

German Federal Agency for Technical Relief - An Overview

Date of Foundation

Founded on 22nd of August 1950 by Otto Lumitzsch as federal civil protection agency on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Volunteers

About 80,000 THW volunteers, including about 15,000 members in the THW youth organisation. More than 11,000 THW members are female.

Full-time staff

The THW has 1,300 full-time employees, making up just over 1% of the total personnel.

Structure

THW is divided into:

- 668 local sections
- 66 THW offices
- 8 regional offices
 - Baden-Württemberg (BW)
 - Bavaria (BY)
 - Berlin, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt (BE/BB/ST)
 - Bremen, Lower Saxony (HB/NI)
 - Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein (HH/MV/SH)
 - Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland (HE/RP/SL)
 - North Rhine-Westphalia (NW)
 - Saxony, Thuringia (SN/TH)
- THW's National Training School with locations in Hoya und Neuhausen
- THW headquarters in Bonn
 - Logistics centre in Heiligenhaus and foreign operations logistics centre in Mainz

Responsibilities of THW

THW provides technical relief under the Act on the Federal Agency for Technical Relief:

- in accordance with the Federal Civil Protection and Disaster Relief Act,
- abroad on behalf of the Federal Government,
- to manage disasters, public emergencies and large-scale accidents at the request of the authorities responsible for hazard prevention.

THW has a wide range of deployment options for its missions in Germany:

Technical hazard prevention

- Search and rescue
- Clearance of debris and blasting
- Flood response
- Illumination of operational areas

Command/communication and logistics

- Establishment and running of operations centres
- Command support (equipment/personnel) for requesting authorities
- Setting up of temporary telecommunication systems
- Establishment and operation of logistics centres
- Provision of food for operational staff
- Equipment maintenance, repair works

Technical assistance in the sector of infrastructure

- Electricity supply
- Drinking water supply
- Construction of bridges
- Sewage disposal

Technical support in the field of environmental protection

- Control of oil contamination
- Water analysis

Emergency services for the population

- Electricity and drinking water supply
- Sewage disposal
- Setting up and technical operation of emergency accommodation

Deployment options around the world

- Emergency humanitarian aid
- Search and rescue
- Drinking water supply
- Pumping
- Rehabilitation of infrastructure
- Setting up of refugee camps
- Support of capacity building measures in civil protection

Operational units

The THW has available more than 1,400 Rescue Units and some 1,000 Specialist Units, organised into 715 Technical Platoons. These are stationed at 668 local sections. Throughout Germany the THW is equipped with more than 11,100 vehicles. Consistency in training and equipment across the country allows the THW to combine units from different areas and deploy them together. For operations abroad, e.g. as part of EU and UN missions, the THW also maintains dedicated Rapid Deployment Units/Modules.

THW's operational focus in 2017:

In Germany

- Missions across Germany in the wake of heavy rain and storms (above all: pumps, debris clearance, power supply).
- Support operations for large-scale events such as the G20 Summit or Tour de France.
- Emergency relief assistance after accidents or severe weather.

Abroad

- Support for the establishment and expansion of civil protection in Iraq, as well as assistance in camps for Syrian refugees and internally displaced Iraqis.
- Support for the establishment of volunteer-based civil protection structures in Tunisia.
- Support for the establishment of civil protection structures in the Western Balkans and Turkey
- Support for the UN peace mission in Columbia.

In 2017, THW operatives were active for more than 680,000 person-hours upon request by various authorities (e.g. police, fire service, disaster management authorities, district, Bundesland and federal government, or EU).

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