

The Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence,
Emergencies and the Elimination of consequences of Natural
Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia)

The Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defence, Emergencies and the Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters (EMERCOM of Russia) was set up in accordance with the Decree by the President of the Russian Federation on the 10th of January, 1994. But the real birthday of the Ministry can be considered as the 27th of December, 1990, when the Russian Rescue Corps was established and assigned a mission of rapid and efficient response in case of emergencies.

The tasks of the Ministry

EMERCOM of Russia is an agency of federal executive power. Its main tasks are:

- development of proposals and initiatives in the area of state policy, concerning the issues pertaining to the Ministry's responsibility;
- management of Civil Defence and Search and Rescue Service in the Russian Federation;
- further development of the Russian System of Disaster Management (RSDM);
- coordination of all activities aimed at the elimination of consequences of large-scale disasters and catastrophes;
- coordination of the activities by federal agencies, local administrations, enterprises and institutions aimed at the prevention and elimination of consequences of nuclear disasters;
- education of the population, training of government agencies and forces in disaster management and response;
- organization of international cooperation.

The Ministry actively maintains its public relations and contacts with the mass media on the issues of civil defence, disaster prevention and response.

In order to coordinate the implementation of certain tasks the following specialized commissions and boards were set up:

- Russian Federation Interagency Commission for Fighting Forest Fires;
- Russian Federation Interagency Commission for Floods;
- Interagency Maritime Coordinating Commission for Emergencies on Seas and Water Basins;
- Russian Federation Interagency Commission for Certification of the Rescuers and Training Establishments.

The structure of the Ministry

The structure of the Ministry is as follows:

- Department of RSDM (Russian System of Disaster Management);
- Department of Disaster Prevention;
- Department of Rapid Response;
- Department of Elimination of Consequences of Nuclear Catastrophes;
- Department of the Works on Seas and Water Basins;
- Department of the International Cooperation,
- Department of Science and Technology;
- Department of Para-military Forces and Supporting Units (Civil Defence).

Resources at the Ministry's Disposal

EMERCOM of Russia exercises its duties both on federal as well as on regional levels and utilizes resources from both. The following establishments are subordinate to the Ministry:

- The Russian Federation Civil Defence Headquarters;
- Regional Centers for Civil Defence, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, located in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Rostov-on-the-Don, Samara, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Krasnyarsk, Chita and Khabarovsk;
- Headquarters for Civil Defence and Emergencies of the republics within the Russian Federation, regions, provinces, autonomous administrative units, districts and towns;
- Command and Control Center;
- Civil Protection Academy;
- Training and Methodology Centers for Civil Defence and Emergencies of the republics within the Russian Federation, regions, provinces, autonomous administrative units as well as that of Moscow and St. Petersburg;

- All-Russian Scientific Research Institute on the Issues of Civil Defence and Emergencies;
- All-Russian Monitoring and Laboratory Control Center;
- Center for Scientific Analysis on the Issues of Civil Defence and Emergencies.

The Ministry also has at its disposal the resources given below, which are used for the response and the elimination of consequences of disasters:

- Civil Defence troops, consisting of military formations and units stationed in various regions of the country;
- Search and Rescue Service with its 13 units in the republics, regions and provinces;
- Central Air-Mobile Rescue Team (TSENTROSPAS) with professional rescuers equipped with aviation facilities i.e. helicopters, cargo aircraft "Illiushin-76" and "Antonov-74" which provide the possibility of taking part in United Nation' humanitarian aid operations. For these purposes the Expedition Forces of Russia were set up on the basis of Civil Defence troops and TSENTROSPAS.

The following is a chronological list of the major operations carried out by EMERCOM:

1991

- Elimination of consequences of a large-scale catastrophe at the Ufa refinery. This unique operation resulted in safe removal of the 30 meter section of the smoke-stack which was swaying at the high of 120 meters to the designated location by the use of directed explosion.

1992

- Expedition to the highland regions of Tuva to bury carcasses of dead cattle stricken by plague.
- Emergency response to a train smash in the Tm\ver province.

1992-1993

- Transportation of humanitarian aid to the population affected by natural disasters in Kazakhstan, Turkey, Albania and Montenegro, by socio-political conflicts in Ossetia, Ingushetia, Pridnestrovie, Tajikistan, Afganistan. Containment by air of a

fire in Armenia. assistance in the prevention of dangerous consequences after the volcano eruption in Nicaragua.

1993

- Transportation of humanitarian aid to civilian population evacuated from the conflict zone in Abkhazia.

- Coordination of cleaning operation for the nuclear accident at the nuclear plant in Tomsk-7.

- Organization of response operations for the floods in Serov, Sverdlovsk province.

1993-1994

- Delivery of international humanitarian aid to the population of the former Yugoslavia. This operations is still going on under the auspices of the United Nations.

1994

- Oil and lubricants delivery to the Russian Dukhobortsy community in Georgia.

- Elimination of consequences of aircraft catastrophes in Irkutsk and Mezhdurechensk.

- Evacuation of Russian citizens from the Republic of Yemen.

- Transportation of humanitarian aid to the Rwandan refugees, camps in Tanzania and Zaire by the EMERCOM's truck fleet. This operation was carried out under the auspices of the United Nations.

- Organization of expedition to the Norway Sea to the spot of "Komsomolets" nuclear submarine catastrophe to carry out works on sealing off the submarine and on nuclear environmental monitoring in the disaster place.

- Emergency response operations in Leninsk, Kazakhstan to eliminate the consequences of explosion which took place as the result of a gas-leak in a dwelling.

1995

- Humanitarian airlift to the refugees in Serskaya Kraina.

- Humanitarian airlift to Kobe (Japan).

International cooperation

Rapid and efficient help to the victims of natural disasters, crises and other emergencies is one of the major tasks of the EMERCOM.

The Government of the Russian Federation has already signed agreements of cooperation in disaster prevention and response with the governments of 30 countries and international organizations. As a matter of fact the draft agreements on cooperation in mutual assistance in case of emergencies are ready to be signed with 15 more countries.

In September 1993 the Council of the Heads of Governments of the CIS countries adopted the Rules of the Inter-State Council on Emergencies which had been set up within the framework of the agreement signed in January 1992 in Minsk by the CIS countries.

Nowadays the EMERCOM of Russia is an equal partner of such esteemed international organizations as the UN Department for Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNESCO, International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO), International Red Cross Committee.

The Ministry takes active part in major international conferences and exercises dealing with the disaster relief problems. The participation by the TSENTROSPAS Rescue Team in the first international rescue exercises under the auspices of the United Nations (Austria, 1994) was appreciated and recognized by the World Community. Using this experience, the EMERCOM of Russia stands strongly for further organization of exercises within the framework of the UN and European Unions' programs and projects.

In November 1993 EMERCOM of Russia and UNHCR signed an Agreement of the Support of Humanitarian Operations. To implement it the expedition forces have been set up by the Ministry. Now it is the time to develop a legal background for the cooperation with International organizations and governments of Asian countries.

EMERCOM of Russia is open for new ideas, is ready to engage into new international projects.