

*ok. punto da leggere*

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The idea to use teams of Civil Protection (or Civil Defence, I don't know exactly) Volunteers, specifically trained, for the case of pollution of crude oil or other hydrocarbons when these oils get beaches or coast-lines, was born inside the European Commission after the relevant experiences taken by the big disasters of oil tankers Erika and Prestige that all of us can remember.

When this kind of disaster happens, professional teams of Agencies or other governmental Bodies (in Italy, for example, the Hydrocarbon National Body, the Ministry of the Environment, the Coast Guard) are not enough: we need, to say so, "integrations that can help competences", and these integrations, for the job ashore (not at sea) when the disaster already happened and the aim is to bound and to limit damages not only for local communities but also for the local environment and for the local sea fauna (especially birds), the European Community looks at Volunteers organizations too.

Therefore this project, realized in Italy through the Italian Civil Protection Department, that imagines a training model able to set in motion the voluntary work...But a training model, because in this field, spontaneity is not a good thing...the volunteer must be trained, he must know that his task is to help professional teams, and therefore he must follow and stick to their instructions, avoiding any improvisation or worst, but, above all, he must learn what absolutely must not to be done. So trained, this volunteer will be able to give a real "qualified help".

The training course is based on a schedule of four days, three for the theoretical and practical lessons, and the last one for a closing exercise, for a class room of 50 student, shared and appointed by the volunteer organizations of national interest registered by the Civil Protection Department, plus ten regulars of the Italian Coast Guard.

The course moves through all maritime Regions of Italy, that is to say 14, and so doing we will have at the end about 750 volunteers ready for the task....Immediately, volunteers of the Region hit by the pollution can be employed, while, if necessary, others can be added, coming in the meanwhile from other Regions.

Till now we have had three courses: In Venice the first, the second in Cagliari (Sardinia), the third in Catania (Sicily), the fourth will be held probably next January 2008 in Genoa (Liguria)...

And just in Sardinia, last June, we have had the "baptism of fire", to say so, because they had an oil pollution getting about three kilometres of beach near Arbatax, and the Mayor asked for the reclamation of the place the help of local SNS volunteers just trained in Cagliari some month before.

The course program has been planned by the Civil Protection, the Coast Guard, the National Institute for the Wild Fauna, the National Institute for the Scientific and Technological Research applied to the Sea, and one part is dedicated to illustrate the effects of pollution at sea and coastal environment, a part is dedicated to the practical training on treatment techniques of oil and hydrocarbons (collecting, transport...), another part treats of laws and rules to fight pollution (only elements of knowledge obviously), and a last one treats of the individual safety and protective measures including the safe use of equipments and tools, the use of protection clothes, the cleaning of protection clothes, how to decontaminate at the end of the job shift.

Another part is finally dedicated to the search, collecting, transport, rehabilitation, release, euthanasia, etc. of birds and other sea animals.

Before the course begins, every appointed candidate receives, well in advance and at home, a certain number of issues with basic knowledge about some of the above items, to be studied before attending the course: before to be admitted to the class room, teaches check the level of learning of these basic knowledge.

Concluding and just to give an idea, some items of the courses program:

- role of the national service of the civil protection
- role of the Coast Guard
- role of the voluntary work
- legislation about the sea pollution
- technical cards about the handling of various kind of oil and hydrocarbons, and connected advices given by a doctor, from the sanitary point of view
- different kinds of pollution at sea
- different intervention techniques with reference to different kinds of coast-line (beaches with sand, stones, rocks, cliffs, etc..)
- absorbent and wasting chemical products
- sanitary and veterinary aspects (illness passing on from the wild fauna to human beings)

And finally, very important because when these disasters happens all the world rushes on the place, some information on relations with the press, other "media" and local communities.

That's all, thank you for your attention.