



Natural disaster risk management in mountain areas in Switzerland

Benjamin Lange, Federal office for the environment FOEN, Hazard Prevention Division, CH-3003 Bern, benjamin.lange@bafu.admin.ch

Natural hazards are frequent in Switzerland. Between 1972 and 2007, approximately 2/3 of all municipalities were affected. Since there is no absolute protection against natural hazards, natural disaster risk management is of fundamental importance and should also include preventive measures. Switzerland has developed a pro-active, risk based concept which follows the Integrated Risk Management approach (IRM). This approach takes into account all important natural processes and all kind of measures. Furthermore, all relevant agencies at state, canton and commune level are organizationally and financially involved. The IRM bases on three sections that complement each other: response, recovery and preparedness. This approach aims at achieving a level of safety that is ecologically and socially accepted and economically viable. The confederation is responsible for the strategic management while the cantons take over responsibility for the operational management and the practical implementation is done by municipalities. Preparedness according to the IRM also includes both protection forests and technical measures. The Confederation grants to the cantons on the basis of program agreements global payments for measures necessary for the fulfillment of the required protection. Within the program agreement "protection forest", approximately 50 million € per year are granted for the maintenance of forests and the necessary infrastructure, for forest protection and measures against excessive game browsing.