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# Civil Defense in Switzerland

In Switzerland civil defense is regarded as a vital part of a total defense policy, designed to exact a high price from any aggressor.

Swiss civil defense dates from World War II, when an "air protection" organization was established and air-raid shelters, giving a total of 800 000 shelter spaces (16 % of the population), were constructed. After 1945 the whole system was abandoned, but already in 1950 a federal decree was enacted, making the construction of basement shelters obligatory for new buildings in communities of more than 1000 inhabitants.

In 1962 a new overall civil defense law was decreed based on the constitution, which definitely introduced obligatory civil defense training for all males between 20 and 60, who are not serving with the army. Women, whose service is not compulsory, may nonetheless volunteer for service. It is expected that under this scheme a force of more than 830 000 trained civil defense workers (15 % of the whole actual population) would be available in an emergency.

## The Mission of Civil Defense

The mission of civil defense is to protect, rescue, and care for the population and to protect goods and property by measures designed to prevent or lighten the consequences of armed conflict. Civil defense is considered part of the national defense effort; however, it does not have a combat function. The civil defense organization, its equipment, and facilities are also available for use in natural disaster, at the discretion of the Swiss cantons and local communities.

## Civil Defense Functions

The Swiss civil defense organizations must perform the following functions:

1. Educate the people regarding the dangers that would exist in a modern war and mass disaster situations, and instruct them in the measures they must take to counter the hazards.
2. Perform the following protective and rescue tasks:
  - Alert and warn the population
  - Enforce and supervise blackout regulations
  - Prevent and fight fires
  - Rescue persons and save property from damage
  - Counteract the effects of nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare

- Protect against floods
- Transfer portions of the population
- Preserve and maintain business and industry
- Protect vital and culturally valuable goods and facilities.

3. Perform the following medical care and welfare tasks:
  - Aid the wounded, injured, and sick
  - Provide for the helpless and those without homes.

## Assignment of Civil Defense Responsibility

The specific assignment of civil defense responsibility to federal, canton, and commune government, to business and industry and to private individuals is prescribed in Swiss federal law. Civil authorities ensure that necessary activities are performed and that the laws are enforced.

## Federal Government

The Swiss Federal Council exercises supreme supervision over the civil defense program, and, if necessary, may take measures to ensure enforcement of civil defense regulations. All federal functions assigned by civil defense legislation (except the preservation of cultural objects) are the responsibility of the Federal Department of Justice and Police; the enforcing agency is the Office of Civil Defense.

The federal authority prescribes for each commune its emergency organization, tactical units, manpower, and equipment requirements. Guidelines are also given regarding the detailed deployment of the organization and its concept of operations. Because we have a standardized table of organization and equipment, we are able to design introductory and advanced training programs that include courses for all operational personnel. The responsibility for teaching these courses is allocated among federal, canton and commune governments.

## Cantons (States)

The canton government administers and enforces federal civil defense laws and regulations; designates the communes and business establishments that must set up civil defense organizations; and ensures the adequacy of these organizations. The canton must establish a civil defense office within its government to administer the C. D. Program and must also appoint the instructors for the program.



O. Burkhardt

## Communes

Swiss local governments are regarded as the chief implementers of civil defense in their respective areas. They are responsible for the enforcement of the laws and regulations enacted by the federal and canton governments. Civil defense activities of business establishments, building owners, and individuals within their area of jurisdiction must be monitored by the communes to ensure compliance with the law. As an enforcing agent, the commune must appoint a local director with the necessary authority.

Local civil defense organizations have to be created in every commune with a population of 1000 and more. So, nearly 1000 communes are bound by law, to create, train and develop civil defense organizations.

The local civil defense organization consists of various service groups and tactical units: Emergency operating center staff, Fire-fighting and rescue, Engineering (pioneer- and utility service), ABC, Medical, Welfare. The highest authority in the local civil defense organization is the civil defense director (local chief of civil defense). The self-defense organization reports to the local civil defense director through the chain of command established from household defense units and industrial and institutional defense units to block, district and sector headquarters. The various tactical units of the local civil defense organization also report for instructions to the director located in the EOC. For training and administrative purposes these units report to their chiefs.

The basic civil defense organization of the commune is household defense. Each dwelling in the commune is an element in its structure. For each group of dwellings containing 60-80 inhabitants, a household defense unit is formed.

Regulations stipulate that members of the household defense unit should be persons who remain on the premises day and night. For this reason, and because of the general shortage of personnel, women are generally the members of this unit.

The commune has to build various protective constructions for the local civil defense organization, like EOC, warning-stations, first aid and medical stations, waiting-positions for the different detachments and platoons of the tactical units and locations for reserve personnel and material according to the civil defense plan.

All new buildings must contain adequate shelter from weapons effects for its occupants. Communes must provide for the construction of public shelter where private shelters do not exist, cannot be built and wherever crowds of people gather. In communes without a hospital, the commune may be required to build a sheltered emergency hospital as an extension of its medical station with well-protected operating and treatment rooms.

In the smaller communes without mandatory local civil defense organization the local fire fighting organization must be adapted to war conditions and be reinforced by rescue and first aid personnel.

#### **Business Establishment**

Business and industrial establishments with 100 and more employed personnel (hospitals, homes with 50 and more beds) are responsible for forming a civil self-defense organization and complying with other required measures. This organization (industrial/institutional defense unit) has the same pattern as the local civil defense force and their leaders and crews must attend training courses and participate in periodic exercises as well as the local civil defense units.

#### **Individual Persons**

Individuals cannot hold conflicting duty assignments with both the military and with the civil defense. Nearly every male adult member of

the community who is not bound for military (militia) compulsory duty is given an assignment in local or industrial civil defense, as a fire fighter, a stretcher bearer, a medical attendant, a member of the welfare service or another specialized job. He has to undergo basic training, refresher-courses and to participate in periodical exercises.

The public must observe blackout regulations, guard against the accumulation of debris, and obey regulations governing personal behavior during warnings and alerts. Upon the activation of civil defense organizations, each person is obliged to render aid to the full extent of his ability.

#### **System Activation**

The activation of the civil defense system in an emergency may be accomplished at the federal, cantonal, or local level. The federal government is empowered to activate civil defense organizations should there be a partial or full military mobilization. The cantons and individual communities have the authority to activate civil defense organizations in the event of an unexpected act of war, or to render emergency aid in case of a natural disaster.

The concept of civil defense calls for almost total mobilization of civilian manpower in the survival system. The state of operational readiness of the civil defense organization is keyed to a corresponding state of mobilization in the Swiss armed forces.

#### **Military Support**

The Swiss Army supports civil defense by placing designated military units called air defense troops at the disposal of local governments. These units are assigned by the federal government to assist large communities that lie in probable target areas. These regularly armed troops are equipped with heavy equipment for fire fighting, rescue and medical assistance. Actually, 32 battalions and 13 independent companies are available for civil defense support. On

request and if available the Army will temporarily dispose of additional troops (pioneers, transport- and medical units i.e.). Military units maintain unit integrity and remain under military command but the local civil defense director decides where their assistance is needed and with what urgency.

#### **Program Cost**

Where action is taken on execution of federal laws, decrees and prescriptions i.e. for training, equipment, and new constructions, the federal government awards subsidies, in special cases up to 65 %. For mandatory building of shelters in private constructions this subsidy amounts to an average of 30 % of the expense of building the shelter, but not exceeding 5 % of the whole building cost. Canton and commune contribute with 35 to 45 %.

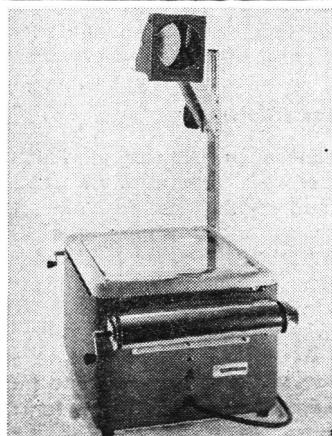
As an inducement to private owners of existing buildings, to build shelters into their structures, the government will contribute a total of at least 80 % of the shelter cost. In case of hospital shelter, the federal government pays 55 to 65 % and the canton with the commune contribute the remaining.

Under this rule, shelter space has been provided for roughly 45 % of the whole population until December 1967. The annual increase is set at approximately 250 000 shelter spaces with the actual constructions activity.

With the construction subsidies and the centralized and standardized equipment program included, the federal government, in favour of civil defense, spent 88 million Swiss francs in 1966, 98,5 million Swiss francs in 1967 and the budget figure for 1968 is of 147,7 million Swiss francs. The other governmental bodies (cantons, communes) together, in terms of annual budgets, approximately made the same contributions. For 1968 the total per capita expenses on all governmental levels approach. 11 US dollars. *O. Burkhardt*

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