

# La France à la loupe

## Civil defence in France

Civil defence is for preventing risks of all nature, informing and alerting populations, and protecting persons, property and the environment against accidents, disasters and catastrophes by framing measures and implementing them alongside appropriate resources provided by the government, territorial communities or public legal bodies or private bodies.

In most countries, civil defence symbols are the triangle (symbol of stability), the colour orange (visible from afar) and/or blue (the colour of peace).



### ORGANIZATION OF CIVIL DEFENCE AT NATIONAL LEVEL

The legal framework for civil defence is defined by **Act 2004-811 of 13 August 2004 on modernization of civil defence** that makes **citizens the leading actors in civil defence and sets out the responsibilities of the state in terms of planning, operational conduct and contingency plans.**

At national level, the **Civil Defence and Protection Directorate (DDSC)** of the French Ministry of the Interior **is the central structure responsible for risk management in France**, whether daily life accidents or major disasters.

The DDSC is involved in four spheres of competence:

- **national operational services**

These are made up of a team of **319 deminers** in 20 centres and 6 field units in Metropolitan and overseas France, including **305 pilots and rescue mechanics** with a fleet of 40 helicopters in 22 bases, a fleet of 23 air tankers and 5 liaison and investigation aircraft.

The **unités d'instruction et d'intervention de la sécurité civile – UIISC** or army (corps of engineers) **Civil Defence Training and Intervention Units** are 1,500 strong and intervene under the responsibility of local authorities to strengthen the resources provided by territorial communities. **These UIISC units can use those resources abroad in the form of détachements d'intervention catastrophe aéromobiles - DICA or Aeromobile Disaster Intervention Detachments**, which intervened following the explosion of the AZT chemical plant in Toulouse in 2001 and in south Asia following the tsunami in 2004.

#### •firefighters and rescue workers

The DDSC's Fire and Rescue Workers Subdirectorate is mainly in contact with the *services départementaux d'incendie et de secours* - Departmental Fire and Rescue Services (SDIS). **The Subdirectorate collects and provides all information useful for managing SDIS locally and nationally. It also defines the doctrine for the commitment of civilian and military firefighters, whether professionals or volunteers**, approves associations involved in civil defence and supports the development of local civil defence reserves.

#### •risk management

The DDSC's Risk Management Subdirectorate **organizes and backs the work of government representatives in defence areas and departments**. Together with very many other bodies, the Subdirectorate **assesses risks, including natural, technological, nuclear and marine pollution-related, and defines the framework for relief operations and civil defence measures**. It informs populations and increases their risk and threat awareness, including by means of early warning systems - [systèmes d'alerte](#) (link to the Civil Defence and Protection section of the French interior ministry's website, in French only). In addition, **the Subdirectorate conducts civil defence watches in liaison with the military staffs in defence areas, other national operational centres and the European Commission's Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC)**. For that purpose, **it operates on a permanent basis the Operational Centre for Interministerial Monitoring of Crises - [Centre Opérationnel de Gestion Interministérielle des Crises \(COGIC\)](#)** (link to the Civil Defence and Protection section of the French interior ministry's website, in French only) **and, by decision of Interior Minister, the Cellule Interministérielle de Suivi des Crises – Interministerial Crisis Monitoring Centre (CISC)**. It also provides the government with information and meets requests for backup from area prefects or foreign States by marshalling appropriate public or private resources.

#### •administration and logistics

The DDSC's *Sous-direction de l'administration et de la logistique* – Administration and Logistics Subdirectorate (SDAL) provides legal advice for DDSC services, in addition to its work relating to financial and budgetary matters, IT, and real estate.

In emergency situations the DDSC takes action together with **other ministries, such as the Ecology Ministry for addressing major natural and technological risks, the Health Ministry for addressing health hazards, and the Agriculture Ministry for addressing food safety risks**.

## **O**RGANIZATION OF CIVIL DEFENCE AT TERRITORIAL LEVEL

Because it is the most easily accessible, the **commune is the first organizational level** at which incidents are addressed, while the mayor's closest interlocutor is the prefect.

**At departmental level**, prefectural authority is implemented by the two following command structures:

- the Prefecture-based **Centre Opérationnel Départemental – Departmental Operations Centre (COD)** that works in close cooperation with the *Service Interministériel de la Défense et de la Protection Civiles* – Interministerial Civil Defence and Protection Department (SIDPC);
- the **Poste de Commandement Opérationnel – Operations Command Post (PCO)** located closest to where the action takes place, though outside the risk area, is in charge of coordinating the various actors in the field.

If the incident is beyond departmental response capabilities, the defence area provides backup and coordinates action through the **Centre Opérationnel de Zone – Area Operations Centre (COZ)**. If action is needed at national level, the **Operational Centre for Interministerial Monitoring of Crises (COGIC)** provides support for ongoing operations.

In order to address identified risks, national operational services prepare contingency plans: the **ORSEC emergency plans** were thoroughly overhauled by **Act 2004-811 of 13 August 2004 on modernization of civil defence**. They no longer merely involve disaster relief organization, but more broadly the organization of a civil defence response. The **Plans ORSEC** ([link to the French interior ministry's website, in French only](#)) – **ORSEC emergency plan is designed to mobilize and coordinate all civil defence actors under the Prefect's sole authority.**

To provide an emergency response at commune level, **Act 2004-811 of 13 August 2004, Article 13, introduced the Plan Communal de Sauvegarde** ([link to the French interior ministry's website, in French only](#)) – **Communal Disaster Contingency Plan (PCS)** set out in **Decree 2005-1156 of 13 September 2005**. The PCS is the operational tool available to the mayor for exercising his policing powers in the event of a civil defence incident. Alongside the ORSEC emergency plans, it forms a new complete and coherent chain for the management of incidents that affect local people, property and the environment. **The PCS determines immediate emergency and protection measures and the sending out of early warnings and safety instructions. The PCS is the local link in civil defence organization** through which incident response is organized locally by accompanying and supporting local people and emergency services.

Act 2004-811 of 13 August 2004 created the **réserve communale de sécurité civile** ([link to the French interior ministry's website, in French only](#)) – **Communal Civil Defence Reserve, a new tool for mobilizing citizens designed to provide support and assistance for local populations.**

### **What is a Communal Civil Defence Reserve?**

**The Communal Civil Defence Reserve is charged with assisting the mayor in crisis situations and actions for preparing and informing local people, as in restarting activities in post-accident situations.** The Communal Reserve takes action solely within the scope of the communal sphere of competence and in no way aims to substitute for or compete with public rescue or emergency services. The Communal Reserve is **placed under the mayor's authority; joining it is optional, on a voluntary basis.**

## Who may join the Communal Civil Defence Reserve?

Subject to the reservist and the communal authority signing a "contract of service", the **Communal Civil Defence Reserve is open to anyone possessing the capacities and skills required for Reserve missions** (such as, for example, updating and implementing the Communal Disaster Contingency Plan, participating in risk prevention actions conducted by the commune and providing material assistance for victims).

### **TOWARDS A EUROPEAN CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE?**

While civil defence falls first and foremost within the competence of governments, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the European Union has been led to take related initiatives consistent with the growing need for coordination highlighted during recent natural or technological disasters. **A Community action programme in the field of civil protection was established by Council Decision 1999/847/CE of 9 December 1999.** To follow up the action programme, **Council Decision 2007/162/EC of 5 March 2007 established a Civil Protection Financial Instrument in order to improve the effectiveness of national response systems to major emergencies and to enhance inter-system cooperation through awareness measures, training, and the conduct of exercises. The total amount for the implementation of the Instrument is set at €189.8 million for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2013.**

**Council Decision 2001/792/EC, Euratom of 23 October 2001** established a **Community mechanism to facilitate reinforced cooperation in civil protection assistance interventions** when a country is affected by an industrial or a technological disaster. **Thirty states** participate in the mechanism by making their resources available on request for countries affected by a disaster **through the Monitoring and Information Centre** based at the Commission in Brussels. The Centre provides a **24-hour watch**, a database of national resources that can be mobilized and a common emergency communication and information system.

**Michel Barnier**, current French Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and a former European Commissioner, was asked by the European Commission to **put forward proposals** on the modernization of European civil protection mechanisms **by creating a European civil protection force ("Europe Aid") governed by the following principles:** European civil protection force interventions must respect the national, regional and local crisis capacity organization of each Member State requesting assistance; **Member States are required to specialize in the handling of one or more threats;** European crisis capacity should also be able to rely on resources additional to Member States' existing resources; **an Operations Centre for planning and organizing exercises** and a **Joint Training Institute** for civil protection and humanitarian action **should be established.**

**In order to establish a genuine capacity for collective action in civil protection, France suggested to its partners creating a European rapid-intervention civil protection force** (*Force d'intervention rapide européenne* - FIRE) which could become effective during the French Presidency of the European Union that is to start in July 2008.

### **KEY FIGURES**

- €429.4 million were allocated to civil defence missions in 2007, while the budget planned for 2008 is €418.4 million;
- In 2006, 252,400 voluntary or professional civilian or military firefighters carried out a total of 3,827,300 interventions or 10,486 a day or 1 intervention every 8.2 seconds;
- 1,845,000 people were rescued.

## For more information

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### WEBSITES

⇒ **Défense et sécurité civiles**, dossier sur le site du Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Collectivités territoriales, janvier 2006 (*Civil Defence and Protection*, dossier available on the website of the French Interior Ministry and the Territorial Communities, in French only)

[http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a\\_l\\_interieur/defense\\_et\\_securite\\_civiles/presentation](http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a_l_interieur/defense_et_securite_civiles/presentation)

### LEGISLATION

⇒ **Loi n° 2004-811 du 13 août 2004 de modernisation de sécurité civile** (*Act 2004-811 of 13 August 2004 on modernization of civil defence, in French only*)

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/PPEE8.htm>

⇒ **Décret n° 2005-1156 du 13 septembre 2005 portant application de l'article 13 de la loi n°2004-811 du 13 août 2004 de modernisation de sécurité civile** (*Decree 2005-1156 of 13 September 2005 implementing Article 13 of Act 2004-811 of 13 August 2004 on modernization of civil defence, in French only*)

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/PRHV7.htm>

### STATISTICS

⇒ **Statistiques des Services d'incendie et de secours, bilan au 31 décembre 2006**, Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Collectivités locales, Direction de la Défense et de la Sécurité civile, édition 2007 (*Statistics issued by Fire and Rescue services, annual statement at 31 December 2006*, French Ministry of the Interior and of Territorial Communities, Civil Defence and Protection Directorate, 2007 edition, in French only)

[http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a\\_la\\_une/statistiques/securite\\_civile/statistiques-ddsc-2006/sdis-2006/downloadFile/attachedFile/STATSSDI.PDF?nocache=1190463372.48](http://www.interieur.gouv.fr/sections/a_la_une/statistiques/securite_civile/statistiques-ddsc-2006/sdis-2006/downloadFile/attachedFile/STATSSDI.PDF?nocache=1190463372.48)

## **REPORTS**

➤ **Pour une force européenne de protection civile: europe aid.** Rapport de Michel Barnier 2006. 86 pages

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/president/pdf/rapport\\_barnier\\_20060508\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/rapport_barnier_20060508_fr.pdf)

➤ **For a European civil protection force: europe aid,** Report by Michel Barnier, May 2006, 62 pages

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/president/pdf/rapport\\_barnier\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/rapport_barnier_en.pdf)