



SYSTEM OF THE PREVENTION AND RESPOND TO ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IN USA AND SLOVAKIA (OVERVIEW)

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SYSTÉM PREVENIE A REAKCIE NA ENVIRONMENTÁLNE RIZIKÁ V USA A NA SLOVENSKU (PREHLAD)

ABSTRACT

People are generally aware of risks of the disasters and emergencies in moment when they occur and when their lives, health or property is threatened. Ignorance of procedures, inappropriate reactions, underestimation of the situation as well as panic often aggravate the consequences of emergency situations. Preparedness and appropriate behavior help to defuse the consequences and impacts of emergencies and disasters. Aim of this paper is to provide a comparison of systems in the U.S. and Slovakia. Attention is given to Community Emergency Response Teams, which represent a form of community service in the U.S. The system of Civil Protection in Slovakia is different. There is, unlike the U.S., no comparable system of community services which educate people about prevention and respond to disasters.

Keywords: emergency, disaster, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), Civil Protection,

ABSTRAKT

Ludia si väčšinou plne uvedomia riziká mimoriadnych udalostí až vtedy, keď k nim dôjde a keď dôjde k ohrozeniu ich života, zdravia alebo majetku. Neznalosť postupov, nevhodné reakcie, podcenenie situácie ako aj panika často zhoršujú následky mimoriadnych situácií. Pripravenosťou a vhodným postupom je možné zmierniť následky a dopad mimoriadnych udalostí. Cieľom príspevku je poskytnúť porovnanie systémov v USA a na Slovensku. Pozornosť je venovaná CERTs (komunitným záchranným tímom pre mimoriadne udalosti), ktoré predstavujú formu komunitných služieb v USA. V druhej časti je pozornosť venovaná systému civilnej ochrany na Slovensku, v ktorom na rozdiel od USA, neexistuje porovnateľný systém komunitných služieb, ktoré by vzdelávali obyvateľstvo v oblasti prevencie a zvládania mimoriadnych udalostí.

Kľúčové slová: nebezpečenstvo, mimoriadna situácia, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), Civilná ochrana

1 USE OF COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (CERTS) TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) consist of trained volunteers who assist first responders (firefighters and medical technicians) during emergencies and disasters, aid citizens before help arrives and perform many other types of nonemergency community service. The CERT

Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations. Using the training learned in the classroom and during exercises, CERT members assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

People naturally want to help their neighbors during emergencies but if they lack proper training, their participation can result in additional injuries and death. The idea to train volunteers to assist emergency service personnel during large natural disasters began in the United States in February of 1985. A group of city officials from Los Angeles, California went to Japan to study its earthquake preparedness plans. The group found a very homogenous society that had taken extensive steps to train entire neighborhoods in one aspect of alleviating the potential devastation that would follow a major earthquake. These single-function neighborhood teams were trained in either fire suppression, light search and rescue operations, first aid, or evacuation. In September of 1985, the city of Los Angeles sent a team to Mexico City to investigate an earthquake there that registered a magnitude 8.1 on the Richter scale, killed more than 10,000 people and injured more than 30,000. Mexico City had no training program for citizens prior to the disaster. However, large groups of volunteers organized themselves and performed light search and rescue operations. Volunteers are credited with more than 800 successful rescues; unfortunately, more than 100 of these untrained volunteers died during the 15-day rescue operation. The lessons learned in Mexico City indicated that training volunteers to help themselves and others and to assist first responders was an essential part of overall preparedness, survival, and recovery.

The program expanded throughout California and in 1994 the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) endorsed it. In response, the Los Angeles Fire Department and the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) revised CERT training to cover disasters experienced throughout the United States. CERT is now housed within the Citizen Corps program launched by the federal government in 2003 and is administered through each state's Citizen Corps agency. Since this training was made available nationally, communities in 28 States and Puerto Rico have conducted CERT training.

What can government do to prepare citizens for natural and manmade disasters? First, citizens need to know what to expect following a major disaster in terms of immediate services. Second, they need to learn how to prevent and prepare for disasters. Third, they must be trained in life saving skills that emphasize decision making, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. Fourth, volunteers must be organized into teams so that they become used to working together in order to be most effective until first responders arrive.

1.1 CERT Training

The 20 hour CERT Basic course is taught by a team of first responders who have the appropriate knowledge and skills. Most instructors complete a CERT Train-the-Trainer (TTT) course so that the course content and delivery is the same throughout the U.S. Training is usually delivered in 2 hour sessions, one evening a week over a 8 week period. CERT participants learn how to:

1. identify hazards in the home and workplace and prepare for disasters (Disaster Preparation)
2. identify fire risks in the home and workplace, determine ("size up") fire risk and extinguish very small fires (Fire Safety)

3. identify three phases of death from trauma: lack of breathing, excessive bleeding and shock and how they can be treated (Disaster Medical Operations – Part 1)
4. manage public health during disasters (proper hygiene, sanitation, purifying water), perform head to toe assessment of victims and triage (sorting victims for further treatment) (Disaster Medical Operations – Part 2)
5. size up the condition of buildings and disaster sites, safely search them and rescue victims (Light Search and Rescue Operations)
6. organize their team, use the chain of command, document their actions (CERT Organization)
7. the psychological impact of disasters on rescuers and victims; providing “psychological first aid” and taking care of CERT members before, during and after a disaster (Disaster Psychology)
8. identify potential terrorist targets and avoid injury from biological and chemical agents (CERT and Terrorism)

The final 4 hour Disaster Simulation is designed to enable the CERT team to practice their new skills.



1.2 Examples

CERT volunteers serve their communities during natural disasters such as floods, snowstorms, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes. They also assist first responders during emergencies such as chemical spills, power outages and civil unrest by directing traffic, assisting neighbors in their homes, delivering supplies and communication. CERT teams DO NOT take on the roles of first responders. Their goal is to provide the greatest good for the greatest number by only performing duties they have been trained for and are capable of doing safely. Many teams in the U.S. have also been trained to assist with mass inoculations during a pandemic or biological attack.

1.3 Getting Started

In order to form a CERT team one must gain approval from appointed and elected officials to use CERT as a means to prepare citizens to care for themselves during a disaster when services may not be adequate. This is an excellent opportunity for the government to be proactive in working with citizens. The potential participants can be recruited from community groups, business and industry workers, and local government workers. After CERT volunteers are trained, it is important to keep them involved. Trainers should offer periodic refresher sessions to reinforce the basic training. CERT teams can sponsor events such as drills, picnics, neighborhood clean up, and disaster education fairs which will keep them involved and trained. CERT members should receive recognition for completing their training. Communities may issue ID cards, vests, and helmets to graduates. First responders need to be educated about CERTs and their value to the community. Using CERTs during disaster exercises will reinforce this idea and develop the bond between the CERT members and first responders.

2 CIVIL PROTECTION IN SLOVAKIA

2.1 Basic facts

Civil protection of the Slovak Republic is system of responsibilities and measures aimed at protection of life, health and property of people which are provided pursuant to analysis of Slovak Republic territory in term of potential disasters and emergencies. Responsibilities and measures of civil protection are legislated in order to reduce a imperilment risk and to define proceedings in elimination of disaster consequences. These responsibilities pertain to:

- organizing, managing and execution of relief works in life rescue
- providing premedical and medical help
- organizing and providing warning duty
- provision emergency delivery and emergency accommodation
- execution of harbouring and evacuation
- execution of anti-radiation, anti-gas and anti-biological arrangements
- organizing, managing and execution civil protection preparation

Civil protection also includes tasks referring to provision of humanitarian help outward.

Crisis management is complex of regulating activities of the civil protection authorities focusing on:

- analysis and evaluation of the safety risks and threats
- planning and taking of the [preventive measures](#)
- organizing, implementation and monitoring of the activities conducted in preparation for crisis situations and resolving them.

Conditions for effective life, health and property protection are constituted by the Civil Protection Act No. 42/1994 (zákon NR SR č.42/1992 o civilnej ochrane obyvateľstva). Under this law - the tasks of civil protection corresponds to the Government, Ministries, Central government bodies, Central state bodies, Regional offices and District offices, Self-governing regions, Municipalities, legal entities and personal entities. Under that law the individual has the right to early warning of a danger, to provide individual protection means and the evacuation and to information about how to protect, for immediate assistance at risk of life, health and property.

Tasks and measures of the Civil Protection are determined by Crisis management and Civil protection section in civil protection department of Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. Section is the professional department of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic for crisis management, civil protection of population, integrated rescue system, economic mobilization, civil emergency planning, critical infrastructure protection, management of material protection and humanitarian assistance.

2.2 Education

Education and training in civil protection, crisis management, civil emergency planning, critical infrastructure protection, integrated rescue system is one of the major tasks of Educational and Technical Department of Crisis Management and Civil Protection (Vzdelávací a technický ústav krízového manažmentu a civilnej ochrany – VTÚ KM CO). Learning takes place through basic and specialized courses. Courses are offered in the department of education and training at the headquarters of the Institute of the Slovenská Ľupča and training centers (in Limbach, Nitra and Spišská Nová Ves). Another form of preparation of candidates is distance learning on the Internet.

According to Civil Protection Act No. 42/1994 - preparing for Civil Protection is defined as follows: preparing for Civil Protection is carried out free of charge. It includes:

- ⇒ preparing civil protection units

- ⇒ preparing citizens for self-protection and mutual assistance
- ⇒ first aid
- ⇒ civil protection measures in case of emergency.

Preparing for the civil protection execute district offices and municipalities and also humanitarian associations.

In case of natural disasters, catastrophes and accidents, people generally aware of the risks that threaten their existence or inhibit the realization of their needs, goals and plans. Consequences of big accidents are usually very bad and confirm the need of such experiences. Panic is often worse as a mere accident and causes more casualties and property damages. During and after the disasters and accidents is information the most important and crucial factor. It is the reason why civil protection department of Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic prepared for inhabitants a Manual. The aim of Manual is to provide maximum information about how to proceed and how to deal with natural disasters, accidents or disasters.

CONCLUSION

CERT is about readiness, people helping people, rescuer safety, and doing the greatest good for the greatest number. CERT is a positive and realistic approach to emergency and disaster situations where citizens will be initially on their own and their actions can make a difference. Through training, citizens can manage utilities and put out small fires; treat the three killers by opening airways, controlling bleeding, and treating for shock; provide basic medical aid; search for and rescue victims safely; and organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers to be effective.

Accidents, natural disasters or other emergencies are unpredictable. It is necessary to have basic knowledge, familiar with the procedures and be prepared. For this reason exists Civil Protection - a system of tasks and measures for protection of life, health and property. In addition, this system analyzes possible threats and takes steps to reduce risks and also sets out procedures and actions in the aftermath of emergencies.

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