

Mesimex 2006 - Discovering Vesuvius: an exhibition to improve risk education in the high volcanic risk area of Vesuvius

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In the framework of the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection, established by the Council Decision (2001/792/CE) of 23 October 2001, the European Commission has promoted training activities including Major Emergencies Simulation Exercises.

The project called “Somma Vesuvius Mesimex- Major Emergency SIMulation Exercise” on volcanic risk has taken place in October 2006 and has been coordinated by the Italian Civil Protection Department.

Mesimex’s scenario has dealt with the simulation of the Vesuvius reactivation, from the early warning phase up to the final evacuation of a sample of two thousand people from the area at risk, as established by the Emergency Plan. The exercise has been focused on the preparatory phase.

One of the main goal of the exercise was “to spread information about volcanic hazards to schools and among the population, in order to make them aware with the National Emergency Plan for Vesuvius Area”.

This goal has been achieved by means of cultural events. For the first time a Vesuvius Civil Protection Exercise has been accompanied by the setting up of relevant exhibitions.

Three exhibitions were held during and after the exercise in Naples and Ercolano, the aim of which was to create a cultural experience for visitors through art, history and science of Vesuvius volcano. In particular, the exhibition “Science and the vol-

cano: millenniums of history”, realized by Osservatorio Vesuviano – INGV, and Civil Protection Department, has been designed to increase volcanic risk awareness among people living in high risk active volcanoes such as Vesuvius. The exhibition is especially oriented to children in school age, and it has been arranged according to a didactical point of view. The exhibit shows how the volcano works and its volcanic history; displaying historical scientific instruments and books, archaeological findings, video footages. Moreover, sensorial and interactive experiences help visitors to a better comprehension of the fascinating world of volcanoes and the surveillance system. A special area has been devoted to Civil Protection activities, focused not only on natural and human-related emergencies, but also on the management of extraordinary events.

The visitors of this exhibition have been many thousands, 5000 of which were school students. The impact on population has been very impressive; most comments have been focused on the request of a fair relationship between scientific community and public to keep people informed about volcanic activity in the Neapolitan region.