Disasters and Emergencies in Switzerland 2025

What risks is Switzerland exposed to?

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Office for Civil Protection FOCP

This brochure summarises the key findings of the national risk analysis *Disasters and Emergencies in Switzerland (DES) 2025.* It shows the public how the risk situation in Switzerland has evolved, how the risk analysis was conducted, and how the findings are used.

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Disasters and Emergencies in Switzerland 2025

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Federal Office for Civil Protection FOCP
Bern, February 2026

Foreword

Events with devastating consequences are making headlines worldwide: historic wildfires in California, the ongoing war in Ukraine, the Blatten rockfall and the fire in Crans-Montana – all leaving behind scenes of destruction, devastation and despair.

Almost daily, reports emerge of disasters and emergencies that threaten the well-being and safety of people, animals and the environment.

Evidence shows that catastrophic events in Switzerland are becoming both more likely and more severe – driven by climate change, expanding urbanisation and digitalisation, and growing geopolitical polarisation. The risk landscape is constantly shifting: new hazards emerge, existing ones grow more complex, while others diminish as preventive measures take effect.

Regularly reviewing the hazards facing Switzerland is essential. This fourth edition of the national risk analysis Disasters and Emergencies in Switzerland 2025 provides organisations responsible for protecting our population and infrastructure with a current, comprehensive basis for their work.

Protecting the population is a shared responsibility. Switzerland's resilience to potential hazards can only be strengthened through close collaboration between the federal government, cantons, communes, partner organisations, industry and academia – and through active public engagement.

International cooperation is equally vital. Many hazards – pandemics, climate-driven extreme events and cyberattacks – ignore national borders. Exchanging information with international partners helps us identify risks early, learn from shared experience and coordinate responses to events.

Let us face this challenge together – for a resilient, well-prepared Switzerland. Understanding the risks is the first step.

Federal Councillor Martin Pfister
Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport

Findings

Pandemics represent the greatest risk to Switzerland.

Switzerland's top risks

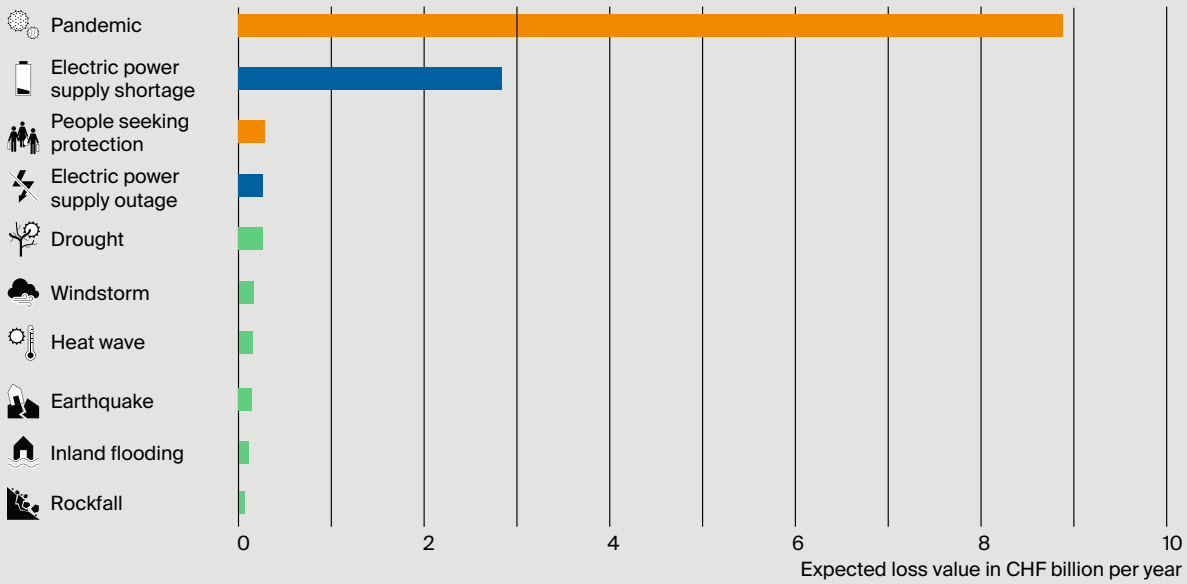
Pandemics and electric power supply shortages pose by far the greatest risks to Switzerland. Both can have a significant impact on businesses and the public, and both have a high likelihood of occurring.

The magnitude of a risk depends on two factors: the impact a hazard can cause and the likelihood or plausibility of its occurring. These combine to produce the "expected loss value".

High impact and high likelihood = high risk
Pandemics and electric power supply shortages are Switzerland's two highest risks because they meet both criteria: they can have a very serious impact – as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated – and they have a high likelihood of occurring compared to other scenarios. Many hazards meet only one criterion. Earthquakes, for example, have considerable destructive potential but they occur less frequently than other hazards.

Increasing interaction between hazards
Another key finding: events are increasingly interconnected and compound one another, changing the demands on civil protection. This fact must feature far more prominently in future preparedness planning. It demands a broader view – understanding which hazards matter, how they interact, and what effects need managing. In other words, what are the capabilities required of civil protection.

Top 10 risks

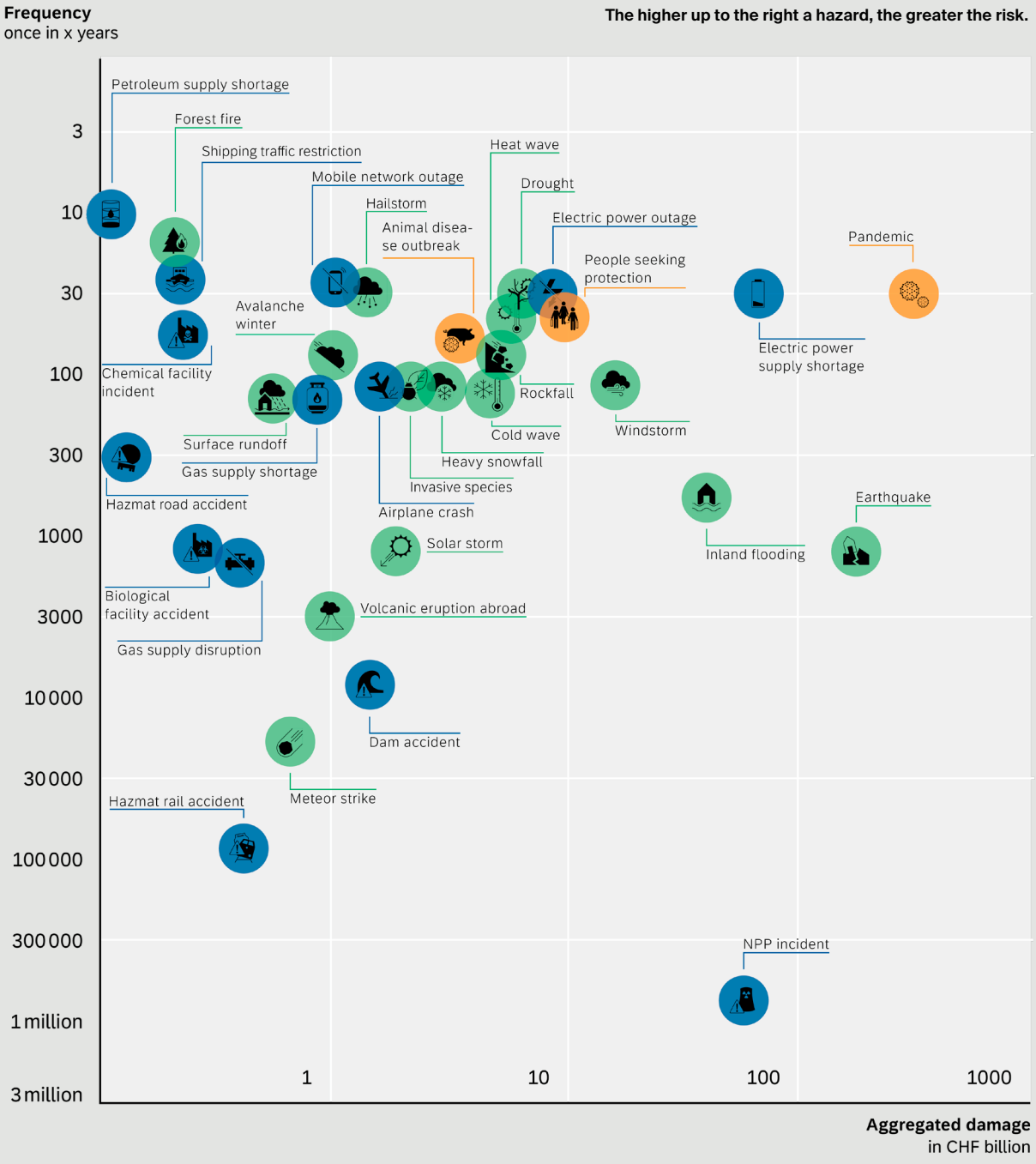


Risk overview

Risk matrix 1

Non-malicious hazards

In workshops, experts assessed the likelihood of non-malicious hazards and their expected impact, drawing on scientific findings, experience from past events and their own expertise.

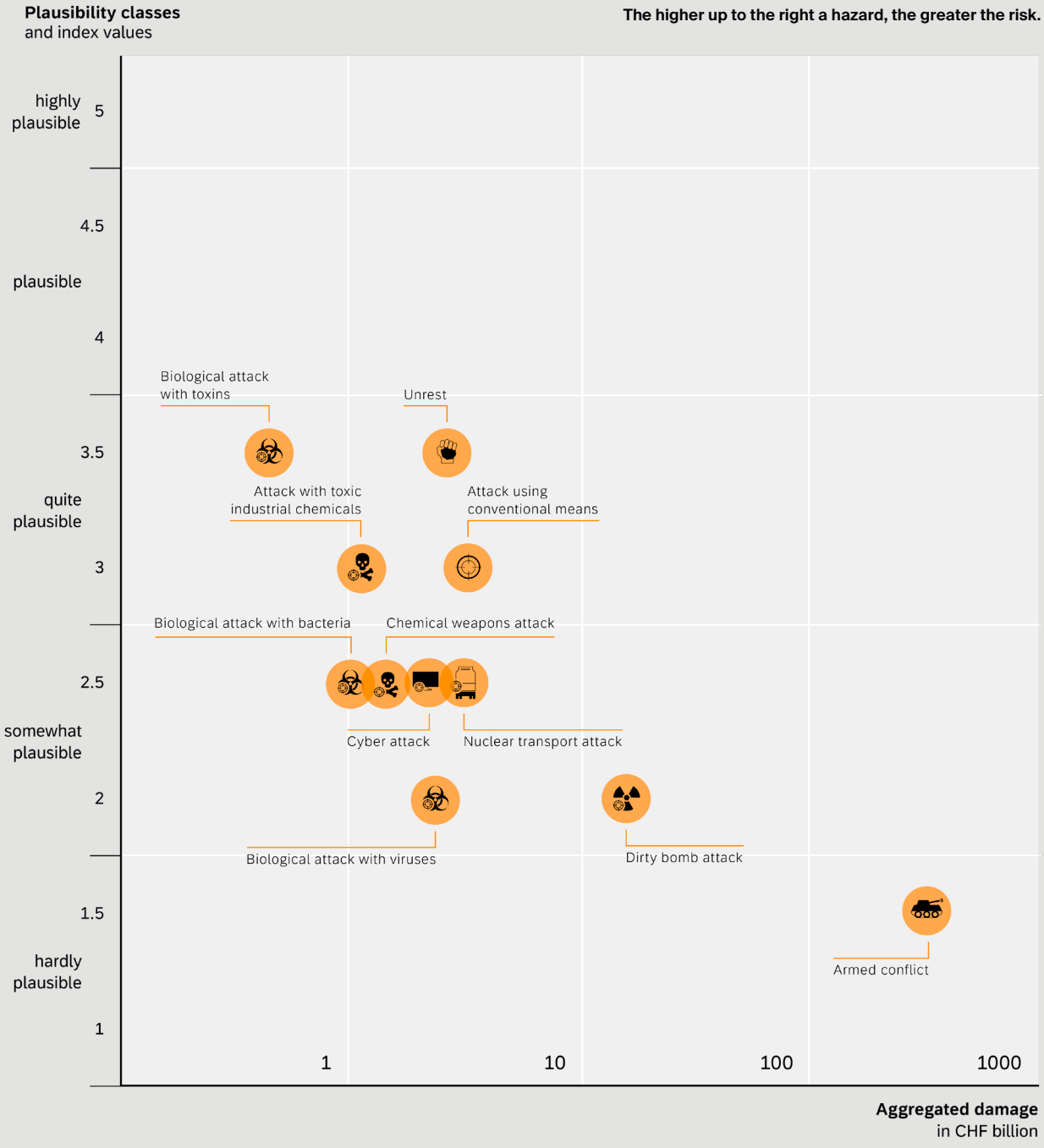


Further information on the risk matrices can be found in the National Risk Analysis Report at www.risk-ch.ch/matrix

Risk matrix 2

Malicious hazards

The likelihood of malicious hazards, i.e. those with wilful intent, is difficult to determine. Instead, experts assessed their plausibility: the degree of a perpetrator's intent and ability as well as the technical and organisational feasibility of such a scenario.



44 key hazards

The risk profile of the 44 hazards analysed is constantly evolving: this updated national risk analysis adds three new scenarios and removes three others. Measures taken to date have reduced the risk of an electric power supply shortage, but this risk remains high. Cyberattacks are becoming an increasingly significant challenge.

The 2025 analysis updates the list of Switzerland's most relevant hazards. Rockfall, heavy rain with surface runoff, and gas supply shortages have been added. Three previous hazard files – severe weather, data centre outages, and attacks on hazardous materials by rail – are no longer analysed. This reflects new findings and events, existing risk-mitigation measures, and technological developments.

Electric power supply shortage: a top risk despite preventive measures
Since the 2020 national risk analysis, numerous measures have been taken to better manage electric power supply shortages. New quota plans mean cyclical grid shutdowns or spontaneous power outages are no longer expected, significantly reducing the potential scale of damage. Nevertheless, electric power supply shortages remain a top risk because the likelihood remains high and the impact is widespread.

Cyberattacks: an increasing everyday risk
The cyberattack scenario describes systematic attacks on the public sector and businesses, particularly in the financial sector, carried out over several months. Individual attacks are classified as "highly plausible" and already occur regularly. However, experts assessed the combination of multiple cyberattacks across different sectors as being highly complex and challenging to carry out. Furthermore, there is currently no concrete indication of a likely perpetrator. The scenario has therefore been classified as "somewhat plausible".

Nature
Earthquakes, inland flooding and windstorms can cause the most severe natural hazard damage, primarily affecting buildings, farmland and ecosystems respectively.

Technology
Among technical hazards, electric power supply shortages, nuclear power plant incidents and electric power supply outages could cause the greatest potential damage, primarily in terms of economic performance and public services.

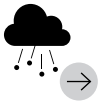
Society
The societal hazards with the greatest damage potential are armed conflicts and pandemics. Both can lead to large numbers of fatalities and casualties, as well as to severe economic losses

Details on the risk profile can be found in the National Risk Analysis Report at www.risk-ch.ch

Scenarios in brief

Nature

Hydrological and meteorological

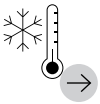


Hailstorm
Hailstorm causes damage across an area of 9,000km²

Heavy rain with surface runoff
Up to 100mm of rainfall per hour for 36 hours

Heavy snowfall
50–70cm of fresh snow in the Swiss Plateau over three days

Windstorm*
Several windstorms within a few days with speeds exceeding 140km/h in low-lying areas



Cold wave*
Minimum temperatures of -20 °C and maximum temperatures below -5 °C over four weeks

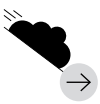
Heat wave*
Average daily temperatures of 27 to 29 °C, with maximum temperatures reaching 40 °C and tropical nights for two weeks

Drought*
Nationwide summer drought with 40 to 60% of usual rainfall

Forest fire
Several forest fires in one region, totalling 250 hectares of affected forest

Gravitational

Inland flooding
High water with a recurrence interval of 300 years in several streams and rivers

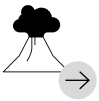


Avalanche winter
200 to 600cm of fresh snow over three weeks leading to numerous avalanches; hazard level 4 (high) to 5 (very high)

Rockfall
Unexpected break-up of five million cubic metres of rock at speeds of up to 150km/h

Seismic and volcanic

Earthquake
Magnitude 6.5 earthquake in an area with high infrastructure density

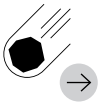


Volcanic eruption abroad
Volcanic eruption disrupts European air traffic for several days

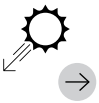
Harmful organisms

Propagation of invasive species
Invasive plant spreads and its toxic parts enter food and animal feed

Extraterrestrial



Meteor strike
Explosion of a meteorite over a populated area; shock wave affecting an area of 150 × 200km



Solar storm
Week-long solar storm disrupts the Earth's magnetic field

Explanation:

NEW — Hazard newly included in the 2025 national risk analysis due to its current relevance.

* Compared to the 2020 analysis: scenario heavily adapted

↗ higher risk

→ little to no change

↘ lower risk

Scenarios in brief

Technology

Passenger transport

Aircraft crash
Plane with 145 passengers crashes over a populated area

Transport of hazardous material

Rail accident involving hazardous material*
Propane gas escapes from a leaking tank wagon in a populated area and explodes

Road accident involving hazardous material*
Tanker lorry crashes at a motorway exit; large quantities of solvent leak out and ignite

Production, distribution and storage facilities

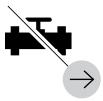
Incident in a biological facility
Numerous individuals infected with unintentionally released SARS viruses

Incident in a chemical facility
A 2-tonne reaction vessel ruptures and releases flammable gases, which explode

NPP incident
Radioactivity escapes for over two hours and contaminates 2,600km^2

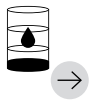
Dam accident*
Rockfall causes a reservoir to overflow, threatening several thousand lives in the valley

Critical infrastructure



Gas supply disruption
Gas supply to several communes restricted for three weeks in winter

Gas supply shortage
Quotas imposed due to a shortage lasting several weeks

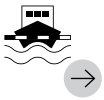


Petroleum supply shortage
Europe-wide supply bottlenecks result in a 30% import deficit for Switzerland over three months

Electric power supply outage
Several cantons experience a complete power outage for two to four days

Electric power supply shortage*
30% power shortage for 12 weeks during winter

Mobile network outage
Mobile phone service from a major provider down for three days

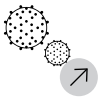


Restriction of shipping traffic
Swiss Rhine ports close for two weeks

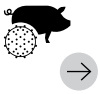
Scenarios in brief

Society

Human and animal diseases

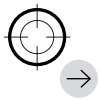


Pandemic*
25% of the population infected with an unknown pathogen



Animal disease outbreak
Nationwide spread of foot-and-mouth disease

Terrorism



Attack using conventional means
Several explosive devices detonate in a large city railway station

Dirty bomb attack
Radioactive bomb explodes in front of a city railway station

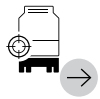
Biological attack with viruses
Smallpox virus released at a trade fair

Biological attack with bacteria*
Letter containing pathogenic anthrax spores found in a post office

Biological attack with toxins
200 congress participants poisoned with ricin

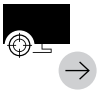
Chemical weapons attack
Sarin attack at an airport

Attack with toxic industrial chemicals
Hydrogen cyanide released in a supermarket



Attack on nuclear material in transport
Attack results in radioactive contamination of an area of 100km^2

Cyber



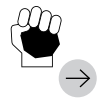
Cyberattack
Public and private sector attacked over several months

Armed conflict

Armed conflict*
Conflict with an authoritarian regime escalates, followed by cyberattacks, sabotage and ground-to-air attacks

Others

Mass influx of people seeking protection*
50,000–75,000 people seeking protection arrive in Switzerland over a period of three months



Unrest
Demonstration with a fatality triggers unrest in several cities over three weeks

Further information on hazards and scenarios can be found in the hazard files at www.risk-ch.ch/matrix

Procedure

Subject matter experts from academia, government and industry analysed Switzerland's most relevant risks.

A practice-based approach

The Federal Office for Civil Protection developed the national risk analysis in close collaboration with subject matter experts from academia, government and industry. A scenario-based approach and broad expert participation ensure the findings have wide support.

Two aspects distinguish the national risk analysis approach: the breadth of specialist input and the scenario-based assessment of hazards. The Swiss method draws on risk analyses from countries such as the United Kingdom and in turn serves as a model for others. This international exchange supports the development of hazard and risk analysis methodologies worldwide.

Expert involvement
The 2025 update drew on the expertise of 265 specialists. Their understanding of current developments and practical experience enable the creation of realistic hazard scenarios and assessment of their impact and their likelihood/plausibility. This strengthens both the quality and acceptance of the findings.

Scenario-based approach
To understand precisely how selected hazards affect individuals, the environment, the economy and society, they are assessed through scenarios that show how an event unfolds. In workshops, subject matter experts then evaluate scenarios of "major" intensity, i.e. events of national significance. By applying the same intensity level each time, the risks posed by different hazards can be compared.

Wide expert participation
265 experts involved

6% academia
17 representatives from universities, research centres and scientific forums

26% private sector
68 representatives from critical infrastructure (41), associations (13), insurance companies (11) and others (3)

68% public sector
180 representatives from cities/communes (26), cantons (45) and the federal government (109)

How the national risk analysis is built

Identification

Refine the method

Refine the risk analysis methodology based on new findings to capture the complex nature of damage as accurately as possible.

Output: Methodology report

1

Gain an overview

Create a comprehensive catalogue of all hazards relevant to Switzerland that could affect civil protection (with examples) .

Output: Hazard catalogue

2

Make a selection

Select hazards that could occur in Switzerland and have already caused disasters, emergencies or serious damage here or abroad.

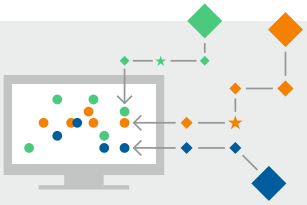
3

Analysis

Develop basic principles

Compile background information for the analysis, including trends that will influence future needs in civil protection.

4



Develop scenarios

For each hazard, develop or update a scenario of “major” intensity, incorporating the latest findings from research and past events.

Output: Hazard files

5

Evaluation

Assess risks

In workshops with experts, evaluate the potential impact on individuals, the environment, the economy and society, and assess the likelihood/plausibility. Consolidate findings in synthesis workshops.

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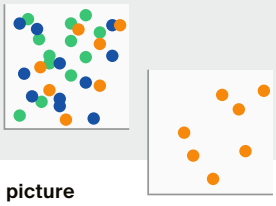

Create an overall picture

Summarise all findings and map the expected impact and likelihood/plausibility in risk matrices.

Output: Risk report; risk brochure “What risks is Switzerland exposed to?” and others

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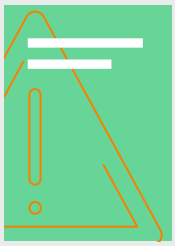
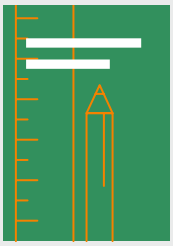
Outputs of the national risk analysis

All outputs of the national risk analysis are interconnected and serve a common purpose: providing a foundation for strategy development and preparedness planning to strengthen Switzerland's resilience.



Hazard catalogue
Lists hazards that could have significant effects on Switzerland

Hazard files
Describe each examined hazard in detail through a scenario



Methodology report
Explains the chosen analysis method in detail

Risk report
Presents the background and key findings for specialist audiences

Risk brochure
Summarises the key findings for the wider public and policymakers

Application

Since 2012, the FOCP's national risk analysis has provided businesses and all levels of government with a solid foundation for preparedness plans.

Building Switzerland's resilience

The outputs of the national risk analysis are widely used in practice. Public and private agencies increasingly draw on them – whether for developing exercise scenarios or using the hazard catalogue to prioritise risks within their own context.

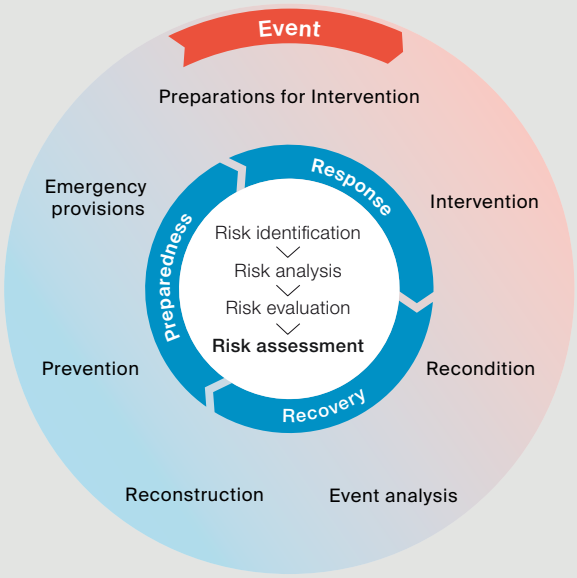
Many public and private organisations now base their planning on risk assessment, beginning by analysing which risks matter most to them. The national risk analysis outputs provide the framework needed to do this systematically – enabling them to assess risks within their area of responsibility and estimate their potential impact. This supports priority-setting and informed decisions on resource allocation.

Prevention, management and recovery
Many organisations take this further, adopting the integrated risk management approach the FOCP pursues based on their risk evaluation. This makes their operations more resilient – more resistant, more adaptable and quicker to recover when facing serious events, disasters and emergencies.

This integrated, holistic approach has three dimensions: prevention, response and recovery. Planning therefore encompasses not just preventive measures, but also response capabilities during and in the aftermath of events.

Ongoing preventive planning
Risk preparedness is a continuous process. Those responsible must regularly reassess: Which hazards are most relevant? Which risks require priority attention? Are the scenarios still current? Many organisations and specialist departments already operate this way, continually realigning their planning to strengthen preparedness for future events. Ultimately, how Switzerland addresses specific risks is a political decision.

Integrated Risk management



Benefits across all levels of government

Many cantons, cities and even small communes, as well as critical infrastructure operators, have developed tailored approaches based on the national risk analysis that align with their specific needs and resources.

The national risk analysis provides a comprehensive foundation for organisations to focus their resources on developing context-specific analyses, action plans and strategies rather than having to start from first principles.

A common foundation for cooperation
A shared planning foundation and methodology simplifies collaboration significantly, creating a better coordinated preparedness network across Switzerland.

Example 1: Federal government

National Disaster Medicine Network KATAMED

The scenarios from the national analysis proved invaluable when we realigned the Coordinated Medical Services to establish the National Network for Disaster Medicine KATAMED. Selected scenarios helped us identify the key parameters for each hazard: anticipated casualty or fatality numbers, timeframes, and conditions across different scenarios.

From this, we assessed the impact on healthcare during exceptional situations in Switzerland. We identified priority areas of action and developed concrete measures for a national action plan. We were also able to demonstrate clearly to cantons and KATAMED partners what challenges to anticipate for specific events and their implications.

“The scenarios from the national risk analysis enabled us to clearly illustrate the challenges facing disaster medicine in Switzerland.”
Dr Tenzin Lamdark,
Commissioner for the National Disaster Medicine Network KATAMED

Example 2: Company

Critical infrastructure protection at SBB

We use the hazard catalogue and hazard files for our contingency planning – to validate our planning assumptions, prioritise protective measures and develop exercise scenarios.

In the national risk analysis, I participated in the workshop on "Attack using conventional means". This proved valuable for our internal analysis, given the complexity of the threat. It was also helpful to hear other specialists' perspectives. These workshops help build valuable networks: it's crucial to already know the people you're going to need in a crisis.

"The scenarios show us clearly how best to structure cooperation when an event occurs."
Patrick Wittwer,
Head of Security, SBB

Example 3: Canton

Cantonal risk analysis: Graubünden

We used the full range of outputs from the national analysis to update our cantonal risk analysis – everything from the hazard catalogue to the methodology. Taking part in the national process also showed us the value of workshops and interdisciplinary teams, and we've since adopted this approach ourselves.

We want to take risk dialogue further. Support with the methodology and with increasing public engagement would be valuable. We've already made a start by tailoring our findings for the public.

"We update our risk analysis every five years. Ideally, we'd like to move to a more dynamic process."
Pascal Porchet,
Head of the Office for Military and Civil Defence, Graubünden

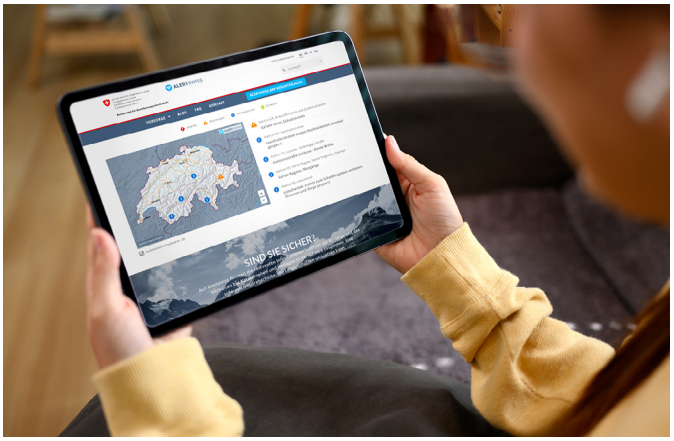
Example 4: Population

Individual preparedness

Disaster management extends beyond government and large organisations. Individual preparedness plays a vital role in Switzerland's overall resilience. The FOCP provides comprehensive information through the Alertswiss warning platform, including specific guidance on response measures for various emergencies in the "Know the dangers" section.

Advance preparation
Effective personal emergency preparedness requires advance planning. Once an event has occurred, opportunities for preparation have typically passed. The information on www.alert.swiss provides concise, accessible guidance on key preparedness measures that all residents should review.

Emergency supplies and planning
Recommended emergency supplies include non-perishable food for approximately one week, nine litres of water per person, a radio that operates independently of mains power and a portable gas cooker. Personal emergency plans should document contact numbers for family members and carers, designated meeting points and evacuation checklists. Alertswiss provides downloadable templates in the "Emergency plan" section.



Emergency meeting points
Nearly all cantons have established emergency meeting points where individuals can obtain information, make emergency calls or assemble for evacuations during disasters and emergencies.

The Alertswiss platform provides comprehensive resources for personal disaster preparedness, including early warning notifications through the mobile application, preparedness guidance and templates, and real-time information during incidents.

Recommended Emergency supplies

- At least 9 litres of water per person (enough for 3 to 4 days)
- Fruit and vegetable juices, soft drinks
- Tea, coffee
- Milk, milk alternatives
- Tinned vegetables, fruit and pulses
- Meat and fish or vegetarian alternatives
- Sauces (e.g. pesto, ketchup)
- Hard cheese
- Oil, spices
- Sweets (e.g. chocolate) and savoury snacks
- Cereal products (e.g. pasta)
- Soups (e.g. bouillon)
- Ready meals (e.g. rösti)
- Special food for infants
- Face masks, hand sanitiser
- Personal medication, painkillers
- Torch, spare batteries, power bank
- Gas or camping stove

Download the Alertswiss app

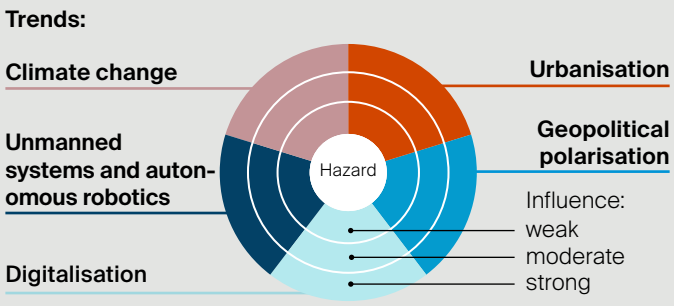
Available on the App Store

ANDROID APP ON Google play

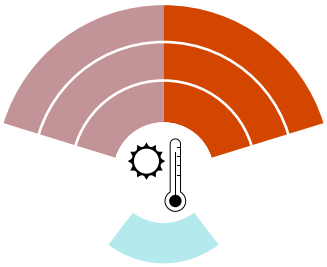
Risk trends

How risks are changing

Megatrends such as climate change and digitalisation mean that some hazards will occur more frequently or cause greater damage in the future. The graph illustrates how these trends increase risk for nine key hazards.



Nature

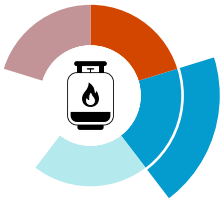


Heat wave

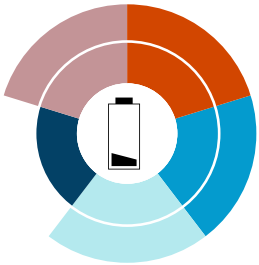
Heavy rain

Earthquake

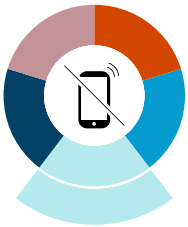
Technology



Gas supply shortage

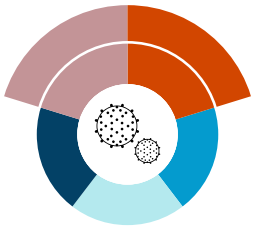


Electric power supply shortage



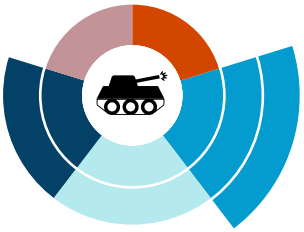
Mobile network outage

Society



Pandemic

Cyberattack



Armed conflict

Looking ahead

Risks never stand still. Keeping pace with how they change is essential.

Next steps

The 2025 update shows that complacency is not an option. But there is good news: the work is paying off. When action is coordinated, even the most serious risks can be substantially reduced.

The past few years have transformed the risk landscape. A fast-moving pandemic, the return of armed conflict to Europe, and floods striking with growing frequency have demonstrated how quickly circumstances can change.

The security environment will keep shifting, requiring constant monitoring of developments across society, technology and the environment as well as regular reassessment of their implications.

Maintaining momentum
This latest revision has brought real changes. Fresh evidence has prompted the addition of new hazards to the analysis. Elsewhere, preventive measures have already lowered the potential impact substantially.

Promoting safety through dialogue
The national risk analysis provides a common foundation for all those working on civil protection, making collaboration easier across all levels of government and with private sector partners. Just as importantly, it is changing how decision-makers think, embedding risk-based planning and integrated risk management into their approach. The analysis achieves this in two ways: it offers a basic methodology, and the process itself builds relationships. Workshops bring together dozens of experts, opening up new perspectives and deepening mutual understanding. The result is stronger disaster management across the country.

The FOCP's goal is to provide a foundation for everyone in the Swiss Security Network – authorities, businesses, researchers and the public. At its core, successful risk management means one thing: working together. Disasters cross all boundaries – so must our response.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

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