



CIVIL DEFENCE

Structure, capabilities,
history, manpower



How can Civil Defence help the public in the event of a disaster?

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In 2002 the Civil Defence of Cyprus was honoured with a gold medal, by the International Civil Defence Organisation for its activities



The mission of Civil Defence

Civil Defence is a department of the Ministry of Interior. Its main mission is to carry out various humanitarian actions intended to deal with the consequences of disasters, resulting either from natural actions (earthquake, flooding, hurricanes etc) or from human actions (industrial accidents, armed conflicts etc).



Response Measures

The term “dealing with the consequences” means a series of response measures aimed at enabling essential services to continue to operate, to house and cater for the afflicted, to carry out rescues, to keep up the population’s morale etc. Civil Defence co-operates with other emergency services on the basis of specific plans.



Preventative Measures

Civil Defence takes certain preventative measures, in co-operation with other involved services, in order to respond in the event of a disaster. Such preventative measures are the following:

- Preparing Action Plans, such as the “Enceladus” Earthquake Plan
- Carrying out various exercises, with different possible scenarios
- Training, equipping and exercising Department personnel
- Providing information to the population at regular intervals
- Constructing and designing shelters

Civil Defence Personnel

In order to train, prepare and respond to disasters, the Civil Defence Force consists of:

- a permanent well-organised staff of 30 persons island-wide and an interchangeable staff of 45 persons island wide
- around 500 volunteers assisting under specific conditions island-wide
- around 7.000 male and female citizens serving Civil Defence island-wide



General Administration and Regional Managements

Members of Civil Defence serve either in the General Directorate of Civil Defence (G.D.C.D.) or in one of the five Regional Managements (R.M.C.D.): Lefkosia, Lemesos, Larnaka, Pafos and Ammochostos.

Every Regional Management has a Civil Defence Station and Substation, in the towns and within the communities. This is where the volunteers and the citizens serving the Civil Defence attend for training and exercises. Attendance is on fixed days and times of the week. In communities where there are no Civil Defence units, organisation is carried out in co-operation with Local Councils.



Obligation to Serve in the Civil Defence

Citizens who are over 18 years old, and males who have been released from their National Guard duties, usually serve in the Civil Defence. Enrolment takes place once a year, following a decision of the Council of Ministers. The Notification issued by the Minister of Interior, calling male and female citizens to serve, obliges the said citizens to attend a specified unit, either in the town or in the countryside to enroll. Service is for a period of two years, unless there is a call for National Guard duty. During their service, members attend training and exercise on fixed days and time.

Civil Defence Departments

Rescue Teams

The Rescue Teams consist of around 150 volunteers of various specialties who are trained according to international specifications.

Civil Defence is not a direct response force (as is the Police or Fire Service); it is prepared to act and provide assistance to other Services in the event of a major disaster. Despite this, the Civil Defence Rescue Department is organised to respond immediately, if the remaining authorised State Services require assistance to respond to emergencies.



The Rescue Teams undergo training and exercise in Training Grounds but they also participate in fire fighting situations and water pumping during floods.





Civil Defence Departments (cont.)

Civil Defence Regional Managements operate another four Departments:

The First Aid Department

which provides First Aid in the event of a disaster, until medical assistance is available.



The Welfare Department

which provides shelters, catering and clothing for the homeless, psychological support to the victims and generally provide relief to the population in the event of a disaster.



The Housing Estate Department to monitor housing estates that are likely to be affected by a possible disaster and to contribute to traffic control. On a preventative basis, the Department carries out periodic inspections of the shelters, distributes information material and becomes acquainted with the area.

The Secretarial-Communications Department which maintains continuous communication with the Civil Defence units and other Civil Defence Essential Services.

The History of Civil Defence

Civil Defence was reorganised at the beginning of 2000 and new scientific and other personnel were recruited. It created the Operations Control Centre, acquired equipment and established the Search and Rescue Teams.

Today, Civil Defence operates in accordance with the amended and consolidated Law of 1996 and the relevant Regulations of 1997, aimed at strengthening and reorganising the entire Republic's Civil Defence system.



Its history dates to the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, when organised Civil Defence was non-existent. Following the 1964 air attacks by Turkey, the need arose for the protection of the population and its property. Therefore, between 1964 and 1966 the relevant Laws and Regulations were passed, which became the basis for the establishment of the Civil Defence Force.

On the basis of International Humanitarian Law, of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Civil Defence enjoys International Protection in the event of international armed conflicts. The Civil Defence international distinctive emblem appears on all personnel uniforms, cars and equipment of all essential services of the Republic, carrying out duties at the time of disaster.



Operations Control Centre

The Civil Defence Administrative Operations Control Centre operates with a permanent staff on a 24-hour basis, undertaking a number of roles.

One of these is the link with the European Union Monitoring and Information Centre that uses the CECIS system (Common Emergency Communication and Information System) and includes all member-states and their associates. The Operations Control Centre is the National Contact Point for ECURIE to monitor ionizing radiation in Europe and transmits the information

to the Ministry of Labour which is directly responsible for applying the legislation.

The Centre is also the National Contact Point of EMSA (European Management Safety Agency) in monitoring water pollution in Europe. The information is transmitted to the Fisheries Department which is responsible for the pollution.

Furthermore, the Centre is also responsible for monitoring the early warning system, operating wireless networks, handling information systems and the operation of the Centre as an Administration Centre in the event of mobilisation.

In addition to the above, Civil Defence has at its disposal multi-functional mobile Operations Control Centres.



Population Warning System

Civil Defence has set up an electronic siren network in towns and communities to warn the population in the event of a threat of a natural disaster or hostile air activities.

The siren network has the following abilities:

- To sound the alarm
- To send a mobilisation signal
- To send sound messages

When the sirens sound citizens are obliged to follow both Civil Defence instructions and those of other Essential Services



Additional, analytical information may be found on the special Civil Defence forms, entitled "Black-out" and "Alarm".

Communication Network

With the assistance of Civil Defence, a reliable wireless communication system has been installed within its units and other State Services, Municipalities and Communities. This modern system may operate with transmitter masts if the telephone network breaks down in the event of a major disaster.



Self-protection Measures in an Emergency

During earthquake, floods or other emergency situations people may have to hastily abandon their homes. In such an event it is a good idea to keep, somewhere handy, basic goods that might be needed, such as a First Aid Box, cash, radio, torch, dry food, underwear, towels, medicine taken by members of the family, etc.

- Start discussing now, both at work and at home, ways of escape from the building, if necessary
- Place furniture and other heavy items against the walls
- Find out where all the various switches are
- Place fire extinguishers in accessible areas
- Ensure that some members of the family have first aid knowledge

Additional and/or more specific information on the subject may be obtained from special Civil Defence forms, titled “Self-protection in the event of hostilities” and “Basic measures in self-protection from chemical, biological, radioactive or nuclear attack and/or accidents”.



Mobile Catering Unit

In case of emergency, for mass catering purposes, there is a special Civil Defence Catering Plan in co-operation with other Services when applicable.

To implement the Plan, Civil Defence has a mobile catering unit, the operation of which is undertaken by specially-trained personnel. The unit,

which has been recently acquired, takes part in exercises to ensure readiness in the event of an emergency.



Civil Defence Shelters



Civil Defence is responsible for the construction and design of shelters, mainly in the urban areas. For this purpose, civil engineers design additions and alterations to suitable basements, with the owners' consent, to render them safe for short periods of stay and protection of the civil population. A number

of shelters have been constructed to date; the programme however continues, in order to cover a larger part of the population.

Assistance to Third Countries

During the earthquake in Athens, the catastrophic tsunami in Southeast Asia and other disasters, the Cyprus Civil Defence coordinated the shipment of medicine and other goods to the inflicted areas following a Council of Ministers decision to provide relief.



European Union Assistance Mechanism for Civil Protection

This Mechanism, in which Cyprus takes part, provides for co-operation and assistance between the member states in the event of natural disasters, hostile activities, industrial accidents etc. In such an event, the affected country may request help from a Communal Network of Specialists in matters of civil protection.



Within the framework of this Mechanism, the requisite procedures are set out, and training and preparatory exercises are carried out which provide important benefits to Cyprus.

Restoration of Damage Service

This Service, headed by the Director of Civil Defence, was introduced after the earthquake in Pafos in 1995, to house the afflicted and to repair damage. The 1996, 1998 and 1999 earthquakes followed in Lemesos and Pafos. The Service's activities continued during the Lemesos tornado in 2003 and the flooding in Lefkosia in 2004. During these disasters, the Service provided grants to restore the damages. In addition to the above, it had an advisory role in the earthquake control programmes and in upgrading refugee housing estates, schools and other public buildings.



Useful Civil Defence Telephone Numbers

Operations Control Centre (24 hour operation)	22403450
Civil Defence General Administration	22403413
Lefkosia Regional Administration	22879464
Lemesos Regional Administration	25811024
Larnaka Regional Administration	24828340
Pafos Regional Administration	26818470
Ammochostos Regional Administration	23815151

