SUMMARY

On behalf of the WODC (Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice) a study was conducted among rescue workers (police, firefighters, ambulance) by the Institute for Psychotrauma. Aim was to assess whether workers have experienced barriers to request civilians to assist in emergencies, and to identify factors related to experienced barriers. For this purpose, 36 rescue workers were interviewed in 2012, using a semi-structured interview protocol developed for the present study. About half of the sample was interviewed directly after a verbal introduction of the project. The other half also received a verbal introduction, but was asked to pay extra attention during the next weeks towards emergencies where they (possibly) experienced impediments. After about 6 weeks the semi-structured interviews were conducted among the latter group.

Main outcome of this study is that respondents never experienced emergencies during their career where they did not ask civilians to help because of experienced barriers. None of the respondents expressed any experience on this topic, or ever heard that colleagues experienced such barriers. Due to these findings, we could not examine factors related to possible barriers.

However, these outcomes do not imply that workers do not have experiences with emergencies where they do not request civilians to help. Answers showed that during certain emergencies, workers deliberately don’t request civilians to help just to protect them towards adverse or drastic views and danger, or because of potential aggression from citizens towards workers. Some respondents mention the risk for juridical accountability when civilians sustain injuries, as a possible barrier to request civilians to help in emergencies. However, concrete examples of such events don’t exist. In other words, when civilians are not asked to assist in certain emergencies, than it is a result of a fast and professional decision process and not because of experienced barriers.