



CTIF International Association of Fire and Rescue Services

Addressing the Climate Crisis: A Call to Action for Fire and Rescue Services Worldwide

The Comité Technique International de prévention et d'extinction de Feu (CTIF), known globally as the International Association of Fire and Rescue Services, expresses deep concern at the increasing frequency, geographic range and growing intensity of the extreme climate events. The CTIF shares this concern with a large number of international scientific organizations, universities and concerned individuals and informed communities’.

As a worldwide organisation CTIF is engaged with partners trying to reduce the significant and growing impact of these changes these change's significant and growing impact on our ability to effectively respond to emergencies and safeguard our communities. Furthermore CTIF wants to highlight the importance of counteraction and preventive measures against the rapidly developing climate crisis. In that context CTIF strongly supports public notes and recommendations from the scientific community.

Extreme weather events, previously considered occasional or seasonal threats, due to high or low temperatures, like droughts, wildfires, heavy rainfall, flash floods, coastal storms, hurricanes, etc. are now commonplace.

2022 witnessed exceptional wildfires across Europe and monsoons in Asia. Unfortunately 2023 has continued this continuing concern: firstly a European heatwave; followed by Storm Mara in North America affecting 100 million people; then Cyclone Freddy in Africa with over 200 deaths; April’s European “Heat Dome” of high temperatures and wildfires; the Storm Mocha floods in Myanmar leading to over 400 deaths in May; and then the worst season of Mediterranean wildfires in June. July saw 10 million hectares of wildfires in Canada and devastating deaths in Hawaii; followed by Hurricane Ida in the USA; then Storm Daniel hit Greece leading to 3500 rescue operations. Evidence, if any were needed, of the relentless challenges now being confronted.

The challenge is present, right here – right now. Fire and rescue services are confronting additional demands from more complex events of greater intensity, happening with increased frequency and duration. Thousands of lives, including those of volunteer firefighters, are placed at risk. This pressing issue requires governments, policymakers, practitioners and technologists, right across the globe, to recognise and understand scientific evidence then cooperate and act to address these increasingly complex demands upon communities and their fire and rescue services. In that context, climate protection has to be seen as integral part of civil protection as climate change poses a severe threat to the public and the Fire Rescue services.

Climate Change and Fire Rescue Operations:

1. **Increasing Frequency and Intensity of Wildfires:** The escalating frequency and intensity of wildfires directly threaten communities, wildlife, and natural resources. Fire and rescue services are being stretched to their limits as they battle larger and more destructive fires, often requiring additional resources and personnel. These wildfires are manifesting themselves not only in geographic areas predisposed to such occurrences, like the Mediterranean or North America but in locations like the UK in Northern Europe, previously unfamiliar and unprepared for such extremes.



2. **More Frequent and Severe Flooding:** Rising sea levels and changing weather patterns lead to increased flooding events. Fire and rescue services are frequently called upon to perform water rescues, evacuate residents, and mitigate flood-related hazards, often with insufficient resources. The high water level of the rivers Sava, Mur and Drava in August 2023, for example, seriously affected Austria, Croatia and Slovenia with flooding.
3. **Extreme Weather Events:** Climate change results in extreme weather events, such as cyclones, hurricanes and severe storms, which require significant response efforts. The demand for skilled personnel, specialized equipment, and emergency shelters is rising.
4. **Heatwaves and Health Impacts:** Prolonged heatwaves and extreme temperatures are affecting public health. Firefighters and emergency responders are exposed to additional risks when working in extreme heat conditions.

CTIF's Call to Action:

To address the impacts of climate change on fire and rescue operations, CTIF urges governments and administrations civil protection and emergency responders worldwide to take the following actions:

1. **Recognise climate change as a global crises:** Use scientific evidence to fully understand climatic changes as a global emergency and incorporate scientific findings into your decision-making processes.
2. **Create and Implement Integrated National Response Strategy:** Use all available statutory and legislative powers to create and integrate local and regional readiness strategies into a national strategy to meet the growing challenges presented by extreme weather events.
3. **Promote Climate Emergency Mitigation:** Take legislative action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reverse the causative factors of climate change. This includes transitioning to renewable energy sources, implementing stricter emissions standards, and supporting sustainable land management practices.
4. **Allocate Adequate Resources:** Provide adequate funding and resources to fire and rescue services to meet the growing demands of climate-related emergencies. This includes localised investments in personal protection and operational equipment, personnel training, advanced oversight and spatial and earth observation surveillance systems, like EU Copernicus, and the development of new technologies to enhance response capabilities.
5. **Strengthening the capacity of firefighters** is essential in the context of the climate emergency and the increasing number of natural disasters. Firefighters are the primary actors in civil protection, and their workforce is and will continue to be under significant pressure due to the multiplication and intensification of exceptional situations caused by climate change. Therefore, it is necessary to reinforce their workforce and facilitate their engagement, both for professional and volunteer firefighters.
6. **Enhance Preparedness and Collaboration:** Foster greater continuous collaboration between fire and rescue services, emergency management agencies, and environmental organizations to develop comprehensive thematic strategies for climate-related disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.



7. **Build Regional Cooperation:** Recognising climate change as a global threat requiring international cooperation governments and civil protection agencies should seek mutual aid agreements with other national partners, as exemplified in the European Union Mechanism, to create greater capacity and enhanced civil response capabilities, such as firefighting aircraft.
8. **Support Staff Well-being:** Recognise and prioritise the well-being of fire and rescue personnel by offering mental health support, adequate rest periods, and the necessary resources to cope with the increased physical and emotional demands of climate-related disasters.
9. **Raise Public Awareness:** Educate the public about the relationship between their own behaviour, climate change and the increasing risks of disasters, emphasizing the importance of preparedness, resilience, and sustainable practices.

In conclusion, climate change represents an escalating threat to our ability to protect lives, property, and the environment. The CTIF International Association of Fire and Rescue Services stands united in its call for governments to prioritize climate change mitigation, adequately support fire and rescue services, and take meaningful legislative action to address the root causes of this crisis. Together, we can build a safer, more resilient world for future generations.