

RESCUE AND CIVIL PROTECTION IN POLAND

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CIVILNÁ OCHRANA A ZÁCHRANA V POĽSKU

ABSTRAKT

Civilná ochrana spočíva v realizácii projektov zameraných na zaistenie bezpečnosti osôb, majetku a životného prostredia v prípade nebezpečenstva spôsobené oboma silami prírody a rozvojom civilizácie, rovnako ako v dôsledku vojny, terorizmu. Záchranná služba a civilná ochrana musí byť vybavený znalosťami o škodlivosti – ich druh, výskyt rozsahu, povahe a účinkoch meradle na človeka, zvierat, životného prostredia a hmotný majetok.

Kľúčové slová: *civilná obrana, civilná ochrana, záchrana*

ABSTRACT

Civil protection includes activities aimed at providing security to people, assets and the environment in case of threats caused by nature itself and civilization development, as well as warfare or terrorist activity.

Rescue and civil protection services should properly understand the nature of threats – their types, range as well as the types and range of their negative effects concerning people, animals, the environment and material assets.

Key words: *civil defence, civil protection, rescue*

INTRODUCTION

Irrespective of whether a given event is the effect of human activity or the consequence of acts of nature, it is the most important to ensure that the response is adequate, fast and effective. Namely, the units which perform tasks connected with rescue and civil protection should be competent, composed and demonstrate the ability to cooperate fast and effectively in a team. The future of people and assets from the threatened places depends on rescue services. In the face of this type of events, it is important to undertake any type of activity in order for our civil protection and rescue services not to fail when they are indispensable.

In the changing world, the foundation of the management of any organism, mechanism, social structure, or enterprise is the updated and reliable knowledge of a given situation. Rescue and civil protection services should be equipped with the knowledge of threats – their type and range, and also the type and range of their consequences concerning people, animals, the environment and assets.

Contemporary challenges and threats have never affected people, assets, the environment and infrastructure so much as they do these days[1]. Threats of contemporary societies caused by catastrophes and technical failures, natural disasters and the environment contamination are also the consequences of wars. Contemporary national security and national defence encompass, to an increasingly larger extent, apart from military power also the ability to protect and rescue people, assets and the environment against non-military threats[2].

CHARACTER AND NATURE OF CIVIL PROTECTION IN POLAND

Civil protection is often treated equally with civil defence, which is a mistake. Civil protection is included in the scope of responsibility of civil defence, although the scope of its activity significantly exceeds the field of civil defence, hence it is wrong to equate these two.

Nowadays, civil protection enterprises are included in a wider scope of civil defence. In this context, it is worth pointing out that civil defence constitutes a significant part of enterprises connected with the so called civil planning, in case of extraordinary situations, and with the tasks connected with maintaining public administration readiness to undertake appropriate activities. It also includes activities within the framework of the NATO established strategy of 'host nation support' as well as civilian and military cooperation. Although in different countries, civil defence means different things, its fundamental undertakings, apart from civil protection, include:

- work places and infrastructure protection;
- cultural assets' protection;
- authority structure protection;
- ensuring the state functioning in times of peace and war;
- organisation of crisis management;

- physical protection (of people, assets and the natural environment);
- psychological protection;
- legal protection;
- education and training.

Civil defence aims at activities which are graphically presented in figure 1.

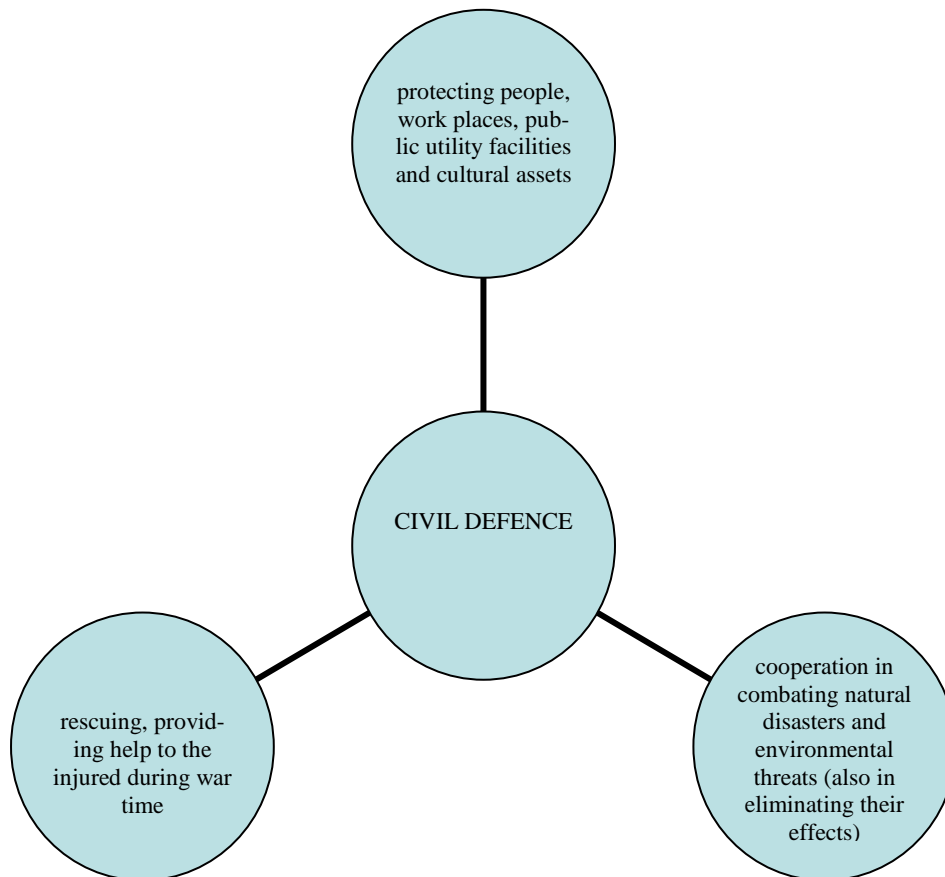


Figure 1. Civil defence [3]

The issues of civil defence, and hence also civil protection and rescue, are regulated in Poland by two key legal instruments: the *Act on General Defence Obligation of the Republic of Poland* [4] and the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers on Civil Defence* [5].

Civil protection consists in the protection of civilian population and civilian people [6] and includes both public administration activity as well as individual activity aiming at ensuring security of life and health of people and their possessions. It strives for maintaining favourable environmental conditions for their survival, social and psychological help for the injured, legal protection and educational as well as fitness preparation in order to be able to deal with the situation in case of catastrophes, natural disasters and military conflicts, as well as directly after their cessation [7].

The Geneva Convention [8] defines civil protection as one of the civil defence tasks which includes activities enabling people's survival in case of a cataclysm or war.

In accordance with the definition adopted by W. Kitler, civil protection encompasses the whole of activities of all the state legal subjects, depending on their legal status, aiming at ensuring the security of the society, property, national heri-

tage assets and the environment in the face of natural calamities and disasters as well as the ones caused by human activity, including war [9].

The implementation of tasks aiming at ensuring security to people, assets and the environment – in case of threats caused both by forces of nature (natural disasters) and civilisation development (failures, catastrophes), as well as military and terrorist activity – includes four types of activities which are graphically presented in figure 2.

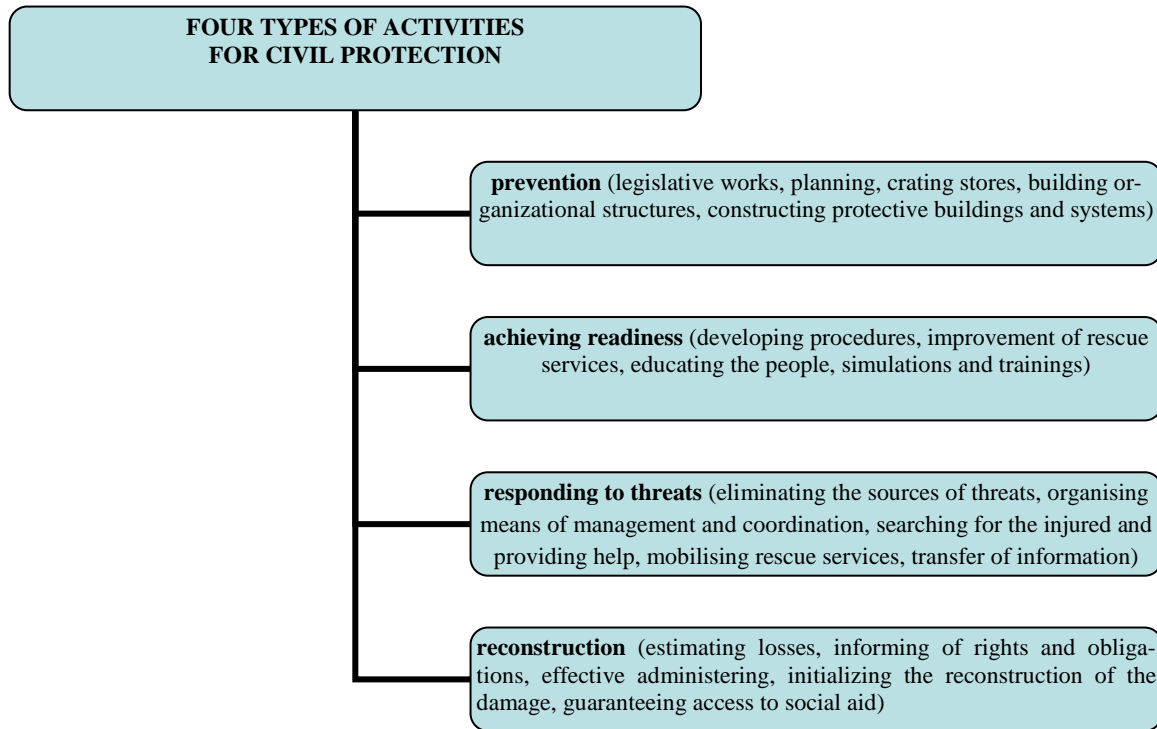


Figure 2. Four important types of activities for civil protection [10]

Civil protection tasks include, among other things, defining threats, preventing them and ensuring the protection of people in times of threats, including war, and also organising and ensuring the functioning of the crisis management system.

An essential element of civil protection, which performs both temporary activities, in the scope of response to threats as well as appropriate planning tasks, are: chief and central public administration organisations, that is competent ministers, Commandant of the State Fire Service, the Chief of State Civil Defence and chief inspectors.

The activity in the scope of civil protection is conducted in any conditions and situations of the state functioning. There can be listed three conditions of the implementation of the above mentioned tasks [11]:

- vigil and immediate response (everyday routine activities connected with rescuing people, assets and the environment and the elimination of their negative consequences; activities aiming at preventing and counteracting threats);
- response in the face of a threat leading directly to a crisis and during a crisis;
- civil protection in times of war (in accordance with the international legal regulations).

Civil protection is divided into collective and individual protection. At the collective level, it is provided by institutions and includes such activities as:

- evacuation;
- creating places of shelter;
- detecting threats and alarming about them.

At the individual level, it consists in the following activities undertaken by citizens:

- obtaining the knowledge of rules of providing first aid;
- obtaining the knowledge of evacuation rules, routes and places;
- ensuring the ability to independently eliminate the sources of disasters, e.g. fires;



- obtaining the knowledge of alarm signals and rules of conduct after hearing them;
- possessing individual protective equipment and ability to use it and the consequences of using it;
- obtaining the knowledge of rules concerning the preparation of flats, buildings, water intakes and food to be protected against the consequences of disasters and crises.

THE PHENOMENOM OF RESCUE

And what about the rescue? In the most general way it can be defined as the organised way of providing help in case of accidents. Rescue capability and efficiency of professional and volunteer rescue formations, led by state and volunteer fire service, medical, chemical and sea rescue services, supported by rescue forces of the army constitute an unusually significant link of contemporary national protection and defence.

Rescue means the activity conducted at all levels of the state organisation and in all conditions (in times of peace, crisis and war) by way of different methods, powers and resources, which aims at rescuing human life and assets.

Rescue as providing help in case of emergency, especially threatening health and life of people; rescue operations are undertaken both in times of peace (great catastrophes, natural disasters) as well as in times of war [12]. Whereas, it's also an activity whose aim is to rescue people or things in danger, as well as people and means engaged in such activity. Rescue activity consists in averting a danger, (...) especially the threat of death or destruction [13].

Having analysed the source and the way of financing of rescue activity, there may be differentiated [14]:

- state rescue – financed from the state budget and the territorial government resources;
- social rescue – costs of organisation and maintenance are in 100 percent covered from the resources of non-governmental organisations;
- commercial rescue which functions in the category of 'service' (the rescue activity is payable).

The following categories may be differentiated within the state rescue:

- depending on types of rescue forces:
 - medical rescue;
 - military rescue;
 - mining rescue;
 - chemical rescue;
 - rail rescue;
 - veterinary rescue, etc.
- depending on types of events (natural disaster, technical, technological catastrophe, etc.) – among others:
 - sea rescue;
 - fire rescue;
 - radiation rescue;
 - aviation rescue;
 - flood rescue;
 - road rescue;
 - rail rescue.

Rescue operations are organised and conducted in order to rescue and provide help to people injured as a result of military activity, natural disasters and other similar events, such as, for example, threats to the environment [15]. The obligation to organise and conduct rescue operations in times of war belongs to the heads of civil defence and managers (owners) of work places. They have at their disposal civil defence formations, appropriately prepared from the point of view of competence and equipment. The commandants of these formations lead rescue operations, and use all available powers and resources destined for that purpose.

It is impossible within the scope of this article to describe the issues connected with the specificity of the organisation of rescue operations typical for different types of rescue services subordinate to different ministries. This is so as all services develop their own methodology of conduct, resulting each time from a specific situation. Due to the long experience of the author connected with the work in chemical corps, the example of a chemical failure will be used to show the set of aims and tasks performed stage by stage in the failure zone. Additionally, the choice of this rescue operation background is justified by the fact that this activity is uniform for all services faced with this type of threat.

Mainly, these tasks, rescue operation phases, include [16]:

- identification of a substance, indication of contamination zones and the range of threats;
- activation of the contamination alarm, warning and alerting systems;
- evacuation of people from the threatened zone and providing first aid;
- elimination of emission sources as well as destruction and neutralisation of a released toxic substance;
- decontamination of rescue services;
- rehabilitation of the environment in the failure zone.

The most important stage of the organisation of a rescue operation, apart from providing medical aid, is the destruction and neutralisation of toxic industrial chemicals (TIC) [17] in the failure zone.

The most important aims - stages in this field include [18]:

- indication of the destruction zone – division of the failure zone;
- limitation of the source of gas emission, leak of a liquid substance, spill of a solid substance;
- limitation of the proliferation of the substance released:
 - to the air by placing water curtains or lowering the intensity of evaporating;
 - to surface waters by sealing the sewer system;
 - to the ground and ground waters by sectioning off foil covered ditches;
- mechanical and sorbent cleanup of toxic substances and transporting them to the destruction zone;
- neutralisation of a toxic substance in the failure zone or in a particular place;
- cleanup and neutralisation of the failure zone from the remains of TIC.

All rescue services in a different and characteristic way divide a rescue operation zone. In general, the division of a rescue operation zone into three zones could be assumed as justified:

- zone I – destruction zone;
- zone II - support zone;
- zone III – clear zone.

RESCUE AND CIVIL PROTECTION SERVICES

The services destined for civil protection and the elimination of local threats in times of peace include the regular rescue forces [the State Fire Service (SFS), Police, medical services, sanitary and epidemiological, veterinary, environmental protection services and others] and designated sub-units of the armed forces, and also (in case of a large range of a threat) civilian population. Their task is to provide necessary help in case of road accidents, rail accidents, power and gas supply failures.

Rescue activities in times of peace are managed by a designated person from SFS who coordinates its activity with a locally competent local government body (commune head, mayor, starost, governor – depending on the range of a threat).

In times of war, extraordinary threats are dealt with by all powers and resources at the disposal in a given area, under the leadership of a locally competent body for civil defence (commune head, mayor, starost, governor – depending on the range of a threat). In case of insufficient predispositions of these people, superior bodies may designate another, substantially competent person.

Undoubtedly, it is the State Fire Service (SFS) that plays one of the most important roles among rescue and civil protection services. It is a professional, uniformed formation fitted with specialised equipment, destined for combating fires, natural disasters and other local threats [19]. SFS plays a role of an intervention force in case of disastrous events. In the rescue and civil protection subsystem, its activity is supported by other services, guards and state institutions as well as by the network of non-governmental organisations [20].

From the moment of its establishment, the scope of SFS tasks has been significantly expanded. It is not associated any more with its original duty – extinguishing fires, but also with organising and conducting rescue operations in emergency situations, including among other things, disasters and road accidents, construction accidents and those of chemical background. The State Fire Service is also a work place of people supervising the observance of fire regulations, conducting scientific research on fire protection and civil protection. The author of this article had a chance to participate in the conference "Civil protection – *past and present*" organised in 2012 by the Civil Protection and Civil Defence Bureau as well as the International Cooperation Bureau of the National Headquarters of the State Fire Service. Events of this type show that the issue presented in this article is very significant and thanks to the discussion with the participation of representatives of the world of science, legal and institutional conditions designers as well as people performing tasks from the scope of civil protection and rescue, the exchange of opinions takes place, which results in the development of innovative solutions, supported with concrete proposals.

The enterprises from the scope of civil protection are conducted in accordance with strictly defined rules:

- The chief rule is based on the universality of the civil protection system;
- the three-step separation of powers (the industry arrangement plays an auxiliary role);
- ensure the response of powers and resources adequate to the character and range of a threat;
- one-person leadership and responsibility for maintaining the readiness to protect people by commune heads and starosts at a province level.

An important role in civil protection is played by central government administration bodies and local administration bodies led by governors, starosts and commune heads.

In Poland there are many organisations performing different task groups from the scope of rescue and civil protection, in accordance with the national legal regulations. Among them the following may be named:

- working in the emergency mode:
 - the State Emergency Medical Services,
 - sea rescue,



- mountain rescue,
 - water rescue,
 - mining rescue,
 - gas rescue,
 - energy rescue,
 - the National Firefighting and Rescue System,
 - working in the regular mode:
 - municipal services,
 - welfare services,
 - health service,
 - sanitary and epidemiological services
 - environmental protection services,
- and multiple non-governmental organisations.

A basic difficulty, making it impossible to fully use the potential of the above mentioned institutions, is the lack of the systematic ordering of their mutual relations, which is a prerequisite of forming, on the basis of their experience, a formation able to provide protection on a mass scale [21].

In the face of such a state of affairs, what should be acknowledged are the efforts of the firefighting environment that at the beginning of the 1990s saw the need to standardize the rules of cooperation between different rescue operation participants. In the recognition of the need to form an integrated system facilitating activities aiming at rescue and civil protection, rescue organisations cooperating in different ways, were concentrated in one point. And so, in 1995 the National Firefighting and Rescue System was founded (NFRS) and organised on the basis of the units of the State Fire Service. It needs to be emphasised at this point that rescue and civil protection in Poland – in the context of the current obligations – constitute a new field of activity for fire protection units [22]. Their task scope includes activities aiming at the protection of life, health, assets or the environment by way of: fire, technical, chemical, ecological, medical, and water rescue as well as radiation rescue, rescue at heights, sea and harbour rescue [23].

NFRS constitutes an integral link of the internal security system and its activity is focused on the protection of life, health, assets and the environment against fires, natural disasters or other local threats. Its unquestionable asset is the simplicity and flexibility of the structure which enables undertaking activities adequate to threats and maintaining readiness to perform tasks in any circumstances [24].

Activities in the scope of civil protection are conducted in a direct way mainly by state rescue services (State Fire Service, professional fire service, national sea rescue, medical rescue, chemical rescue, radiation rescue and technical rescue), rescue organisations of social character (Mountain Volunteer Rescue Service, Tatra Mountains Volunteer Rescue Service, Water Volunteer Rescue Service, Polish Red Cross), and also private rescue companies. Civil protection can also be found among the obligations of civil defence. Moreover, civil protection is dealt with by public order and safety services, such as the Police, Municipal/Commune Police, Railroad Guard or private security agencies. If the above entities cannot manage a particular crisis situation, all activities connected with civil protection are taken over by the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland [25].

Civil protection includes also psychological activities. They are conducted by the Polish Psychological Society which creates Crisis Intervention Centres and provides help for rescuers during undertaken rescue activities.

Civil protection has also a legal dimension, manifested in the ratification of international rules, which defend fundamental and universal citizens' interests (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Civil protection is a sphere of security which, first of all, focuses its attention on ensuring human survival, irrespective of the type of the cause of threat.

Preparing universal and effective civil protection in the place of residence, work places and schools as well as in public places seems to be one of the key needs of the Polish national defence. It is a serious challenge due to the enormous differences between the organisation of civil protection in our country and the functioning of the civil protection system in other NATO and EU countries.

The fundamental task of the state is ensuring its citizens the protection of life and assets at any time and in any circumstances, which is clearly stressed by the constitutional guarantee of protection against disastrous industrial threats, natural disasters and consequences of military activities. Government and local administration bodies are obliged to fulfil these assurances both in times of peace as well as in time of war. It requires increased intellectual effort connected with the improvement of legislative works, engagement on the part of individuals experienced in the field of the discussed issue, ability to cooperate, and drawing on the achievements and solutions of other countries. It is connected with the necessity of adopting the attitude of readiness to face on a daily basis non-military threats with consequences as dangerous as wars.

In Poland we have different undertakings which aim at improving the effectiveness of functioning of rescue and civil protection services. There are steps undertaken which, in their authors' opinion, should influence the effectiveness of the civil protection and rescue system. Functioning of entities responsible for civil protection and rescue has become the subject

of deliberations of competent ministers. One of their fruits is the initiative called the *Rescue and Civil Protection Programme for the period 2014-2020* [26].

The planned Rescue and Civil Protection Programme aims at [27]:

- developing the general legal framework regulating the activity of institutions and public services and also social organisations performing tasks in the scope of civil protection and rescue;
- applying solutions adopted in the *law on the emergency communication system* after its adoption by the lower and higher chamber of the Parliament, thanks to which it will be possible to establish a comprehensive and compatible mechanism of cooperation between rescue services and the emergency communication system;
- applying organisational solutions, administrative and legal procedures, as well as financial mechanisms guaranteeing appropriate functioning of civil protection and rescue.

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RECENZIA TEXTOV V ZBORNÍKU

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