



Press Release

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French Earth-observation satellites prove pivotal to managing major disasters

The International Charter on Space and Major Disasters is an organization created by CNES and ESA in 1999 that brings space technologies to the aid of emergency response teams in the event of major disasters. A unique example of successful international cooperation, it combines and coordinates the Earth-observation resources and expertise of its many member space agencies and is able to call on up to 25 satellites to acquire imagery of disaster-hit regions and deliver critical satellite data rapidly to civil protection and humanitarian aid teams organizing relief efforts.

Since its inception in November 2000, the Charter has been activated several hundred times all over the world. Half of these activations have been in response to inland or coastal flooding, and half for hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, volcano eruptions, landslides, oil spills and aviation accidents. No continent is spared and many countries have called on the Charter's aid. For example, it was activated in 2014 after the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, in 2015 for the earthquake in Nepal, in 2016 for Hurricane Matthew and in 2017 for the wildfires in Chile.

The French SPOT and Pleiades satellites spearheading this constellation have demonstrated their responsiveness and agility time and time again. Most recently, they swung into action in July when floods hit Japan and wildfires raged in Greece. And just days ago, the Charter was activated for the 19th time since the start of the year and the 580th time in all after the earthquakes on the island of Lombok in Indonesia. Some 20 satellites in the Charter constellation supplied imagery on this occasion, notably Pleiades imagery that proved a perfect match to the requirements of requesting organizations and data users. In particular, SERTIT, the French rapid-mapping department, generated a series of maps for CNES identifying disaster-hit areas with unprecedented precision.

CNES will be taking over the rotating chair of the Charter for six months starting in October.

Learn more about the Charter on its website: <https://disasterscharter.org/web/guest/home>

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