

CIVIL DEFENSE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: STATUS, PROBLEMS, WAYS OF IMPROVEMENT

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Abstract. The article explores the current state of the civil defense system in educational institutions of Ukraine, considering contemporary challenges related to military threats, hybrid forms of influence, and emergencies. The main problems and risks affecting the effectiveness of defense for participants in the educational process are identified. The study substantiates the ways to improve organizational, legal, and practical mechanisms for ensuring safety in the educational environment. The importance of integrating civil defense into the overall functioning strategy of educational institutions under crisis conditions is emphasized.

Keywords: civil defense, education safety, emergencies, shelters, organizational mechanisms, legal framework, hybrid war, school safety.

Анотація. У статті досліджено сучасний стан системи цивільного захисту у закладах освіти України з урахуванням актуальних викликів, пов'язаних з воєнними загрозами, гібридними формами впливу та надзвичайними ситуаціями. Визначено основні проблеми й ризики, що впливають на ефективність захисту учасників освітнього процесу. Обґрунтовано шляхи удосконалення організаційних, нормативно-правових та практичних механізмів забезпечення безпеки в освітньому середовищі. Акцент зроблено на необхідності інтеграції системи цивільного захисту в загальну стратегію функціонування закладів освіти в умовах кризових подій.

Ключові слова: цивільний захист, безпека освіти, надзвичайні ситуації, укриття, організаційні механізми, нормативно-правова база, гібридна війна, шкільна безпека.

Introduction. In modern conditions, when Ukraine is faced with numerous threats of both natural and man-made, social and military nature, the effective functioning of the civil defense system is of particular importance. Educational institutions, as the environment of daily stay of children, students, teaching and service personnel, are among the most vulnerable objects in cases of emergency situations. Therefore, the organization of an adequate level of civil defense in educational institutions is not only a requirement of the legislation, but also a matter of real preservation of the lives and health of a large number of people.

Recent years, and especially since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, have demonstrated the need for a radical revision of approaches to security in the educational environment. Hundreds of schools and kindergartens have been destroyed, thousands of students have been put at risk, and the educational process has been forcibly transferred to a distance or mixed format. In such conditions, the issue of preparedness of educational institutions for emergencies has become critically

important. The relevance of the study is due to the need to identify key problems in the civil defense system of educational institutions, assess the state of their preparedness for emergency events, and find effective ways to improve this area, taking into account modern challenges and practices [1].

Analysis of the state of the issue. In the conditions of full-scale aggression against Ukraine, constant threats from terrorist acts, artillery and rocket attacks, the issue of ensuring civil defense in educational institutions has acquired particular importance. Educational institutions are not only a place of study, but also an environment where hundreds of thousands of children, adolescents, students and employees are daily [2]. Their life and safety are a priority of state policy in the field of education, security and civil defense.

Unfortunately, in the conditions of war, a number of significant problems have been identified: some educational institutions do not have properly equipped shelters, there is no systematic training of staff and students for actions in emergency situations, modern digital means of notification have not been sufficiently implemented, and in some cases there is no coordination between school administrations and local authorities. Lack of funding, shortage of personnel in the security sector, as well as the psychological unpreparedness of participants in the educational process to act in conditions of real threat – all this creates serious risks.

At the same time, educational institutions have a powerful potential for forming a culture of security in society. It is in schools and universities that the foundations of a conscious and responsible attitude to threats are laid, self-defense skills and algorithms of behavior in critical situations are formed. Increasing the effectiveness of the civil defense system in education not only reduces the level of risk for participants in the educational process, but also contributes to strengthening national resilience in general.

Improving civil defense in educational institutions is an urgent task that requires a comprehensive approach: from updating the regulatory framework and technical re-equipment to the active involvement of teachers, parents and local communities in joint work in the field of security. This will allow creating a safe and stable educational environment that is able to effectively respond to modern challenges and threats.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the current state of the civil defense system in educational institutions of Ukraine, identify key problems and risks in its functioning, and justify ways to improve organizational, regulatory, and practical mechanisms for ensuring the safety of participants in the educational process in emergency situations, in particular, taking into account military threats and hybrid challenges.

Methods, materials and research results. The civil defense system in educational institutions of Ukraine faces a number of serious problems and risks that significantly reduce its effectiveness in modern conditions. One of the most acute problems is the inadequate state of the material and technical base. A significant part of schools and kindergartens do not have equipped shelters or storage facilities that would meet modern requirements. Basements are mainly used, which do not have

proper ventilation, lighting, sanitary facilities or drinking water supplies. This makes it impossible for people to stay there for a long time during an emergency.

Another significant problem is the insufficient training of teaching staff and employees of educational institutions for actions in critical situations. Often, teachers do not undergo professional training in civil defense, do not have basic first aid skills or evacuation algorithms. Training and education provided for in the plans are in many cases carried out formally or are ignored altogether. The lack of realistic training scenarios leads to the fact that children and adults do not know how to behave properly in extreme conditions. Weak coordination between the administrations of educational institutions, local authorities and units of the State Emergency Service also remains a problem. This reduces the ability to respond promptly to emergencies, and notification and evacuation are not always provided in a timely manner. The situation is also complicated by a chronic shortage of funding for civil defense measures. Many schools do not even have basic safety equipment – first-aid kits, emergency lighting, loudspeakers for notification, and the purchase of equipment for shelters often falls on the shoulders of parents.

A separate problem is the low level of awareness of students and parents regarding civil defense issues. Children do not always know how to act in the event of an air raid, fire or man-made accident. Parents sometimes perceive safety measures as an unnecessary burden or do not understand their critical importance.

Let us consider the main risks that may be encountered [3]:

1. Emergence of threats to the life and health of participants in the educational process in the event of an emergency (especially during an air raid or shelling), students and teachers may find themselves in danger due to the inability to get to shelter in time or failure to follow a clear algorithm of actions.

2. Psycho-emotional stress and stress, exacerbated by constant anxiety, lack of clear information and unpreparedness to act in a crisis situation, cause panic, stress disorders and a decrease in the level of trust in the institution's administration.

3. A decrease in the quality of education occurs due to the unwillingness of students to focus on learning during emergencies, which leads to interruptions in learning, the transition to a low-quality distance format or the complete closure of institutions.

4. Loss of material resources and damage to property can lead to significant losses of educational equipment, documentation, library funds as a result of attacks or fires, etc.

5. Civil defense is often not a priority in the budget planning of educational institutions, which leads to the lack of high-quality warning systems, emergency lighting, modern first-aid kits, and backup communications.

Improving organizational, regulatory, and practical mechanisms for ensuring the safety of participants in the educational process in emergency situations, especially given the realities of military threats and hybrid challenges, is an extremely urgent task of state policy in the field of education and national security [4]. The modern context in which educational institutions of Ukraine operate requires a review of approaches to

civil defense – not only as a formal component of the management system, but also as a vital element of the daily activities of the educational environment.

Organizational improvement involves the creation or updating of local emergency response plans in each educational institution, taking into account the specifics of the region, potential threats, and real scenarios. It is advisable to create permanent internal coordination groups on security issues, which would include not only the administration, but also teachers, representatives of the parent community, and, if possible, representatives of local authorities or the State Emergency Service. It is important that civil defense measures are not considered as one-time actions or routine training, but are integrated into the overall management system of the institution. Particular attention should be paid to establishing communication with local authorities, rescue services, police, medical institutions – that is, those structures on which timely response in the event of an emergency depends.

In the regulatory and legal aspect, it is necessary to update the current legislative framework regulating safety requirements in educational institutions, in particular, to make amendments to the State Building Standards regarding the mandatory design of modern shelters in new schools and the reconstruction of old buildings in order to adapt them to defense needs. The regulatory documentation that regulates the procedure for conducting training, briefings, evacuation, provision of communication equipment, first-aid kits, and personal protective equipment also needs to be updated. All these documents should be brought into line with the real threats facing the country – in particular, missile strikes, mining, armed provocations, information and psychological attacks. An important step should also be to legislate the responsibility of local governments for the state of security in schools and control over the implementation of civil defense measures.

In practical terms, personnel training is of paramount importance. It is necessary to systematically conduct courses on first aid, evacuation, behavior in the event of shelling or the detection of explosive objects. It is important not only to inform, but also to form sustainable practical skills in teachers. Educational institutions should also be provided with modern warning systems, emergency lighting, radio communications, as well as mobile first-aid kits, and electricity generators for critical cases. No less important is training with students in the format of modeling real events, with the involvement of emergency response services, which will allow them to work out behavior algorithms to automatism.

Given the hybrid nature of modern threats that combine military actions with cyberattacks, disinformation, and sabotage, the security system of educational institutions should also integrate elements of information hygiene, psychological protection, and identifying signs of destructive behavior among participants in the educational process. This requires close cooperation with psychologists, cyber police, and information security specialists [5]. It is important to develop critical thinking, the ability to navigate in crisis situations, and adaptability in students as basic competencies in a world where security is no longer a guaranteed condition of everyday life.

Thus, increasing the level of security in educational institutions requires not only individual measures or instructions, but a comprehensive systemic approach that combines regulatory regulation, organizational planning, practical training, technological support, and, most importantly, the formation of a security culture among all participants in the educational process. Only in this way can an educational environment be created that is resilient to crises and capable of protecting children and adults in the most difficult conditions.

Conclusions. In modern conditions, when the education system operates under constant threats from armed aggression, hybrid attacks and other emergencies, ensuring effective civil defense in educational institutions is becoming a priority area of state policy. The study showed that the key problems remain the unsatisfactory condition of shelters, the low level of practical training of staff and students, the formal nature of training, the lack of clear coordination between educational institutions, local authorities and response services, as well as a lack of funding.

To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to systematically update the organizational structure of security in schools, review and adapt the regulatory framework to real threats, and implement effective practical measures and technological solutions. Special attention should be paid to the formation of sustainable skills for action in emergency situations, the development of psychological resilience and information literacy of participants in the educational process. The improvement of the civil defense system in education should take place both at the state level and directly in each educational institution – through a combination of regulatory regulation, practical training, technical support and increased responsibility for compliance with safety requirements. Only a comprehensive approach will create a truly safe educational environment for children, teachers and employees.

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