

# An Overview of the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)

## Date of Foundation

Founded on September 16, 1950 by Otto Lummitzsch on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

## Volunteers

Approx. 80,000 THW members, including approx. 42,000 active volunteers, approx. 15,000 youth and approx. 8,000 girls and women.

## Employees

Approx. 800 employees, circa 1% of the total number.

## Structure

The THW comprises:

- 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 National Training Centre, with two sites in Hoya and Neuhausen
- THW Headquarters in Bonn, including the Logistics Centre in Heiligenhaus, near Düsseldorf

## Budget

The German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) made available to the THW a budget of approx. EUR 135 million in the 2008 Federal Budget.

## Responsibilities of the THW

### Technical Hazard Prevention

- Location, rescue, salvage
- Debris clearance and blasting
- Rescue from water hazards
- Fighting floods
- Lighting of operational areas

### Command/Control and Logistic Support

- Establishment and operation of command centres
- Command support (material and personnel) for public utility providers
- Establishment of temporary telecommunications systems
- Establishment and operation of logistics nodes
- Catering for operatives
- Material maintenance, repair and servicing
- Consumables transport

### Technical Assistance in the Infrastructure Field

- Electricity supply
- Drinking water supply
- Sewerage
- Bridge construction

### Technical Assistance for Environmental Protection

- Oil damage abatement
- Water analysis

### Emergency Provisions for the General Population

- Power and drinking water supply
- Sewerage
- Establishment and technical operation of emergency accommodation

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### Additional Technical Assistance (as needed on-site)

#### Technical Humanitarian Assistance Abroad

- Emergency relief aid (SEEBA, SEEWA)
- Location, rescue, salvage
- Drinking water supply
- Power supply
- Pumps, water delivery
- Erection of refugee/displaced person camps with infrastructure
- Logistics
- Reconstruction

#### Use of THW Facilities for Information and Consultation

- THW National Training Centre  
(training facilities in Hoya and Neuhausen)
- THW Operations Centre  
(information, command, coordination)

### Operational Units

The THW has 1000 Technical Units and 1440 Rescue Groups, incorporated into 730 Technical Platoons. In addition, there are the specialist units for international missions: Rapid Deployment Unit Water and Sanitation Abroad (SEEWA) and Rapid Deployment Unit Search and Rescue Abroad (SEEBA). Nationwide, the THW has more than 8400 vehicles at its disposal.

### Technical Assistance

Particular focal points of THW operations in 2008 included:

- dealing with the damage caused by Hurricane „Emma“,
- technical assistance for Deutsche Bahn during the salvage operations for the ICE train which derailed in the Landrücken tunnel near Fulda,
- rescue, debris clearance, pumping operations, electricity supply, and temporary bridge construction in the wake of numerous storms and freak weather conditions,
- drinking water supply for the public in Myanmar after the tropical cyclone “Nargis” and in China in the wake of the earthquake in the Sichuan province.

In 2008, THW volunteers were in action for a total of approx. 390,000 hours after being requisitioned by various public utility providers (e.g. police, fire department, disaster management authorities, the governments of local and regional administrative districts or federal states, the Federal Government, or the EU).

They also carried out technical assistance as part of wider humanitarian, charitable and social responsibilities. Furthermore, the THW also performs ‚miscellaneous technical assistance‘: this category includes missions that are not covered by the THW’s statutory duties, but instead are contracted by third parties.

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### Contact and Information

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