

**Report on the actions taken by the Civil Defence in response to the emergency  
caused by the fire that broke out in the mountainous area of Lemesos on  
Wednesday, 23 July 2025**

**A. Operational Timeline**

**Wednesday, 23 July 2025**

On Wednesday, at 13:52, a Civil Defence volunteer who was heading to the village of Foini, observed smoke coming from the Malia area. He immediately reported this by telephone to the Chief of the Lemesos Search and Rescue Department of the Civil Defence. The Chief contacted the Civil Defence Aerial Observation Unit, which was in the area, and requested confirmation of the report. The Civil Defence Aerial Observation Unit immediately confirmed the outbreak of the wildfire.

The Chief headed to the Malia area as the first responder after immediately alerting the Fire Service and the Civil Defence Operations Control Centre of the General Civil Defence Administration to mobilise the Lemesos District Civil Defence Directorate and the volunteers from the Search and Rescue Department.

At the same time, the Civil Defence Air Observation Unit alerted the Forestry Department Operations Centre of the smoke from the wildfire in the Malia area through 1407.

At approximately 14:10, the Fire Service informed the Civil Defence Operations Control Centre about the wildfire in the Malia village and requested assistance in its evacuation.

The Chief of the Limassol Search and Rescue Department, who was the first to arrive at the village, supervised the evacuation together with the Head of the Community of Malia. The evacuation was carried out towards the village of Pachna.

The Civil Defence Operations Control Centre informed the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior and mobilised all Civil Defence Stations, the Lemesos Units, and the Larnaka Search and Rescue Department. At the same time, it put the Pafos District Civil Defence on high alert.

After the Civil Defence Operations Control Centre consulted with the Fire Department about setting up a Coordination Centre in the affected area, the Civil Defence Operations Control Centre asked the Commander of the Lemesos District Civil Defence Directorate to join them on the site.

At 15:10, the Civil Defence Operations Control Centre received reports on a family of 13 who refused to abandon their home in Vasa Koilaniou. The Chief of the Lemesos Search and Rescue Department went to their home and aided in their evacuation.

Three vehicles carrying 10 volunteers from the Civil Defence Stations of East Lemesos, Polemidia, and Kolossi, were mobilised to set up shelters. This was achieved in coordination with the Heads of the following Communities:

- Pachna
- Pano Kivides (canceled due to evacuation)
- Trimiklini
- Pano Polemidia (ultimately, this shelter was not needed or used)
- Erimi
- A number of the inflicted was given shelter at the Episkopiana Hotel and Sports Resort

Then, the Larnaka Search and Rescue Unit arrived and began extinguishing the wildfire in the communities of Agios Amvrosios and Souni-Zanakia

The evacuation of the communities was carried out by the Lemesos District Civil Defence Directorate under the coordination of the Chief of the Lemesos Search and Rescue Department, who received instructions from the Coordination Centre in the affected area.

The General Civil Defence Directorate was in continuous communication with the Chief of the Lemesos Search and Rescue Department, exchanging information regarding the evacuation in Malia and, later, those in Vasa Koilaniou, Potamia (around 16:30), in Vouni (around 17:20), in Koilaniou (around 18:00), in Agios Therapon (around 19:15), in Lofou, and Agia Mavri. The evacuees were directed either towards Pachna or Trimiklini.

The conditions in Vouni, Agios Therapon, and Lofou were particularly challenging due to:

- The intensity of the wildfire.
- The numerous utility poles and wires blocking the streets.

Due to the intensity and rate of spread of the wildfire, the Civil Defence could not evacuate all inflicted areas on its own and, in consultation with the Fire Department, requested reinforcements from the National Guard.

The Civil Defence Operations Control Centre also aided in locating active camp sites and providing guidance to the campers, in coordination with the Fire Department. The camp sites were located using a list of camps maintained by the Civil Defence and provided for by the organisers of the camps, as well as camp sites for which the Heads of the Communities had knowledge of.

Instructions were then given at approximately 20:00 to evacuate Silikou and Agios Georgios Silikou.

Due to the wind direction shifting, evacuations of Souni-Zanakia (around 20:45), Vounaros (Ypsonas area), Alassa (around 20:55), and Agios Amvrosios (around 21:00) became unavoidable.

The Larnaka Search and Rescue Unit was dismissed late at night, while the Pafos Search and Rescue Unit was responsible for battling the wildfire and carrying out evacuation in the area of Vounaros, in Ypsonas.

In early morning, Pachna was partially evacuated while the Lemesos Search and Rescue Department, in cooperation with the Heads of the Communities, investigated reports of trapped or missing individuals. In many instances, the residents' unwillingness to evacuate hindered the operations.

### **Thursday, 24 July 2025**

On Thursday, the Fire Service's Coordination Centre moved to Ypsonas, Kourion Municipality.

In consultation with the Fire Service, the Civil Defence carried out fire extinguishing operations in Zanakia, Kantou, Arsos, Koilaniou, Omodos, and Pera Pedi. The District Civil Defence Units of Ammochostos, Larnaka, Lefkosia, and Lemesos contributed to this effort.

The Lemesos Search and Rescue Department remained vigilant in Arsos, in case an evacuation was needed. At noon, Koilaniou Community was evacuated, while Omodos was evacuated in the afternoon, following Police instructions.

Meanwhile, Welfare Units from the Larnaka and Pafos District Civil Defence Directorates transported food and water to the inflicted and to all groups battling the wildfire. The Welfare Units provided 3 meals per day, as they continue to do so. On Thursday, 27 of July, as many as 300 portions were provided per meal.

The Civil Defence Aerial Observation Unit continued monitoring the area to detect any rekindled fires.

The Lemesos District Civil Defence Directorate promptly established a coordination centre which identified needs in food, water, and accommodation, as well as the donations from citizens, corporations, and organised groups.

The Civil Defence arranged temporary accommodation in various lodgings for those who were evacuated from the affected areas.

Meanwhile, it provides aid to the inflicted who continue to live in the affected areas.

### **Friday, 25/07/2025**

Throughout the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2025, 60 members of the Civil Defence personnel and 20 vehicles approximately were mobilised

## **A. Evacuations**

Below is a list of the evacuations that were carried out during the wildfire in the mountainous area of Lemesos:

### **1. Evacuations on 23/07/2025**

- Malia
- Vasa Koilianiou for the evacuation of children who were trapped
- Potamiou
- Vouni
- Souni-Zanakia
- Agios Therapon
- Silikou and Agios Georgios Silikou
- Vounaros (Ypsonas Area)
- Alassa
- Lofou for which the need for evacuation became known after the area became inaccessible due to the rate of spread of the wildfire and the damaged wires

Meanwhile, the Emergency Response Unit of the Police attempted to evacuate Lofou, but was unable to do so, due to the damaged wires of the Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC). Instead, the Special National Plan "POLIVIOS" was activated, making use of the primary school of the community, as an emergency measure. Similar actions were also performed in the community of Agios Therapon, where trapped individuals remained at the stadium of the community until they were rescued.

### **2. Evacuations on 24/07/2025**

- Koilani
- Omodos

## **A1. Community Evacuations Mechanism**

The evacuation of residential areas is regulated by the Special National Plan "POLIVIOS". The plan includes and describes procedures for evacuating inhabited areas that are threatened by or vulnerable to natural and/or man-made disasters. The Special National Plan "POLIVIOS" provides for the adjustment and tailoring of itself by each community and in coordination with the Civil Defence.

Each community's Plan is updated annually by the Civil Defence in coordination with the Community. Members of the Community Council then meet with a Civil Defence Officer who informs them about the provisions of the plan and the responsibilities it assigns to the Community.

Each Plan includes a table listing information such as the number of housing units, individuals who need assistance due to physical limitations, the response instruments available at the community, the residents and members of the Community Council who will volunteer, and the assembly point in the community.

It should be noted that the assembly points listed in each community's "POLIVIOS" Plan are used by residents when evacuating their homes during disasters, including wildfires, only when evacuation from the area is not possible. In the case of wildfires, it is preferred that the evacuees use their own vehicle to escape. Those without a vehicle are assisted by the Civil Defence or other government services.

Following consultation with other services (Fire Service, Police, Department of Forests), the Civil Defence informs the residents which route to follow when evacuating.

The residents are alerted about a disaster either by text messages, if the community is equipped with such a system. For communities where text messages are not an option, the residents are notified by sounding the bells of the church, door-to-door alerts, or any other means the Community Council deems appropriate. The Civil Defence, where present, uses the sirens and speakers that are installed on its vehicles to alert the residents.

As provided by the "POLIVIOS" Plan, when the Civil Defence is made aware of the need to activate it, it immediately mobilises the Civil Defence Directorate of the district where the fire is detected, as well as the members of the Community Council so that they begin the evacuation until the Civil Defence arrives.

The Community Councils also aid the Civil Defence in the management of the shelters by availing their resources and staff when evacuees from other communities are forced to escape to their community.

The Civil Defence acts as a first responder who arrives on the spot as soon as possible after being notified of any crisis, until groups consisting of volunteers or permanent staff reach the affected area. These groups require about 45 minutes to prepare for a mission, not including the time it takes to reach the area.

The Civil Defence is instructed to begin an evacuation by the service or department that is responsible for the management of a particular incident. That service might be the Fire Service, the Department of Forests, or the Police, depending on the nature of the crisis. The responding service also informs of which route is the safest for the evacuees to follow.

Considering the limited number of staff and volunteers available, as well as the severity of the crisis such as this wildfire, it is impossible for the Civil Defence to be physically present at all the areas where evacuations are undertaken and accompany the

evacuees. Despite the challenges it faced, the Civil Defence operated at its full capacity, followed all protocols, and used all of its means to guide and support the inflicted.

During the wildfire, in coordination and joint effort with the Heads of the Communities and other services, the Civil Defence activated the “POLIVIOS” Plan and carried out evacuations as described in the Operational Timeline.

In 2025, the Civil Defence organised information campaigns as regards the evacuation protocols and the provisions of the Special National Plan “POLIVIOS”, which included the following:

- In-person visits by representatives of the Civil Defence to the Community Council for the purpose of updating records.
- District meeting on 11/03/2025 in Lemesos, in collaboration with the Commissioner for the Development of Mountain Communities, representatives of all services, and the presidents of the nine complexes in Lemesos.
- Targeted seminars in Alassa (07/05/2025), Mathikoloni (14/05/2025), Amathounta Municipality (19/05/2025), Platania Forest Station (19/05/2025), Paramytha (18/06/2025), Palodeia (18/06/2025), and Agios Ioannis in Agros (01/07/2025).
- Participation in the meetings organised by the Lemesos District Administration in Moniati (10/04/2025), Kivides (09/04/2025), and Parekklesia (11/04/2025), and in the annual coordination meeting of the District Administration on 24/04/2025.
- Relayed letter from the Lemesos District Administration to the Heads of the Communities for the strengthening of cooperation between the two and update of the “POLIVIOS” Plan records.

## **A2. Campsite Evacuations**

Information relating to camps is not included in the records of the “POLIVIOS” Plan. The Civil Defence is proactively informed about them either through the Department of Forests or by the camp organisers.

Currently, there is no legal framework regulating camps and their operations. The Commissioner for Children’s Rights issued a report on this matter. This issue was raised within the Civil Defence when it came to its attention that, not only is there no legal framework, but there is also lack of contingency plans on the end of the organisers in case of an emergency. Additionally, there is no legal obligation for the organisers to inform the Civil Defence about the operation of a camp.

Concerning the campsite in Lofou, an officer from the Search and Rescue Department contacted the Head of the Community much in advance before the wildfire reached the village and asked that, in consultation with the organiser, children are evacuated from

the camp as a precautionary measure. The Head of the Community then contacted the organiser, Mr Loizos Konstantinou, who followed the Civil Defence instructions.

It should be noted that there is no mention of this campsite in the “POLIVIOS” Plan for Lofou.

## **B. Isolated Houses**

There were numerous isolated homes in the area which made it difficult for the rescuers to confirm that there were no trapped residents inside them. Isolated homes are not addressed by the “POLIVIOS” Plan; an issue that we must resolve in coordination with the Heads of the Communities during our next review of the Plan.

## **C. Farming development**

There are also numerous farming development that are not properly listed in the “POLIVIOS Plan”. This must be addressed as well.

## **D. Activation of European Union Civil Protection Mechanism**

The European Union Civil Protection Mechanism was initially active on Wednesday, 23/07/2025, at 17:20.

The first request was for the provision of aerial resources as a considerable amount of time is required for them to respond and prepare for operation.

Spain responded to the request on 23/07/2025, and informed that they could begin the water drops in the morning on Saturday, 26/07/2025. Due to bad weather, the aerial resources could not take off earlier than late afternoon on 24/07/2025 and would need to lay over in Sardinia.

Sweden, Serbia, and Italy also responded to the request on 24/07/2025. While Spain was expected to join the battle against the wildfire on Friday, 25/07/2025, we recalled our request due to the improvement of the situation and informed accordingly all countries who responded.

The second request was submitted on Thursday, 24/07/2025, and concerned reinforcement of our ground forces with forest rangers. Greece responded with its unit arriving in Cyprus on Thursday night and began operations on Friday 25/07/2025.

### **D1. RescEU**

In regard to securing funds from the European Committee’s programme, RescEu, for the acquisition of aerial resources and their placement in Cyprus, the Republic of Cyprus has repeatedly made requests on the matter, with the latest being in September 2024, but was turned down every time. The reason being that Cyprus is considered to be remote and thus unable to respond to calls for help from other member states.

## **D2. “Exchange of Experts” initiative by the European Union – Secondment of ground forces from member states to Cyprus during the summer season**

The “Exchange of Experts” initiative under the Civil Protection Programme of the EU allows for the secondment of civil protection experts, in the summer time, to countries that express interest for the initiative. The participating experts are either equipped with their personal gear alone or with fire engines and other equipment.

The Department of Forests was aware of this initiative and the eligibility of the Republic of Cyprus to request reinforcement of its ground forces. However, due to complexity in hosting, training, security, and familiarisation with the Cyprus terrain, it was deemed that this initiative would not be of any added value to the Republic of Cyprus.

The Department of Forests evaluates this programme every year and decides accordingly.

The Republic of Cyprus would benefit more from the acquisition of aerial forces from RescEu, but as mentioned in the previous section, the request by the Republic of Cyprus was turned down.

Instead, we came into a bilateral agreement with Jordan which provided for the placement of aerial forces in Pafos for all summer, so that they can promptly respond to a crisis.

## **E. Reception and hosting of missions**

The Civil Defence activated the mechanism for the reception, hosting, and assistance of international aid missions (Host Nation Support). Specifically, the Civil Defence made all arrangements for the hosting of the missions, including the accommodation, meal provisions, transportation, and others. This concerned the mission that arrived from Jordan with 17 members, the mission from Egypt with 32 members, the mission from Lebanon with 11 members, and the mission from Greece with 26 members.

The Civil Defence carried out the actions above in cooperation with the private sector.

The members of the missions also received SIM cards for easier communication.

The completion and effective implementation of the Host Nation Support by the government of the Republic of Cyprus, with the support of the private sector, was a case in point of our country’s readiness to host and support international aid missions during crises.

## **F. Accommodation for the inflicted**

The Civil Defence promptly arranged for the operation of shelters for the inflicted a few hours after the evacuations began.



Then, it arranged for accommodation at various lodgings until the completion of the assessment of the damage to properties in the affected area by the Lemesos District Administration and the Technical Services of the Ministry of Interior.

Up to this point, we arranged accommodation for 284 individuals (98 families).

## **G. Volunteers**

Volunteers are an indispensable part of the Civil Defence and are of significant importance in the management of crises.

Abiding by the legal framework, the Civil Defence recruits volunteers whom it trains and places in various positions such as rescue, welfare, first aid, neighbourhood watch, and communications. Volunteers are regularly trained, both within Cyprus and abroad through the Civil Protection Programme of the EU. The Civil Defence also provides for their equipment.

Finally, the Civil Defence established response units in communities such as that of Foini and Kyperounta, which were active in the management of the crisis due to the wildfire in the mountainous area of Lemesos.