

The Safe Village Safe People Program

What are the "Safe Village" and "Safe People" Programs?

These are two programs created by Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 157-A / 2017, of October 27, which established a set of measures that the Government decided to introduce "a systemic reform in the prevention and fight against forest fires, extending to other areas of protection and relief."

The "Safe Village" program is defined as a "Population Cluster Protection and Forest Protection Program" and is intended to establish "structural measures for the protection of people and goods, and those built at the urban-forest interface, with the implementation and management of protection zones to clusters and strategic infrastructures, identifying critical points and places of refuge." For its part, the "Safe People" program aims to promote "awareness-raising actions for the prevention of risk behaviour, self-protection measures and evacuation drills, in articulation with local authorities."

Who is responsible for the implementation of the Programs?

The implementation of the "Safe Villages" and "Safe People" Programs is carried out under a Protocol between the National Civil Protection Authority (ANPC), the National Association of Portuguese Municipalities (ANMP) and the National Association of Parishes (ANAFRE).

Under this protocol, its implementation is carried out at two levels:

- Strategic level (carried out by the Central Administration through the ANPC): elaboration of cross-referential guidelines throughout the national territory, complemented by awareness campaigns and national warning systems;
- Operational level (carried out by municipalities and parishes): local implementation of concrete measures of protection and sensitization, taking advantage of greater proximity to citizens and the capacity of local agents to mobilize their communities, strengthening relationships of trust and stimulating participation of the populations.

What actions are developed under the Programs?

Under the "Safe Village" and "Safe People" Programs, actions are developed at the following levels:

- **Protection of agglomerates** (a cluster of houses) - actions aimed at the management of protection zones for agglomerates located at the urban-forest interface, in order to reduce the possibility of buildings being affected by rural fires;
- **Prevention of risk behaviour** - awareness-raising actions aimed at reducing the number of ignitions caused by fire-related risk behaviour;
- **Awareness raising and warning to the population** - actions to raise awareness and inform the population about the current rural fire risk and the self-protection behaviour to be adopted in the event of the possibility of approaching a rural fire;
- **Evacuation of agglomerates** - actions to prepare and carry out a spontaneous or deliberate evacuation of a cluster when approaching a rural fire;
- **Shelter and shelter** - actions to select and prepare spaces or buildings of a particular cluster to serve as a shelter (indoors) or a shelter (open space) during the passage of a rural fire, in cases where is the most feasible or the only possible option.

What is the Local Security Officer?

The Local Security Officer is a person established in the Single Prevention and Combat Directive (attached to the Resolution of the Council of Ministers, nº 20/2018, of March 1st) and that will have a catalysing effect in the operation involving warnings, evacuation, shelter or refuge in each cluster.

In practice, the officer is a "key" element of the cluster, resident in it and who voluntarily acts as a facilitating agent between the Municipality / Parish and the remaining population of the community, operating the different measures and disseminating information. The Local Security Officer should have an adequate knowledge of the geographical, human reality and existing structures at the local level.

What channels are used to broadcast local-level warnings?

In order to guarantee that the warning messages reach the greatest number of people, different channels are used simultaneously, adjusted to the local reality according to the characteristics of the population and the territory.

It is up to each municipality to decide on the most appropriate warning mechanisms. In any case, it is a priority to adopt the following actions, which complement each other:

- Creation within Parishes of door-to-door warning networks involving Local Security Officers or other members of the population of the cluster;
- Streamlining of the articulation with the local radios so as to obtain greater speed in the dissemination of warnings;
- Promotion of contact with local parishes for the use of bell ringing or carrying out dissemination actions in religious cults;
- Creation of mechanisms for the use of sirens.

What is a shelter or a collective refuge?

The shelter or collective shelter (depending on whether it is an enclosed space or an open space, respectively) is a safe place within the cluster which may be the most appropriate option for approaching a rural fire by allowing people to be protected from heat (or at least exposure to the flames or radiation) and smoke, as well as the projection of objects carried by the air.

Such spaces will not have to have a very large area - in some small clusters, for example, a small, enclosed or open space, may be sufficient to accommodate a limited number of people for up to 1 hour.

What places can serve a collective shelter?

The collective shelter will tend to be an enclosed space that is intended to accommodate people before or during the passage of fire, providing security to its users. Newer builds are usually a safe place as long as they and their surroundings are kept in good condition, cleared of weeds and with active fuel management, in order to provide greater safety.

Thus, common spaces (e.g. pavilions / sports facilities, churches, swimming pools, schools, multipurpose rooms, community centres, public facilities, etc.) or residential buildings within easy reach of the cluster and which are more resistant to fire may be used.

What places can serve a collective refuge?

They can be used as collective refuges, outdoor spaces inside the agglomerates, which are large (e.g. football fields, church chapels, central squares, large openings, fairgrounds, tanks, lavatories, swimming pools, etc.) provided that they are removed from empty buildings or in ruins in their surroundings, as well as tufts of vegetation.

Shelters should be located in easily recognizable and recognizable spaces, even in conditions of poor visibility due to smoking.

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