



## People with disabilities and emergency: a survey in Friuli Venezia Giulia

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Scientific literature shows no evidence of studies on the effects of disasters for people with disabilities, but the few available data confirm that in such situations they are at the highest risk of death and injury than the remaining population. Just to draw the attention, in 2005 the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina highlighted considerable criticalities in the United States (73% of the victims in New Orleans were over sixty, although this represented only 15%) [ 2]; the death rate for people with disabilities after the devastating Japanese earthquake in 2011 was particularly significant if referred to the one of the whole population [3]. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also stigmatized these aspects ; they highlighted how “persons with disabilities [ . . . . . ] are often ignored or excluded at all levels of disaster preparedness, mitigation and intervention” [4]. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes the importance of this question stating (art. 11) “States Parties shall take [ . . . . . ] all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters”. Even before, the “Verona Charter on the rescue of persons with disabilities in the event of disasters ” outlined the basis for ensuring the protection and safety of persons with disabilities.

At local scale, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Regional Council of Associations of People with disabilities and their families started to deepen these aspects with a survey aimed at defining the awareness by persons with disabilities about the possible emergency situation in which they might be involved, considering even their responsiveness. At the purpose, an addressed questionnaire was structured, that considers factors related to:

- persons and their needs, in relation to their difficulty when moving around, with any aids;
- housing, that is typology and its geographical location within the context of risk areas;
- their relationship with emergency, to understand how they process needs and knowledge about spatial arrangements for safety.

The ongoing survey recall an inquiry developed in USA [5]. The paper will introduce the results coming from the working out of the first group of the collected questionnaires (about 265), which show aspects of special interest such as the knowledge of environmental risks from respondents (the majority stated with certainty that their territory is at risk from earthquakes or flood) and their awareness if the house is earthquake-proof or not (75%). It is also interesting the awareness of what to do at home, during an emergency situation (fire, earthquake or flood); at the same time the reports highlight a critical issue often underestimated: the widespread use of devices electrically powered (such as lifts) that may not work in case of emergency. Even the identification of safety areas in public spaces presents an uncertainty profile: whether 68.6% said they knew what a "area of refuge" is, 46.4% of them would not be able to recognize it.

The paper will therefore present comments to the results of the survey, that fits the path outlined by the EU on these issues [6] and could represent a resource and a starting point in defining future policies on the matter and a base for research projects targeted to constitute a data base (on territorial and extra-territorial scale) or applied experiences for prevention.

[1] Romano G. (2015), “La tutela delle strutture strategiche in emergenza: l’esperienza italiana”, in atti del convegno nazionale “EMERGENZA E FRAGILITA’ - Il Progetto degli Edifici Strategici a partire dall’Emergenza”, Ascoli Piceno, 2015

[2] National Council on Disability (2006), “The impact of hurricanes Katrina and Rita on people with disabilities: a look back and remaining challenges”, 2006 (<https://www.ncd.gov/publications/2006/Aug072006>)

[3] Fonte Governo Giapponese (2012), “The Earthquake and Persons with Disabilities - Mortality rate of persons with disabilities in the Great East Japan Earthquake”, 2012 (<http://www8.cao.go.jp/shougai/english/annualreport/2012/pdf/s12.pdf>)

[4] <http://www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/world-disasters-report/wdr2007/>

- [5] McClure L.A. et al. (2011), "Emergency Evacuation Readiness of Full-Time Wheelchair Users With Spinal Cord Injury", *Arch Phys Med Rehabil*, Vol 92, March 2011
- [6] Alexander D. e Sagramola S. (2014), "Major Hazards and People with Disabilities – Their Involvement in Disaster Preparedness and Response", Council of Europe ([https://www.ucl.ac.uk/igh/research/a-z/related-docs-images/kelman-ref\\_2014\\_CoE\\_Alexander\\_and\\_Sagramola\\_\\_EN\\_.pdf](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/igh/research/a-z/related-docs-images/kelman-ref_2014_CoE_Alexander_and_Sagramola__EN_.pdf))