

## *Chapter 6*

### **Preparedness and real time response**

#### **Operational Guidelines for Emergency Management**

The Prime Minister issued on 3 December 2008 Operational Guidelines for Emergency Management to regulate the information flow between the different actors involved, the activation and co-ordination of the components and structures of the Italian National Civil Protection Service (NCPS), to describe the organisational model of the emergency management at a national level to support and adequately contribute to the local civil protection response, and to guarantee the necessary operational co-ordination of emergency management.

According to the model adopted by each region, the Rescue Co-ordination Centre (CCS) of the province is activated. In the CCS there are representatives of the region, the prefecture, the province and the institutions, administrations and operational structures dedicated to the management of the emergency. The CCS must according to the guidelines assure unified direction of operations and co-ordinate actions with those carried out by the mayors of the involved municipalities. If the model adopted by the region does not indicate clearly who exercises leadership of the CCS and there is specific agreement between the prefecture and the province in force, then this task is assigned to the prefect who has the duty of ensuring the safety of the people and the goods.

Each region affected by an event guarantees for instance the immediate activation and deployment of the regional column and the volunteer organisations, the management of health care emergency operations, the deployment of its technical experts to check the safety in buildings, assess the damage, evaluating the risks left and induced, verifying if the water is drinkable and conducting environmental recovery and land reclamation operations as well as use of primary necessity goods stored under regional competence to assistance to the population. The region will, in case there is a need for extraordinary means and powers due to the actual needs in an area affected

by disaster and on the basis of requests coming from the local institutions, submit a request for a declaration of the State of Emergency.

## Emergency preparedness

The limited numbers of fire-fighters in relation to the size of the country and population create a considerable capability deficiency, though one solution to address this need would be to fully train more volunteers for fire-fighting. Even this approach would only be possible in the parts of Italy where there are enough volunteers, which tend to be in the North. In the southern part of Italy there is a relative dearth of volunteers, and there are too few professionals due to insufficient resources to pay them. This is clearly a weak point in the preparedness and real time response to disasters that should be urgently addressed. One possible solution in the South of Italy could be to employ appropriately trained part time fire-fighters which is a solution chosen in Northern Europe in particular in areas where the population is limited. Another question to consider in this context is why emergency response resources of this type are not part of the municipal structure as in other countries.

During the panel interviews stakeholders often mentioned the unsatisfactory situation in respect to contingency planning in the municipalities due to insufficient funding and resources or lack of political commitment was mentioned. In Liguria for instance 50% of the municipalities were estimated to have fully implemented their civil protection role, but municipalities where there are only 250 inhabitants cannot complete an entire civil protection plan. Liguria has operational plans for the provinces that can compensate for this and be put in place, if the municipality planning is lacking. In Sicily, however, where there are 390 municipalities and as many as 90 municipalities per province, each of which is under resourced, provinces cannot cope with this problem.

In Italy, there is a general discussion going on concerning the usefulness of the provinces in particular in regions like Sicily. On the other hand in some regions the provinces play a rather strong role. The Review Team found that the official position is to support the provinces. The main task for the provinces is to elaborate the provincial emergency plan, but a problem is that they have no specified powers. The mayors are the local civil protection authorities, but the President of the Province is not by law a civil protection authority. In some regions, the prefects are also involved and playing important roles in civil protection which means that there are multiple actors with certain authority making the situation sometimes quite unclear.

Some municipalities, for instance in Sicily, have established inter-municipal collaboration for civil protection planning and work together at a sub-provincial level, frequently around a stronger municipality with more capacity and resources or around for instance the volcano Etna. The logic is to start with a

common risk mapping, and the approach adopted is always the same, to assess and map the hazards and risks, create relevant scenarios and elaborate an operational plan. Most major risks are very well known in Sicily, for instance all the area around Etna can be subject to the consequences of an eruption of the volcano, earthquakes and the effects of the ash plume. There are also geographical areas where floods, forest fires, etc. call for well established collaboration between municipalities. In areas with a high and very high level of risks, a civil protection organisation and emergency plan is required in the legislation to be set up and this obligation is being fulfilled in Sicily for volcanic risks and marine and coastal risks including wave intrusion.

To overcome some of the problems in Sicily, the need for inter-municipal plans and collaboration is being emphasized and this year the region has provided funding for inter municipal co-operation, for example for forest fire fighting covering 30% of the Sicilian territory. The region has implemented this model for co-operation also for public administration of health services and waste management without an obligation in the legislation. The development of organised co-operation and the inter municipality co-operation model is therefore encouraged and supported in Sicily. An agreement is signed by the participating municipalities establishing the collaboration with all components collaborating within the municipal co-operation.

The Review Team found it difficult to obtain clear answers to questions about how the application of the above cited national guidelines by the regions is monitored. There is also a need to analyse the extent to which the constitutional and administrative reforms have increased or decreased the capacity for conducting civil protection activities at every level of public administration.

*Opportunities for action:* The shortcomings in respect to preparedness and real time response should be addressed and different solutions should be considered from region to region depending on their particular resource deficiencies, to permit NCPS to function in a holistic way in the event of disaster. The interest of interoperability and achieving a more even level of civil protection capacity in the country requires an overall solution that cannot be resolved only within the framework of NCPS.

## Human resource aspects

The Review Team has found a clear, coherent national leadership with other relevant actors integrated into the Italian National Civil Protection Service and a very high level of commitment and professionalism of the personnel at the national and regional level in particular. At provincial and municipal level the visits and interviews demonstrated that there are discrepancies amongst their respective capacities for civil protection activities and

a need to establish a minimum acceptable level in all parts of Italy. This will require a more systematic and common education and training system for all civil protection actors in Italy.

A very large number of motivated volunteers provide the necessary resources needed for large scale civil protection operations and help to create local involvement in many, but not all, parts of Italy. About 50% of the personnel involved in an operational response to a disaster will be volunteers, including some volunteer fire fighter brigades, 15% military units (previously conscripts, but now professionals- which means the available persons have been reduced dramatically), 25% professional fire fighters and 10% others (technical), *i.e.* police, medical care, etc. Only volunteers who have been specifically trained and have adequate equipment can be involved in forest fires and other firefighting. Other volunteers have tasks such as taking care of children and elderly.

The costs for volunteers' training and maintaining the organisation are covered, that is if the organisation is registered in a national registry. The volunteers can also be used in international interventions. Training of volunteers, generally carried out locally, is important to avoid the volunteers becoming an obstruction to the professionals. Firstly, they have to learn what they cannot do and to understand the risks in earthquakes, forest fires and floods, before they can learn what they can do, outside a red zone into which no one is allowed to enter except experts and fire brigade personnel.

However, recruitment of volunteers is difficult in certain parts of Italy, due to tradition and other reasons, but the opportunity of getting a good education and training could help to improve the situation. Furthermore, as volunteers cannot fill some more qualified roles without education and training, for instance that of qualified firemen, and should not be required to do so from a workers health and safety perspective, such education and training has to be conducted. Different solutions for improving the situation in the areas with problems of volunteer recruitment need to be found and, besides education and training, certain guidance could be gained from sharing the experiences from the areas in Italy, which have been successful in their recruitment, and also other countries.

*Opportunities for action:* NCPS seems to a great extent to be very personality driven at all levels and measures need to be taken to maintain the present high level of personal competence and capacity among the personnel – including persons in leadership positions – in the long term perspective. A very high level of competence is necessary for the personnel to be able to fulfil their roles under pressure in the very complex situations which characterize a disaster. Besides the training conducted at different levels of the command and control system and the regular disaster management exercises, a common competence development or life long learning system should be considered for the personnel in the operational components and structures of NCPS.

Such a system could also serve as an engine for improvement of NCPS and therefore include measures for addressing some of the shortcomings that the interviews have indicated primarily on the provincial and municipality levels. The training of the mayors for instance consists of only a one day workshop. For the officers in charge of civil protection at municipal level there are opportunities offered to participate in several training courses.

The regional plan foresees that in case of warning there should be a 24 hour operational room at local level, but the municipalities frequently do not have the resources to manage such a system. If this is the situation, then the mayor being responsible for the municipality will be acting very much on his own. But also personnel other than the mayors in the whole system need to have good designated education and training to be able to collaborate well and efficiently with each other at the different posts and levels they may be appointed to in the NCPS. A common competence development programme would also facilitate good recruitment to the service. The training of volunteers should be a part of the common civil protection training.

*Opportunities for action:* Maintaining the high level of commitment and professionalism of the civil protection personnel is vital and should be promoted through the introduction of a common competence development or life long learning system and measures should be taken to facilitate the recruitment of volunteers in all parts of Italy including education and training.

## Technology standard

The visits demonstrated that modern advanced technical equipment is available and used in certain parts of NCPS, for instance systems for sharing the common situation awareness and exercising efficient command and control. The visits and hearings indicated however that in the prefectures, provinces and municipalities on the other hand only some of these had centres with a modern technological standard whereas others were operating with very traditional means such as fax, telephone or cell phone.

Also in other countries old methodologies and technology are still in service to a great extent. In the emergency services in general, there is quite strong traditionalism and a certain tendency to maintaining traditional methodology and technique too long, although the situation is changing quickly with the new generation of personnel.

In Italy modern IT is now becoming successively implemented and operational in certain centres, as elsewhere in the Italian society. Seen in relation to the high level of risk as well as the magnitude of the consequences that have to be managed with a diversified and large quantity of resources, the full introduction of modern methodology and technology on a wider scale

can be considered more important and require higher priority than in many other European countries.

*Opportunities for action:* Efforts should be made to bring all civil protection operational centres in the prefectures, provinces and municipalities fully operational and up to an appropriate and as far as possible common modern technology standard which would facilitate interoperability and enable the centres to contribute more to NCPS. An improvement of the technology in the centres would enhance the capacity for exercising the emergency command and control efficiently but also make it possible to share and contribute to the common national situation awareness system.

## **Critical infrastructure**

Major critical infrastructure providers or life-lines are among the components and structures involved in NCPS and are represented in the Operational Committee (see Annex B for more descriptive detail of the operators and their roles in civil protection). These components and structures in NCPS must be obliged to ensure the implementation of their specific competences and capacities in the intervention activities with respect to the established procedures. In the past, Italy has experienced a number of very severe electricity failures, transport disruptions, major production loss and telecommunications failures, which during the study visits and hearings indicated the need to consider the introduction of more extensively legislative and other measures to ensure the functioning of the critical infrastructure in disaster situations or other crises.

Disruption of critical infrastructure increasingly subjects industrialized economies to negative cascade effects due to the interdependencies of different systems. This also applies to such systems as financial and payment systems including credit cards and cellphone communication systems. It should furthermore be taken into account that extensive privatisation of these services creates new risks and needs for ensuring the functioning of the critical infrastructures through legislation.

There is a clear need to take further steps to ensure the functioning of the critical infrastructure in Italy in the event of natural disasters or other national crises. In Japan for instance, legislation places the responsibility for the functioning of the infrastructure through requirements on the infrastructure providers, public and private, by requiring them to have business continuity planning. Such an approach is recommended also for Italy, not least as these providers or lifelines are the only entities able achieve appropriate and adequate practical results in these respects. There is also a strong self-interest for the infrastructure providers to make their functioning more secure.

*Opportunities for action:* Consideration should be given to the introduction of a legal responsibility to have effective business continuity planning for critical infrastructure providers, and lifelines in both the business sector and the public sector should be considered to ensure the functioning of society in the event of natural disasters or other national crises.



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