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# PROCESS OF AUTHORISING ACTIVITY RELATED TO DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES, IN PARTICULAR WITH REGARD TO THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY AUTHORITY AND ITS CO-AUTHORITIES

#### Abstract

A basic need of people is security. Regulation has evolved as a result of industrial disasters in connection with hazardous materials. Currently the SEVESO III. Directive is in force in Europe, and the system for protection against major industrial accidents also operates in Hungary. A significant number of foreign investments are established in Hungary. Some of them are dangerous establishments, their operation and safety have a serious impact on the safety of life as well as profitability. The main goal of the paper is to meet the information needs of the investors having less proficiency in this topic and assisting in project preparation. The paper presents the general model of the official procedure and the simplified model of the industrial safety regulatory approval of dangerous establishment, identifies the co-authorities and the related/parallel official procedures.

Keywords: disaster management, industrial safety, hazardous establishment, authority

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# VESZÉLYES ANYAGOKKAL KAPCSOLATOS TEVÉKENYSÉG ENGEDÉLYEZÉSÉNEK FOLYAMATA, KÜLÖNÖS TEKINTETTEL AZ IPARBIZTONSÁGI HATÓSÁGRA ÉS TÁRSHATÓSÁGAIRA

#### **Absztrakt**

Az emberek alapvető igénye a biztonság. A veszélyes anyagokkal összefüggő ipari katasztrófák hatására fejlődött a szabályozás. Jelenleg Európában a SEVESO III. irányelv van érvényben, és hazánkban is működik a súlyos ipari balesetek elleni védekezés rendszere. Magyarországon jelentős számban létesülnek külföldi beruházások. Ezek egy része veszélyes ipari üzemként valósul meg, ezek üzemfolytonossága és üzembiztonsága az életvédelemre és emellett a profitabilitásra is komoly hatással van. A tanulmány fő célja a – téma szempontjából laikus, külföldi – beruházók információ igényének, a projektek előkészítésének segítése. A dolgozat bemutatja a hatósági eljárás általános, valamint a veszélyes üzem iparbiztonsági hatósági engedélyezésének egyszerűsített modelljét, azonosítja társhatóságokat a és kapcsolódó/párhuzamos hatósági eljárásokat.

Kulcsszavak: katasztrófavédelem, iparbiztonság, veszélyes üzem, hatóság

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the basic psychological needs of human is to meet the need for security [1]. Disaster is "a sudden, schocking-proportioned event" [2], whose effects need to be handled. In some cases, unfortunately, a tragedy must occur in order to create measures for handle the risks. It was the case with the 1976 industrial disaster in Seveso, Italy. As a result of an industrial accident, toxic material (dioxin) was released into the environment, with the consequences affecting about 37 000 people. For this reason, the predecessor of the European Union issued the so-called Seveso I Directive (82/501 / EEC) in 1982 to deal with major industrial accidents in connection with



chemicals. The regulation has been being developed continuously based on the experience of accidents and application, currently the so-called Seveso III. Directive (2012/18/EU) is in force [3]. The system for protection against major industrial accidents has been developed since 1999 in Hungary, its current form has been in act since 2012 [4]. According to IBM-Plant Location International 2019 Global Location Trends, in 2018, Hungary received a significant foreign investment worldwide, similar to the average for 2013-2017 [5]. A part of the investments took place as the so-called hazardous establishment, which I already mentioned above. The operation and safety of this - in addition to the priority of the protection of human life - is, in my opinion, of great importance for the profitability of the establishments and also for the national economy. In general, the licencing procedures for dangerous establishments is carried out by the County Disaster Management Directorates [6, p. 4.§]. During my work, I often experience a need for information from a foreign investor having less proficiency in questions of this paper. The main goal is to create an English language study that can help in this. In order for making the procedures easier to understand later, I follow in the study the logic and order of the relevant legislation. In addition, I make suggestions for an effective procedure for the authority and also for the client. As a result of my analysis and synthesis of the relevant legal regulations, so that it can be understood easier by simplifying, I will generally present the official procedure and then the process of licencing the dangerous establishments. After that, I identify the acting industrial safety authority and its co-authorities, highlighting the moments, which are important for the success of the investment. For this study, I also use my own experiences as an official administrator and manager of the authority. Looking back over the past five years, I have given lectures at about 30 conferences and trainings in the topic of the experience of the official law enforcement in the field of the disaster management authority. On these occasions, I also consulted with the clients.



# 2. GENERAL RULES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

The 2016 CL. Act on General Administrative Procedure (hereinafter Ákr.) and its general justification begins as follows: "Article 24 of the Basic Law guarantees everyone that his or her affairs will be handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by the authorities. In addition, it is an expectation of the clients and the executive to administrative authority procedures so that a final decision can be made in them as quickly as possible" [7, p. 51].

"Ákr" is a general regulatory framework for administrative authority procedures [8], and I present universal procedural rules based on its analysis. The characteristics of each official procedure are included in additional legislations, such as the disaster management licencing of the hazardous industrial establishments, which I will describe later. The "ÁKR" contains 144 sections arranged in 82 titles and come into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2018. With some exceptions, it refers to all official proceedings, participants, clients and authorities. The authority shall act within the framework set by law, with regard to professionalism, simplicity, cooperation with the client and the principles of good faith.

The authorities acting in each case, their powers and competences are designated by law. Jurisdiction refers to the type of client, such as a building licence. Competence shows which of the authorities with the same competence acts proceed in a given geographical area. For example, in Kecskemét, the County Government Office of Bács-Kiskun is entitled to consider an application for a general building licence [9, p. 1.§]. Client can also be a natural person or a company, whose legitimate interest is affected by the given case. The client may also be represented in the proceedings through his/her authorized. The right of representation is always examined by the authority.

The administrative procedure basically has three possible main stages (Figure 1). These are the main proceedings, the remedy and the enforcement. Most of the cases are closed in the first stage, so the paper basically deals with it. Clients can appeal against substantive regulatory decisions. Examples are an appeal to an authority of a second instance or a submission of

statement of claim to the competent court. Based on changes in legislation in recent years, the latter is possible in most cases. A legal remedy is typically submitted to the decision-making body, which forwards it to the adjudicating body. There are also ex officio forms of remedies for example, the superior body can investigate a possible breach of an authority under the supervisory procedure. The final decision of the authority has to be implemented by the responsible client. If the client fails to do so, then the enforcement of the decision is ordered ex officio or at the request of the claimant, which is generally carried out by the state tax authority. An example of this is the recovery of fines, but it can also be aimed performing a specific activity.

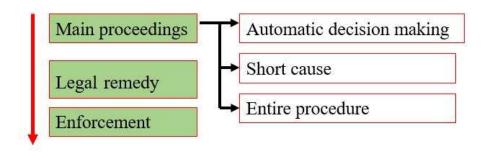


Figure 1 - Possible main stages of the administrative procedure (made by the author).

In this chapter, I primarily present the entire procedure, because this is typically authorized in case of large investments. However, the application can be processed in automatic decision-making within 24 hours in cases specified in a separate legal act, or in a short procedure within 8 days if everything is available for a decision. I divided the entire procedure into three main stages:

- to initiate the procedure,
- to examine the application and clarify the facts,
- to the decision



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The procedure may be initiated ex officio or upon request. The authority shall inform the client of the initiation. In the former case, the authority initiates proceedings on the basis of a legal obligation. As a result, it imposes fines, for example for violating the rules. In the latter, the client submits an application, typically to obtain some kind of official licence. If it has competence, the authority has a duty to act. In Hungary, the language of the administrative authority proceedings is Hungarian. A client who does not speak Hungarian can also use a foreign language during the procedure but only by bearing the translation costs.

The application must be submitted in the specified manner, form and attachments. The procedure fee must be paid at the same time. For example, an application for a building licence must be submitted through the so-called ETDR system, attached by the appropriate design documentation [10, p. 2.§]. If the request is not received as required, the procedure will not start. The authority shall first examine in each case its jurisdiction and competences and the existence of the main content of the submitted application and its attachments. Then examines it in detail the subject matter of the request, for example in case of the use of a building and its technical conformity. The authority has a duty to comply with the provisions of the law and to clarify the facts. If the data are not sufficient, the authority can use all the appropriate evidence to clarify the facts. For example, the authority can issue a request for rectification, invite to make a statement, involve a witness or an expert and in addition can hold a negotiations or onsite inspections. The administrative deadline for the entire procedure is maximum 60 days, but in some procedures the legislation may specify less days. For example, the administrative deadline in case of construction procedure, if a specialist authority is to be sought, is maximum 35 days. These deadlines are typically objective. The competent authority shall give its opinion on a specific technical issue, if its involvement is determined by law. In general, the authority contacts it in the framework of its own procedure, but in order to speed up the administration, it is possible to obtain a so-called preliminary opinion from the competent authority. For example, in case of building licenses for priority investments, the competent County Disaster Management Directorate acts as the fire protection authority at the request of the county government office [11]. The authority makes its decision on the basis of the available data and evidence. In general, the authority makes a decision, and in other actions during the procedure



(for example a call for rectification) an order. In the "ÁKR" in certain cases, the incomplete, inadmissible application may be rejected by the authority, and the procedure can be terminated. The client can also request the standstill of the procedure for example in case of significant modification of the application.

The significant investments and its authority procedures from the economical point of view can be declared to priority level by the government. For these investments there are special rules such as extraordinary administration, shorter deadlines or different fees. The rules for the implementation and simplification of priority investments are set out in the Act of LIII. 2006. [12]. Priority official cases are usually defined in a Government Decree such as in case of the Mercedes factory in Kecskemét, (336/2017. (XI. 9.) Government Decree) [13]. The general model of the main proceedings is illustrated in Figure 2.

The "ÁKR" regulates official controls under a separate title. According to its reasoning, it does not, in principle, consider it an official cause, but the legislation refers to it [7, p. 56]. A competent authority in a given case is a series of actions aimed at obtaining and establishing facts and information, with the help of which compliance with legal regulations can be established. This may be done ex officio or upon request, with or without prior notice by request for documents or by on-site inspection. In most cases, the authorities plan the inspections in advance. On the basis of the official control, the authority can initiate proceedings of its own motion. As a result, the authority may be required in a decision to take specific actions.

Concerning the period following of the health emergency, the *Chapter IV. of The LVIII. Act* 2020. provides specific rules for the **public proceedings** aiming for issuing authorised licences based on Ákr. [14]. Given its importance, I have supplemented the publication with it, but I will not present the specific rules.

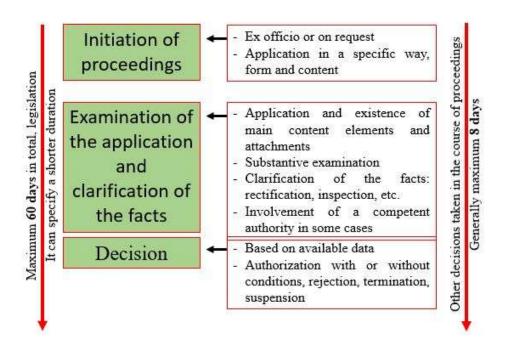


Figure 2 - Schematic diagram of the main proceedings (made by the author).

It is very important during the preparation of the investment to identify and apply the current legislation being in force.

# **3.** THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY AUTHORITY AND THE LICENSING PROCEDURE OF DANGEROUS ESTABLISHMENTS

The National Directorate General for Disaster Management, Ministry of the Interior (NDGDM) (hereinafter referred to as **BM OKF**, NDGDM) is the national central body, its territorial bodies are the county disaster management directorates, and its local bodies are the disaster management branch offices. A detailed description of the powers and contact details can be found on the official website of BM OKF. The competent bodies of disaster management



possess the powers concerning the official approval in relation to the fire protection, water and water protection, and prevention of major accident involving dangerous substances detailed in Chapter 3. This means three groups of cases, but in total more than 400 administrative cases. The central body has national jurisdiction, the territorial bodies has it in the administrative area of the certain county (or the Capital, Budapest) [15], the area of competence of the branch offices are designated in 43/2011 (XI. 30). Regulation of Ministry of the Interior [16]. The interesting thing about the area of competence of the water and water protection authority is that it is linked to river basins and 12 county disaster management directorates has this competence [17].

The industrial safety field is integrated at the said central, territorial and local level of disaster management. The administrative tasks and activities of the field cover the following main areas:

- official supervision of dangerous establishments;
- official control on the transport of dangerous goods by road, rail, water and air;
- tasks related to critical infrastructure protection;
- professional management of nuclear accident events;
- operation of a CBRN units, and Mobil Detection System units (MDS) [18].

The main objective of disaster management is to ensure the protection of life, to prevent and minimise risks using its official power and toolbox [19].

I have systematized and collected the relevant major legislations concerning authorisation procedure for dangerous establishments in Figure 3. I have compiled the chapter primarily on the basis of an analysis of these two legislations:

- Act No. CXXVIII of 2011 concerning disaster management and amending certain related acts (hereinafter referred to as Kat.) [20]
- Government Decree No. 219/2011(as of October 20) on the protection against major accidents involving dangerous substances (hereinafter referred to as "R") [6].

#### 2012/18/EU Directive

on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, amending and subsequently repealing Council Directive 96/82/EC Text with EEA relevance (Seveso III Directive)

#### Act No. CXXVIII of 2011

concerning disaster management and amending certain related acts.

#### Government Decree No. 219/2011 (X.20.)

on the protection against major accidents involving dangerous substances

# Government Decree No 234/2011. (XI. 10.)

of the Government implementing Act No. CXXVIII of 2011 concerning disaster management and amending certain related acts.

# Ministry of the Interior Decree 51/2011. (XII. 21.)

on the authority processes subject to administrative service charge in the authority processes of major accident prevention related to dangerous substances, on the administrative-like services and statements, on the amount of charge to be paid, and on other regulations regarding the payment

Figure 3 - Main legislations related to the disaster management licensing procedure in case of hazardous establishments (made by the author)

There are basically three types of hazardous establishments depending on the amount of hazardous material:

- Upper tier dangerous establishment
- Lower tier dangerous establishment
- Under tier establishment

The first two belongs to the above mentioned Seveso III EU Directive (2012/18 / EU) and this is valid in the Hungarian legislation system through the provisions of "Kat" and "R". In Hungary, there were around 400 under tier establishments, 130 lower tier dangerous establishments and 110 upper tier dangerous establishments in 2015 [3].

In general, the county disaster management directorates, as the industrial safety authorities, have jurisdiction to making licensing procedures in case of dangerous establishments [6, p. 4.§]. Their jurisdiction is the same as the administrative area of the county (or the capital) [15, p. 1. melléklet a)].

Before the establishment of a new dangerous installation, if the amount of dangerous substances at the site will exceed the limits specified in the Tables 1 and 2 of Annex R. 1, the threshold quantities of dangerous substances named and not named in their tables, the site identification must be carried out. If more than one of the hazardous substances in the tables is present in the establishment, the quantity shall be calculated according to the formulas set out in point 3 of Annex R. 1. In addition, the BM OKF<sup>2</sup> issued methodological guide on the subject.

If the new dangerous installation will be placed in a new building and not in an existing one, then the competent construction authority can proceed the licensing process of the building only after obtaining a valid disaster management license.

The operator shall submit the completed establishment identification as an annex to the application for a disaster management license.

The following documents must be attached to the application for a disaster management permission:

- prepared identification sheets and their annexes in accordance with R.<sup>3</sup>;
- the authorization to the authorized person, the document certifying the right of representation
- A document proving the payment of the administrative service fee according to Decree 51/2011 (hereinafter: R2.)

With certain exceptions, the customers are obliged to provide electronic administration according to the Section 9 (1) of Act CCXXII of 2015 [21]. In the licensing process of hazardous establishment, customers can do this with the help of the so - called e-paper service (e-papír.gov.hu). I gave a lecture on its practical use in the VII. Fire Protection Professional Days Conference in Lakitelek [22]. The presentation was at a conference about the fire protection, but the content of it can also be applied in connection with hazardous establishments.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> These are common abbreviations in Hungarian. Therefore, I would like to help you understand another text on a similar subject by using abbreviations in Hungarian.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "a scaled map of the plant's surroundings and a site plan of the establishment, where the location and quantity of dangerous substances must be signed, and establishments dealing with dangerous substances, specifying their purpose."



In case of an incomplete application, the responsible Directorates for the establishment shall initiate the procedure and take a decision within 60 days of the receive of the application. The veracity of the submitted identification data sheets is checked in the framework of an on-site inspection.

As a result of the procedure, Directorate decides in the form of a decision and obliges the client to prepare a Safety Report (BJ)<sup>2</sup>, Safety analysis (BE)<sup>2</sup>, or Serious Incident Response Plan (SKET)<sup>2</sup>, with a deadline, or grant it a disaster management license, in case of operation below tier establishment the SKET obligation. If the establishment does not belong to the Section IV of the Act on disaster management the Directorate shall close the procedure initiated upon request.

The client submits the completed BJ/BE by the specified deadline, or if it also contains protected data, it shall also send the public version of it and the extract required for the public information extract to the authority. At the same time, the administrative service fee must be paid for the procedure according to R2. The Directorate has 70 days from the submission of the documents to judge it. In case of SKET the deadline of the procedure is 60 days.

The Directorate examines the BJ/BE in particular with regard to the fact that the safety documentation is in accordance with the regulation R.10 § (2) and its R.7. Annex point 6.1. whether the conditions imposed on the economic operator entrusted with the preparation of the safety documentation have been met (only in the case of a "mandated" legal relationship), of R.7. Annex 6.2. whether the use of a dangerous industrial protection officer as referred to in point (a) is justified (only in case of establishment dealing with hazardous substances).

In addition, the Directorate sends a public version of the BJ or BE and an extract from the public information to the competent disaster management branch office and to the mayor of the endangered municipalities for the purpose of conducting proceedings to ensure publicity. Providing publicity is a complex topic that can be highly important to a foreign investor. That



is why I propose that you prepare thoroughly. The topic is addressed in a doctoral thesis based on the legislation in force in 2011, which summarises the substance of the issue [23].<sup>4</sup>

The Directorates will examine BJ or BE, if there has been a rectification procedure, together with the submitted documentation as a rectification, subject to the protocol containing the opinions sent by the mayor. The authority examines the reality of the submitted documents during an on-site inspection. Before issuing a decision, the Directorate verifies the data contained in the submitted safety documentation by using official risk and decision support software.

The decision of the Directorate (disaster management license) is communicated to the operator in resolution form, which can be an unconditional, stipulated acceptance decision or a rejection. The authority shall notify the mayors of the endangered settlements and the chairman of the competent County Defence Committee of its decision by sending a final decision.

Following the finalization of the decision, the Directorate shall inform the competent County Police Headquarters, the state health administration body, the environmental protection authority and the state ambulance service about the dangerous activities and serious accident hazards related to hazardous substances in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Kat.

In addition, the Directorate shall designate the boundaries of the danger zone around the hazardous installation in a separate resolution.

The designation of the danger zone shall in all cases be made in a separate decision within 8 days after the final acceptance of the safety report or safety analysis. The schematic diagram of the licensing procedure for a hazardous establishment is illustrated in Figure 4.

After obtaining the disaster management license, the operator must continuously maintain the protection measures and the expected level of safety. In my opinion the issue is very important, but I will not deal with it in this paper. The operation of a dangerous establishment without a disaster management license can be restricted or prohibited by the authority according to the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> http://m.ludita.uni-

Act on disaster management. In addition, according to the 208/2011. (X. 12.) Governmental Decree the authority can impose a fine of up to 5 million HUF [24].

In my experience, the consultation with the authority before identification of the establishment or the submission of the application can greatly help the preparation of the documentation and the efficiency of the administration. The Directorates, as a service provider and customer-friendly authority, provide the opportunity for consultations. It is important that the person appointed to represent the client arrives for the conciliation with some concept and a representation document.

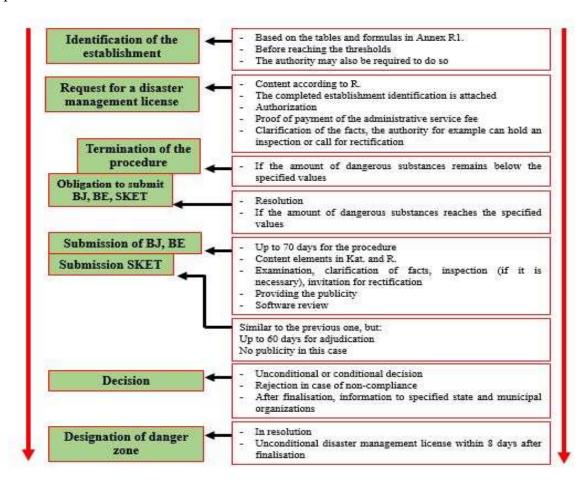


Figure 4 - Schematic diagram of the licensing procedures in case of hazardous establishments (made by the author)



# 4. CO-AUTHORITIES AND THEIR PROCEDURES

The sectoral authorities perform their official activities in relation to dangerous establishment on their own initiative, but they have a duty to inform the industrial safety authority in this regard, which also performs coordination activities [20, pp. 32.§ (4)-(8)]. In this chapter, in connection with my aims I mentioned in the introduction, I will collect and identify the regulatory approval procedures and authorities acting in parallel with and related to the industrial safety regulatory approval of hazardous establishments. I illustrated the result in Figure 5 at the end of this chapter.

Based on my analysis of the legislation, the following are determined by acts and government decrees for each official procedure:

- the conditions for procurement or notifying the license (for example in the case the sizes and function of a building etc.),
- the examined exact technical matter (for example functionality of the built-in fire alarm system),
- the authorities involved in the case and their competences (I gave an example in Chapter 2).

In my opinion the issue is very important, but I will not deal with it in this paper. The specialized authorities involved in each official procedure are typically determined in the 531/2017. (XII.29.) Government Decree [25]. The Government may establish different rules in relation to priority investments in a decree [12].

In connection with a general industrial investment as a hazardous establishment, I identified 23 potential types of licensing procedures and 4 co-authorities. I have categorized these according to the acting body belongs to government offices, disaster management or other organizations.

The County (capital) Government Offices (hereinafter Kh) are the "general territorial public administration bodies" of the Government. Its activities are managed by the government

commissioner. Kh consists of a head office and district offices directly headed by the government commissioner. Kh and the district offices correspond to the administrative area of the county/city/district. As an individual exception, in some official cases, the Kh may have jurisdiction over several counties. I will highlight this in the official cases I have identified. Government Commissioners are typically appointed to coordinate official matters and authorities related to priority investments from the national economy point of view [26]. The last significant change in the competence of the Kh came into force on 1 March 2020, at that time, the Kh took over the authority exercise of the building authority from the notaries of the municipalities.

### In generally, Kh and its organizations act by location in these official procedures:

construction, forestry, survey, land protection, real estate registration, environmental, public health, heritage, soil protection, land use, nature protection, spatial planning, road

#### In generally, Kh and its organizations act in several counties in these official procedures:

building authority for the specific types of construction within the competence of the technical safety authority, mining authority, technical safety, railway and strip track, procedure for electricity industry activities

# Other official cases and acting authorities:

communications, fire protection, defence, the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances, water management and water protection

Figure 5 - Authority procedures related to industrial investment in case of hazardous establishment

The right to communicate is performed by the National Media and Communications Authority, which is an independent organization. The Office of the National Media and Communications Authority is an independent competent body. Their headquarters are in Budapest, but they have customer services in, Debrecen, Miskolc, Pécs, Szeged and Sopron [27]. The licensing

procedures for defence authorities are conducted by the Official Department of the Ministry of Defence with national competence. This competence is typically related to the defence objects and their different protection distances and areas [28].

# 5. SUMMARY

Using the relevant literatures and basic legislations, I summarised and presented the authority procedures in general. Then I analysed the simplified licensing process of the dangerous establishments and the acting of the industrial safety authority. For the easy understanding, I made figures of the simplified operating model. I identified the main official case groups related to the investment of hazardous industrial establishments and the acting authorities.

The paper is suitable for foreign investors having less proficiency in questions to meet the first information when they need for. This can make the process of creating a dangerous establishment even more efficient. In addition, the paper can be useful if we publish it in another foreign language. Furthermore, the study can be used during the trainings of the staff.

The coordination of concepts, common thinking and proactive problem research (especially if the investor's representative is present) can help a lot in the preparation of the project and in the quick and effective conduct of the future official procedure. Negotiations are beneficial to both sides. In this way, the disaster management authority can quickly and efficiently convey the comments related to the protection of life and safety. The client has direct access to information and feedback, that helps the investment, which speeds up the implementation of the business, increases its operational safety and profitability.

The paper basically covered the construction of a dangerous establishment, and I also plan an operational study as a follow-up in the future. I suggest creating similar articles for other authority cases.

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