



FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions on Cultural Property Shelters

- What is a cultural property shelter?

A cultural property shelter is an underground civil engineering structure designed to ensure the safe storage of movable cultural property in the event of armed conflict, natural disasters and anthropogenic hazards. Either the cultural property is brought to safety in such a shelter when endangered, or it is already stored there as a precautionary measure.

- What legislation applies to cultural property shelters?

Legislative provisions on cultural property shelters can be found in the Federal Act of 20 December 2019 on Civil Protection (CivPA, SR 520.1) and in the Ordinance of 11 November 2020 on Civil Protection (CivPO, SR 520.11). The Federal Act on the Protection of Cultural Property during Armed Conflicts, Disasters and Emergencies (CPPA, SR 520.3) contains no provisions on cultural property shelters. All legal requirements and construction project phases can be found in the guidelines, entitled *‘Cultural property shelters: construction of new refuges and repurposing of decommissioned protected facilities (2020)’*.

- What cultural property shelters qualify for federal subsidies?

According to Art. 91 para. 5 CivPA, the Confederation shall cover approved additional costs for the construction and renovation of cultural property shelters for cantonal archives ('State Archives') and collections of national importance (as listed in the FOCP's Inventory of Cultural Property of National and Regional Importance) as well as for their equipment and furnishing. In accordance with Art. 86, para. 2, a lump-sum contribution of CHF 1,000 per square meter is paid to cover these approved additional costs. The cantonal authorities are responsible for building shelters to store cultural property of regional importance.

- What are the minimum requirements for cultural property shelters?

According to Art. 104 CivPO, cultural property shelters must provide basic protection against the effects of modern weapons, in particular against all effects of nuclear weapons and close impacts of conventional weapons. In addition, cultural property shelters must withstand natural disasters with a return period of up to 300 years without damage. Structural and organisational measures must also be taken to minimise damage caused by very rare events where the return period may be up to 1,000 years. In addition, the protective casing must be designed for a service life of at least 100 years.

- Can cultural property shelters be built above-ground?

Under no circumstances may cultural property shelters be built above ground. In order to fulfil their purpose and comply with the minimum requirements of Art. 104 CivPO, they must be built underground.

- What equipment and furnishings can be found in cultural property shelters?

Cultural property shelters include in particular stackable containers, racks, rolling shelves, sliding cabinets and wire walls for pictures. It is important that all furnishings provide mechanical protection that is suitable for the cultural property in question and that they are secured in a shock-proof manner. Materials and construction must provide the necessary physical and chemical stability over a service life of at least thirty years. Special vulnerabilities of the stored cultural property and specific local risks must also be taken into account. Equally important are the climatic conditions inside cultural property shelters. The construction of workplaces, plumbing and technical installations is not permitted in cultural property shelters.

- Can cultural property shelters be closed down or converted for other uses?

According to Art. 89 CivPO, the FOCP decides whether cultural property shelters should be closed down. It only authorises the closure of a cultural property shelter if a shelter is no longer needed or if it no longer satisfies technical requirements and cannot be renovated. The cantonal authority must submit an application to the FOCP proposing an alternative storage location that meets cultural property shelter specifications.

- Who is responsible for maintaining cultural property shelters?

According to Art. 65 CivPA, the owner of a cultural property shelter is responsible for its maintenance. According to Art. 81 CivPO, the cantons are responsible for periodic inspections of shelters, which must be carried out at least once every ten years.