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The Operation of the Management System of Fire Brigades During the Performance of the Tasks of Damage Elimination – Part 1.

Attila Kozák, László Komjáthy

Abstract

Today it is the age of rearrangements in Hungary. Rearrangements can have various causes. In Hungary's present situation the primary aspect for organisations managing from state norms is generally the expectable cost savings. These days, integrated disaster relief is one of such areas, too. Since 1 January 2012 the fire protection management of Hungary has been performed by a central organ, the National General Directorate for Disaster Relief. During the reorganisation the management system of the rescue fire protection has also changed. In Hungary during the reorganisation we have managed to avoid disasters in plenty of cases thanks to the professional fire-fighting interventions. It can clearly be seen that the introduction of and research into the professional management system of the fire-fighters is required at each organisational and management level, because this activity is rather complex and its development increases the sense of security of the Hungarian citizens in the future. In my article I present the management and the management system of the fire brigade. I aim to study the organisational management process of the fire brigades, to demonstrate the new elements of today's fire brigade as well as the tasks and activities of the organs involved in the performance.

Keywords: Disaster relief, Professional Fire Fighters' Captainty organisational management levels, reorganisation, public administration.

JEL classification: H40, H49

1. Introduction

The organisations managing the public administration are periodically required to determine the main directions and methods of the necessary changes in separate programs. In certain cases it may be necessary that the established culture of the organisation is changed consciously. This program served as the framework among others for launching the centralisation, reconsideration and reform of our public administration system, including the prosecution administration, which affects the whole system of the disaster relief organisation [1]. Besides many other things, this required a new constitution. Thanks to this and plenty of other influences, the new Basic Act in Hungary highlights and emphasises the significance of the disaster relief area both directly and indirectly. This Act makes the protection, maintenance and preservation of natural resources compulsory to the state and every citizen and states that Hungary acknowledges and enforces everyone's right to a healthy environment [1].

In today's Hungary the protection against disasters is one of the most current national issues. By today it has become clear that safety and security is not simply a technical problem but a complex social issue, not simply a local or a professional problem but a global issue, and we can expect lengthy, long-term challenges rather than solutions to the problems in the short term.

"Disaster relief (the prevention and protection against disasters) is a national issue, and the fulfilment of the role expected by the society requires the performance of corrections adjusting to the various natural and other changes, the increase of the

state participation and the realisation of the necessary developments [2]."

Considering disasters, the industrial facilities producing hazardous materials and the transportation of materials resulted in disasters owing to the violation of the technological requirements. The multidirectional risk of the critical infrastructure and the deficiencies in the protection systems have caused supply problems in Europe affecting half the Globe several times. Some serious accidents occurred at facilities used for crowds of people and at outside events have called our attention on serious problems. The term "risk situation" has been introduced owing to the emergence of such problems.

2. Specific Law and Order

The specific law and order is a period in the life of a state when, for the protection of the citizens' lives, material assets and the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, measures differing from the normal law and order may be taken, governing may be realised through decrees, and even decisions restricting the citizens' rights may be passed. It can be caused by some kind of extraordinary event requiring the collaboration of protection forces.

Legislative background

- The Basic Act of Hungary
- Act no. CXIII of 2011 on national defence and the Hungarian Army, as well as on the measures that might be introduced in the specific law and order
- Act no. CXXVIII of 2011 on disaster relief and the amendment of the related acts

- Governmental Resolution no. 234./2011 on disaster relief and on the enforcement of Act no. CXXXVIII of 2011 on the amendment of the related acts
- It is also mentioned in other sectoral (HM, etc.) legal provisions, at the specification of the sectoral protection tasks.

The specific law and order is intended to offer an opportunity for exercising power based upon specific law and order under constitutional conditions for the performance of protection duties.

2.1 Types of Specific Law and Order

2.1.1 Extraordinary Condition

In the case of declaration of state of war or the direct risk of an armed attack by a foreign power (war risk), the Parliament announces an extraordinary status and established the Council of National Defence. During the period of extraordinary condition, the Council of National Defence is the supreme manager of Hungary's National Defence and the Hungarian Army. Its chairperson is the President of Hungary, and the members include the Chairperson of the Parliament, the group leaders in the Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Ministers with consultation right: the head of the National Defence Headquarters [3]. The Council of National Defence exercises the rights assigned to it by the Parliament; the rights of the President and the rights of the Government.

2.1.2 Emergency Status

In the case of armed actions aiming to overthrow the legitimate order or obtain exclusive power as well as serious, violent actions jeopardising life and property security to a mass scale and committed with arms, an emergency status is announced. During emergency status the extraordinary measures specified in the fundamental act are introduced by the President of Hungary via decrees. The decrees may suspend the application of certain acts, differ from legislative provisions and pass other extraordinary measures. The President of Hungary shall notify the Chairperson of the Parliament of the extraordinary measures introduced without delay [4].

2.1.3 Preventive Protection Situation

In the case of the danger of external armed attacks or for the fulfilment of allied obligations, the Parliament announces the preventive protection situation for a specific period and at the same time it authorises the Government to introduce extraordinary measures specified in the Basic Act. The Government may introduce measures differing from the acts related to the operation of the public administration, the Hungarian Army and the public order protection organs. These are effective until the decision of the Parliament concerning the announcement of a preventive protection situation but for no more than sixty days. During the period of the preventive protection situation, the Government may formulate decrees to suspend the application of certain acts, may deviate from legal provisions and pass other extraordinary measures [5].

2.1.4 Unexpected Attacks

If external armed group unexpectedly break into the territory of Hungary, the Government shall, for the averting of the attack, the protection of the territory of Hungary with the domestic and allied air protection and aeroplane preparedness forces, the legitimate order, the life and property security, the public order and public security, take measures if necessary until the decision concerning the announcement of the emergency status or extraordinary status, with forces proportionate with and prepared for the attack [6].

2.1.5 A Risk Situation

I present this type in more detail owing to the importance of the damage disaster duties.

Regarding acts of God or industrial catastrophes jeopardising life and property security, and for the elimination of the consequences thereof, the Government, shall announce a risk situation and may introduce extraordinary measures specified in the Basic Act [7].

A risk situation may be announced in the case of a situation or status that jeopardises or damages people's lives, health, material assets or the basic supply of the population, the natural environment or the natural values in a way or to an extent that the prevention, elimination of the damages or the elimination of the consequences exceeds the protection facilities of the competent organisations in the co-operation order prescribed. It requires the introduction of specific measures, the continuous and strictly harmonised co-operation of the local governments and state organs as well as the use of international assistance.

To fulfil the disaster relief duties, the Head of the Professional Disaster Relief Organ Central Organ (BM OKF General Director) immediately takes measures according to the approved central danger relief plan for the protection of human life, material assets required for existence and critical infrastructure, the provision of the fundamental supply of the population, and the minimising of the consequences of the given disaster.

2.1.6 Reasons

Acts of God, natural disasters, in particular:

- During flood protection, if the forecasts say that the flooding water approaches the highest water level observed so far and further considerable flooding can be expected, or if an unavertable ice-pack has emerged, or the break of any dike jeopardises.
- During internal water protection, if the internal water jeopardises inhabited areas, industrial areas, main traffic roads or railways and further floods can be expected.
- Continuous, intensive, durable snowfall or snow-drift lasting several days,
- Owing to other extreme weather, a situation jeopardising the people's lives, material assets, the fundamental supply of the population emerges.
- Geological dangers.

Industrial catastrophe, civilisation dangers, especially:

- Any material getting outdoors during activities carried out with harmful materials and waste jeopardise human life, health and the environment to mass extents and severely.
- Unplanned radioactive dispersion and other radiation load, which influences security unfavourably and causes the unplanned radiation load of the population.
- Dangers of other origin, especially:
- Human epidemic or risk of epidemic and animal epidemic causing mass diseases,
- ship damage-type pollution of surface waters affected with the taking of drinking water.
- Air pollution emerging for any reason to an extent exceeding the alarm threshold limit value specified in a separate legal provision.
- Such extent of disfunctioning of critical infrastructure that prevents the basic supply of the population for several days or in several counties.

In risk situations the Government decrees may introduce extraordinary rules and measures, and specific management rules become effective concerning the risk situation.

If the risk situation affects several counties, or if it is necessary for the elimination of the disaster, the minister in charge of the protection against disaster may appoint a minister commissioner. In the given town or village the management of the local disaster protection activity is taken over from the mayor by the person appointed by the head of the regional organ of the professional disaster relief organisation (MKVI) as of arriving at the scene [8].

In a risk situation the tasks and competence of the body of representatives of the local government and of the metropolitan and county general assembly are fulfilled and exercised by the Mayor, the General Mayor of Budapest and the Chairperson of the County General Assembly. The involvement of the voluntary rescue organisations into the protection is ordered by the head of the professional disaster relief organisation.

In a risk situation an order may be introduced stating that a given territory of the country shall be left by the population for the necessary period, and a new place of residence for the population may be designated. During the evacuation and rescue the public order protection body authorised to enforce the measure shall act against any person staying at their place of residence in spite of the obligation.

In a risk situation an order may be introduced concerning the restriction of the use of railway stations, harbours, airports or warehouses in order to ensure the railway, road, water and air transportations.

From the areas at risk, the transportation of property assets may be ordered for their placement in national economic and other terms. This may be ordered by the minister in charge of protection against disasters, or, if the connection with the central management bodies is interrupted, the person exercising the competences of the chairperson of the metropolitan, county committee for protection.

In a risk situation an order may be introduced for the fulfilment of temporary civil protection service. For the purpose of life and property rescue, an order may be introduced concerning the use of any vehicle, technical devices and earthwork equipment suitable for rescue. To an extent required for the elimination of a risk situation, an order may be introduced concerning the use of real estates or the partial or entire demolition of buildings, provided that it is absolutely necessary for the elimination of the risk or the prevention of further dangers. The staying of the population in the streets or other public areas may be restricted.

3. The Integration of the Organisation of Fire Brigades to the Disaster Relief Organisation

One of the aims of the integration of professional fire brigades as of 01 January is to make the interventions fast and standardised and apply the available assets and tools effectively.

„Act no. LXXIV of 1999 on the management and organisation of protection against disasters and protection against serious accidents related to harmful materials states that the General Director of the National General Directorate for Disaster Relief, for the performance of the professional tasks of fire brigades, determines the professional requirements of performing fire protection and technical rescue tasks, manages and supervises the professional work and activity of the subordinate organisations, but this professional management and supervision was not supported with an efficient content from a legislative respect [9].”

The legislator deemed the placement of fire protection in state maintenance as the most appropriate decision to eliminate the problems. The arguments for state maintenance included among others that standardised public order protection free of local interests and a system with management of appropriate level are established, which results in more efficient fire protection and facilitates the reasonable application of material sources with the better exploitation of the available capacities and the optimal planning and systemisation of the force and tools. It has become clear that a state fire brigade operating within the frames of a disaster relief organisation fulfilling the professional management and control of the terminated professional local governmental fire brigades, in particular, within the single disaster relief organisation system.

In the disaster relief organisation system the General Director of BM OKF and the directors of the regional organs exercise management, supervision, direct ordering, control and official authority in the tasks specified by the law and detailed in the public law organisation regulations. It can be observed that the organs of BM OKF and the regional organs are divided into professional and functional organisational units depending upon their management and direction tasks. The term ‘organisational unit’ refers to the deputy general-director organisational elements, the national general supervisory organs, the services and the general departments [10].

The professional disaster relief organs involved in the realisation of disaster relief can be divided into three groups:

- a nationally competent central organ,
- the county, metropolitan regional organs,

- local organs, which are the disaster relief branches and the professional fire brigades.

4. The Organisational and Management System of Disaster Relief

The central management of fire protection is exercised by the interior minister in charge of the protection against disasters, the Head of the General Directorate for BM National Disaster Relief.

4.1 The Interior Minister's Duties

He/she prepares for the drafts of the higher-level legal provisions concerning fire protection, technical rescue and the fire brigade, the public law means for regulating organisations and the international agreements, by way of formulating decrees within his/her authority and issuing normative orders, in agreement with the ministers involved he/she regulates fire protection and technical rescue.

- He/she exercises the right of agreeing in relation to the regulations concerning the fire protection, technical rescue and fire brigade planned by other ministers.
- To the suggestion of the head of the central organ for the professional disaster relief organ, he/she decides upon the establishment and termination of the professional fire brigade,
- He/she determines the requirements concerning the planning, development, systemisation, control, supervision and correction of the fire-extinguishing, technical rescue and the related fire-protection techniques.
- He/she specifies the qualification requirements, the system and principles of training for the staff of the fire brigade.
- He/she exercises the rights due to ministers having the duties in relation to the serving relations of the professional staff at the professional fire brigade.
- He/she determines the professional information and data supply system of the fire brigade.

4.2 Head of the Central Organ for the Professional Disaster Relief Organ and his/her Management Authority

The General Director of BM OKF directs the activity of the professional fire brigade.

- He/she manages the involvement of the units of the fire brigade units in the fire-extinguishing and technical rescue tasks, the related preparations, the reporting, the abandoning of their field of operations, and the ordering of their extraordinary duty service with direct orders.
- He/she initiates the establishment and termination of the professional fire brigade.
- He/she appoints and releases the professional fire-fighting commandants and exercises the employer's authority specified in relation to them by the law.
- He/she issues for the fire brigades the Assembly Regulations, the Fire-extinguishing and Technical Rescue Regulations to be applied in extraordinary situations,

the detailed rules concerning the fire-extinguishing and technical rescue activities of the fire brigades, the area of operation of the professional fire brigades, the smallest vehicle and technical stock to be kept stand-by at the professional fire brigades and the control order of the technical conformance thereof, the number and organisational classification of staff of the professional fire brigades, and the regulations for the fire-fighting sport contest.

- He/she co-ordinates and controls the tasks of the local governmental fire brigades related to the planning of the budget.
- He/she continuously checks the use of the budgetary and other monetary assets of the local governmental fire brigades and the voluntary fire-fighting associations.
- By way of the regional organ of the professional disaster relief organ, he/she checks the activity of the local governmental fire brigade, the institutional fire brigade, and the voluntary fire-fighting association fulfilling fire-extinguishing and technical rescue tasks.

4.3 The Regional and Local Organs of Disaster Relief

The regional organs of disaster relief are the county disaster relief directorates operated with county and metropolitan competence. The local organs are the disaster relief branches and the professional fire-fighting headquarters, which might operate a disaster relief station and disaster relief offices. The organisation according to the functional area makes the relationship between the organs clear. The organisational structure applies central county-level regional and local structures and this structure is kept in each area. This structure allows immediate intervention in any situation at any organisational level during a given risk situation. The central management represents national interests and as it has already turned out above, it exercises management rights over the regional and local organs.

4.3.1 Head of the Regional Organ

The director of the regional organs directly reports to the general director of BM OKF.

Acting in its tasks and authority, he/she manages the activity of a regional organ, and through his/her local organ he/she manages and controls the professional activity of the institutional fire brigades, local governmental fire brigade and the voluntary fire-fighting associations fulfilling fire-extinguishing and technical rescue tasks, too.

Acting in its authority related to the management and coordination of the regional organ, he/she exercises professional management over the operation of public security rapporteurs in issues related to the organisation of courses and specification of the content of examinations, ensures the performance of the industrial safety, fire-protection and technical rescue, as well as disaster relief tasks, the professional requirements thereof, manages and controls the professional work of the subordinate organs [11].

4.3.2 Professional Fire-fighting Headquarters

A professional fire brigade is the local organ of the professional disaster relief organ, a state fire brigade, which may be

established at the proposal of the General Director of BM OKF by the interior minister. The commandant of the professional fire brigade is appointed by OKF General Director, upon asking for the opinion of the board of representatives of the local government at the functioning area.

The fire-fighting commandant or his/her appointed deputy reports to the board of representatives of the local government at the functioning area about the fire-protection situation of the given settlement, the measures taken for the purpose of fire protection and any related tasks on an annual basis.

The fire brigade employees in special service relations fall under the effect of Act concerning the service relations of the special staff of armed organs.

4.3.3 Tasks of Professional Fire Brigades

A professional fire brigade carries out fire-extinguishing and technical rescue activities and participates in the performance of safety measures in the case of direct fire- and explosion danger. It fulfils official fire-protection tasks specified by the government in decrees. At its seat it is involved at the request of the local government in the fulfilment of certain tasks requiring special preparations or devices and serving the safe operation of public buildings. It controls the activities carried out by the local governmental fire brigade, the institutional fire brigade and the voluntary fire-fighting association fulfilling special fire-fighting duties. A part of the professional fire brigades fulfils the official and special official fire-fighting tasks as a disaster relief branch in the settlements of the region specified in legal provisions.

In settlements and regions located far from the settlements of the fire brigade seats the appropriate assistance is granted by the establishment and operation of fire-fighting stations.

4.3.4 The Key Criteria for Local Governmental Fire Brigades

A local governmental fire brigade is founded by the settlement local governments, local governmental associations and fire-fighting associations jointly or the local governments and the governmental associations thereof individually. On the basis of a co-operation agreement concluded with the professional fire brigade, it operates with the professional guidance of the professional fire brigade. It fulfils stand-by tasks that can be used continuously for fire-extinguishing and technical rescue purposes.

The professional fire-fighting tasks of a local governmental fire brigade are fulfilled by full-time and voluntary fire-fighters.

The tasks include the following:

Its professional tasks cover the preparation for fire-extinguishing and technical rescue activities, fire extinguishing, technical rescue, involvement in fire prevention tasks, as well as facilitating the efficiency of fire investigation. It recruits and organises the applicants for fire-fighting service in its area of procession, and provides for the professional preparations and continuing training thereof. It provides for the maintenance and statutory supervision of the special instruments and individual protective devices. It drafts an annual retraining plan in

accordance with the requirements specified in the legal provisions, forwards such plan to the competent professional fire brigade for approval and provides for the continuing training of the staff.

During its fire-extinguishing and technical rescue activity, the local governmental fire brigade shall:

- provide the staff involved in the intervention with standardised individual protective devices;
- process at the command of the Chief Duty Service of OKF to extinguish fire and perform technical rescue outside its procession area,
- perform extraordinary stand-by service based upon the command of the Head of OK or the founder of the local governmental fire brigade, whose costs shall be covered by the entity ordering such service,
- the procession area of the local governmental fire brigade shall be determined as follows: the prescribed forces and tools of the alarmed fire brigade shall arrive at the farthest point of the public administrative borders of the settlement within the procession area in not more than 25 minutes of receiving the signal.

A local governmental fire brigade shall start the procession to the fire cases and/or technical rescue in its stand-by vehicles with minimum 4 persons being on duty for that purpose and with a person authorised to lead the fire-extinguishing, within 8 minutes of the alarm.

The supervision of the professional activities of local governmental fire brigades shall be performed by the disaster relief directorates. During the professional supervision activity thereof, a disaster relief directorate shall:

- Control the professional activity of the local governmental fire brigade and the elimination of deficiencies.
- Control the labour protection activity of the local governmental fire brigade and initiate the elimination of deficiencies.
- Organise co-operation with the professional and institutional fire brigades.
- Exercise the right of preliminary agreeing concerning agreements for the assuming of institutional fire brigade tasks.
- Organise compulsory continuing training and professional briefing for the commandant and the employees authorised to lead fire-extinguishing at the local governmental fire brigades at least two times a year.

4.3.5 Institutional Fire Brigades

In Hungary, dangerous plants and the technologies operated there cause the highest risk potentially. It is a public interest that plants and facilities applying such dangerous technologies operate local fire-fighting organisations which, based upon their personal and physical preparedness, are suitable for primary intervention in the case of any local risk situation, starting fire-extinguishing as soon as possible and putting out the fire with the additional fire-fighting forces arriving there. This

ensures that fires and explosions arising at the facilities cannot jeopardise the population living nearby and the settlements. The operational principles of institutional fire brigades are regulated by Act no. XXXI of 1996 (the Fire Protection Act), while the detailed rules are set forth in Governmental Decree no. 239/2011. (XI.18).

An agreement concerning the fulfilment of the tasks of institutional fire brigades may only be concluded if, besides fulfilling its own tasks without any difficulty, the organisation assuming such liabilities is able to perform the following concerning the facilities of the other business organisation involved in the agreement:

4.3.6 Tasks of an Institutional Fire Brigade

The Governmental decree specifies the tasks whose fulfilment a institutional fire brigade shall be suitable for and which shall be fulfilled during its operation.

These duties are basically fire-extinguishing, technical rescue and fire-prevention tasks to be fulfilled at the territory of the facilities, as well as tasks related to the ensuring of the conditions for fire-extinguishing, rescue and fire investigation.

- In working hours it provides for the fulfilment of stand-by or stand-by-like service.
- Besides working hours, it performs duty service according to the specifications of the head of the facilities.
- It ensures the conditions for fire-extinguishing.
- As specified by law, it fulfils fire-extinguishing and technical rescue tasks in the procession area of the institutional fire brigade, and performs the tasks specified in the Fire-extinguishing Technical Rescue Plan for it.

4.3.7 Voluntary Fire-fighting Associations

In Hungary organisation-like fire protection has been present for about 150 years. In large settlements the first voluntary fire brigades were established after the Compromise in 1867.

These associations were established at local initiation. Their members fulfilled their tasks voluntarily and ensured the establishing and operational costs from public donations.

Therefore, the scope of activities of voluntary fire-fighting associations includes fire-prevention, as well as fire-extinguishing and technical rescue activities.

Within the scope of fire-extinguishing and technical rescue activities, a voluntary fire-fighting association shall:

- Forward the request for help observed by it to the professional fire brigade or the local governmental fire brigade.
- Until the professional fire brigade or the local governmental fire brigade arrives at the scene, it shall make every effort to prevent the fire from spreading, extinguish the fire and provide assistance to any injured person or any other person in danger.

Any person who complies with and accept the statutes of the association and is admitted to the association as a member may become a member to a voluntary fire-fighting association.

5. Conclusion

This article clearly shows that the management system of the fire brigade has considerably changed. Thanks to this process, any process of the management can be supervised and managed by the general director – director at central and regional levels any time at any level. With the central management system established in this way, the operation of the system has become more transparent and quickly reorganisable rather than slower. One of the problems to be solved in the short term is the covering of blank spots with disaster relief stations and the supporting of voluntary fire brigades that operate efficiently on the blank spots at present.

The transformation of the operations management is not perfect yet; however, the introduction of emergency number 112 will result in one single system where several operations can be carried out simultaneously and the elimination of various cases of damage will take less time. Also, it will make the service organisation and the stock management easier, and it will be easier to create harmony both in the rescue and in the provision of assistance.

I can experience the advantages of multi-level management personally because the tasks for each level are specified accurately. My professional experience also shows that central management can be the basis for a system that functions well.

I suppose it is a reasonable idea to involve the civil protection in the various types of protection to a larger extent. Today civil protection is changing rapidly. The classification of the settlement to disaster relief risk is being prepared, various plans are being drafted and updated by the disaster relief commissioner and the settlement public security rapporteurs, which are new positions, under the co-ordination of the professional fire-fighting-commandant. This field requires the harmonisation of the civil protection disaster relief and army plans, whose opportunity can be provided by the new protection administration at district level. This process will largely depend upon the co-operation between the two deputy chairpersons of HVB.

Citizens should be made aware of the fact that to a certain extent they are also responsible for prevention and protection. This issue will also be solved after a while with proper preparations, with various population information systems through presentations held at schools, kindergartens and at the events of business and non-profit organisations. The students were introduced to the performance of fire-fighting works during community services organised for them at the fire brigades.

Practically, the system has become entirely clear. However, through the elimination of problems in the meantime, the management system of disaster relief will soon be able to always pass the best measures possible for the elimination of any damage case.

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8. Section 46 of Act no. CXXVIII of 2011 on disaster relief and the reasons for the amendment of the related acts.
9. Reasons for the Disaster Relief Act.
10. http://www.langlovagok.hu/tanulmanyok/2012/kulturavaltas_pethokrisztinarita_2012.pdf.
11. Regulated by the Organisational and Operational Regulation published by the County Disaster Relief Directorates via a director's command.

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