UNIFORMED SERVICES AND EMERGENCY CALL SYSTEM COOPERATION

Introduction

The progress of civilisation and intensification of migration movement have caused an increase of various threats. These threats result in new types of mass incidents, catastrophes and malfunctions in workplaces, installations, technical equipment, means of transports or public facilities. This in turn gives rise to an acute need to engage the emergency services and fire protection organisations in Poland.

In order to improve civil security, Emergency Call System was established. Its priority is to make the 112 emergency number fully available to the public, as well as to efficiently forward emergency notifications to the appropriate emergency services in life- and health-threatening crisis situations.

The Emergency Call System is a crucial element of the domestic security of every country. It is used to provide help in crises and emergency support. One of the conditions for the cooperation of Emergency Call System units, security services and emergency services is maintaining constant contact and coordination of their actions via dispatch stations.

Cooperating with Emergency Call System, uniformed services are much more efficient in their attempts to provide safety. Lack of cooperation

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would cause low efficiency of information circulation among individual emergency services, which would result in a greater number of deaths and losses of property.

Emergency Call System

Establishing a new organisational entity within the structures of emergency services – the Emergency Call System – proved beneficial to the society in Poland. The idea arose as a result of the need to better organise the emergency services in situations of urgency, as well as to integrate operations of health protection units, Police and National Fire Service and emergency service system.

As early as 1991, the European Council introduced a consolidated emergency number and the obligation was sanctioned in Directive 2002/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002. The Directive provided that „users should be able to call the single European emergency number “112”, and any other national emergency telephone numbers, free of charge, from any telephone, including public pay telephones, without the use of any means of payment”. In Poland, the implementation of the Emergency Call System took several years. There was no institution responsible for quick and efficient access to emergency services until 2013.

The Emergency Call System, including the 112 call number, has existed in Poland since 2014. It consists of emergency call centres (CPR) comprising a uniform emergency call system, where calls are directed to the 112 number, enabling to transfer them to the appropriate emergency service.

Every year, the system is improved, which makes the handling of emergency calls more and more efficient. Throughout the country, the 112 emergency number has been increasingly used instead of the traditional numbers for individual emergency services.

The main objective of the system is to ensure that the call from a person in need is forwarded to the appropriate rescue services as quickly as possible. The operator decides whether to forward the notification to the appropriate services, as there are instances when it is not justified to do so.

Emergency entities should receive information on the incident or the suspicion of incident of real threats. It is also vital to remember that the

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5 According to the guidelines, the deadline to implement the regulations for the EU countries was July 2003 (for newly admitted EU countries – 1 May 2004. Poland did not comply with the requirements within the deadline, thus the number was only accessible on mobile phones. The requirement was met on 1 September 2004. For this delay, infringement proceedings were launched against Poland. Fortunately, they were withdrawn.
system in which efficiency and reliability are essential to save life and health is still in need of further development and improvement of its functionality.

It must be noted that the construction of the Emergency Call System in Poland has not been finished yet. In the near future, Polish authorities are planning to improve the efficacy of road accident notification procedures. According to research carried out on behalf of the European Commission, the implementation of the eCall system, which can reduce the arrival time of rescue services by up to 50%, will be finalised shortly. It is worth mentioning that soon every new car will have to be equipped with sensors automatically registering road accidents and notifying the appropriate emergency call centre about them.\(^6\)

What is more, the Emergency Call System will presently introduce a new way of making emergency notifications in the form of text messages. This solution will enable emergency notifications from all those who are not able to make a phone call. This is especially dedicated to individuals with hearing and speech difficulties.\(^7\)

Such a system can improve the coordination of the procedures and the process of deployment different emergency services to the scene. It also becomes easier and less expensive to meet different challenges with the use of the modern technical solutions, because Emergency Call Centres employ the same solutions, and they can be substituted if a local operator is busy, and the call can be received by an operator from another province.

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**Cooperation of the National Fire Service and Emergency Call Centres**

Fire safety and security against the consequences of local threats are important elements of domestic public security.

National Fire Service is a foundation of the public security system as it carries out tasks within the national system of security and public order. It cooperates with the Emergency Call Centre on the basis of notifications from emergency call operators, who contact appropriate National Fire Service (NFS) units after receiving a call from a person in need of assistance. The operators on duty in the control stations of the National Fire Service on the individual levels of administrative division (districts – control station of the District Commander of the NFS, provinces – control station of the Province Commander of the NFS, nationwide – control station of the Chief Commander of NFS) send appropriate units to the scene.

The duties of operators in the National Fire Service control stations include:
— receiving, classifying and, if need be, forwarding emergency notifications,

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\(^7\) *Ibidem.*
dispatching emergency resources,
— assisting and coordinating rescue operations,
— reviewing information about threats from the monitoring systems of National Firefighting and Rescue System entities and data on operational readiness, response time, the course and conclusion of rescue operations,
— informing superiors and public administrative authorities of types of threats, the prognosis of their development and scale and incident scene,
— initiating procedures for headcount increase or introducing increased operational readiness. 8

The image presents Incident Notification Form in the National Fire Service Decision Support System.

Figure 1  
Instruction for handling an incident in the Decision Support System of the State Fire Service from the Regional Rescue Notification Centre in Lublin


8 See: Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 18 February 2011 on detailed principles of organisation of the national rescue and fire-fighting system (Dz.U., 2011, No. 46, item 239).
Figure 1 shows the Incident Notification Form in the National Fire Service Decision Support System (a multi-module IT system for supporting control station operators), which demonstrates the range of data exchanged between the Emergency Call Centre and the National Fire Service. Elements of the form include data from the emergency call:

— a unique emergency identification number, date and time of the call, operator’s identification number;
— information about the incident scene or threat, including the address of the incident or threat, geographical coordinates, name of the facility, information about the facility where the threat occurred;
— information on the type of incident or threat;
— information on the entity or entities to which the call has been directed;
— description of the incident or threat, including the number of people injured or in a situation of urgent health emergency and other information relevant to the emergency call;
— caller’s personal details;
— unit’s dispatch operator’s confirmation of receiving the call;
— contact details of the emergency call operator and the unit’s dispatch operator;
— information on the status of handling the emergency call;
— information on connection status with the caller;
— information concerning the content of emergency call: call recording identifier and content of the original emergency call. 9

National Fire Service runs reconnaissance in the scope necessary for rescue response and cooperates with other emergency units and services securing the incident scene.

Main tasks of the National Fire Service include:
— reconnaissance of fire threats and other local threats,
— organising and conducting rescue operations during fires, natural disasters or elimination of local threats,
— auxiliary specialist rescue activities during natural disasters or elimination of local threats by other rescue services,
— conducting research in the scope of fire protection and civil security,
— cooperating with fire and rescue services of other countries and their international organisations on the basis of international agreements and separate regulations. 10

Cooperation of Police and Emergency Call Centres

Cooperation between public order services and Emergency Call Centres involves direct exchange of information concerning incidents via electronic

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9 Regulation of the Minister of Administration and Digitisation of 29 July 2014 on telephone numbers covered by the emergency call system (Dz.U., 2014, item 1050).
means using ICT systems. After taking and registering an emergency call in the ICT system, the emergency call operator sends information in an electronic form which includes the date and time of the call, information on the incident scene or threat, description of the incident or threat and personal details of the caller; it is sent to a Police unit officer on duty and, in justified instances – depending on the qualification of the notification – the telephone call is forwarded to the police station on duty.

The police officer on duty receives the information from the emergency call operator in the control station, which is the workspace of the officer coordinating Control System operations.

After receiving the information from the emergency call operator, the on-duty police officer is in charge of police forces until a police officer responsible for handling the notified incident is appointed. The police forces deployed to the incident scene inform the officer on duty of the status of the emergency.

Figure 2 shows an incident notification form in the Police Command Support System (SWD).


The Police Command Support System incident notification form includes the reception of a new emergency notification, which is registered in the ICT system. The main screen of the form specifies the reception of the notification.

The form shows the identification number of the Police unit officer on duty. It also shows information about the incident date and time, type and classification of the incident, including the forces and resources disposed to the scene and the description of the scene. The elements of the form include geographical coordinates allowing quick response from the service.
The tasks of the police officer on duty with regard to receiving information about the incident include:
— ensuring instantaneous response to the incident,
— carrying out the commands of a higher-rank police unit officer,
— cooperating with on-duty officers of police units,
— managing the work of the control station staff.

Instantaneous response of the Police to the incident is ensured by:
— ongoing reception of notifications of incidents and follow-up information,
— taking immediate action after reception of the notification or information about the incident,
— ongoing management of Police unit resources and forces at disposal,
— changing the deployment of services and issuing commands within the competence determined by the head of the Police unit and resulting from separate provisions,
— ensuring the circulation of information about the incident,
— managing police forces until a police officer responsible for handling the incident is appointed.\(^{11}\)

The main tasks of the Police include:
— protecting human life, health and property against unlawful attacks violating these goods,
— ensuring public safety and order, including ensuring peace in public places and means of transport, in road traffic and waters open to the public,
— initiating and organising activities preventing crime and infractions or criminogenic phenomena and cooperating within this framework with the state, local authorities and social organisations,
— detecting crimes and infractions and prosecuting the perpetrators,
— supervising specialist armed security units as specified in separate provisions,
— ensuring that the administrative and police regulations concerning public activities and being in effect in public spaces are obeyed,
— gathering, processing and forwarding criminal intelligence,
— filing data gathered by authorised entities on fingerprints, unidentified fingerprints from crime scenes and DNA analysis results,
— cooperation with the police from other countries and their international organisations, as well as European Union organisations and authorities on the basis of international agreements and contracts, as well as separate provisions.\(^{12}\)

Cooperation of the Police and the National Fire Service with Emergency Call Centres consists in transferring notifications and exchanging information and data via the ICT systems. Emergency Call Centre connects to the ICT system and exchanges data with the Police or National Fire Service systems.

\(^{11}\) See: Order No. 1173 of the National Police Chief of 10 November 2004 on the organisation of duty service in police organisational units (Dz.U. of the National Police Headquarters, 2013, item 73).

\(^{12}\) Act of 6 April 1990 on the Police (Dz.U., 2020, item 360), Article 1(2).
The connection and data exchange is conducted via a communication interface which enables mutual transmission of:
— collected data on the content of the emergency call including personal data of the caller and other involved people and recordings of the telephone calls;
— telephone connections associated with the handling of emergency calls;
— information on emergency call status including confirmation of receiving the emergency notification via the ICT system of the Police, National Fire Service, as well as receiving the emergency call by the dispatcher and dispatching of rescue resources and conclusion of rescue operations.\(^\text{13}\)

**Conclusion**

Prompt and appropriate organisation and coordination of a rescue operation require the cooperation of the security, uniformed and medical services. Experience of the rescue personnel, access to reliable information via communication systems among the Emergency Call Centres and rescue, technical and security services as well as access to IT systems allows swift localisation of the incident and the determination of its scope. The services cooperating with the Emergency Call System perform a series of procedures that lead to safety and efficient rescue operations resulting from different kinds of sudden and unforeseen incidents (type and scope, place of incident, number of casualties). Whenever possible, they provide assistance including qualified first aid.

Despite taking extensive measures to improve the cooperation between the Police, the National Fire Service and the Emergency Call Centres, the system is imperfect, the communication with the rescue services is flawed, which affects the response time. A lot of information reaching the services is incoherent and groundless as it fails to reflect the factual state of life- and health-threatening incidents which in turn, in some cases, makes the intervention groundless. The proper flow of information and the quality of messages are crucial.

When conveying information one should comply with the *need to know* rule or the Minimum Necessary Standard, according to which one should disclose to a group and each participant of an incident such amount of information as is necessary at a given moment. Both overload and deficiency of information may result in serious problems at each stage of operations.\(^\text{14}\) The cooperation of the services within the framework of the

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\(^{13}\) Act of 22 November 2013 on the emergency notification system (Dz.U., 2019, item 1077), Article 13.

Emergency Call System will contribute to improving the quality and efficiency of handling emergency calls.15 Utmost efforts should be made to ensure that the cooperation of the uniformed services and the Emergency Call System constitutes a reliable, coherent system to handle emergency calls and organise rescue operations aimed at shortening response time.

References

Scientific studies


Normative acts

Regulation of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 18 February 2011 on detailed principles of organisation of the national rescue and fire-fighting system (Dz.U., 2011, No. 46, item 239).
Regulation of the Minister of Administration and Digitisation as of 29 July 2014 on telephone numbers covered by the emergency call system (Dz.U., 2014, item 1050).
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Documents and materials


Web publications


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**Summary:** The study contains the most important information regarding the functioning of uniformed services in the emergency alert system. The matter of the utmost importance is to provide operation and cooperation of the Police and State Fire Brigade with emergency alert system centres. Smooth coordination in terms of sending emergency services units, emergency aid units and extensive cooperation with uniformed services in case of major disasters, are the advantages of the 112 alert system implemented by Poland.