

7.2 What are the ERUs?

7.2.1 General overview of the ERU system

Emergency Response Units (ERUs) were created in 1994 as part of the global IFRC disaster response system, to be used in large emergency response operations, when global assistance is needed and the Federation's delegations and the affected National Society cannot respond alone. ERUs provide specific services where local capacity is insufficient to cope and are deployed to complement the work of a National Society; by providing specific technical services, they enable the NS to focus on their strategic approach to the emergency response.

An ERU is a team of trained technical specialists deployed at short notice and a pre-packed set of standardised equipment to support the delivery of their objectives. They are designed to be self-sufficient for one month and can operate for up to four months, with the possibility of extending further if required. The ERUs are vital in the IFRC's disaster response system. When the term is used within the Movement, it covers both the team of specialists and the kit they deploy with. However, an ERU deployment can also mean a single delegate with a laptop and a satellite phone.

There are different types of ERUs, and one or more of them can be called to the same disaster, depending on the specific needs in the affected region. They are called upon after initial assessment of the post-disaster needs.

National Societies can choose whether they want to hold an ERU; if they do, they are free to choose which type of ERU they wish to maintain. When a NS commits to maintaining an ERU, this usually means that they will maintain standard equipment and a roster of on-call specialists (who they will recruit, train, develop and commit to periods of availability). Exceptionally some NS maintain a roster of personnel and will only deploy them into another NS's ERU (so they do not own a complete ERU).

When an ERU is deployed, it is expected that the deploying NS can cover the funding of the team and its kit for four months. ERU personnel can only deploy for four weeks at a time, and when the fourth rotation of personnel leaves the operation, a handover plan must be in place to plan for the next stage of the operation.

The need for assistance may continue beyond an ERU's four-month operational period. If so, the service can be managed by the IFRC's ongoing operation, the host National Society, the local government or other organisations.

7.2.2 Different types of ERUs

There are ten different types of ERU (see the below table). NS listed below can be supported by other NS with trained personnel and can share resources but should be considered as leads in case of deployments.

ERU type	Purpose	Team size	NS capacity
Logistics ERU	To manage the arrival of large amounts of goods either flown in by air or trucked and shipped in, the clearance of these goods, their storage and subsequent distribution. The unit is also responsible for the reporting on these items (it tracks all incoming goods according to a 'mobilisation table' and pipeline documents) and fleet management In addition, the	4–6	British RC Swiss RC Danish RC Finnish RC Spanish RC

ERU type	Purpose	Team size	NS capacity
	<p>unit supports the clearance of other ERUs, which often arrive with heavy equipment, and a large part of the logistics ERU mandate revolves around capacity building. The logistics ERU does not provide procurement services to other ERUs, PNSs or the HNS.</p> <p>Optional additions to standard kit (available upon request, though not held by all NS): four-wheel drive, forklift.</p>		
IT and Telecommunications ERU	To establish local communication networks and links, to help ensure the smooth flow of information in the operation. Furthermore, to assist the host National Society with its communication systems.	2–3	American RC Austrian RC Danish RC New Zealand RC Spanish RC
WatSan Module 15	<p>To provide treatment and distribution of up to 225,000 litres of water a day for a population of 15,000 people, with a storage capacity of 200,000 litres a day. This unit can also provide basic sanitation and hygiene promotion for up to 5,000 people. The module is designed to respond to scattered populations. It is flexible and can deploy as several stand-alone units for up to five different locations.</p> <p>Integrated in this M15 is the distribution and capacity for the transport of treated water to dispersed populations, with a capacity of up to 75,000 litres a day and the option to set up different storage and distribution points.</p>	4–8	Austrian RC French RC German RC Spanish RC
WatSan Module 40	To provide treatment and distribution of water for larger populations. The unit can treat up to 600,000 litres a day for a population of up to 40,000 people. As with the M15 unit, the M40 has an integrated distribution capacity for the transport of treated water to dispersed populations.	4–8	Austrian RC French RC German RC Swedish RC
Mass Sanitation Module 20	<p>To provide basic sanitation facilities (latrines, vector control and solid waste disposal) for up to 20,000 people, to initiate hygiene promotion programmes and to provide dead body management services.</p> <p>Optional additions to standard kit (available upon request although not held by all NS): flat-pack latrines, diggers.</p>	4–6	Austrian RC British RC German RC Spanish RC Swedish RC
Referral Hospital ERU	<p>First-level field hospital, providing referral-level multi-disciplinary care to a population of up to 250,000 people. The inpatient capacity ranges from 75–150 beds, providing surgery, limited traumatology, anaesthesia, internal medicine gynaecology, obstetrics and paediatrics.</p> <p>It consists of one or two operating theatres, a delivery room, inpatient wards and treatment areas, X-ray and a laboratory.</p>	15–20	Finnish RC German RC Norwegian RC

ERU type	Purpose	Team size	NS capacity
	<p>It also provides an outpatient department and an emergency room to ensure the treatment of casualties.</p> <p>The unit needs to be self-sufficient, and therefore includes supporting modules such as administration, IT and telecom, water and power supply, staff accommodation and vehicles.</p>		
Rapid Deployment Hospital	<p>A specifically modified, lighter version of the Referral Hospital ERU, which can deploy within 48 hours of alert and offers medical and surgical interventions, such as triage, first aid and medevac. It also has limited medical/surgical care, including an outpatient department.</p> <p>It can function for up to ten days, pending the arrival of a more complete hospital or a Basic Healthcare ERU. It can also be used as mobile clinic if required at a later phase of operation.</p>	8–10	Canadian RC German RC Finnish RC Norwegian RC
Basic Healthcare ERU	<p>To provide immediate basic curative, preventive and community healthcare for up to 30,000 beneficiaries, using a modular approach adjusting to local needs and according to WHO basic protocols. The unit deploys with the Interagency Emergency Health Kit. The unit can deliver basic outpatient clinic services, maternal-child health (including uncomplicated deliveries), community health outreach, immunisation and nutritional surveillance.</p> <p>It does not function as a hospital but has 10–20 overnight bed-capacity for observation.</p> <p>This ERU also requires the availability of local health staff and interpreters to support services and should have the agreement of the local health authorities for the ERU expatriate (doctors/nurses) to provide healthcare.</p>	5–8	Canadian RC German RC Finnish RC Norwegian RC French RC Japanese RC
Relief ERU	<p>To support the host National Society to undertake relief assessments, targeted beneficiary selection and to assist in the set-up of food and NFI distribution, as well as compile relief distribution statistics. This ERU can also assist in the setting up of camps and works closely with the Logistics ERU. The Relief ERU can set up cash-based responses to the emergency, in which case the collaboration with logistics is strengthened.</p>	4–6	American RC Benelux RC Danish RC Finnish RC French RC Spanish RC
Base Camp ERU	<p>To provide RCRC staff engaged in emergency operations with appropriate living and working conditions. The Base Camp ERU offers tented accommodation (conditioned for hot and cold climates), toilets, hot showers, recreational facilities, a kitchen, offices, administrative, IT/communication and coordination facilities, in locations where these are not available for RCRC staff.</p>	varies	Danish RC Italian RC

7.2.3 BRC ERUs

The BRC has chosen to maintain two Logistics ERUs and one MSM ERU. The kit required for those three teams is stored at the international warehouse in Bulwick, Northamptonshire. For more information about the warehouse, see the [Bulwick international warehouse standard operating procedure](#).

7.2.3.1 The Logistics ERUs

BRC stores enough kit and personnel to deploy two simultaneous Logistics ERUs. See above table for a detailed description of the objectives of the Logistics ERU.

The standard kit content designed by IFRC is available from the IFRC [standard product catalogue](#) (code ULOGLOGI). In agreement with the IFRC, however, the BRC has made some additions and modifications to the standard list (see above for details of optional additions to MSM and Logistics ERU kit).

For a detailed content list of the BRC's ERU kit, contact the UKO logistics team.

Logistics ERU teams are made up of:

- A team leader
- A warehouse and transport delegate
- An airops delegate
- One or two supply chain administration delegates

Detailed [role descriptions](#) for each of the above roles are available in the annex.

Previous deployments of the Logistics ERUs include:

- Dominica in 2017
- Greece, Vanuatu and Liberia in 2015
- The Philippines in 2014
- Chad in 2013

For more information on deployments, contact the logistics team.

The National Societies that maintain a Logistics ERU have created a technical working group to share experiences and challenges, under the sponsorship of the IFRC. The group meets once a year for a two-day conference, gathering representatives of the Swiss, Danish, Finnish, Spanish and British Red Cross, as well as the ICRC and IFRC. The agenda and minutes of the TWG meetings can be shared upon request.

For more details about management of the Logistics ERU, see the [ERU standard operating procedure](#) developed by the logistics team.

7.2.3.2 The MSM20 ERU

The BRC stores enough kit and personnel to deploy one Mass Sanitation Management ERU. See the above table for a detailed description of the objectives of the MSM20 ERU.

The standard kit content designed by IFRC is available from the IFRC [standard product catalogue](#) (code UWATMMSMCOMP). In agreement with the IFRC, however, the BRC has made some additions and modifications to the standard list. To see a detailed content list of the BRC's ERU kit, please contact the UKO logistics team.

MSM ERU teams are made up of:

- A team leader
- A sanitation engineer
- A hygiene promoter
- One or two specialist support delegates

Detailed **role descriptions** for each of the above roles are available in the annex.

Previous deployments of the MSM ERUs include:

- Mozambique in 2019
- Uganda in 2017
- Bangladesh (Cox's Bazaar) in 2017
- Greece in 2015
- Nepal in 2015
- Mozambique in 2013