

Providing emergency bridging support in Switzerland

Bridging Case Study



Emergency Logistic Support Bridge, Switzerland

Customer: The Swiss Army | Solution: Mabey LSB™



The Challenge

In October 2011, freak weather conditions caused rivers to break their banks and widespread mudslides in the Bernese and Valais Alp region of Switzerland. Amongst the devastation, a bridge across the valley near the sparsely populated municipality of Kandergrund – 35 miles south of Berne – was washed away with severe implications for the 800 people who live in the municipality.

The Swiss Army Catastrophe Intervention Force, a unit set up specifically to react to this type of event, was tasked with re-establishing the connection in the Kander Valley. Having taken delivery of two new Mabey Logistic Support Bridges™ (Mabey LSB™) only three months earlier, the unit found itself with an immediate and unexpected challenge.

The Solution

A feasibility reconnaissance inspection carried out in the days following the incident identified that a 39.6m Mabey LSB™ was required, suitable for Swiss highway loading and up to Military Load Class 40. The Army staff, well aware of the capabilities of the Mabey LSB™ system, issued the formal order to build the bridge on 14th October and preparatory ground works begun immediately to clear the flood damage and open the approach roads.

On 17th October more than 100 tonnes of bridging equipment was delivered to site, and construction began. The erection was carried out by 20 soldiers from the engineer section who were motivated by the challenge of opening the bridge as quickly as possible for the Kandergrund community.

The bridge, 13 bays long with a 4.2m wide carriageway, was assembled at the side of the river using a crane. A temporary nose was attached to the front and the whole structure was then launched over the gap, with deck units stacked on the rear of the bridge to act as counterweight. Once in place, the bridge was fully decked and lowered onto its bearings. The build was completed in just four days and the temporary bridge was formally opened by the local Mayor on 24th October 2011.

The Result

Response, planning and construction of the Kandergrund bridge was completed in just two weeks, which was something of a first for the Swiss Intervention Force as never before had so large a bridge been constructed under such difficult operational conditions. The structure is expected to be in use for around 18 months while a permanent solution is sought.



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