

FACTSHEET RISK REDUCTION MEASURES

Incorporating and training volunteers for hazard observation and increase of emergency response

Where was it implemented?

Glashütte, Saxony, Germany

Fields of action

- Settlement area
- Early warning and disaster management
- Risk communication

Related to measure from the catalogue of measures

- Interactive communication and participation formats
- Ensure preconditions for the implementation of disaster control plans
- Contact persons and consultation hours for citizens' consultation
- Holding stocks of sandbags, boards, lids and flaps



Training of uncommitted volunteers in cooperation with the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW); local committee Dippoldiswalde.

Source: Judith Schache, TU Dresden

Area characterisation

Area type: rural

Landscape type: flat, hilly, mountainous

Problem

After the enormous flood in August 2002, additional heavy precipitation events led to further floodings in the City of Glashütte. It consists of 16 districts and owns 10 voluntary fire brigades. Heavy precipitation events in hilly areas occur rapidly and are limited in space and time, which makes emergency planning more difficult. Those events often come along with uncontrolled surface water runoff and high risk of erosion due to predominantly agricultural used areas. In rural, hilly areas, emergency responders have to cover quite long distances until they reach their place of emergency.

According to the 4th German Volunteer Survey, the engagement in the sectors of emergency- and rescue service has developed below-average. The number of members in voluntary fire brigades is expected to decline. That's why emergency responders might reach their physical limits, especially whilst larger and longer emergency situations.

The project "VEREINT - Cooperatively organised civil protection whilst extreme weather conditions" analysed, in how far uncommitted volunteers can be integrated into disaster management and response. The RAINMAN project accompanied VEREINT in its work and disseminated the results in its pilot regions.

Description and aim

The measure aims at the strengthening of local, voluntary emergency responders in rural areas. A systematic approach to integrate uncommitted volunteers in civil protection has been developed. Uncommitted volunteers are defined as persons or organisations that do not belong to any authority and/or organisation with security-related duties, but agree to help in emergency situations like floods voluntarily. In contrast to spontaneous volunteers, skills, competences and contact details of uncommitted volunteers are gathered in advance, so that they can be organised and employed systematically.

In the beginning, clarity about the future role of uncommitted volunteers is required. According to the expected

crisis situation of the municipality, specific tasks for uncommitted volunteers need to be defined. On this basis, an overall strategy including the operational and organisational structure for the so-called “pool of volunteers” needs to be specified by the municipal administration and disaster management agencies. Afterwards, the process of volunteer recruitment starts. Hereby, the realisation of a one-day-event, a so-called “flood provision day” is a core element of recruitment. This event informs participants about problems and losses caused by uncontrolled surface water runoff and sensitises to feel responsible for self-provision and to take actions to help and protect others. Recurrent volunteer trainings help to maintain the number of volunteers and their skills.

Effect of measure

In the example of Glashütte, four flood provision days had been taken place. Supported by further public-oriented measures and activities, a pool of volunteers was consolidated. Recurring volunteer trainings have become an integral part of the municipality and take place at least once a year. Professional emergency personnel was trained on teaching uncommitted volunteers in handling sandbags.



Training of uncommitted volunteers.
Source: N. Richter, TU Dresden

Description of implementation

Implementation: 01.12.2016 - 30.11.2019

Effect horizon: mid-term

Involved stakeholders:
volunteer fire brigade, Municipality of Glashütte (mayor, disaster management), city and district council, citizens

Initiator / responsible:
Municipality of Glashütte

Lessons-learned

Main success factor:

- Involvement of local committees and disaster defences
- Organisation of the event “flood provision day”
- Effective information of citizens by flyers, posters, postcards, (website) announcements and articles in the official gazette

Main challenge:
Finding and motivating potential volunteers as well as integrating them into the pool of volunteers with respect to their manifold skills and (professional) competences. A good sense of belonging in the pool of volunteers as well as between the volunteers, professional emergency personnel and municipality can be considered as indispensable and needs to be maintained constantly.

Synergies / beneficial aspects:

- Relief of professional emergency personnel, but increasing responsibility
- Local experiences and knowledge of volunteers might be helpful
- Enhancement of self-provision of citizens, forced by local training events

Conflicts / constraints:

- All activities are based on voluntary engagement and have to be chosen carefully and economically to save capabilities, esp. time.
- Voluntariness complicates a reliable planning in an emergency case.

Key message to others starting with a similar task	Contact
<p>Results of this measure have been published in a practical guideline: “Entwicklung und Implementierung eines Helferpools” (ISBN 978-3-86780-612-1) (in German). It is designed to encourage other municipalities with similar conditions to establish a pool of volunteers to cope with floods successfully.</p>	<p>TU Dresden, CIMMT - Centre of Production Engineering and Management</p> <p>E-Mail: cimtt@mailbox.tu-dresden.de</p>
<p>Further information (in German)</p>	<p>Project website „VEREINT“: http://vereint.cimtt.de</p> <p>Website of the Municipality of Glashütte: https://www.glashuette-sachs.de/</p>