



CHAIN OF SAFETY
covering the whole north sea region

AFTER ACTION REPORT (AAR)

BE-NL command post exercise (CPX)

30-may-2008 -> 31-may-2008

COFLEX

(Coastal Flood Exercise)

SUMMARY = 30.01.2009



Interreg North Sea Region

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1. ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After Action Report
AARIP	After Action Report / Improvement Programme
ADCC	Algemene Directie Crisiscentrum
AIREVAC	Aerial Evacuation
BE	Belgium
BZK	Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties
CCOMM	Crisis Communication
CEMAC	Crisis & Emergency Management Agency
CGCCR	Centre Gouvernemental de Coördination et de Crise (Belgian National Crisis Centre)
COFLEX	Coastal Flood Exercise
CPX	Command Post Exercis
C3	Command, Control & Coordination
DCS	Document Control Sheet
DDL	Document Distribution List
DDP	Document Distribution Procedure
DirCo	Director of Co-ordination (Federal Police, BE)
DK	Denmark
DTG	Date Time Group
EM	Emergency Management
EMF	Emergency Management Function
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
ERC	Expertisecentrum Risico- en Crisiscommunicatie
ES	Emergency Support
ESF	Emergency Support Function
EU	European Union
EVAC	Evacuation
EVAL	Evaluation / Evaluator
EXER	Exercise
GE	Germany
IBZ	Intérieur – Binnenlandse Zaken
IP	Improvement Programme
IP	Internet Protocol
MIC	Monitoring & Information Centre (EU)
NCC	Nationaal Crisiscentrum (Dutch National Crisis Centre)
NL	the Netherlands
N/A	not applicable – not available
OBS	Observation / Observer
PA	Public Address
PCC	Provinciaal Coördination Committee (members of the PCC)
PCC	Provinciaal Crisiscentrum (Crisis Centre of Province level)
P.WVL	Province of West Flanders
P.ZLD	Province of Zeeland
S.I.	Système International
STAAR	Standard specifyint the After Action Report
ToO	Theatre of Operations
TTX	Table Top Exercise
UK	United Kingdom
USAR	Urban Search & Rescue
VOIP	Voice Over IP
WC	Working Committee
WVL	West-Vlaanderen (West Flanders)
ZLD	Zeeland

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 NARRATIVE

1. The European funded Interreg3B project Chain of Safety was aimed at improving knowledge sharing, information exchange, logistical support and even joint operations before during and after a coastal flooding in the North Sea region. Authorities and different types of agencies from BE, DE, GE, NL and UK participated and developed a vast number of activities through various Working Committees (WC).
2. The WC 'Exercise' decided to organise a transboundary bi-nation command post exercise (CPX) with the project members from Belgium and the Netherlands. CEMAC assisted in the preparation and conduct of the exercise (EXER), which was held on monday 30-may-2008 and tuesday 31-may-2008.
3. The exercise, which was subdivided in four segments, aimed at addressing the various phases of a (coastal) flooding in which emergency management teams and emergency services are involved and have key roles to play. The four segments were selected based on previous mathematical calculations regarding flood risks and the different relevant stages.
Thus the exercise scenario addressed: reaction to a flood warning, incident response during the storm, emergency response and relief operations in the hours after the storm, and finally the phase where salvage and recovery can commence.
4. The complete provincial emergency management staff of the Province of West-Flanders (BE) and a somewhat downsized staff of the Province of Zeeland (NL) were the main players.
The exercise staff, composed of staff from CEMAC, the national level of both countries and various other representatives was off site in BE, in contact with two duo's of observer/evaluator in each of the crisis centres.
5. Exercise injects were delivered to the participants via e-mail, voice comm, Video-overIP and telefax. All participants could communicate with each other and the EXER staff via the same means. A basic scenario formed the skeleton and determined the sequence of events, whilst the interaction between all actors was the basis for the real time evolution of what was supposed to happen.
6. The two participating teams were to a greater or smaller extent unfamiliar with both the scenario and the exercise methodology, which had its impact on the overall performance and success of the exercise; and which lead to a number of observations which have been included in this AAR.
7. Referring only to the action during the EXER and the results of the hot debriefing of the two teams themselves, significant conclusions are:
 - a. the authorities responsible for the emergency management were to some extent unaware of the possibility of such large scale incidents and thus of the requirement to cope with the resulting volume in emergency response and logistics;
 - b. whilst communication across national borders was done in a pro-active and efficient manner, none of the participants had prior experience in setting up joint operations and consequently major activities could not benefit from the pooling of know how, equipment or operations in the field;
 - c. the significantly different organisation of analysis and decision making processes in both countries raises the question on how liaison and working-together can be organised in a manner which reduces chances of error and bias and optimizes efficiency and effectiveness.

2.2 KEY OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

8.

<i>Theme: Exercise Methodology</i>	
Observations	Recommendations and Corrective Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the exercise was a technological 'light' version of earlier VIREX exercises. the absence of a full scope forum and internet based communication platform proved more difficult in establishing cross-border co-operation; - the concept of a CPX – and more specifically the level or during-exercise involvement of the exercise staff differs in the two countries. This caused mis-alignments in the initial stage of the exercise; - the characteristics of decision making at provincial level in Belgium and the Netherlands are also different. The former being in support of operations, the latter being a mid-term think tank to anticipate potential difficulties in crisis management. These different roles were not always distinguished in the exercise scenario. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use the original VIREX concept - pre-briefing with the joint exercise staff prior to the exercise day; - the geographical co-location of both teams was beneficial to improve ad hoc steering and coordination - the same conclusion is valid for real time cross border co-operation during an actual emergency situation. Belgian authorities should be aware of the changing role of the province and the emerging role of the 'veiligheidsregio'.

9.

<i>Theme: Command & Control (national & transboundary)</i>	
Observations	Recommendations and Corrective Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - liaison between the two countries was sufficient and pro-active, although limited to a single staff level liaison point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it would have been better to establish multi-level and multi-channel command and control information flow and co-ordination points. As ref. (13.) this was defined in a more logical manner in the original VIREX concept, hence the recommendation to work via 'mail-boxes' or specified channels for itemised information.

10.

<i>Theme: Operations</i>	
Observations	Recommendations and Corrective Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cross-border co-operation was limited; - significant differences were identified in the modus operandi of the two crisis teams and in the type and level of information available at command level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the available instruments and information permitted the dutch team to identify clearly the required assets, to verify their national availability and to use IT systems to request foreign aid. the availability of better information sharing with several other nations other than Belgium, caused the peculiar event that the Netherlands authorities requested German helicopters in a BE-NL exercise ...; - the Belgian authorities did not have the instruments and information to assess own availability of assets and thus could not clearly identify which elements could benefit from foreign support or co-operation; - investment in a Belgian logistical monitoring system seems the primary axis of improving this process.

11.

<i>Theme: Crisis Communication</i>	
Observations	Recommendations and Corrective Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- both countries exchanged information regarding the communication with the population after messages and communication channels had been validated internally. This did not permit close concertation or joint communication, but due to the mostly operational nature of the messages, this was not considered critical.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-

12.

<i>Theme: Miscellaneous</i>	
Observations	Recommendations and Corrective Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the Dutch crisis team did dispose of a number of significant operational advantages, e.g. access to electronically stored plans and information, an electronic messaging systems involving all levels of crisis management, and the availability of a number of very valuable tools in terms of methods and documentation (e.g. the post-flooding recovery checklist).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- these instruments and methods can serve as potential Best Practices for the Belgian counter-parts.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE OPERATION OR EXERCISE

3.1 REALIA

- **Name of the Exercise** : COFLEX (COastal Flood EXercise) 0801
- **Duration** : 8 hours
- **Exercise Date** : 30-may-2008 (1600hr-2000hr)
31-may-2008 (0830hr – 1230hr)
- **Sponsor** : Project Chain of Safety (Interreg3B programme)
Working Committee PILOT
- **Type of Exercise** : bi-nation command post exercise (CPX)
- **Funding Source(s)** : European Union – Interreg3B programme
co-sponsorship by local and supra-local agencies involved in the project
- **Programme** : Activities of the Working Committee 'Exercise'

3.1.1 FOCUS

MITIGATION [x]	PLANNING [x]	RESPONSE [x]	RECOVERY [x]
<i>specific focus</i> - risk assessment related to coastal flood risks - pro-active operational and communications actions	- planning of the emergency response in EXER segment 1 - use of the Guidance document for transboundary co-operation	- organisation of the provincial emergency response - transboundary co-operation - national support operations	- reconditioning of zones flooded with salt water

3.1.2 SCENARIO TYPE

13. Major flooding, with operational, managerial and communications challenges.

3.1.3 LOCATION(S)

14. REAL
 BE - Brugge, Provincial Emergency Management Staff of the Province of East-Flanders
 BE - Zele, Exercise Staff
 NL – Middelburg, Provincial Emergency Management Staff of the Province of Zeeland
15. SIMULATED ToO
 BE – North Sea coast line between Zeebrugge (western side) and Knokke-Heist (eastern side)
 NL – North Sea coast line / Westerschelde region between Cadzand (western side) and Breskens (eastern side)

3.1.4 PARTICIPATING ORGANISATION(S)

NATIONAL

16. BE - CGCCR (Ministry of the Interior)
NL - NCC (Ministry of the Interior)
- LOCC
- DCC Ministry of Transport, public works and water management

SUPRA-LOCAL

17. BE - Flemish Regional Authority
BE - Provincial Authorities of the Province of West-Flanders
BE - Liaison Officer for the Province of East-Flanders
BE - Federal Health Inspector
BE - Federal Police – DirCo
BE - Commander of the Civil Protection unit for the Province of West-Flanders
BE - Military Commander of the Province of West-Flanders
NL - Provincial Authorities of the Province of Zeeland
▪ Waterboard Zeeuws-Vlaanderen
▪ Regional Police Zeeland
▪ Safety Region Zeeland
NL - Liaison Officer for the Province of Zeeland

LOCAL

18. BE - Representative of the Major of the Municipality of Knokke-Heist
BE - Fire Brigade of Knokke-Heist
BE - Local Police of Knokke-Heist
NL - Representative of the Major of the Municipality of Sluis

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

19. BE – CEMAC
BE – Royal Meteorological Institute
BE – Regional Authorities

3.1.5 NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

20. approx. 45

3.2 EXERCISE OVERVIEW

21. EXER COFLEX was divided into four segments of each more or less 1.5 hours, played over two days with each two segments. The segments per day had a short intervals inbetween. Each of the segments represented a time block in real time according to a multi-week time scale based on the possibilities of pre-storm weather and damage forecast, the actual emergency management during and immediately after the storm and the start of the recovery phase.
22. The real life events were simulated using graphical and textual representations based on prior analysis of flood scenario simulations and scientific literature related to coastal flooding and its consequences. The exercise objectives were specified by a working group in charge of the overall exercise preparation.
23. The exercise sessions were followed by an immediate (Hot) Debriefing at three locations: exercise staff (Zele, BE), crisis management team of West-Vlaanderen (Zeebrugge, BE) and crisis management team of Zeeland (Middelburg, NL). The transcripts of the debriefings with the participants were used as input for this AAR.

3.3 EXERCISE EVALUATION

24. The exercise staff was composed of three groups.
Team 'Zeel': 18 members of staff from CEMAC and various authorities from both participating countries
Team 'Zeebrugge': 2 members from the Working Committee Exercise
Team 'Middelburg': 2 member from the Working Committee Exercise
25. The two latter teams had two tasks:
 - a. observation and evaluation (OBS/EVAL) of the action in the crisis centre were they were present;
 - b. transfer of feedback from the playing centres to the central EXER staff.
26. The main team had multiple tasks:
 - a. control of the EXER;
 - b. reaction upon actions from the players;
 - c. indirect observation and evaluation through analysis of the actions and via the contacts with the other teams.
27. All EXER staff members who were also designated OBS/EVAL received a pre-exercise briefing, had the exercise handbook and a standard level III evaluation checklist.
All participants in the exercise received a viewfoil supported lead-in briefing explaining the exercise methodology, including the role and code of conduct of the OBS/EVAL.
28. The OBS/EVAL used their checklist to record observation during the exercise. The checklist or a summary document was later sent to CEMAC.
The participants in both teams were invited to a 5 minutes Hotwash at the end of day 1 and a formal Hot Debriefing at the end of the exercise (ENDEX).
All participants were asked to share observation and recommendations regarding the conduct of the exercise, the scenario and evidently the actions during the exercise.

All comments were recorded and sent to CEMAC in the format of a Hot Debriefing report and participants were also informed that they could afterwards send in their additional comments via e-mail.

29. An initial reporting on the EXER has taken place during the closing conference of the Chain of Safety project in The Hague (22-may-2008 and 23-may-2008).
30. This AAR is based on all comments and reports received from the various parties concerned. The AAR is structured in conformity with STAAR and the theme classification refers to FEMA EM/ES functions.

4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

31. The objectives of the EXER COFLEX as defined by the Working Committee Exercise were:
- a. increase bilateral information sharing in the exercise preparation phase;
 - b. test the validity of the proposed exercise methodology;
 - c. make EXER participants aware of the coastal flood risks and the consequences for emergency management;
 - d. promote the use of the “Guidance Document BE-NL Coastal Flooding” which had been developed as one of the activities of the WC ‘Pilot’ and assess its usefulness for other transboundary regions in the Chain of Safety project (or broader);
 - e. train the participants in the information processing and decision making processes directly linked to coastal flooding;
 - f. increase transboundary co-operation during the exercise and afterwards, both for the participating teams as for the members of the international EXER staff.

5. EVENT SYNOPSIS

5.1 EXERCISE SEGMENT 1

32. The national meteorological organisations have issued a warning that a heavy storm may, and probably will, hit the northern part of the Belgian coast line and the southern part of the Dutch coast line.
33. Both the Belgian and Dutch emergency management staff at provincial level convenes to assess the situation and to decide upon action to be taken to pro-actively increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the emergency response effort in case the storm does come on land in the designated area(s).
34. The emergency management teams receive but limited amounts of outside world information, since the situation is at that time still 'as normal'.
The objective of this EXER segment is thus primarily to stimulate reflections upon the consequences of a coastal flood and to let the teams prepare an action plan for the following 72 hours.
More specifically the issue of large scale evacuation is raised, confronting the teams with the necessity to make a decision regarding preferred course of action.
In terms of methodology, the first segment can be categorised as Table Top Exercise (TTX) rather than of a full CPX.

5.2 EXERCISE SEGMENT 2

35. The second segment starts with the situation whereby the actual storm is reaching the coastline. At first fragmented information indicates a breach of coastal defences near Knokke-Heist. Consecutive reports confirm the emergency and provide insight in the scale of the damages, i.e. a flooding of the municipality and the hinterland. Slightly delayed and in correspondence with the movement of the storm front, a similar flooding occurs in the vicinity of the Dutch municipality of Breskens and its hinterland.
36. At high pace, the two teams receive information from the terrain and various types of background information. In opposite direction, they issue orders to emergency services, media and the population which will provoke reactions by the EXER staff.
37. The two teams focused on establishing situational awareness and an overall assessment of the state of emergency and on taking decisions related to the operational disposition and operational priorities of the emergency services, the crisis communication (CCOMM) strategy, inter-agency and supra-local support and co-ordination and possibly evacuation.

5.3 EXERCISE SEGMENT 3

38. Day two, overall segment 3 covered the hours immediately following the passage of the storm. Although the adverse weather conditions (heavy winds, gale, etcetera) are over, the inflow of sea water into the stricken areas continues. Nevertheless, the situation permits the entry of these areas by the emergency services, who will focus attention on reconnaissance, consequence assessment, evacuation, urgent operations and the organisation of relief for those people who are left in the inundated area.
39. The teams are confronted with an increasing inflow of information and demands from the ToO and have to decide upon strategic priorities, communication with the population in the flood zone, the evaluation and organisation of offer and demand regarding cross-border co-operation, and the planning for the operational priorities and organisation in the following weeks.
40. The massive scale of damages and the similarity of operational demands in both countries was intended as a stimulus to exchange information between teams, identify available assets and required assets and organise joint actions (e.g. the pooling of air vector for USAR, AIREVAC and food delivery). The scale of consequences also required a view outside the two provinces and the possibility to request outside assistance via the Monitoring & Information Centre (MIC).

5.4 EXERCISE SEGMENT 4

41. The final segment addressed the issues related to salvage and recovery, including reconditioning of the area and short and mid term aftercare for the stricken population.
The segment covered the period some weeks after the flood, when due to pumping and natural outflow the area is becoming free of water.
For a number of weeks, the emergency services have gradually evacuated the remaining citizens and livestock which survived, have established security measures, haven relocated the evacuees and have – with the utility companies and other organisations – prepared for reconditioning activities in the aftermath of the flood.
42. As in the first segment, the element of time driven decision making is only minor involved. Overall analysis of the situation, of the requirements and the creation of a solid, feasibly and effective recovery plan were the key objectives in the last phase of the exercise.
43. This phase of emergency management equally calls for the exploration of possibilities of cross-border co-operation. Not only the regular emergency services and management authorities need to be considered, but commercial or academic organisations with vital equipment or expertise can be identified and can – ideally – be used jointly to remedy particular technical or analytical problems (e.g. professors with expertise in the field of soil reconditioning, major cleaning companies or rodent extermination companies). Even in this stage is co-ordination of major decisions across borders advisable (citizens from the two provinces live but a few kilometers from each other and could be confronted with differing instructions and information).

6. ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES

6.1 INTRODUCTION

44. The analysis of outcomes is structured more or less along the lines of the EM/ES functions. One may observe for some functions the paragraph differentiation BE or NL in cases where distinctive observations and comments or recommendations relate to only one of the two teams. There is no separate overview of comments related to a single team, since the exercise was conceived as a bi-nation effort and certainly not the competition between two teams. Readers who wish to make a resume of the major comments per country can easily extract these from the report as it is.

6.2 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

6.2.1 REGULATORY CONTEXT AND STRUCTURE OF AUTHORITY

6.2.1.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

45. The gravity of the decision and its consequence whether or not to evacuate on a large scale in the municipalities which would be flooded in case of failure of the coastal defences could give rise to a discussion between provincial level and national level concerning priorities and measures, including the authority to communicate with the population.
46. The contacts between the two nations on the various administrative levels (national, provincial, local and the indirect communication via a simulated MIC).

1.6.A.1.a. OBSERVATIONS

47. The participants used their existing emergency management structures and hierarchy to discuss strategic and operational options regarding an evacuation and also regarding major actions in the aftermath of the flood as well. No major conflicts were observed and the managerial column in both countries functioned in an effective and co-operative manner.
48. In the field of bi-lateral contacts, it was observed that the more elaborate structures in NL and recent changes in the organisational structure, more specifically the creation of 'Veiligheidsregio's' (safety regions) which take over quite a number of the task previously executed at provincial level made it rather difficult for the BE PCC to identify who is responsible for what. It proved in the opposite sense rather difficult for the NL C3 structures to identify who in BE could be doing what, since a number of executive and analysis cells which exist in NL have no BE counterpart.
49. The international co-operation via MIC was only marginally simulated, since no MIC representation or role player participated in the exercise. Bi-lateral contacts between CGCCR and NCC (which were both present in the EXER staff) supplemented the province-to-province contacts whereby however the provincial level was not always informed of the outcomes.

6.2.1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

50. The changes in the organisation structure in NL requires that BE authorities verify and where necessary modify existing emergency plans.

6.2.2 IDENTIFICATION, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF RISKS

6.2.2.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

51. The two teams received meteorological, hydrological and other raw data and information which allowed them to analyse and assess the risk of a coastal flood. The teams were asked to make the assessment and to create a plan of action if deemed necessary.
52. The teams also received terrain information during the exercise which would permit them to analyse emerging threats to emergency responders, the general population, livestock and the natural environment.

6.2.2.2 OBSERVATIONS

53. Both teams objectively analysed the data and information they received. The inclusion of experts (meteorologist, hydrology expert, ...) in the PCC of West Flanders was novel and resulted in better judgement and decision making.
54. Detailed information was not shared cross-border.

6.2.2.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

55. BE: formalise the inclusion of experts and expert teams as 'technical staff' of the PCC

6.2.3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

6.2.3.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

56. Requirements in personnel, equipment, materials and expertise exceeded the provincial or even national response capability. Exercise participants had to decide upon commitment and prioritisation of available assets and the requirements for outside support.

6.2.3.2 OBSERVATIONS

57. BE – Emergency management authorities do not dispose of an inventory of available emergency response assets at supra-local level. The emergency management team could not identify the location, type, capability or availability of essential emergency response equipment and teams. They did not – apart from starting to telephone – have any means to establish such an inventory in real time. Such inventory does not exist on a municipal, provincial or national level and is not available to the individual emergency services either. The inventory of available civilian equipment and expertise which was kept up to date during the Cold War has been abolished.
- NL – The Dutch emergency services have a system of unique identification numbers for each vehicle and have established a national inventory. The 'Landelijk Operationeel Coördinatiecentrum' (LOCC) maintains a national inventory of assets and expertise (including data managed by the military) and co-ordinates international support requests. The procedures are standardised and have been published in the 'Handboek Bijstand'.
58. The consequences of the situation in the two countries were that:
- BE - the existence, suitability and availability of certain emergency response equipment and teams were guesstimated and presumed operational;
 - virtually no civilian equipment could be identified and requisitioned, thus could not support the emergency response effort;
 - it was unclear which support could be requested from other provinces, the national authorities or even other units of the civil protection;
 - it was overall impossible to generate an overview of which equipment and teams could be and/or had been used for which task.

- NL - the committing, availability and results of the equipment and teams in theatre was recorded by a regional operational staff linked to the PCC;
- needs which surpassed local capability were transferred to LOCC which either identified nationally available assets and tasked these, or identified EU-member states with potentially the required assets and asked for these through MIC (and bi-laterally).

6.2.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

59. BE – development of a national inventory and instruments to assess availability and commitment.

6.2.4 EMERGENCY PLANNING

6.2.4.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

60. Both teams could use their existing emergency plans and had received through their national channels the “Aanzet calamiteitenregeling grensoverschrijdende kustoverstroming BE-NL” which had been developed as another component of the EU-project.

6.2.4.2 OBSERVATIONS

61. The « calamiteitenregeling » document as such was not really used regularly during the exercise. The team composition in Belgium and general information flow structures showed however that main recommendations of the guiding document had been implemented. The guiding document serves as a descriptive manual of how procedures have currently been designed and gives recommendations for national modifications and for the establishment of more elaborate cross-border liaison functions.

6.2.4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

62. The main points of the guiding document should serve as basis for the modification of existing cross-border operational and management plans.

6.2.5 COMMAND, CONTROL & CO-ORDINATION

6.2.5.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

63. Several operational and communications related issues were opportunities to establish cross-border C3.

6.2.5.2 OBSERVATIONS

64. The majority of operational and communications decisions were done within the two national frameworks. Sometimes the information was relayed to the cross-border liaison function. There was however no structural exchange of information directly via the functional or operational level in the two countries.

6.2.5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

65. This observation is contrary to observations during previous exercises with full implementation of VIREX technology. It was then observed that participating teams were more inclined to use the forum function to post a resumé or even ‘draft’ of their decisions in an effort to keep their counterparts across the border informed. Information sharing and hence creating the opportunity to profit from decisions already taken increases if the information flows are more formalised. This can be done through procedural and formal means (i.e. the emergency plan and standard reporting formats such as a SITREP) and through technological means.

6.2.6 NOTIFICATION, PRE-ALERT & ALERTING

6.2.6.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

66. Crisis teams received a national warning and alerted their command and operations structures according to national emergency plans. This involves a message to the neighbouring province.

6.2.6.2 OBSERVATIONS

67. All procedural rules were followed. The alerting of the provincial crisis teams also includes alerting the liaison officer, thus establishes from the early stages a cross-border communication.

6.2.7 OPERATIONS & PROCEDURES

6.2.7.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

68. Implementation of procedures as described in the emergency plans, including the “Aanzet tot calamiteitenregeling ...”.

69. All operational decisions taken to remedy the breaches of the coastal defence system and to limit the consequences of the flood.

6.2.7.2 OBSERVATIONS

70. The number of cross-border activities was very limited, although opportunities existed to implement joint actions. Reporting by the observers and the results of the Hot Debriefing showed that the focus in decision making was different in the two crisis management teams. The Belgian team focused on identification of the tasks to be performed and initial decision making. The Dutch team focused on the implementation of pre-determined and pre-planned actions within a clear operational framework. As such the operational focus of the two teams was not ‘in sync’, thus limiting the possibilities for cross-border integration or co-ordination of operational actions.

6.2.7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

71. Follow up on the “Aanzet tot calamiteitenregeling ...” by analysing – for example during a number of workshops – the scope and nature of operations where both partners would benefit from joint or at least combined operations.

6.2.8 LOGISTICS & FACILITIES

6.2.8.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

72. Infrastructure, systems and equipment available at both locations to exchange data and information with exercise staff and with the crisis team of the other country.

6.2.8.2 OBSERVATIONS

73. Both crisis teams had an operational crisis centre with various telecom systems: internet with e-mail access and voice-over-IP, traditional land based telephony, mobile telephony and telefax. Additional systems such as video-over-IP and the linkage between ASTRID and C2000 were not integrated in the exercise.

74. The Belgian provincial crisis team had established base at the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre (MRCC) lacking own fixed installations.

75. The exercise staff used a number of dedicated e-mail addresses to disseminate messages and to relay information from and to the participants in the exercise.
76. Exercise participants used primarily e-mail to exchange information with exercise staff – and sometimes with each other. The Belgian team used a single e-mail operator (station), whilst the Dutch team had e-mail relay points for the different cells and functions.
77. The forum facility used in earlier internet based exercises (VIREX) had not been deployed upon request by the participating teams. It was observed that in comparison with earlier exercises, the lack of this instrument decreased the overall situational awareness and thus can have had a negative impact upon decision making.

6.2.8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

78. BE – Installation of fixed and operational Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in Brugge.
79. Analysis how cross-border digital flow of information during actual emergency situations can be improved.
80. Use of forum facilities in any future exercise. Working net-centric.

6.2.9 EXERCISE POLICY

6.2.9.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

81. This exercise was the first for the Belgian authorities (of the Province of West-Vlaanderen) involving a scenario of a large scale flooding.
82. This exercise was for the Dutch authorities a general rehearsal for the November 2008 nation wide flooding exercise (week) and the province of Zeeland had played earlier flooding scenario exercises.

6.2.9.2 OBSERVATIONS

83. The difference in level of experience between the two teams was noticeable. The main point for the Belgian team was possibly the creation of awareness concerning the possible consequences of a severe storm and resulting flooding. The main point for the Dutch team was the testing of existing structures, plans, procedures and systems.

6.2.9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

84. BE – Include this scenario type in the multi-annual exercise programme.

6.2.10 PUBLIC EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

6.2.10.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

85. The various exercise segments included events which required intense communication with the population in the threatened and/or stricken area.

6.2.10.2 OBSERVATIONS

86. Both teams organised their communication for their area of responsibility and did not assess the possible effects of cross-border media – such as the national radio and tv in both countries. The exercise teams exchanged their press messages in an after-the-fact manner.
87. The results of the Hot Debriefing indicated that at least part of the problem was caused by a difference in staffing of the crisis communication team in both countries. The Dutch PCC disposed of a fully functional team, whereas the Belgian PCC only had one person responsible for crisis communication and in charge of several supportive tasks.

6.3 EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

6.3.1 ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES MANAGEMENT

6.3.1.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

88. Assessment of and decision making concerning the reliability of the utilities networks and the establishment of post-flooding recovery planning was part of the exercise.

6.3.1.2 OBSERVATIONS

89. The difference in level of experience between the two teams was noticeable. The main point for the Belgian team was possibly the creation of awareness concerning the possible conditions and consequences of disruptions in the utilities systems. The main point for the Dutch team was the testing of existing structures, plans, procedures and systems.

6.3.1.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

90. BE – Development of BNIP utilities management (e.g. based on the UK model).

6.3.2 PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY

6.3.2.1. ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

91. Although possible within the scope of the scenario, no operational actions were taken to organise cross-border co-operation in the field of measures for public safety and the safeguard of reinstoration of security in theatre.

6.3.2.2. OBSERVATIONS

92. This component was taken into consideration in the decision making process of the Dutch PCC.

6.3.3 LONG TERM COMMUNITY RECOVERY

6.3.3.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

93. Although possible within the scope of the scenario, no operational actions were taken to organise cross-border co-operation in the field of long term community recovery.

6.3.3.2 OBSERVATIONS

94. Again the difference in level of emergency pre-planning was an element in the lack of cross-border co-operation. The Dutch PCC had experience with using the 'after the flood' recovery checklist, and has developed a number of procedures with clear lines of responsibility and objectives, and could thus easily start 'implementing' the measures proposed by the checklist.

The same checklist – which has been included in the "Aanzet tot calamiteitenregeling ..." – was new for the PCC of West-Vlaanderen, and the main benefit of the exercise was thus that the team members could get acquainted with its content and make initial decision based upon the items to be covered.

6.3.3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

95. BE – Integrate the 'after the flood' checklist in the existing emergency plans, and develop operational procedures to be able to implement this.

6.3.4 CIVIL MILITARY COOPERATION

6.3.4.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

96. The scope and nature of the emergency situation required close co-operation between civil and military authorities.

6.3.4.2 OBSERVATIONS

97. This co-operation at national level is embedded in the regular emergency management arrangements. Belgium has a long standing tradition of CIMIC, whilst this form of co-operation has only developed to institutional level in the Netherlands of the last few years.

98. The fact that both nations are part of NATO and that the navy of both countries is part of a same bi-national command structure offers sufficient opportunities for close(r) co-operation in case of a scenario of this type. This co-operation could involve use of common means of telecommunication, the pooling of air vectors and other operational assets, and joint command.

6.3.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS – CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

99. Analyse how joint command of military assets could improve the tasking of these assets in both countries.

6.3.5 DATA & INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

6.3.5.1 ELEMENTS IN THE EXERCISE

100. The use of existing real time systems and procedures for data & information management, with a focus on cross-border data analysis and/or information sharing.

101. The existing VIREX forum was not used during COFLEX.

6.3.5.2 OBSERVATIONS

102. The Dutch emergency management structures have off the shelf IT systems and a system of periodic Situation Reporting – in Dutch called SITRAP – which permits periodic flow of information in horizontal and vertical direction through the activated command and support structures. This system also covers reporting to the liaison officer – if established – embedded in a foreign emergency management team. The Dutch method could have been implemented to facilitate cross-border flow of information, but its use was rather limited.

7. CONCLUSIONS

103. The EXER COFLEX was one of the key elements in the final stage of the multi-year Chain of Safety project. It involved the active participation of the emergency management teams PCC West-Vlaanderen (BE) and PCC Zeeland (NL) with in the latter case, the subordinate tactical and logistical structures. The exercise was – in both countries – supported by representation from the national level, which was embedded in the central exercise direction staff in Belgium.
104. The exercise involving a major flood hitting the Belgian and Dutch coast almost simultaneously aimed at testing cross-border coordination and cooperation at managerial and tactical level. No actual emergency services were developed, but the exercise also focused on the lower echelon activities.
105. Overall cooperation between the two nations was satisfactory, and builds upon a long standing tradition of mutual consultation, coordination and cooperation. Several existing bi-lateral agreements for assistance in case of emergency are testimony of this tradition.
106. Real bi-nation exercises with the simultaneous activation of crisis teams in both countries are however not that common. Certainly not when they are included in the same "play scenario". These exercises are however exceptional tools to test what has been written and to identify what has been written but proves impractical or what still has to be written.
107. The EXER used some internet based communication but much less prominent in its use as compared to earlier exercises.
108. Overviewing the EMF/ESF reported earlier in this document, some main conclusions can be drawn:
- a. the general approach of emergency planning and emergency management is different in the two countries. Overall the Dutch authorities have more elaborate instruments and a larger staff, which enables them to perform tasks within a given time frame to a much greater level of detail. This difference in level of decision making was an important factor why not all opportunities were exploited to cooperate cross-border (the same conclusion is valid for the bi-national exercise support staff);
 - b. The non-availability of a joint working platform had significant negative impact on the possibility to identify opportunities of cross-border cooperation and to identify potential critical points where at least cross-border consultation or coordination were essential.