

EDUCATION OF CRISIS STAFFS IN AUSTRIA

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Abstract

Education of personnel working in crisis staffs is a significant requirement for the proper operability. The approach of crisis staffs to education is, in Czech Republic conditions, considerably variable, despite the fact that crisis management is understood as the execution of state administration or as the execution of state administration in transferred sphere of activity. This paper brings the information on the possibilities how to approach the education issue.

Key words

Crisis staff, crisis management, Integrated rescue system, education, Austria.

Introduction

Recently, the topic related to the education of personnel incorporated into crisis staffs has been undergoing a renewal in the Czech Republic. The questions, whether the education has been done well or whether somewhere else it is not done better, have been discussed. The source of inspiration can be the education of personnel working in crisis staffs in neighboring Austria. SIAK–Sicherheitsakademie, Bildungszentrum Traiskirchen near Vienna [1] is the implementer of such form of professional training.

Several aspects of a crisis management system

Austria is the republic which covers the area of more than 83,870 km². There are approximately 8.5 million of people living there. The country is divided administratively into nine federal countries - lands. Other administrative levels are districts (84 districts and 15 statutory towns), municipalities and towns or villages (total 2,359).

The government is responsible for crisis management, federal countries - lands [4] are responsible for the management of civil emergencies of a large scale, thereafter “catastrophes”. Within the frame of the management of catastrophes (Katastrophenmanagement) they differentiate the preparation for catastrophes (Katastrophenschutz) and response to catastrophes (Katastrophenhilfe). Regarding the content of these structures, they are similar to the Integrated rescue system in the Czech Republic.

For the coordination of rescue operations during catastrophes, a relevant representative of territorial administration and its crisis staff are responsible. Crisis staffs in Austria have a unified organization structure (see Fig. 1).



*Fig. 1
Organization structure of a crisis staff – adapted according to [3]*

The course for the management of response to catastrophes

The objective of this course is to train the participants to master the processes indispensable for operability of crisis staffs when responding to catastrophes[3]. The lectures are divided into four days with 32 hours of practicing. In the training more than 20 persons with various functions are involved – a course leader, training leader and his staff, trainers of specific staff functions. The course itself is divided into:

- Theoretical preparation – 1st day
- Staff training of professional working groups of a crisis staff – 2nd day
- Staff exercise of the whole crisis staff 3rd and 4th day

Theoretical part

Theoretical part of the course is focused on the presentation of basic problems connected with the management of the response to catastrophes. The topics are the same for everyone. They are the following:

- system of crisis management in Austria,
- rescue system in Austria,
- special features of the management when responding to catastrophes,
- control and decision making process of the leader of rescue operations together with his staff.

Regarding the content, the lectures are focused on the skills which are necessary for the leader of rescue activities and his staff during the response to the consequences of a catastrophe. The training of individual steps of a control and decision making process is the objective of a staff training the following day.

Staff training of professional working groups of a crisis staff

Rescue activity management is trained during the avalanche in the Alps. The crisis staff trains the representatives of public administration on a district level. Simulated event takes

place in the territory of about 15 x 25 km. The participants of the course are divided into individual professional working groups of a staff and each group has its own trainer – (see Fig. 2).

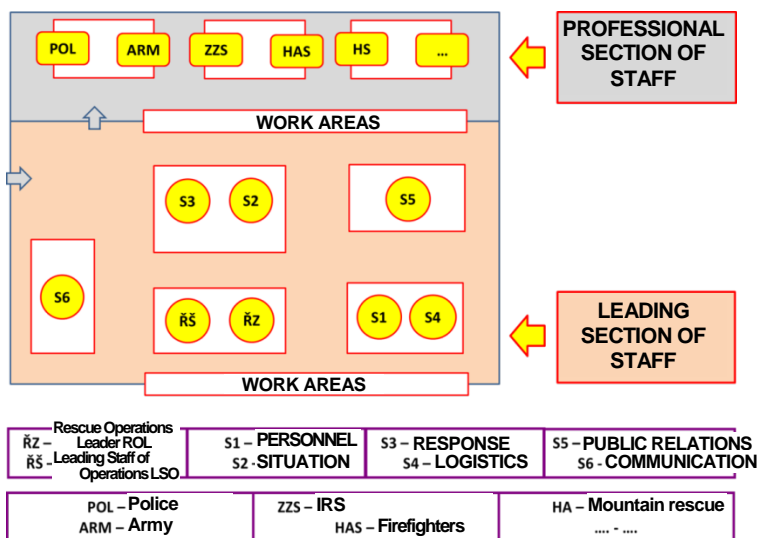


Fig. 2

Organization of the workplace of crisis staff during the exercise – source: [2], [5]

About one hour is provided to make the workplaces of individual work groups operable. Subsequently the staff exercise follows for about 8 hours. The objective is to harmonize working procedures both within individual groups and the staff as a whole. Then, the staff training is completed by press conference.

Training of the staff as a whole

Most time of the course is devoted to the practice of activities of the staff as a whole. Within the staff exercise the support of the leader of rescue activities by leading staff during a flood is practiced. The practice itself is preceded by one-hour lecture on principles which have to be kept during the exercise. This is followed by the opening of the staff exercise itself. After more than two hours a staff meeting is convened in order to unify current knowledge of the situation. During the meeting the practicing staff receives about 60 various reports to which they have to respond.

After another four hours a staff meeting follows in order to adopt the decision of the rescue operation leader. The number of reports delivered to the staff when this meeting takes place is about 90. Besides seven places for implementation of after flood measures, there are two fires. One of them is in a chemical plant with the leak of dangerous substances. Two hours are allocated for the elaboration of the decision of a leader responsible for rescue operations. After the announcement of the decision, the exercise is interrupted until the next day the same time. The first part of staff exercise has been taking place continuously for about 10 hours. Time for lunch break for participants of the exercise is different, the staff operation must be ensured nonstop.

The second part of the exercise is opened by issuing the command for the preparation for a situation meeting related to the alternation of a shift. The situation meeting is concluded by the approval of a content of a relevant protocol encompassing the specification of a situation related to the time of handing over the shift. Then the staff exercise is officially terminated followed by the evaluation of the course and handing over the certificates to the participants.

Conclusion

The approach of Austrian colleagues to the education of personnel incorporated into crisis staffs is different from the approach in the Czech Republic. The guidance of professional training and the knowledge how it is done by our neighbors are inspiring. Moreover, our republic has the longest common borders with German-speaking countries.

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Literature

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