

Feedback on floods in Var, south of France, 15th June 2010 : different societal impacts and responses linked to levels of prevention, organization and information

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Observing the last dramatical floods in Var in south of France on 15th June 2010, very differents responses and impacts can be identified. 23 death, people missing, more than 50 communities impacted, 700 Millions Euros of damages were to declare after the event.

Most of human loss, 12 people, were to deplore in Draguignan in Var were 270 mm of rainfall were registered in the city center.

This tragedy reminds all the necessity of prevention, organization and communication.

In term of flood disaster, the fact is that physical protection is necessary but inevitably limited. To manage these kinds of crisis, local authorities need to be able to base their policy against flood on prevention, warnings, post-crisis analysis and feedback from former experience.

While many damages were observed in Draguignan, the event was different in Hyères, Sainte-Maxime, Cogolin, Grimaud or Toulon who behaved to face it by minimizing the effects, and economic impacts of the flood. The fact is that they had prepared their organization to face flood crisis, they had informed the population of what had to be done, they had given security advices, they had reacted from the vigilance information and kept on being informed during the event to adapt their plans and actions: opening security centers, closing roads before they get flooded, evacuating when necessary.

The most relevant example is in Sainte-Maxime where 260 mm of rainfall were registered in the city center, a volume close to the 270 mm registered in Draguignan during the same event. In Sainte-Maxime, no human loss was to deplore, the community was informed, had the information of rainfall intensity and rainfall effects in anticipation and could inform the citizen with the help of the police circulating and communicating in the streets. Getting informed the citizen could elevate and protect their property, evacuate their cars on the hights of the community, and secure themselves and family. Comparing this event with what happened in the same city, Sainte Maxime on 19th September 2009, where hundreds of cars were flooded, the conclusion is that prevention, organization and communication made the difference. Further more this last event was more important with 260 mm of rainfall registered in city center of Sainte Maxime on 15th of june 2010, while 110 mm were registered in September 2009 during the event that caused many damages.

The principle for communities and companies to face these kinds of crisis is to prepare emergency plans, to organize crisis management and reduce risks; to organize themselves or to get help and assistance during crisis to activate and adapt emergency plans with enough of anticipation; and to analyse floods effects and improve emergency plans afterwards.

These organizations have to be coordinated with state services to secure continuity and coherence of information.

In order to reduce risks, and to keep the benefits of these organizations, local communities and companies have to maintain the awareness of risk of the citizens and employees. They also have to maintain their safety plans to keep them constantly operational.

This kind of initiative is developed notably by Predict services, nationally and notably in south of France and internationally. In Haiti Predict services helps the 30 most vulnerable communities to elaborate their

community safety plans.