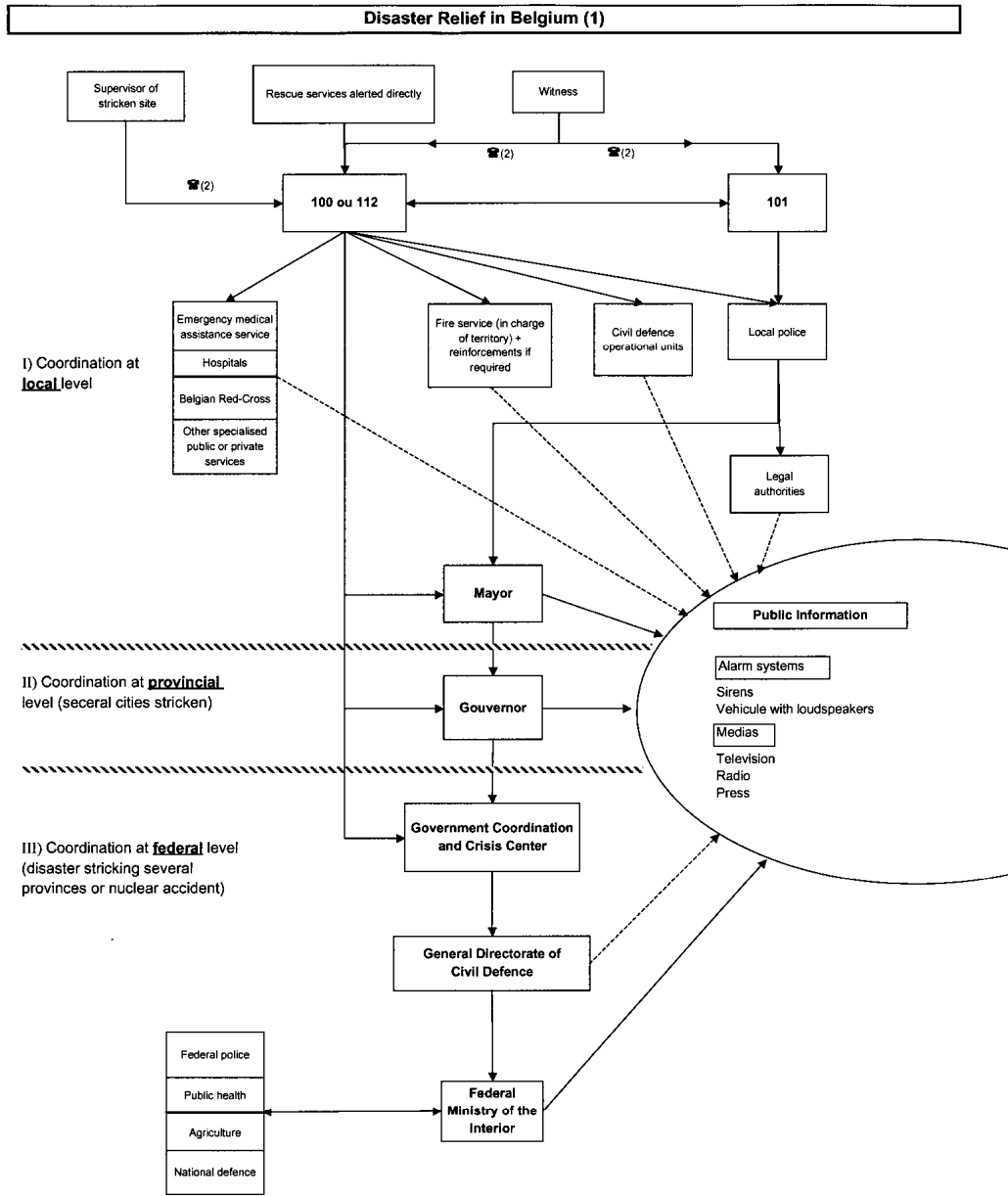
The Royal School of Civil Defence, based at Grez-Doiceau, about thirty kilometres from Brussels, organises training courses for operational and volunteer Civil Defence personnel who also carry out part of their training within operational units. Fire services have a training centre in each province (10 in total).

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<sup>1</sup> Disaster refers here to events, somewhat restricted geographically, which may result from human activities, or from natural phenomena, but which require means beyond local ones. Examples are: road accidents requiring special equipment for towing or repairing, landslides...

<sup>2</sup> Calamity refers here to events of a certain scope resulting from nature or from climatic natural phenomena, which represent a danger for the population and/or property. Examples: storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes...

<sup>3</sup> Catastrophes refer here to major events and accidents resulting from human activity. Examples: Plane crash, toxic gas clouds or explosion in installations at risk or following a collision between road tankers,...



(1) This relates to the alarm procedure generally applicable to all kinds of risks except nuclear accidents where the procedure is reversed: those in charge of nuclear installation must report all incidents or accidents directly to the Government coordination and crisis Centre which in turn transmits all relevant information and directives to the governors, local authorities and all other services concerned, in accordance with the national plan for nuclear emergencies.

(2) Emergency call numbers: these connect with telephone exchanges where employees contact the relevant rescue or intervention services according to the information given to them:  
 -100: more particularly rescue services  
 -101: more particularly police services  
 -112: European emergency number, for rescue and police services

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