

Multi-level emergency management

The Danish fire and rescue service consists of the municipal fire and rescue service, the municipal and national support sites, and the national, regional fire and rescue service.

The fire and rescue service

The Danish fire and rescue service is deployed in situations of fire and natural disasters. It is designed as a multi-level system. The municipal fire and rescue service (Level 1) is in charge of day-to-day emergency management. The municipal and national support sites (Level 2) assist by supplying equipment for the most frequent tasks while the national fire and rescue centres (Level 3) assist in larger, long-term or particularly personnel-intensive accidents.

Level 1: The municipal fire and rescue service

The municipality may choose to have a municipal fire and rescue service or enter into a contract with a private company (most often Falck) or a voluntary fire brigade. The first turnout of the fire fighting service must depart as soon as possible and within five minutes of the alarm. The number of fire-fighting vehicles and fire fighters is established by the local council on the basis of a local risk assessment. The response of the fire and rescue service at the site of damage is managed by the municipal on-site commander while the overall response is coordinated by the police.

Level 2: The municipal and national support sites

If the municipal fire and rescue service does not have enough capacity to handle an accident using its own resources, it may call upon the assistance of nine municipal and national support sites situated in Aalborg, Århus, Esbjerg, Fredericia, Odense, Kalundborg, Fredensborg, Greve and Nykøbing Falster or the five national fire and rescue centres. The support site assistance can reach a site of damage throughout the country within an hour.

The municipal support sites are staffed by full-time or part-time employees of the municipality or local volunteers, and the Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) places equipment at their disposal. This may be water tankers, lighting equipment or high-pressure compressors. The municipal and national support sites thus only offer equipment.



Municipal fire fighters and DEMA in action during a fire near Thisted, July 2009.

Level 3: The national fire and rescue service

In the case of comprehensive accidents requiring special equipment or large amounts of equipment and personnel, the municipalities may call on the assistance of DEMA's five fire and rescue centres in Thisted, Herning, Haderslev, Næstved and Allinge all on 24-hour turn-out duty. DEMA's centres may dispatch personnel and equipment within five minutes and reach destinations all over the country within approx. two hours. DEMA can rapidly muster up to 1,200 conscripts, non-commissioned officers and volunteers.

DEMA also has two voluntary response forces deployed in Hedehusene and Herning at its disposal, which may support the fire and rescue service with approx. 400 volunteers.