

**“THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC PREPAREDNESS IN THE
HISTORY OF THE CIVIL DEFENSE SYSTEM”**

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Annotation: This article analyzes the formation and development of the civil defense system in the Republic of Uzbekistan, focusing on its organizational, legal, and educational foundations for preparing the population for emergencies. It examines the introduction of the subject “Fundamentals of Life Safety” within the National Program for Personnel Training, the evolution of civil defense education programs, and their practical outcomes. The role of neighborhood assemblies (mahalla) and the Civil Defense Institute in enhancing public readiness is highlighted. The study also discusses current challenges, such as insufficient methodological support, lack of continuity in personnel training, and limited use of innovative approaches. Finally, the paper proposes practical measures for modernizing the system, implementing digital education technologies, and fostering a culture of safety.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, civil defense, emergency, safety culture, Fundamentals of Life Safety, education system, personnel training, mahalla system, innovative approach.

In today’s era of globalization and technological progress, human life is closely interconnected with complex systems, industrial processes, and environmental factors. At the same time, the growing number of natural disasters, technological accidents, ecological crises, and social tensions demands a fundamental reassessment of society’s security system. Under these conditions, ensuring the stable operation and modern development of the civil defense system is recognized as one of the key priorities of national security policy. Civil defense is a state system of measures aimed at protecting the population, territories, and the material and cultural assets of the Republic of Uzbekistan from dangers arising during or as a result of military actions [1]. One of the key factors in the civil defense system is the level of preparedness of personnel—especially those serving in the field of civil protection—to act effectively in emergency situations. In the modern era, the use of innovative approaches, digital technologies,



and advanced educational resources has become increasingly important for the effective functioning of this system. However, several challenges remain: limited practical orientation of training, insufficient psychological readiness, outdated methodological resources, and inadequate application of innovative teaching methods in training and retraining personnel. These issues highlight the need for a new scientific approach to ensuring preparedness within the civil defense system. Priorities include modernization, adaptation of advanced international practices to local conditions, development of psychological resilience, and strengthening of safety culture.

Training civil defense personnel with theoretical and practical knowledge about the causes, prevention, and mitigation of emergencies—and continuously improving their professional competencies—is one of the key conditions for ensuring safety. In Uzbekistan, personnel training in civil defense is organized systematically and continuously through three main stages: initial preparation of students, professional development of employed staff, and training of unemployed citizens for emergency readiness.

A distinctive feature of this training is its focus on studying both general and regional characteristics of emergencies. Along with providing broad knowledge about common hazards—such as earthquakes, floods, fires, and industrial accidents—the system also includes specialized professional training tailored to regional risk factors. For example, in disaster-prone regions, emphasis is placed on strengthening skills in managing earthquake and flood aftermaths, while employees at industrial facilities with technological risks receive intensive practical training in the use of technical equipment, hazard neutralization, and population evacuation procedures.

Therefore, analyzing the age structure, knowledge level, and practical preparedness of civil defense personnel, as well as organizing training processes based on modern approaches, are among the main scientific and practical tasks of the field. Enhancing specialists' practical skills through advanced pedagogical technologies, simulation exercises, and virtual learning programs is defined as a strategic direction for system improvement.

The National Program for Personnel Training, adopted in Uzbekistan in 1997, marked a crucial stage in reforming all levels of the national education system. Based on this program, a new 9+3 structure was introduced, providing education through academic lyceums and vocational colleges. Within this process, the organizational and



methodological aspects of teaching in the fields of civil defense and emergency preparedness became increasingly important.

In 1998, by a resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers, the subject “Fundamentals of Life Safety” was introduced into the general secondary education curriculum. Its main goal was to foster a culture of safety among students and teach them how to act correctly in emergency situations. Later, “Civil Defense” training sessions were added to the curriculum, focusing on developing skills in identifying, assessing, and mitigating hazardous situations.

Starting from 1998, the subject “Civil Defense and Fundamentals of Life Safety” was also implemented in academic lyceums and vocational colleges as part of the youth pre-conscription training program. Through this subject, students acquired practical knowledge and skills in self-protection during emergencies, assisting victims, and preventing dangerous situations [2].

As a result, the legal, organizational, and methodological foundations for personnel training in the field of civil defense were established, creating a solid basis for developing a culture of safety in the sector.

The introduction of the “Fundamentals of Life Safety” subject in Uzbekistan became a significant step in preparing the younger generation for emergency situations within the civil defense system. To support this goal, a teaching manual titled “Fundamentals of Life Safety” was published for secondary school teachers. The manual included the mandatory minimum content of the “Human Safety Fundamentals” curriculum and presented topics in a sequence adapted to students’ age characteristics.

However, since only 1,000 copies of the manual were published in 2004, more than 9,700 school teachers across the country lacked access to the necessary methodological resources. Consequently, the teaching process of the “Fundamentals of Life Safety” subject faced numerous organizational and methodological challenges. In most cases, classes were conducted by group supervisors who had limited knowledge and training in this field [3].

In addition, the absence of specialized courses on civil defense and life safety within the teacher training system, along with a shortage of educational materials, negatively affected the quality of personnel preparation in this field. Therefore, strengthening the methodological base, improving teacher qualifications, and providing



modern educational resources remain urgent issues in the civil defense education system.

On December 14, 2006, a joint order of the Ministry of Emergency Situations and the Ministry of Public Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan launched pilot testing of the “Fundamentals of Life Safety” curriculum to enhance the quality of education and improve the learning process in the field of civil defense. Within this pilot project, 15 preschools and 15 general education schools from various regions of the country were selected as experimental sites. This initiative represented an important step toward creating an effective model of continuous education in the civil defense system, aimed at developing students’ preparedness for emergencies, fostering a culture of safety, and strengthening civic responsibility [4].

The results of the experiment demonstrated the need for the full integration of the “Fundamentals of Life Safety” subject into the educational process, as well as the improvement of its content and teaching methods. This created a scientific foundation for modernizing education within the civil defense system and expanding the use of practice-oriented teaching approaches.

To ensure the effective implementation and systematic coordination of the pilot program, a working group consisting of 18 qualified specialists was established. The group included representatives from the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Public Education, and relevant research institutions. They were tasked with evaluating the content, methodology, and outcomes of the pilot project [5].

According to the order of the Minister of Public Education dated July 27, 2018, starting from the 2018–2019 academic year, the “Fundamentals of Life Safety” course began to be taught in grades I–IV of general education schools within the subjects “The World Around Us,” “Ethics,” and “Physical Education,” while in grades V–XI it was integrated with natural sciences and the subjects “Sense of Homeland” and “National Idea and the Basics of Spirituality.”

This change was mainly driven by the extension of general secondary education to 11 years and the restructuring of school curricula. Additionally, the previously taught subject “Pre-Conscription Military Training” was reintroduced in the secondary specialized education system, incorporating topics on civil defense and basic medical service.



However, the number of study hours was reduced from 140 to 72, significantly decreasing the time allocated for “Civil Defense” and “Medical Service” sections, which are essential for developing students’ practical skills in acting correctly during emergencies and protecting themselves and others.

Following the study of the 2011 Rishton district earthquake, the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan adopted Resolution No. 208 on July 19, 2011, “On the approval of a comprehensive program for training the population to act during natural and man-made emergencies caused by earthquakes.” The resolution identified the development of public emergency response skills as one of the key priorities of the civil defense system.

To implement this decision, a 40-hour course titled “Safety of Life Activity” was introduced in secondary specialized and vocational education institutions. Developed in cooperation with UNICEF, the course program and manual were aligned with the “Pre-Conscription Military Training” curriculum and put into practice in the 2013–2014 academic year. As a result, systematic instruction on civil defense, safety culture, and emergency preparedness was established within the educational process.

In higher education, a 50-hour course “Civil Defense and Emergency Situations” is taught during the 7th–8th semesters to deepen students’ knowledge in this field. The program was modernized in accordance with contemporary educational standards, ensuring interdisciplinary integration and focusing on the development of practical skills in emergency preparedness, safety culture, and population protection.

Community institutions also play a crucial role in enhancing public readiness for emergencies. Historically, mahalla assemblies have served as social structures uniting all segments of society and promoting safety awareness. Since 2002, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, together with the Republican Mahalla Charity Foundation, has been conducting educational and organizational activities to train unemployed citizens for emergency preparedness [6].

“Civil Defense Corners” were established in mahallas and equipped with informational posters and educational materials. The Ministry regularly organized roundtable discussions and awareness campaigns, providing residents with practical guidance on responding to natural and man-made emergencies. As a result, more than 21,000 citizens participated in specialized training courses in 2002, and over 24,000 in 2003[7]. In addition, training and advisory centers on emergency preparedness were established within mahalla assemblies. For example, in 2003, such centers began



operating in 204 out of 522 mahalla and village citizens' assemblies in the Kashkadarya region [8]. Through these centers, lectures, discussions, and training sessions were conducted to develop safe behavior skills among residents. Such awareness and educational activities were consistently carried out across other regions of the country as well, contributing to the stable functioning of the civil defense system.

In recent years, special attention has been given to establishing civil defense structures within mahallas nationwide. This initiative plays an important role in enhancing public safety culture and improving preparedness for self-protection and mutual aid during emergencies.

According to the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 650 of August 21, 2017, "On additional measures to improve public preparedness for action in emergencies," the creation of Mahalla Civil Defense Units was approved. This initiative, based on international best practices, aims to increase the effectiveness of assistance to the population during the initial stages of emergencies. In practice, the first three hours after a natural or man-made disaster are crucial for saving lives. Therefore, the civil defense units established within mahallas serve as the primary link for providing first aid, ensuring rapid response, and facilitating effective information exchange among residents [9].

According to the resolution, the organizational structure and subordination system of the Mahalla Civil Defense Units were defined, and a total of 66.798 billion soums was allocated for their material and technical support for the period of 2018–2021[10]. These measures are recognized as an important step toward strengthening citizens' active participation in ensuring community safety and creating a foundation for the sustainable development of civil society.

The research revealed that efforts to prepare mahallas for emergency situations have not yet reached full effectiveness. The main reason is that, for many years, lower-level civil defense structures were not fully established across all districts and cities of the republic. This situation has reduced the overall level of public preparedness for emergencies at the local level.

A major turning point occurred in 2019, when the State Fire Safety Department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs was transferred to the Ministry of Emergency Situations. As a result, the Ministry gained subordinate structures in all districts and cities of the country, forming a unified territorial management mechanism within the civil defense system.



One of the current pressing issues is ensuring that these structures are staffed with highly qualified specialists capable of responding effectively to all types of emergencies. To meet this need, an important organizational reform was introduced — the Fire Safety Institute under the Ministry of Internal Affairs was transferred to the Ministry of Emergency Situations and transformed into the Academy of the Ministry of Emergency Situations. This decision plays a strategic role in the professional development of the civil defense system, strengthening personnel capacity based on modern standards, and ensuring rapid and coordinated response during emergencies.

The Civil Defense Institute occupies a vital scientific and practical position in improving public preparedness for emergencies. Since its establishment in 1996, the institute has served as a national center for training qualified specialists, developing methodological support, and promoting a culture of safety. Between 1996 and 2016, its academic staff produced over 173 educational and methodological manuals and textbooks, as well as 30 sets of visual training posters for various social groups of the population [11]. Among these were special methodological manuals developed on a pilot basis for students of grades 5–6 and 7 in general education schools. These materials played an important role in shaping the younger generation’s practical skills for appropriate actions during emergency situations [12].

This educational institution, the only one of its kind in Central Asia, began its activity on May 20, 1943, in Tashkent as the “Training Courses for Leaders and Command Staff of the Local Air Defense System.” Initially functioning as military defense courses, it was later transformed into a civil defense-oriented structure after World War II. In 1969, by government resolution, it was reorganized as the “Republican Civil Defense Courses,” and in 1992, it received the status of the “Republican Center for Training Senior Officials in Civil Defense and Emergency Situations.”

After Uzbekistan gained independence, personnel training in the field of civil defense and the promotion of safety culture became one of the key priorities of state policy. Accordingly, by the Cabinet of Ministers’ resolution dated April 11, 1996, the center was reorganized into the Civil Defense Institute of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Today, the Civil Defense Institute functions not only as an educational institution but also as a scientific and methodological center in the field of civil protection. It contributes to strengthening the country’s safety system through research on modern



risks, the development of new emergency response methods, and the adaptation of international best practices to national conditions.

As a national scientific and practical center, the Civil Defense Institute plays a crucial role in improving public preparedness for emergencies. Its main tasks include enhancing the qualifications of leaders and officials responsible for civil defense at state and economic facilities, as well as improving their practical readiness for emergency situations.

According to statistical data, more than 9,000 specialists received advanced training at the institute between 1997 and 2002, and by January 2016, the total number had reached 30,300 [13]. These figures clearly demonstrate the institute's strategic role in strengthening the national civil safety system and enhancing personnel capacity.

In addition, to train a wide range of the population within the Ministry of Emergency Situations system, the Civil Defense Institute conducted 832 mobile training sessions, covering more than 37,000 citizens. These sessions were organized in cooperation with various national ministries, agencies, and enterprises, involving a total of 11,136 employees [14].

Local training centers also play an important role in enhancing the population's practical preparedness in the field of civil defense. For example, in 2002, a total of 41,587 citizens received retraining at the Civil Defense Institute and regional training centers; in 2003, this number reached 61,160, and in 2004, more than 39,000 people were retrained. Among them were officials from the Tashkent city administration, heads of departments, and managers of categorized enterprises. Specifically, 28 senior officials, along with 988 civil defense commanders and specialists, received training under 40- and 80-hour specialized programs [15].

In 2006, more than 6,000 people participated in short, 7-hour training programs conducted by the Leadership Training Center under the Tashkent City Department of Emergency Situations. Overall, between 1996 and 2006, over 700,000 residents of the capital received training in the field of civil defense.

These results demonstrate that the Civil Defense Institute has become an invaluable scientific and practical institution for fostering safety culture and improving citizens' knowledge and skills in emergency response. Today, the institute remains an integral part of the civil defense system and a key component of the national security strategy.



In Uzbekistan, the civil defense system constitutes an essential element of national security policy. Its effectiveness depends directly on the population's level of preparedness for emergencies, the stable functioning of organizational structures, and the professional competence of specialists in the field. Research findings indicate that modernization of the system, development through scientific approaches, and the promotion of public safety culture remain urgent social priorities.

In conclusion, in recent years, significant organizational, legal, and scientific-practical reforms have been carried out to improve the civil defense system. The introduction of the "Fundamentals of Life Safety" course at all levels of education within the National Program for Personnel Training, the systematization of civil defense educational programs, and the establishment of Mahalla Civil Defense Units have laid the foundation for a continuous education and practical training system in this field. Moreover, the activities of the Civil Defense Institute and the Academy of the Ministry of Emergency Situations play a vital role in training qualified specialists, developing methodological and scientific bases, and adapting international best practices to national conditions. The institute's training courses, mobile sessions, and practical seminars have proven to be effective mechanisms for strengthening public safety awareness and improving the qualifications of leaders and specialists. However, certain shortcomings remain within the existing system. These include outdated methodological resources, reduced classroom hours, limited local training infrastructure, and insufficient professional qualifications among instructors—all of which slow down the sector's development.

Therefore, further improvement of the civil defense system should focus on the following key areas:

Introducing innovative approaches: expanding the use of digital learning platforms, simulation exercises, and virtual training laboratories;

Enhancing human capacity: implementing regular professional development programs for teachers, managers, and specialists;

Strengthening the mahalla system: improving the material and technical base of Mahalla Civil Defense Units and expanding their training activities;

Advancing scientific research: intensifying studies on modern risks and developing preventive strategies.

In summary, applying a scientifically grounded and comprehensive approach to civil defense development—along with adapting international experience to national

realities, improving safety culture, and advancing personnel training—will serve as a decisive factor in ensuring Uzbekistan’s sustainable development and national security.

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