



Fact Sheet

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The federal authorities' natural hazards portal

As mandated by the Federal Council, the federal agencies with responsibility for natural hazards are improving the information provided to the population about natural hazards. The new natural hazards web portal (www.natural-hazards.ch) provides an overview of current hazard situations and warnings in relation to rain, snow, wind, storms, heat waves, frost, icy roads, floods and mass wasting, forest fires, avalanches and earthquakes.

Background

The agencies responsible for the natural hazards portal are the Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology, the Federal Office for the Environment, the Swiss Seismological Service and the WSL Institute for Snow and Landscape Research SLF. The natural hazard agencies developed the portal over a two-and-a-half year period and in accordance with federal project guidelines (Hermes). The external costs of the portal total CHF 1.2 million. The natural hazards portal is a milestone in the implementation of the OWARNA report, in which the Federal Council drew lessons from the flood events of 2005. Together with the cantons and communes, various measures have been introduced to improve the warning and alerting processes for natural hazards. They aim to improve the protection afforded to the population during major natural hazard events.

Central information source

What is new about the portal is that it provides a 'one-stop shop' for information about all types of natural hazards in German, French, Italian and English (basic information). The overview map on the home page enables users to obtain information about the current natural hazard situation in Switzerland at a glance. The participating natural hazard agencies provide information on the hazard and warning situation to the portal around the clock. This is linked with information about possible impacts and general recommendations for behaviour. As was the case hitherto, the cantonal and municipal agencies are responsible for

providing concrete instructions regarding behaviour in the case of a hazard event. More detailed information on the individual natural hazards can still be obtained on the websites of the participating agencies.

A mobile version of the website guarantees easy access for people on the move and, thanks to the barrier-free design of the portal, the information can be retrieved without problem by the entire population. Due to its high availability of 99.5 per cent per year and its capacity to process over one million page requests in just a few minutes, the natural hazards portal is designed to cope with a high number of user requests.

Added value provided by the portal

Round-the-clock information about the current natural hazard situation in Switzerland at a click

Easily accessible detailed information on all locations in Switzerland

Background information on the possible impacts

The screenshot shows the 'Naturgefahrenportal > Current natural hazards' website. At the top left is a navigation menu listing hazards: Avalanches, Earthquakes, Floods, Forest fire, Frost, Heat wave, Rain, Slippery roads, Snow, Thunderstorms, and Wind. The main content area features a 'Warning issued by the Swiss government' for 'Hochwasser' (High water) with a detailed text box and links for 'Further information Flood' and 'Recommended behaviour Flood'. Below this is a section for 'Current natural hazards situation in Switzerland' with a search bar and a map of Switzerland color-coded by danger level. A 'Danger levels' legend on the right shows five levels: 5 (Very high danger, red), 4 (High danger, orange), 3 (Considerable danger, yellow), 2 (Moderate danger, light green), 1 (No or minor danger, dark green), and No evaluation (grey). Below the map is a 'Current warnings issued for Switzerland (19 Messages)' section with a 'show' link. At the bottom is a grid of 12 small maps for different hazards: Avalanches, Earthquakes, Flood, Forest fire, Frost, Heat waves, Rain, Slippery roads, Snow, Thunderstorms, and Wind. Annotations with arrows point to these features: 'Round-the-clock information...' points to the navigation menu; 'Easily accessible detailed information...' points to the warning text box; 'Background information on the possible impacts' points to the 'Recommended behaviour' link; 'All current hazard reports at a glance' points to the overview map; 'What should be done in the case of a hazard event? Collected recommendations for behaviour' points to the 'General recommendations for action' link; and 'Particularly interested in a specific natural hazard? The process maps provide an overview.' points to the grid of hazard-specific maps.

The federal agencies with responsibility for natural hazards

Federal Office of Meteorology and Climatology, www.meteoswiss.ch

As Switzerland's national weather and climate service, MeteoSwiss is responsible for the basic provision of weather and climate information in Switzerland and makes a crucial contribution to society, politics, business and science. Information about the weather is recorded using soil measurement stations, weather radars, satellites, radiosondes and other instruments. MeteoSwiss monitors meteorological events, compiles weather forecasts, and warns the authorities and population about storms. MeteoSwiss also analyses data that enable conclusions to be drawn about climate change and extreme weather events and provide a basis for climate change scenarios in Switzerland.

Federal Office for the Environment, www.foen.admin.ch

It is the job of the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources like soil, water, air and forest. The FOEN is responsible for protection against natural hazards; it shields the environment and human health from excessive environmental pressures, ensures the conservation of biodiversity, and is responsible for Switzerland's international environmental policy. In the area of natural hazards, the FOEN is responsible for hydrological forecasts and for warning the population about floods, associated mass wasting and the risk of forest fires.

Swiss Seismological Service, www.seismo.ethz.ch

The Swiss Seismological Service (SED) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ) is the federal agency for earthquakes. The SED's mission is to monitor earthquake activity in Switzerland and neighbouring countries and to assess the earthquake risk in Switzerland. In the event of an earthquake, the SED informs the public, authorities and media about the location, intensity and possible impacts of the event.

WSL Institute for Snow and Landscape Research SLF, www.slf.ch

The SLF is an interdisciplinary research and service centre for snow, avalanches, permafrost and mountain ecosystems. It is part of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research WSL and is, therefore, also part of the ETH domain. The SLF assesses the avalanche risk in the Swiss Alps and issues a daily avalanche bulletin in winter. The Operational Snow Hydrological Service (OSHD) at the SLF analyses the distribution of snow water resources and supports the FOEN in providing flood information.

In cooperation with the **Federal Office for Civil Protection (FOCP), www.babs.admin.ch**