

CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN POLAND

Jacek DWORZECKI
jacekdworzecki@o2.pl

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Abstract

The paper presents the elements of critical situation management system, which currently operates in Poland. Legislative initiatives and valid legal basis of Polish crisis management system have been discussed as well as the levels of reacting to ensuing critical situations have been presented. Moreover, the paper demonstrates particular elements of crisis management system in Poland, such as National Rescue and Firefighting System, Emergency Medical Services system, Emergency Alert System, 112 System and the assignments of Government Security Service. The research paper consists of interviews with experts who deal with problematic aspects of crisis management. Additionally, basing on the example of natural disaster – the flood, which took place in Poland from May to August 2010, the opinions of Polish people about the efficiency of performed rescuing actions have been introduced. The main aim of the paper, apart from presentation of tasks and the structure of crisis management system in Poland, is to indicate (inter alia basing on the opinions of interviewees) the neuralgic areas, functioning of which requires immediate improvement.

Key words

Crisis, disaster, natural disaster, crisis management, rescue system.

INTRODUCTION

So far, a general agreement among all responsible political environments, concerning fundamental rules of Polish policy of national safety and not involving it in current political battle, was a good feature of transformations in Poland.

The problemacy of crisis management is an exception to this rule, as successive governments invalidated legislative proposals of their predecessors. Till 2008, previous attempts of legislative regulation of crisis management in Poland were strongly marked by two main axes of disagreement: firstly, between civilian and military idea, next between civilian-firefighting and civilian-military ideas. The factual dispute concerned factors of corporate and departmental nature, and the needs of current political battle.

Current legal solutions in Poland as far as the shape (way of organising) of crisis management is concerned, are a result of catastrophic flood in 1997, which uncovered organisational and legal chaos in the field of ensuring public safety in

the context of non-military critical situations. During the following decade, developing a package of laws on the state of emergency became successful. Consequently, in 2007, the Act on crisis management was passed.

Those legal acts form modern crisis management system in Poland. According to legal regulations included in the acts, organs of state and self-government administration are responsible for organisation and implementation of tasks connected with crisis management, in order to ensure public safety in Poland. Those organs shall focus the actions of operational crisis response services (army, police, fire service), public and private institutions as well as a total population. They are responsible for planning, organising, motivating and controlling the implementation of subject tasks in particular critical situations.

Poland has a four-level structure of crisis management system (starting with state/government level, through province, county and commune). Depending on the scope of threat and territory connected with it, the actions shall be undertaken by the lowest level, whose competences suffice to cope with certain event. Therefore, not all mentioned levels of crisis management are always involved in solving particular critical situations.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN IN THE MATTER OF COUNTERACTING CRISIS SITUATIONS IN POLAND AFTER 1989

Creating crisis management system is very complicated and time-consuming. The best proof is the history of formulating this kind of structure in Poland. Lack of system solutions, allowing to coordinate the activities of all administration subjects and other units forming various rescue structures, was noticed during the flood in July 1997. At that time, in southern and western part of Poland, as a result of intense rainfalls, overflowing rivers flooded 2592 towns, 1362 completely, and 665 thousand hectare of ground. 480 bridges and almost 1400 km of roads were destroyed. The flood devoured 54 victims, and 162,5 thousand people were evacuated.

The disaster became an impulse to create legal regulations constituting crisis management system. In March 1998 the Council of Ministers accepted and put forward to the Sejm an amendment to the act on General Obligation of Defence the Republic of Poland from 1967. The bill was elaborated by the Head of the National Civil Defence. The main alterations concerned replacing civil defence by civil protection, and charging it with new tasks in the field of crisis management. On 26 November 1998, with the Minister's of the Interior and Administration decision, the Office of Emergency Management and Civil Protection was created. The Crisis Management Centre was developed within its structures. From June to September 1999 the Office of Emergency Management and Civil Protection prepared successive bills on civil planning and crisis management. Earlier, the bill on civil readiness and crisis management was introduced by the Institute of Public

Affairs. It was commissioned by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister. Half a year later, on 15 April 2000, with the decision of the Minister of the Interior and Administration, the Office of Emergency Management and Civil Protection was put into liquidation.

The National Headquarters of the State Fireservice became an office serving the Head of the National Civil Defence and took over the infrastructure of the abolished Office. After interministerial consultations, on 18 April 2000, the bill on civil readiness and crisis management in times of peace, elaborated by the Institute of Public Affairs, was put forward to the Sejm by the government. The first reading of the bill took place on 30 June 2000. The bill was sent to Sejm Committees on Administration and Home Affairs, National Defence, Territorial Self-Government and Regional Policy as well as Justice and Human Rights. On 6 June 2001 significantly altered bill was put forward to the Sejm for second reading, which took place on 4 July 2001. After voting, the bill was sent to parliamentary committees again. The Sejm passed the bill on 26 July 2001 and sent it to the Senate, which passed it without any amendments. On 6 August 2001 the act was sent to the President of the Republic of Poland by the Marshal of the Sejm. After three weeks, on 27 August, the President vetoed the bill. Consequently, four years after the flood, there was return to initial state – lack of solutions concerning crisis management system functioning.

The act on a state of natural disaster, passed on 18 April 2002, was a step towards creating this kind of system. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, a state of natural disaster is introduced to prevent and overcome the effects of natural disasters or technical failure having features of natural disaster. The act describing this state concerns activities and competences of the organs of public authorities as well as the scope of limitations on the rights of persons during an extraordinary measures. As extraordinary measures are a legal instrument used by the highest organs of executive authorities when ordinary legal measures are insufficient to cope with appearing threats, accepting legal solutions introduced by the act on the state of natural disaster and other acts included in the package was insufficient to create an effective crisis management system, that is the entirety of system solutions in the sphere of persons protection. The solutions shall be realised in everyday practice by the authorities of all levels, in cooperation with specialised organisations and institutions.

During the years 2001-2005 the then government coalition made two parallel attempts to regulate the issue of crisis management and persons protection. On 30 April 2004 a parliamentary bill on the safety of citizens and crisis management was sent to the Sejm of the 4th term. A year later, on 26 April 2005 a government project was sent. It was prepared by representatives of Ministry of National Defence and National Security Bureau. Both projects included mainly regulations repeated after the bill on citizens safety and crisis management of 2004. Nevertheless, they differed significantly as far as definition of crisis situation and issues of system organisation on central level are concerned. Works on the project were directed to Sejm Committees on Administration and Home Affairs as well as Territorial Self-Government and Regional Policy. The final bill, being the result of

both Committees work on both projects, has not been sent by the Marshal of the Sejm for second reading before termination of parliamentary term. However, solutions suggested in both projects, especially the issue of appointing central organisation unit coordinating crisis management, were later applied during works on the next version of act on crisis management.

Together with new, 5th term of the Sejm in 2005, works on preparing government bill on crisis management were initiated in the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. After interministerial consultations the bill was accepted by the Council of Ministers on 20 June 2006 and a week later it was introduced to the Marshal of the Sejm. The first reading of the bill took place on 22 August 2006. The bill was sent to the Committees on Administration and Home Affairs as well as Territorial Self-Government and Regional Policy, with an indication to obtain the opinion of Public Finance Committee and Health Committee. During the session on 26 March 2007 the Sejm passed the act, and on 30 April 2007 the President signed it.

The Act on crisis management entered into force on 22 August 2007, and solutions included in the act shall be helpful in coordinating activities aiming at counteracting the effects of critical situations of considerable weight. The Act specifies authorities responsible for crisis management, their tasks and general principles for crisis management, as well as the rules of financing crisis management tasks.

LEGAL BASIS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN POLAND

The Constitution of the Republic of Poland, as a document of the highest rank, as far as problemacy of crisis management is concerned, distinguishes three types of extraordinary measures: a state of martial law, emergency and natural disaster.

An extraordinary measure is a situation of particular grave threat, when ordinary constitutional measures are insufficient to solve it. Extraordinary measures may be introduced only by regulation, issued upon the basis of statute, and which shall additionally require to be publicized. Separate acts determine the principles for activity of organs of public authority and the degree to which the freedoms and rights of persons and citizens may be subject to limitation.

As far as functioning of the state is concerned, during a period of introduction of extraordinary measures, the following shall not be subject to change: the Constitution, the Acts on Elections to the Sejm, the Senate and organs of local self-governments, the Act on Elections to the Presidency, as well as statutes on extraordinary measures. Moreover, during a period of introduction of extraordinary measures, as well as within the period of 90 days following its termination, the term of office of the Sejm may not be shortened, nor may a nationwide referendum, nor elections to the Sejm, Senate, organs of local self-government nor elections for the Presidency be held, and the term of office of such

organs shall be appropriately prolonged. Elections to organs of local self-government shall be possible only in those places where the extraordinary measures have not been introduced.

As it was mentioned before, the Act of 26 April 2007 on crisis management is the basic current legal act regulating activities in the field of crisis management in Poland. It specifies the organs responsible, decision structures as well as organisational, logistic and financial tasks in this field. The act lays a foundation for crisis management system, functioning of which must accord with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland. The acts introducing an extraordinary measures complete the basis of crisis management. These are:

- The Act of 21 June 2002 on a state of emergency;
- The Act of 29 August 2002 on a state of martial law and on competences of the Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces as well as the principle of his subordination to the constitutional organs of the Republic of Poland;
- The Act of 18 April 2002 on a state of natural disaster.

The Act of on a state of emergency defines circumstances and rules of declaring and calling off the state of emergency as well as the scope of limitations on the rights and freedoms of citizens. The state may be issued by the President on request of the Council of Ministers for a definite period of no longer than 90 days, in a part or upon the whole territory if the state. The President may extend a state of emergency only once for a period no longer than 60 days and with the consent of the Sejm. Subsequently, the term of office of state authorities shall be adequately prolonged.

The next act – on a state of martial law and on competences of the Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces as well as the principle of his subordination to the constitutional organs of the Republic of Poland – defines the procedure of declaring it, code of conduct for governmental authorities, rules of limiting human rights and freedoms during the martial law. In Poland the state may be introduced by the President on the request of the Council of Ministers, upon the basis of statute, in a part or upon the whole territory of the state. It includes the possibility of limitations on the rights and freedoms of persons and citizens as well as changing competences of the organs of public authority.

The act on natural disaster determines the procedure of declaring this kind of state, code of conduct for governmental authorities and rules of limiting human rights and freedoms during the state of natural disaster. It is introduced by the regulation of the Council of Ministers, upon the basis of statute, at the request of proper voivode or on its own initiative. It may cover an area affected by the natural disaster or areas which have been or may be affected by the effects of natural disaster. A state of natural disaster may not exceed 30 days. Moreover, during a period of 90 days after its termination an election or referendum may not be held.

The tasks of the organs of government and self-government administration, implemented within crisis management, were included in following legal acts:

- The Act of 23 January 2009 on provincial and government administration in a province;

- The Act of 5 June 1998 on provincial self-government;
- The Act of 5 June 1998 on county self-government;
- The Act of 8 March 1990 on commune self-government;
- The Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 20 February 2003 on the detailed principles of participation of sub-branches and branches of Polish Armed Forces in preventing or eliminating effects of natural disaster;
- The Ordinance of the Minister of Economy of 8 November 2002 on the requirements of action plan in the event of human life, health, property or environmental threat;
- The Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 30 April 2010 on the plans of critical infrastructure protection;
- The Regulation no. 86 of the Prime Minister of 14 August 2008 on organisation and code of conduct of the Government Team for Crisis Management;
- The Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 30 April 2010 on the Report on threats to national security;
- The Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 15 December 2009 determining which government authorities shall establish emergency management centres and defining their methods of operation;
- The Ordinance of the Prime Minister of 10 July 2008 on organisation and activity of Government Security Centre.

The Act on population protection is currently in preparation. It includes the code of conduct, informing, warning and alarming, organs responsible for population protection as well as rights, duties and principles of safety education and financing.

In Poland regulations concerning crisis management are adapted to European Union requirements. EU Legal acts influencing Polish legislation in this field are:

- Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe;
- Council Directive 82/501/EEC of 24 June 1982 on the major-accident hazards of certain industrial activities (Seveso);
- Council Directive 96/82/EC of 9 December 1996 on the control of major-accident hazards (Seveso II);
- Council Decision 91/396/EEC of 29 July 1991 on the introduction of a single European emergency call number;
- Directive 2007/60/WE of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risk;
- Council Directive 2008/114/EC of 8 December 2008 on the identification and designation of European critical infrastructures and the assessment of the need to improve their protection;
- Council Decision 2008/617/JHA of 23 June 2008 on the improvement of cooperation between the special intervention units of the Member States of the European Union in crisis situations;
- Council Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA of 13 June 2002 on combating terrorism;

- Council of Europe Convention on the prevention of terrorism, adopted on 16 May 2005 in Warsaw;
- Convention on the physical protection of nuclear material, including annex I and II, opened for signature in Vienna and New York on 3 March 1980;
- International Convention for suppression of acts of nuclear terrorism, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 13 April 2005.

NATIONAL RESCUE AND FIREFIGHTING SYSTEM

National Rescue and Firefighting System was formed by the State Fire Service and initiated in 1995. It was created in order to make connections between rescue units and improve the effectiveness of rescue activities. It is defined as the integral part of the internal security system, including forecasting, recognising and fighting fires, natural disasters or other local threats in order to save life, health, property or environment. The system comprises units of fire protection, other services, inspections, guards, institutions and subjects which voluntarily, through civil-law contract, agreed to cooperate in rescue actions. It is characterised by structural simplicity and elasticity, which allows to adapt activities to a type of threats, as well as possibility to fulfill tasks in various conditions. The system functions in state of watchfulness and temporary reacting as well as in state of rescue actions including activities undertook during threats which exceed capacity of county's, commune's or even provincial own funds.

The main aim of National Rescue and Firefighting System is the protection of life, health, property and environment through:

- fighting the fires or other natural disasters;
- technical rescue;
- chemical rescue;
- ecological rescue;
- medical rescue;
- cooperation with units of the State Medical Rescue System.

National Rescue and Firefighting System is coordinated by a village-mayor (mayor, president of a city), county starost and voivode. As the system has a role of an organiser, the State Fire Service carries out the following tasks:

- developing county and provincial rescue plans, which mainly include a set of rescue procedures implemented during a process of informing, administering and conducting rescue activities as well as specification of rescue resources;
- analysis of rescue activities and operational documentation in order to improve functioning of National Rescue and Firefighting System;
- coordinating decisive processes and information flow between subjects implementing rescue and performing for the sake of population protection;
- the managing positions of territorially appropriate chiefs of State Fire Service serve as rescue centres, whose responsibilities include analysing current operational readiness of the subjects of rescue system, notifying and administering powers and measures as well as coordinating rescue activities;

- county and provincial commandants of State Fire Service draw conclusions from the analyses of threats and operational protection. The conclusions aim at improvement of rescue system in the area of a county and are directed respectively to a county starost, voivode and the Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service. As a result, a reliable „photography” of current rescue situation in Poland is obtained.

National Rescue and Firefighting System functions according to organisational administrative structure in Poland on county, provincial and national level.

On county level notifications are received and rescue activities are realised, according to rescue plan, also in the case of support from provincial and national level. On this administrative level the system is coordinated by a county starost, by means of county rescue plan, developed by the Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service. It includes tasks and code of conduct in case of danger. County crisis management team and county crisis management centre are subsidiary bodies of a county starost.

In case of exceeding capacity of county rescue forces, provincial level of National Rescue and Firefighting System is initiated and Provincial Commandant of the State Fire Service is in charge of rescue activities.

Provincial level plays supportive and coordinating role. Provincial operational reserves with specialised teams and national base of specialist equipment are applied on this level. Activities of National Rescue and Firefighting System are coordinated by a voivode through provincial crisis management team, and Provincial Commandant of the State Fire Service develops provincial rescue plan.

The highest level of National Rescue and Firefighting System is called central. The Chief Commandant of the State Fire Service is in charge, and forces are created by central operational reserves with specialised teams, national base of specialist equipment as well as forces and reserves of schools of National Fire Service. The coordination of rescue activities is supervised by National Centre for Rescue Coordination and Protection of Population.

The structure of National Rescue and Firefighting System includes professional rescue services and non-governmental organisations, such as:

- firefighting and rescue units of the State Fire Service;
- Voluntary Fire Service units;
- plant fire brigades;
- plant rescue services;
- hospitals;
- national specialists on diverse rescue areas.

The System is also supported by following services, inspections and guards:

- Maritime Search and Rescue Service;
- mining rescue stations;
- police;
- border guard;

- the State Inspectorate for Environmental Protection;
- State Agency of Atomic Energy;
- Institute of Meteorology and Water Management;
- Mountain Voluntary Rescue Service;
- Water Voluntary Rescue Service;
- Tatran Voluntary Rescue Service;
- Polish Aeroclub;
- Polish Scouts Association;
- Polish Medical Mission;
- Polish Red Cross.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES SYSTEM

Emergency Medical Services system was created in order to provide assistance to people affected by health hazard. The units of the system are respective organs of government administration, hospital rescue wards and medical rescue teams. Units statutorily appointed to bring help to people in need cooperate with the system.

These include:

- injury centres;
- organisational units of hospitals, specialised in providing health benefits;
- units assisting and included into National Rescue and Firefighting System;
- rescue organisations;
- units subordinate to or supervised by a respective minister of interior and Minister of National Defence (provincial military headquarters, provincial district of prevention and treatment, Police, Border Guard).

Organs of government administration which perform tasks of the system are a respective minister of health and a voivode.

In case of necessity to apply units beyond area of given healthcare facility, which includes hospital rescue ward, medical dispatcher is obliged to notify an emergency medicine physician coordinator who supervises undertaken activities. The number of physicians coordinators in provincial emergency call centres is determined respectively to the number of population and is obliged to provide a 24-hour accomplishment of tasks, which include:

- substantial supervision of medical dispatchers;
- coordination of cooperation between medical dispatchers in case of events requiring use of units beyond one unit administrator's area;
- providing medical dispatchers with essential information and substantial assistance;
- participation in activities of provincial crisis response teams;
- 24-hour duty.

Activity of physicians coordinators is also statutorily regulated in the sphere of tasks carried out during natural disasters or technical failure, or when a state of sudden health threat involves risk for considerable number of people. In

such cases a physician coordinator is obliged to inform a voivode about a necessity of introducing a state of high alert in all or some of healthcare facilities, operating within a given province.

FLOOD IN BOGATYNIA. RESULTS OF PERSONAL RESEARCH ANALYSIS

Within conducted research (from September 2010 till October 2010) a questionnaire form was distributed among 186 injured residents (the age range was 19-64) of Bogatynia (dolnośląskie province), the city where on 7 August 2010 catastrophic flood¹ took place. The respondents were not differentiated as far as gender is concerned. Half of people participating in the research were native residents of Bogatynia.

Respondents by age

Age range (years)	Below 20	21 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 50	51 – 60	61 and older
Number of people participating in the survey (in %)	43/ 23,1%	21/ 11,3%	61/ 32,8%	14/ 7,5%	28/ 15,1%	19/ 10,2%
Time (years) of residing in investigated area	Up to 5 years	6 – 10 years	11 – 15 years	16 – 20 years	21 – 25 years	From birth
Number of people participating in the survey (in %)	9/ 4,8%	8/ 4,3%	31/ 16,7%	26/ 14%	18/ 9,7%	94/ 50,5%

As a result of flood in investigated city about 600 residential and historical buildings, bridges and the only (from Polish side) access road to Bogatynia (provincial road 352) as well as buildings in the area of lignite mine were damaged or completely destroyed. In the city with a total population of 16 thousand, about 1500 people lost the roofs over their heads in barely three hours. Property damage was initially estimated at 460 million Polish złotych (115 million €).

*Property damage incurred by participants of survey during flood
in Bogatynia in August 2010*

Property damage incurred by participants of survey as a result of flood (in Polish zloty/€)	Up to 10000 Polish zlotych (Up to 2500 €)	11000 – 55000 Polish zlotych (2600 – 14000 €)	56000 – 155000 Polish zlotych (14500 – 40000 €)	Over 160000 Polish zlotych (Over 40500 €)
Number of flood victims (in %)	27/ 14,5%	61/ 32,8%	66/ 35,5%	32/ 17,2%

1300 firefighters from five provinces (dolnośląskie, opolskie, wielkopolskie, śląskie, małopolskie), 900 soliders, 300 policemen and city guards, with 8 helicopters and about 130 other mechanical vehicles (amphibious vehicles, fire truck, ambulances, trucks and other specialist vehicles) at their disposal, participated in direct rescue activities on the day of disaster. Within a few hours more than 1000 people were evacuated, none of whom died.

According to state and self-government authorities, crisis management system (including notifying and direct rescue activities) during the flood acted flawlessly. The respondents were of the similar opinion. 79,6% of them rated undertaken rescue activities at a high or very high level, indicating proper and immediate reaction of services and a range of initiated rescue activities, adequate to the danger.

In addition, reparation activities (common initiative of state and self-government authorities), undertaken after the flood wave subsided, and connected with damaged city infrastructure were also well rated by the pollees. For instance, damaged provincial road 352 was put into use again barely 14 days after the flood.²

The respondents also emphasized on help the residents received from state authorities. Flood victims were once paid out a 6000 zlotych non-repayable loan and replacement accomodation was secured (there were objections as far as living standards are concerned, e.g. poor condition of sanitary facilities, mouldy walls etc.). Bogatynia authorities commissioned preparation of construction plan of a new housing estate for around 1000 flood victims who suffered the most. Currently, tender proceedings continue. They are connected with accomplishing detailed plans and necessary building documentation, as well as selecting a contractor of the estate by competition.

Concluding the results of research connected with evaluation of rescue activities, undertaken by state and self-government units functioning within Polish crisis management system towards the flood victims, it should be noted that the respondents express rather positive opinions about the rescue action. Few negative opinions were connected mainly with poor standards of residential buildings where flood victims were accomodated after the disaster.

Within further research aiming at assessment of Polish crisis management system, a survey was conducted among three social and professional groups – students, police and fire service officers.

491 students from a few public and private colleges (Gliwice Higher School of Enterprise, University of Education in Myslowice, Bielsko-Biala School of Finances and Law, Higher School of Public and Individual Safety „Apeiron” in Cracow, Jan Dlugosz University in Czestochowa, Higher School of Safety in Poznan, Higher Officer School of Ground Forces in Wroclaw) located in dolnośląskie, śląskie and małopolskie province, participated in the survey from October 2010 to May 2011. The respondents (aged 19-54) were not differentiated as far as gender is concerned.

Respondents by age

Age range (years)	Below 20	21 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 50	51 and older
Number of respondents (in %)	32 6,52%	279/ 56,83%	118/ 24,03%	48/ 9,77%	14/ 2,85%

The investigated group assessed Polish crisis management system, including state and self-government uniformed groups, at a high level. Professionalism of the state fire service and police as well as city guards in connection with implementation of service activities during disasters was assessed positively.

On the other hand, negative opinions were connected with voluntary fire services. The respondents accused them of lack of professionalism, mismanagement and nepotism, indicating numerous publicised cases of acting to the detriment of social interest, e.g. stealing fuel from fire trucks, using company equipment for private purposes, lack of regular training etc.

The assessment of particular uniformed groups functioning within Polish crisis management system

Students' assessment, concerning state and self-government uniformed groups functioning within Polish crisis management system	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Fire Service	4/ 0,81%	13/ 2,64%	131/ 26,69%	343/ 69,86%
Police	57/ 11,61%	253/ 51,53%	109/ 22,20%	72/ 14,66%
City Guard	91/ 18,54%	178/ 36,26%	128/ 26,06%	94/ 19,14%
Voluntary Fire Service	331/ 67,42%	136/ 27,70%	21/ 4,27%	3/ 0,61%

While conducting the survey among officers of uniformed services (154 people), questions about functioning of Polish crisis management system were not asked, as the pollees are representatives of institutions being a pillar of the system and the responses may not be reliable. A questionnaire was used, including questions allowing to characterize tested group, such as: length of professional practice, post, participation in rescue activities. Moreover, an open question was used, concerning drawbacks in functioning of Polish crisis management system. The respondents (aged 21-51) were not differentiated as far as gender is concerned.

The respondents are professionally active, serving at: District Police Headquarters in Oświęcim (małopolskie province), District Police Headquarters in Bieruń, District Police Headquarters in Pszczyna, City Police Headquarters in Tychy, Provincial Police Headquarters in Katowice (śląskie province), District Headquarters of State Fire Brigade in Pszczyna (śląskie province), District Headquarters of State Fire Brigade in Oświęcim (małopolskie province), City Guard Headquarters in Brzeszcze, City Guard Headquarters in Oświęcim (małopolskie province).

Research group characteristics of state and self-government uniformed group officers

Length of service in uniformed group	Up to 5 years	6-15	16-20	21-25	26 and more
	29/ 18,83%	46/ 29,87%	41/ 26,63%	24/ 15,58%	14/ 9,09%
Position held	managerial		executive		
	19		35		
Participation in rescue activities, fighting natural disasters within crisis management system	Up to 5 times	6-10	11-15	16-20	21 and more
	11/ 7,14%	21/ 13,64%	33/ 21,43%	52/ 33,76%	37/ 24,03%

According to data included in the table above, officers with a lot of professional experience (51,3% with length of service of 16 years and more) participated in the survey. They took part in rescue activities within crisis management system many times.

The most frequent drawbacks of Polish crisis management system, noticed by respondents who answered open questions are:

- (police respondents)
 - ✓ Lack of water equipment and training on water bodies;
 - ✓ Insufficient number of vehicles with higher driving parameters (4-wheel drive sport-utility vehicles);
- (state fire service respondents)
 - ✓ Insufficient training connected with common rescue activities of state fire service, police and city guards in order to overcome critical situations;

- ✓ Solving a growing problem connected with overtime work hours worked by firefighters during activities (at the end of 2010 the number exceeded 2 million hours);
- ✓ Lack of aerial firefighting equipment, especially useful during rescue and firefighting activities in forest areas (in Poland forests cover an area of 29%);
- ✓ On county and provincial levels insufficient reserves of material counteracting natural disasters – for instance sandbags;
- (city guard respondents)
 - ✓ Lack of means of personal protection, used during rescue activities connected with overcoming the effects of natural disasters (clothing – raincoats and rain shoes, non-inflammable overalls);
 - ✓ Lack of specialist rescue equipment (climbing and swimming equipment).

All in all, it is necessary to state that in the light of answers given in the questionnaire by officers of state and self-government uniformed groups functioning within Polish crisis management system, the biggest objections are connected with insufficient number of specialist rescue equipment and trainings aiming at correct cooperation of these groups during counteracting and overcoming critical situations.

CONCLUSION

Critical situation management system is not created exclusively to manage in situations critical for organisation, structure or state functioning. It constitutes a specific form of executing managerial functions by managerial organs, which under determined law, supported by proper procedures, make an effort to cope with managing any organisation and achieve goals, mainly in security sphere, in the face of threats which can turn into critical situations.

The aim of critical situation management system comes down to gaining resources of any organisation to provide conditions for counteracting critical threats, as well as assuring functioning continuity of this organisation in times of crisis.

Critical situation management system means not only decisive and executive organs. It is also connected with information connections necessary to implement management process as well as methods and activities regulating functioning rules of given organisation according to delineated goals.

Basing on the results of research described in this paper and concerning functioning of particular elements of critical situation management system in Poland, it is worth noticing that there are still certain problems which need to be solved as soon as possible.

To sum up, it is worth noting that Polish crisis management system constantly evolves, adjusting to current needs of Polish society and EU requirements. It is a complex process, engaging enormous personal, material and technical as well as financial resources. However, a success of implementing a homogenous system of reacting to critical situations is a crucial condition for secure and prospective existence of Polish society.

NOTES:

- ¹ On 7 August 2010 in early morning a cloudburst took place. Around 160 mm of rain fell per square meter, 140 mm within two hours, meanwhile monthly average for this area equals 60 mm. The depth of Miedzianka river has risen from average 1,5 m after a rainfall, to 6m.
- ² At that time it was possible to access Bogatynia only through Germany and Czech Republic. Reconstruction works of 750 m section of the road were conducted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Several dozen people worked during every shift, 20 units of heavy equipment were used. Source: interview with A.Grzemielewicz, mayor of Bogatynia [accessed on 8 September 2010].

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