



## The rigid nature of public institutions in disaster management

Public institutions tend to be highly regulated by a number of acts detailing exactly what each employee is supposed to do in each situation. In addition to laws specifically governing their activity, public institutions often have to comply with additional requirements such as public transparency or freedom of information requests, as well as plans designed by other institutions. For example, in Romania, public institutions need to comply with Law 52/2003 on transparency in the public administration (requiring proposals for normative acts to be publicly debated), Law 544/2001 on the freedom of information and with the requests of, for example, the National Anti-Corruption Strategy which establishes goals to be met in order to prevent integrity incidents such as corruption or conflict of interests. In order to comply with all these demands, special departments are created, generating extra management challenges. The German Freedom of Information Act was approved in 2005 and amended in 2013. According to it, “everyone is entitled to official information from the authorities of the Federal Government”. Furthermore, the Act equates natural or legal persons that discharge duties under the public law with authorities and subject them to the same strictures. The act exempts from the scope of the duty to provide public information aspects related to international relations, military and other security-critical interests of the Federal Armed Forces, internal or external security interests, monitoring or supervisory tasks of the financial, competition and regulatory authorities and matters of external financial control (German Freedom of Information Act of 5 September 2005 - [http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_ifg/englisch\\_ifg.html#p0008](http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_ifg/englisch_ifg.html#p0008)). Given the different professional cultures within each of these departments, communication to the public might be encumbered by the lack of understanding between operational departments (e.g. the doctors and nurses working on an ambulance), the administrative departments (which might or might not understand the specifics of case classification when presented with a statistic) and communication departments (interested to present the best possible public image of the institution). For example, an independent assessment of the internal culture of a Fairfax fire department concluded that “There were also perceptions that conflict exists between uniformed staff and volunteers, between uniformed and civilian staff, and between those with a traditional fire suppression mindset and those in the EMS/paramedic field. The need for enhanced cultural competencies training and awareness was also noted” (County of Fairfax, 2017). Moreover, in addition to having to obey several laws, public institutions must be seen to uphold the law. Any small mistake by these institutions will be severely criticized by the media, leading to a strong incentive to hide any breach of the law. This could be seen in the Nordic example presented above, where the failure of the foreign ministers translated higher up on the hierarchic chain.

Note: See source document for full reference.

### Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Power relations](#), [Worldviews](#)

Disaster Phases: [Prevention](#), [Preparedness](#), [Response](#), [Recovery](#), [All disaster phases](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Law enforcement agencies](#), [National civil protection body](#), [Government](#), [NGOs](#), [Military](#), [Local](#)



[authorities](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

## Source

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