



NETHERLANDS



National Coordination Centre

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1. Mission :

The Fire Services and GHOR (Medical Assistance in Accidents and Disasters) Department imposes quality and performance requirements on the organization, officers and equipment of the fire service and GHOR agencies. The Department is also improving the administrative organization of the fire services and the GHOR. In addition, the Department also develops the policy for all the duties of the fire services and the GHOR towards the entire safety chain, with the emphasis on the proaction and prevention links of the chain.

2. Regulation and procedure :

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations formulates the framework for the fire services in the form, for example, of the relevant legislation and regulations. The Minister also has the administrative responsibility for the structure of the GHOR, and ensures for the preconditions required to fulfil the public administration's responsibility for the GHOR.

The Minister of Health, Welfare and Sports has the sole responsibility for the medical content of all medical assistance.

3. Organisation :

In contrast to some other European countries, the Netherlands does not have a separate operational organization for disaster control. Putting out fires, assisting victims and enforcing the public order are all everyday duties of the stand-by services such as the fire brigades, medical (assistance) services, police, and municipal services - the core organizations in disaster control.

When so required other services can also be requested to provide services; for example, in emergencies the army can be requested to supply helicopters and other equipment, or specific knowledge or personnel. Other organizations can also be involved in disaster control, such as rescue teams, water control authorities, the Netherlands Red Cross, environmental agencies, and other municipal and provisional services. Foreign assistance organizations can also be called in to help in regions close to the border. The Netherlands has concluded agreements with Germany and Belgium for the provision of this assistance. Official requests for assistance are always required, for which purpose procedures and protocols have been implemented that lay down the roles to be played by the municipality, province and the central government in the event of a disaster.

The intensive collaboration between various organizations imposes stringent requirements on their co-ordination, organizational skills, and appropriate mutual understanding of each other's capabilities and limitations. The Government ensures that relief staff acquires the knowledge and skills they need by offering them training courses, prepared by multi-disciplinary teams, and by organizing large-scale exercises.

Agency

On 1 January 2004 the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations began developing a new agency: the *Landelijke Faciliteit Rampenbestrijding* ("National Disaster Response Facility", the LFR). The LFR will be a national facility for the Ministry's safety partners; it will focus on providing multi-disciplinary support such as assistance, and the necessary operational logistics. One of the major components of the LFR is the Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR), the Dutch assistance team available for international deployment in the search for and rescue of victims of disasters.

Safety regions

The authorities must be able to act efficiently during the control of disasters; however, they also need to make suitable preparations for disaster management -a need that is applicable both to the operational services and to the administration. Various studies and evaluations of disasters have shown that the complexity of the current division of duties is particularly detrimental to the joint preparations for disasters, and to the joint control of disaster situations. For this reason the Government plans to introduce a System of safety regions in which the fire brigades, GHOR and police will collaborate closely at both operational and administrative levels. This approach will shorten lines of communication, and will provide for the performance of a number of duties at a regional level. The Government's Safety-regions Ministerial Standpoint is intended to devolve the management of the fire brigades to a more regional level; this objective is to be achieved in 2006. The administrations of the fire brigades and the GHOR will be merged to create one assistance administration. This administration will need to reach collaborative agreements with the regional police administrations that improve the co-ordination of preparations for joint operations during crises. The regional administration will be assigned decision-making powers whereby decisions will also be possible in the absence of consensus. Fire-brigade staff in higher job grades or in specific jobs will be transferred to the regional service.

GHOR - Médical Assistance in Accidents and Disasters

Following a disaster or a major accident, top priority is assigned to the rescue of victims, and to the provision of medical assistance and care of the victims. Municipalities in each region will need to make joint arrangements for the creation of a public body to provide for medical assistance required as a result of accidents and disasters in their region. These GHOR regions will ensure for the explicit and centralized administrative responsibility for the performance of the entire medical-assistance chain.

The duties of the region focus on the consistent and coherent performance of the health-care institutions within the medical-assistance chain. It should be noted that, in contrast to the fire brigades and the police, the medical-assistance services and organizations do not fall under the public administration's authority. Consequently it will be important to give attention to this issue during the formation of the GHOR regions. Moreover the regional administration -a continuation of the local administration - has no powers over the health-care organization, the majority of which lies in the private sector. The GHOR's administration will be restricted to compiling mutually-concluded agreements. The regional administrations will appoint a regional medical officer with the responsibility for the preparations for and management of medical assistance provided during disasters. The officer will use the structure of the everyday emergency medical assistance organization for the provision of medical assistance following disasters and major accidents.

Following a disaster the medical services will carry out their duties under the auspices of an organization which is referred to as the 'GHOR structure' in the Netherlands. The GHOR's objective is to ensure for the integral operation of the medical assistance organizations following (the threat of) a disaster, a (large-scale) accident, and/or a crisis.

Within the disaster-control operations the GHOR administration bears the final responsibility for the following processes:

- medical assistance - somatic: taking care of the injured, and providing them medical assistance;
- medical assistance - psychosocial: the collective care of victims immediately after the disaster in shelters (and by hospital staff), together with the provision of psychosocial assistance;
- preventive public health care: the assessment and implementation of measures to counter the harmful effects on health resulting from exposure to food, (drinking) water, soil and the atmosphere that has been contaminated during a disaster or, where relevant, is contaminated with residues as a result of a disaster.

4. Staff :

The primary Dutch fire services are organized at a municipal level. The regional fire services coordinate (the preparations for) disaster control and large-scale operations. The GHOR (Medical Assistance in Accidents and Disasters) is a regional organization.

The Netherlands has more than four hundred and fifty municipal fire brigades, with a total staff of some 27,000 men and women; no less than 82 percent of the staff are volunteers. Five fire brigades are staffed solely professional firemen and women. All Dutch firemen and women, both volunteers and professionals, fulfil the same requirements.

5. Training :

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations also has two autonomous administrative authorities, namely the Nibra (Netherlands Institute for Fire Services and Disaster Management) and the Nbbe (Netherlands Bureau of Fire Services Exams).

The Nibra is a training and centre of knowledge for the fire service and disaster-control organizations. The Nbbe is responsible for the development, implementation, management and organization of state examinations for fire-brigade and disaster-control staff.