



SHARING BEST PRACTICES ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

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Catastrophic Events Management

KATRINA and L'AQUILA experiencesⁱ

Interventions by:

- **Dr. Scott Wells**, Federal Coordinating Officer (at the time of Katrina), U.S. Department of Homeland Security - FEMA
- **Dr Agostino Miozzo**, Co-General Manager of the Civil Protection Department of Italy

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Scott Wells – Catastrophic Events

“best practices” and “worst practices”

Good morning,

First let me clear, I am no longer with FEMA; I was FEMA as Federal Coordinating Officer but I left FEMA in 2006, so everything I am saying to you today is from a private American citizen.

I am taking a couple of liberties: one is that this meeting is talking about “best practices”, I am talking of “worst practices”, and there is a reason for that: is that I do not remember good things to happen, I remember bad things to happen. And I will make references to Katrina, one of the catastrophic disaster I was involved in for 9 months.



My central message I would like to give across to you today is a kind of a follow of what secretary Chertoff has said and this is “We are not serious”, and he used the example that Congress is not serious enough, they need to give more authority to the federal government and so we need to be more serious. That is my message a guess to you, we are not serious, and “we” is a big world, by “we” I mean everybody, the citizen, the families, local state federal government private sector, all of us. We are not serious enough today for the threats that confront to us.



Have we made progress? Yes, but the enemy has made more progress to me and threats have been growing. I have been involved in emergency management for over 20 years. We have threats now I ever imagined 20 years ago, plains running in arrases, nuclear terrorism. So we are now in a very dynamic environment with this treats is pure scaring, and I do not think we are serious enough, this is my central point.

Catastrophic events are always different.



A catastrophic event is not one step above the large event, they are different, and we have to acknowledge and respect the catastrophic events are different, it is exponential from large is not incremental, and we cannot go “linear” for catastrophic event. So we have to respect a catastrophic event are different: so a cascading effect to them that leads you not to have track of what you do, Katrina is an example, thinks start following apart, and start on ravelling from a catastrophic event; Katrina and Louisiana we had to the Capital Cities in Louisiana, about seventy miles

north the New Orleans, two days before the rainfall. As soon the hurricane landed at 6:10 in the morning, on Monday August 29, we have lost our situational awareness and the state IOC, the federal state, loosed what we call Initial Operational Facility.

We did not know what was going on, we had a void, that is a cascade of event from a catastrophic event



The biggest operational problem that we had in Katrina was time, time is the biggest enemy we cannot keep up with operational tempo that that disaster gave us. Mather Nature was operating in seconds to create demand for us, dead bodies, search and rescue, housing, feeding, water, emergency power, evacuation: they runs in seconds and our response was running in minutes to hours, we were out of sync between what the demand was and what our capability was able to respond: that is just way as catastrophic events happens.

And planners, responders, we all have to

acknowledge this in planning response operations

In a word, what I am trying to say is: are we thinking big enough? We did not think enough in Katrina.

When you go to a disaster, everybody goes with his point of view, their own background on how things operate, based on the own experiences; and this works small to medium, may be large disaster because you cannot go linear; when you get something catastrophic you have to change the way you think, because they cannot work, it is not linear, its exponential. You got to look outside the conventional, and unless you try to lead to do that, unless you have plans to do that ahead of time, you could be in the conventional mindset for an unconventional disaster, and that is not worth.

The follow-on

A second point is the follow-on: you can show up to a catastrophic disaster. None America, not a country like you are as to face to a great earthquake as you do in Italy. We have all our great resources right capabilities to do things, and, at least when I was in FCO; you cannot do this for a catastrophic event, you cannot just show up: you got to have a plan, you got to be prepared.

I have a friend, Jack Colleague, that is the state director of emergency management in the state of Texas, and he is a sentence: he says, “Texas is **managing risks, not consequences**”; to me this is very profound and that captures one sentence what I am here to talk you about: it is like preparedness. And that is not the easy thing to do to manage risks and not consequences.

Because when I was FCO we managed consequences: maybe it is different today. That is reacting to what happened there.

To go from managing consequences to managing risks is a huge see-change on how we operate it.

One it requires great investments, and the state of Texas and other states like Florida had, but not all of



them; some of them do manage risks, they would do risk assessment. State of Texas looks into most likely event, which is hurricane, most destructive event, which is Houston with all large population, the port and they have planned according to those risks, the most destructive, the most likely, and, they spend millions of dollars on preparedness stuff;

They bring in science, that is another thing. Emergency Management is a kind of science. How you take advantage of science, marry science with the operational environment. The people did the modelling, at the Champaign Illinois, the scientist got with the operations in the plan.

Let me tell you, if you have done it, that is a experience there is a growing pain associated with that and the world of the emergency management is just taking advantage and use that capability to use science.

Right now is more science we do and we had so much science, so much technology we can use to help us we did not show up.

Try to achieve the unity of efforts

Third think I will talk you is most important at all: the essence of what we do, in the world of the emergency management, is trying to achieve the unity of efforts.

In America that is very important, is an important to have unity of efforts: but in fight battle or respond to a disaster how you get unity of effort across a wide range of units and jurisdiction.

That is the key: we call it ... into management systems, that is the foundation doctrinal of the publication we had to get unity of effort. We had a national response framework: I do not think we are here yet.

Because if we say some preliminary sentences,



that unity of effort means everybody and an event like this, government can't do that. It is to take on the civilian, the survival, is should take the private sector, it should take the volunteers, international support and I am asking: are we there? Do we have unity of efforts for

catastrophic events that can orchestrate international support, private sector, public sector, mass critical stuff, at the right place and at the right time? That is a tough think to do, but that is the world we leave in.

However is a big problem to do this effort, it is a one word: Government.

It is a nice think to be a private citizen, I can say this thinks.

Government, at least Federal Government, was not built to speed, was built to safety. Again I go back to my first comments, time is the biggest enemy in the catastrophic disasters: there are so many checks and balance in United States, that things move very slowly: you have to build consensus, and is very difficult to execute disaster response operations because all of those checks and balance of the system we are leaving, and we have a federal system of democracy: that means we share power.

When I was an FCO I wanted to be a dictator, I wanted to be in charge of everything, because you need in charge one person to like the military when they fight battles, that is how they have unity of efforts, they have one guy charge: do that do that do that!

We do not "do that" in our world, is a bottom up the world of the emergency management, the state support the local and the local support the state: they share power.

We have 56 states and jurisdiction, we have 3300 counties and nations, thousands of cities: there are so many jurisdictions over there, here some jurisdiction of total authority you are a decision maker

What we have to do after a disaster is to bring all these people together and work together for a common good; Government create this culture of passivity of not doing anything, You do not get a "yes", you do not get a "no" you get a "may be".

That is not working, you need decision makers and all we preach here in America that the decision maker is down in the as the way as Dr Nuss have decision making has been centralized, at the national level for this big disaster and that is very difficult



Our success story in Katrina was what Coast Guard

Our success story in Katrina was what Coast Guard did and a couple of other agencies of first responders they were successful because they empowered people on the ground, to make decision and do things when they need it done.

That is a key element of how unity of effort can be put in, but the practice of that has not reached the point of fruition.

Last think I would talk about, I guess we are closing, is appropriated here in DC: success or failure is a

function of leadership. and I see the nation power right here in DC. By my experience on disaster, the people on the ground they know what to do and they do it. They showed initiatives, they have done great things.

I had a fiend to me, a General, that told me: "is the private and the sergeant that win wars, is the general and admiral that loose wars".

Managing risks and not consequences defines the success

And I thing that is what we have here: leadership at all levels, local level, state and federal level they have to show leadership, they have to demonstrate leadership and people that support in the state they have to do that too. That means a couple of things, that means making decisions, within incomplete and faulty information, is something we need: that means in all this preparedness phase you have to trade on, you have to invest money in preparedness: and preparedness is just not a plan. A plan is the start of the preparedness: you have not only to make a plan, you got resources that needs to be identified you got to train and exercise as plan and integrate it

So preparedness is difficult and managing risks and not consequences defines the success, but that creates a great commitment of leaders to resource constrained environment. But if we win or we lose or we succeed or we fail will be a function of Leadership

Thank you very much.



Agostino Miozzo – Emergency Management

It is really a pleasure and a honour to be here to represent the Italian Civil Protection Department.

I was following with great interest the presentation Mr Scott Wells gave just a few minutes ago.

Looking the picture of this seminar leaflet and the previous interventions, mention has been done about an ***agile system, designed with creativity, non-bureaucratic...*** .

I was one of the organizers of that visit during the G8 at L'Aquila, and I can assure you that we were no bureaucratic at all, very active, with plenty of aspirin in our pockets because the headache we had in organizing the G8 summit and the visit of the two presidents in L'Aquila area was really a great, demanding task. And in respect with the speech by Scott Wells about the Katrina hurricane emergency and the relevant studies, we too have done a great evaluation and study. Normally we say that we are learning from our mistakes: but sometimes, not always, we learn from the mistakes of the others.

Katrina was a great experience for all the international community, because we have seen here the real gaps, the real problems that normally we have to face in managing a major natural, or man-originated disaster, which is the Civil Protection's business.

6th April 2009 h 3.32 a.m. – 5,8 Richter

I'd like to elaborate a little bit about L'Aquila disaster, that is to say the latest major catastrophe we had in Italy. From a general point of view, an earthquake of 5.8 magnitude on the Richter scale is not catastrophic event, at least if we compare it with either the Sichuan earthquake in China, or the Banda Aceh tsunami in Indonesia; with respect to those events, the L'Aquila earthquake could be rather classified as a "normal" earthquake.

Nevertheless, for my Country it has been a disaster, a catastrophe, for several reasons: for the dimension of the earthquake, for the fact it hit a very old town, one of the most beautiful towns in Italy, and the epicentre of the disaster was the historical centre of that town. That was a very big problem.

What did then happen with our response system? How did we react? Thirty minutes after the earthquake, we had this scenario.

A scenario is, as you know, something we prepare in advance, we are not going to prepare it during an emergency, and the data that we got from this scenario where rather interesting and significant. The estimates (about people and buildings involved, etc) that we got 30 minutes after the shock were somehow



very close to the reality. That underlines the fact the scenario is a really relevant element in the preparedness, an element very useful not just for earthquakes but for every kind of disaster.

Thanks to the scenario, we were able to activate the amount of resources we considered necessary and useful for this kind of event. Somehow we were lucky because of the fact the tragedy was a 5.8 magnitude event; if we were to face a 7.1 shock like the Messina earthquake in 1908, I'm sure the situation would have been very, very different for us. Fortunately, we were able to manage the actual kind of disaster, and the Civil Protection system was operational immediately.

thanks to the organization that is in place in my Country, which is, as I said, the result of the lessons learned from decades of mistakes we have done also in Italy.

“The Italian Civil Protection Department: a good result after years of mistakes...”

6 th April, 2009	
3h32	•earthquake magnitude 5,8
4h15	•Crisis Unit of the Department of Civil Protection
4h40	•DPC teams departure
4h40	•Operational Committee of Civil Protection meeting
9h00	•Organisation of the Direction of Command and Control on site

Coordination is the real word, is the strong concept that must be implemented. Coordination cannot wait for the emergency: it must be in place before. You cannot think you can establish a coordination during an emergency unless coordination is well planned in advance, since “peace time”. So at L’Aquila we had this organization, the coordination team was there, all the relevant persons and institutions were gathered around our coordination table.

The first response to the earthquake was immediate: fire brigades, volunteers, health services, everybody was there. The first to activate was the local system, which reacted in real time. As we always say it is the local system that provides the first aid, that reduces the overall vulnerability and the number of victims and suffering people. This is obviously true if the local system is well organized, actually in this case the local system reacted immediately, and within 24 hours the national system was also operating, with the fire

I was listening to what Mr Scott Wells said about what has been learned from the mistakes that occurred during Katrina, and I can say that the experience of the mistakes Italy has done in the past has brought to some good results, including the organization that is in place today.

The earthquake occurred at 3.32 a.m. and our organization activated immediately, a few minutes after the event we called the first coordination meeting.

	24 hours	48 hours
Fire fighters	2010	2400
Armed forces	1520	1650
Police	1500	2000
Red Cross	800	800
Volunteers	2000	4300
K9	108	134
	8 Regions+1 Autonomous Province	14 Regions+1 Autonomous Province



brigades setting up their coordination system, search and rescue started and, considering the dimensions of this emergency, we decided that we were able to manage the crisis with our own resources.

Mr Scot Wells was talking about international support during the Katrina emergency. In the case of the Abruzzo earthquake, after a first assessment Italy informed the friend Countries, that immediately reacted offering international support, that we would be able to manage the crisis with our own, internal resources, so we asked those Countries not to send their own search and rescue teams, their fire brigades and not to send goods and means that we may have not been able to use in the proper way.

From the Emergency to the Reconstruction



And again, going back to the Katrina experience, I remember how difficult it was for the United States to open to the international community, to require some kind of help to the international community. A traditional donor Country suddenly became a recipient of aid from foreigners, but in such circumstances we may not be ready, not prepared to receive international aid.

This is an interesting point, and we have gone through the same experience in Italy. After the L'Aquila event we did not request the humanitarian international support

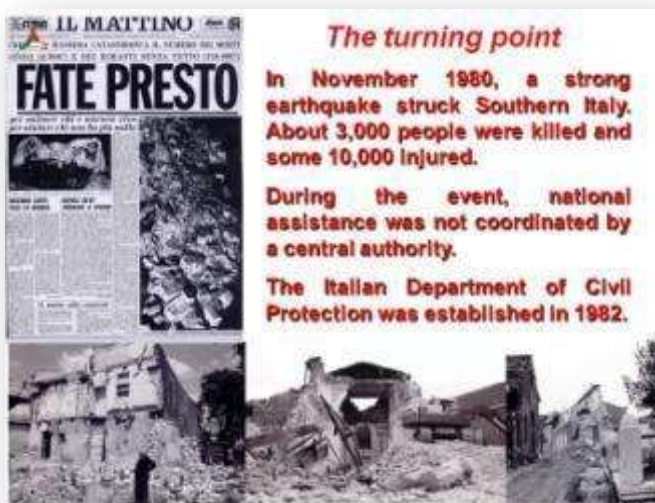
which is usually made available in such cases: we asked the friend Countries to come and help us in a completely different way, that is by supporting reconstruction of some of the beautiful historical buildings that have been destroyed by the earthquake, and our friends are doing that.

Even if I won't elaborate on this aspect here, many friend Countries are supporting Italy and, believe me, they are facing big difficulties, because they were not prepared to provide a different kind of support from what is normally requested. We are used to provide aid to developing Countries, but on the other side we are not prepared, even from the legal point of view, to put money in a developed Country. If we – I mean the Italian Civil Protection – were requested to put money, not only to send goods, to the United States, we would experience some problems, starting from the legal base for such an action.



Why did we say "no" to the offer of international support? We said "no" since, as you see from the figures in Slide n. 7, the Italian Police, Armed Forces, Red Cross, volunteers, all of them were already operating in the disaster area with more than 10,000 professionals within 24 hours from the event. After that we started sending back a huge number of last-minute volunteers, who were coming and trying to support, because we didn't want last-minute volunteers on the scene, just professional and organized teams and staff, capable of operating and behaving in a proper way.

Something different from the past that we have done in L'Aquila is also the post-emergency management. As you know, as the result of the earthquake we had between 68 and 70 thousand homeless people. In the past, the homeless were traditionally recovered in tents or campers, or in containers. But to live in a container in a place like L'Aquila, where temperatures fall considerably below zero in winter time, is quite difficult, so this time we decided not to put people in containers or campers, but to offer them a different opportunity. We decided to start a crash programme to build anti-seismic houses, that has allowed to attain considerable results in a six month time frame. By the end of 2009, almost all the homeless people in the area hit by the earthquake will be housed in new, suitable buildings, while on the same time the damaged buildings are being repaired and reconstructed.



Again, as I said before, we are learning from our mistakes, and I am proud to say this time Italy has had the capability to deploy quite an efficient, well-functioning Civil Protection organization.

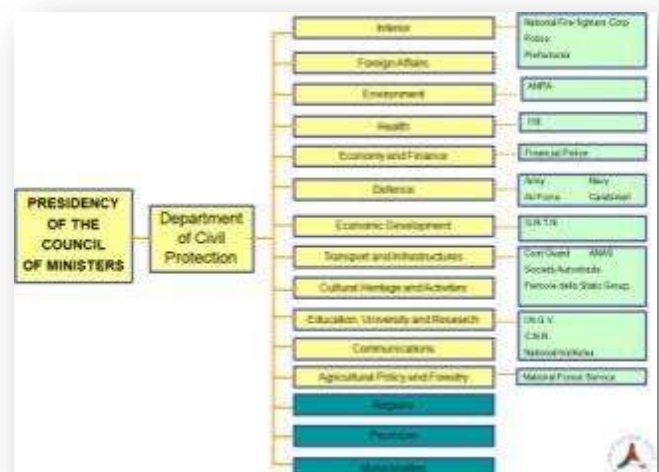
Timing is a relevant factor in crisis management.

This picture was taken 28 years ago, after the earthquake in Irpinia. "Fate presto" means "Hurry up!", the newspaper in the picture was published three DAYS after the earthquake. Today, if after three HOURS the fire brigades were not on the spot we would be prosecuted, we would be shot by the population! Twenty eight years ago, as I said, this headline on the newspaper was

published three days after the event: that means three days after the earthquake people were not yet properly assisted; we actually had thousands of soldiers and volunteers deployed in the area, but without coordination, without a clear chain of Command and Control. This clear and effective chain is what we have finally been able to achieve in Italy, after years and decades of efforts.

Nobody likes to be coordinated

We – I mean the Department of Civil Protection – we have a very interesting position, but on the same time a very difficult one from the political, technical and practical point of views: we are in the Prime Minister's Office, that is to say the "Italian FEMA" reports directly to the Prime Minister. This means that when my boss, the Head of the Civil Protection Department, speaks during a major emergency, he speaks on behalf of the Prime Minister. As a consequence, it would be very difficult for either the Minister of Interior, the Minister of Defence, or the Minister of Health to answer "no" to my boss, when he asks for helicopters, ambulances, staff personnel or whatever. Our position is an important one, but very difficult to manage, since



nobody likes to be coordinated: no Minister likes to be told what to do from Senior staff and “external” personnel, that react and act on behalf of the Prime Minister.

For Katrina a massive support was given by the Military Organizations: In Italy the military service is today non longer compulsory, that means we have unfortunately lost part of the military personnel that was easily available during emergencies. We have however in Italy a large number of organizations, about 3,000, that gather more than one million Civil Protection volunteers, we can rely upon.

Share experiences, share a common language is a “must”

Early warning is another “must”, an essential factor for an efficient intervention by the Civil Protection.

About new challenges, that’s something everybody has to face. An interesting example comes from a nation-wide electric power black out Italy suffered in September 2003. At the very beginning we thought we were under a major terror attack: fortunately we were not, we soon discovered the reason was a technical problem, a thunderstorm that collapsed energy power lines, which were the origin of the problem.

The funeral of Pope John Paul II was another major event which proved very difficult to manage. We had to deal with millions of pilgrims, some of which had to queue between 18 and 24 hours before being able to enter St Peter’s square, so the problem was to organize not only the funeral, but also medical aid for people forced to stand and wait for hours and hours. Another headache was the media, which is always a problem for any one dealing with a catastrophe or a major disaster.

Last but not least, as we have said, no one can take care of everything by himself. That’s applies even to the strongest Nation in the world, the United States. And we are very convinced we have to work together, we have to share, this is an obligatory path.

The future will not bring self-sufficiency; on the contrary, the future will enhance the need of sharing experiences, share a common language and a common code of conduct. Only if we know what to do, how to ask for international assistance, we shall be able to manage the future crises, and to reduce our vulnerability.

ⁱ In occasion of the nomination of Dr Agostino Miozzo as the Managing Director for Crisis Response and Operational Coordination in the European External Action Service (EEAS, AOS presents the recording of the speeches done at the 3rd HS Conference held in Washington with the sponsorship of The George Washington University and SELEX Sistemi Integrati, a Finmeccanica Company.