

Understanding the French Emergency Services

In the event of an emergency dial the appropriate number:

Medical (SAMU) 15, Police 17, Fire and Accident 18 or Pan-European number 112

Explain the situation to the operator (English may be spoken by the operator but there is no guarantee). Calls to 112 are received by either SAMU or the fire brigade and then instantly rerouted to the appropriate service or handled on the spot

The services reached by dialling 15 & 18 operate in conjunction, with the emergency teams having skills, training and facilities suitable to many situations. "Fire-fighters" are qualified to provide first rescue and ambulance services.

Medical emergencies and accidents (SAMU)

SAMU: The Emergency Medical Assistance Service (*Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence*) reached by dialling 15 or 112.

There is always a qualified doctor on hand to determine the most suitable response to a call and implement it. This may involve giving the caller information or advice, or sending the appropriate emergency vehicle, such as an ambulance for a street accident or home emergency, a private ambulance, or a mobile resuscitation/intensive care vehicle or even a medical helicopter.

SMUR: The mobile emergency resuscitation service (Service Mobile d'Urgence et de Réanimation, SMUR) vehicles are equipped with at least one qualified emergency doctor (or an anaesthetist), a nurse and a paramedic.

In the case of serious accident or severe illness a Hospital Mobile Intensive Care Unit (H-MICU), (*UMH-Unité Mobile Hospitalière*) is sent. This is a rapid intervention vehicle or helicopter equipped to provide full hospital-standard life support services. The French approach is to treat the emergency/casualty on-site and vehicles and personnel are equipped and trained for this.

SAMU de France has an English-language website: <http://www.samu-de-france.fr/en>

Sapeurs-pompiers (firefighters and first rescue)

The Sapeurs-Pompiers are the fire-fighters of France, supervised and trained by the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministère de l'Intérieur*). Fire fighting brigades work closely with SAMU and are trained and equipped to respond to fires, auto accidents and emergency medical situations. They include professional (SPP), health and medical (SSSM) and volunteer (SVP) brigades.

Emergency siren

Nationwide, at noon on the first Wednesday of each month, the emergency sirens are tested. The sirens are tested in three sequences of 1 minute 41 seconds each, separated by a silence of five seconds. If the situation arises, information about what to do will be provided by France Inter or France Info radio stations.

Understanding the French Police Services

National Gendarmerie (*Gendarmerie Nationale*), is a military police force operating under management provided by the French Ministry of Defence (*Ministère de la Défense*). It is responsible for policing the countryside, rivers and coastal areas, and small towns that fall outside the jurisdiction of the *Police Nationale*. The force is also authorised to carry out criminal investigations, crowd control and security activities of airports and military locations and attend ceremonial and state occasions.

National Police (*Police Nationale*): The civil law enforcement agency of France, with jurisdiction over cities and large towns. The National Police comes under the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministère de l'Intérieur*) and is responsible for security operations (patrols, traffic control, identity checks) and conducting criminal enquiries.

Local Municipal Police (*Police Municipale*) are responsible for local policing in towns and villages, law enforcement, lost property and handling minor traffic or domestic offences. These are managed by the local municipality.