

The International Charter ‘Space and Major Disasters’ – an international initiative for disaster response based on space-based information.

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ABSTRACT:

International initiatives in the field of Earth observation-based disaster and risk management have initially focused on the response phase after disaster occurrence. The International Charter Space and Major Disasters (the “Charter”) was established in response to results of the UNISPACE III conference in 1999. Today the Charter has grown to a group of 15 members, mostly national space agencies, which organise rapid access to imagery from their Earth-observing satellites after the occurrence of major natural or technological disasters worldwide.

The Charter’s Authorised Users can activate the group through a single access point which is available 24 hours, seven days a week. The Charter’s principle of “Universal Access” allows the national disaster management authority of any country to become an Authorized User after a training session which ensures that the user knows exactly how to interface with the Charter and provide all required information in the case of an emergency.

Since 2007, the Charter has been activated more than 40 times per year on average. The Charter members have designed scenarios that assist in choosing the appropriate satellite data to be acquired once the Charter is activated. Useful image products are then provided to the user as quickly as possible. The Charter members have prepared such scenarios for each disaster type covered, such as catastrophic floods, extreme storm events, earthquakes, wildfires etc with a sample of the resulting map products available on the Charter web site.

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