Geophysical Research Abstracts
Vol. 18, EGU2016-17845, 2016
EGU General Assembly 2016

Communicating geohazard information for emergency responders, a case study from the UK.

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SSS11.4/ESSI4.6/HS11.39/NH9.13 Communication of uncertain information in earth sciences: data, models and visualization

Communicating geohazard information for emergency responders, a case study from the UK.

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In February 2013 a sinkhole opened beneath a Florida Home resulting in the loss of a life and demolition of the affected home. The resulting void was in the order of 15 m deep. Neighbouring homes also had to be demolished. Television footage of this unfortunate incident resonated with an Assistant Commissioner of the London Fire Brigade who questioned whether or not such a feature would be recognised in the UK and if so, how the emergency response would be managed. Stemming from this, the British Geological Survey was invited to work with the Chief Fire Officers Association Urban Search and Rescue working group on geohazards. The aim of this group was to develop national tactical operational guidance on geohazards that would form the basis for regional guidance and training. The project was addressed collaboratively providing opportunities for two students from the Coventry University Disaster Management course, that were on placements with Avon Fire and Rescue, to work with the BGS to develop the guidance. Key to the success of the project was an iterative approach to knowledge exchange with respect to firstly, the characterization of the geohazards, and the processes and uncertainties associated with them and secondly, with respect to emergency responders' needs and priorities. Effective communication was achieved through challenging and rationalising the geoscience language for the end user and through a series of customised illustrations that portray the geohazard and associated zoning for response management. This paper shows the value of BGS data in developing resilience through preparedness, describes the approach to this project and the key outcomes in terms of geohazard communication, as well as considering how the project may develop in the future.