



GERMANY



Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe

(Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Response)

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1. Legislation :

Germany's 1949 Constitution (Grundgesetz) stipulates that protection of the population in peacetime is the responsibility of the 16 constituent states ("Land," or collectively, "the Länder"). Federal responsibility and legislation only exists for the protection of the population in case of war or if the Bundestag (parliament) has determined that a state of tension exists (stage preliminary to war). The April 4th 1997 civil defence law delegates emergency planning and operational preparation in peacetime entirely to the Länder and their structures (agencies, procedures, organizations) set up to carry out these functions. The Länder, therefore, have their own laws regulating measures for urgent medical assistance and fire-fighting, as well as procedures for technical assistance and disaster management. The Federal Government supplements the Länder's equipment with war-time resources, e.g. special NBC-vehicles, which can be used during peacetime as well.

Federal prescriptions concerning measures necessary for civil protection during a war are carried out by the local authorities, in their respective territories, as agents for the federal government.

The September 11th 2001 attacks, and to an even greater degree, the catastrophic floods of 2002 led to the development of a new strategy for protecting the people of Germany, which was agreed upon by the Federal Minister of the Interior and his colleagues from the Länder.

A joint and coordinated approach by the Federal authorities and the Länder concerning the crisis management of unusual and nationally significant disaster and damage situations characterizes this new strategy.

Without changing laws concerning the traditional allocation of responsibilities the Federal Government increased its coordination of services with the Länder by setting up an new Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Response (Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe) in May 2004. The Office's mission, apart from performing the German government's civil protection tasks, is to provide support for the Länder through coordination and information.

2. Mission :

The mission of civil protection authorities is to provide for the protection and well-being of the population and its living conditions during civil disasters and emergencies, as well as during armed conflicts. These authorities contribute planning, administration and material resources to the prevention of, damage-control during, and recovery from these events.

3. Organisation :

According to the respective laws of each Land, the first authority in charge during a peacetime disaster is the cognizant rural district, county or municipal authority. The director of administration for each such authority manages the local response to important damages and disasters. To carry out his administrative duties, he is assisted by a team composed, according to the needs of the situation, of the officials of his own administration, of representatives of other authorities and services as well as of other organizations involved in disaster management. For the technical and tactical execution of the required measures, he appoints a director of operations, who is assisted by a team that includes the representatives of the organizations and units participating in the operation (e.g. police, fire departments, non-governmental organisations, and private enterprise). When a disaster affects several districts or exceeds the capabilities of the local government, the next highest hierarchical authority ensures coordination.

The federal government supports local and regional authorities, as well as the Länder, with its own operational forces (e.g. Technisches Hilfswerk, Federal Police Forces, Armed Forces) when asked for (administrative assistance), and with services provided by the Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Response which is the responsible authority for:

- performing the German government's civil protection tasks;
- co-coordinating the protection of critical infrastructures;
- collecting, evaluating and reporting information of all types of and from all sources so as to define one single hazard situation;

- coordinating the Federal government's task of informing the Länder and their communities, the private sector and the people about prevention, planning and current threats;
- supporting the management of deployed Länder forces and other public and private resources in large-scale hazard situations;
- coordinating the protection of people against weapons of mass destruction;
- providing personnel in leadership positions at all administration levels in civil protection with the appropriate training to cope with threats;
- providing national coordination in the field of civil preventive security within the framework of the European integration process; and
- coordinating the Federal government, the Länder, fire services and non-governmental relief organisations when assuming international humanitarian tasks and for civil-military-cooperation.

An inter-ministerial coordination group may be set up within the Federal Ministry of the Interior when the catastrophe exceeds the ability of a Land to cope or has spread beyond its territorial boundaries. In such cases, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, in liaison with other Federal Ministries and the other Länder, ensures the coordination of assistance for the Land affected by the disaster

In case of a military crisis, 13 different ministries are responsible for civil emergency planning within their own respective areas, and the Ministry of the Interior holds an overall coordinating function.

4. Staff :

Communal authorities provide responders for emergencies through professional fire-brigades or voluntary fire-fighters who are competent in fighting fires, technical assistance, and, in some Länder, for emergency medical assistance. In general, only towns of over 100,000 inhabitants have a professional fire brigade (total approx. 36,000 fire fighters).

Elsewhere, fire-fighting services are provided by 1.1 million active voluntary fire fighters. In addition, commercial and industrial establishments particularly at risk are required to ensure an internal fire-brigade service. These services employ some 46,000 fire-fighters nationwide.

Additional civil protection forces include Non-Governmental relief Organizations ("NGOs") with mainly volunteer working members, such as: The Workers' Samaritan Federation Germany (Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund), the German Life Saving Federation (Deutsche-Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft), the German Red Cross, St. John Ambulance Service (Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe), Relief Service of the Order of Malta (Malteser-Hilfsdienst).

These organizations, with approximately 500,000 qualified aides, are the backbone of the German population protection System.

Therefore, the Federal Government supports the organizations by exempting young men from otherwise mandatory military service if they commit themselves for a fixed period of time to a NGO or the Technisches Hilfswerk (Federal disaster relief agency).

The Technisches Hilfswerk is the operational force of the Federal Ministry of the Interior concerning disaster relief with a total of approx. 70,000 aides. The Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Response has 302 full time employees to accomplish its mission.

5. Training :

Training of fire-fighters takes place at the fire-brigade schools in each Land. The relief organizations run their own training facilities for their members. Additional training capacity is provided by the Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Response's Academy for Crisis Management, Civil Emergency Planning and Civil Protection ("Academy for Crisis Management").

The curricula concerning civil-defence matters is the same nationwide. The exchange of personnel and close cooperation between government entities, NGOs, and private enterprise, as well as international exchange of expertise, is part of the German Government's philosophy concerning the Academy for Crisis Management. Therefore, the offered courses are not only open to the aforementioned government authorities, NGOs and partially to private companies, but are sometimes even jointly organised and conducted.

6. Finances:

The Federal Ministry of the Interior's 2005 budget for civil protection is approximately eighty-five million Euros (€ 85,000,000) for the Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Response and another one-hundred and twenty-nine million Euros (€129,000,000) for the Technisches Hilfswerk.

The federal budget 2005 also includes additional budget funds for civil protection, e.g. within the budget of the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, which is responsible for preparedness in the food sector.

Each Land meets its responsibility in civil protection with different priorities and different budgeted amounts of money.

Mr. Christoph UNGER

**President of the Federal Office for Civil Protection and
Disaster Response**

