

CHAIN OF SAFETY
covering the whole north sea region

news

2nd meeting in Blankenberge

In the small Belgium coastal town of Blankenberge the partners of the project Chain of Safety gathered from March 21st to 23rd 2007 for the second time. By means of this project an inventory is drawn up of:

- contingency plans with regard to coastal floodings
- the equipment in the different countries
- the knowledge about coastal floodings and response

The final goal is to make one transnational contingency plan. In May 2008 the framework for this plan will be tested for the first time on the basis of a border crossing incident between Belgium and the Netherlands.

Workshops

The meeting started Wednesday-afternoon with a couple of workshops, where experts from several countries in the field of flooding were invited for. The chairmen of the working committees "Plans" and "Equipment" presented their results up to now to specialists from the Monitoring and Information Center (MIC) of the European Commission, the National Operational Coordination Center (LOCC) of the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Ministry of Transport, Public Works & Water Management, German and Belgium Ministries and asked them to give feedback. The chairmen of the working committees had preliminary to this meeting held an inventory amongst the partners of the project. A vivid discussion arose, which led to surprising results for the continuation of the project.

Media invasion

The working committees gathered the second day and during these meetings the progress and the development were discussed. The outcomes of the workshops were involved in this too of course. Apart from that the order was properly disrupted that day by a true media invasion. The West-Flemish television as well as radio and writing press had set out for the hotel for several interviews with the chairman of the steering committee and

other partners of the project. At the end of day 2 a visit was paid to the MRCC (Maritime Rescue and Coordination Center) in Ostend, the centre for calamities at sea.

Next time: Essex

The meeting of the steering committee was the order of the last day of the partnermeeting. As a result of all discussions during the past few days, it had become clear that the project would continue from a joint starting point in the form of a couple of scenario's. Decided was to ask an external expert to work out these scenario's, varying from a

Initiative to a Contingency Plan for flooding

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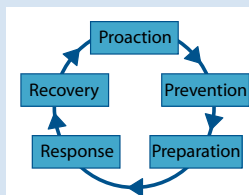


regional incident with crossborder effects to the worst case scenario. These scenario's don't have to be worked out in detail but have to be able to serve as a basis to make a good risk and result-assessment. At the end of this meeting all partners got the necessary homework for the next partnermeeting, which will be held in coming October in Essex (UK).

Flood Contingency Planning and the Safety Chain

Making contingency plans demands working together on various governmental levels and with various operational organisations. As one of the partners in the Chain of Safety project, the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands is a very natural one. In working together for a safe and secure society, the Dutch government has promoted the use of the principle of the chain of safety (pro-action, prevention, preparation, response and recovery) since the early 1990s – within the domain of disaster relief and crisis management (civil protection).

Of great value is how the principle combines the safety efforts of the people in different operational and governmental organisations with the efforts of the public and business. Besides that, a balanced contribution can be made for all the links in that safety chain.





Events

Meetings of the steering committee and the working committees

- October 3rd – 5th 2007 (UK)
- January 23rd – 25th 2008 (Denmark)

Workshops

- Transnational workshop 1 “Knowledge” October 2007
- Transnational workshop 2 “Plans” January 2008
- Transnational workshop 2 “Knowledge” January 2008
- Transnational workshop 2 “Equipment” January 2008
- Exercise “Pilot” May 2008

Final conference

- May 2008 (Netherlands)

Safer society

Knowing that working together along the lines of that principle will help in planning for a safer society, various partners of different member states around the North Sea Region initiated the project. The project partners now find themselves supported in this initiative because the safety chain has become one of the main principles in the EU Flood Directive which has very recently been accepted by the European Parliament.

Why?

Why focus on a flood contingency plan? Don't we have a strong defence against the North Sea? Yes, we have! And we are safer than ever, but there is no 100% guarantee that flooding will never, ever happen again. Following the safety chain, we know that we can perform better, especially regarding response preparedness. So, there is a paradigm shift moving from “defend and manage” to “anticipate and respond”. There is also a shift from “the government protects society from floods” to clear choices about living with the risk and the roles of government and those of other actors. Information, communication, awareness-raising and response planning become essential.

Cooperation

Besides the long tradition around the North Sea of flood risk management and preventive measures, flood incident management and flood contingency plan development become essential too, though the latter is underexposed. Regarding these developments, the Chain of Safety project focuses on cross-border cooperation, knowledge exchange, organisational measures and further increase of standards for our initiative towards a flood contingency plan to cover the entire North Sea Region. The spring meetings and workshops in Belgium and the equipment and plans resulted in an awareness of limited available regional and/or national resources and a table of contents for evacuation planning.

With this knowledge, the different flood response procedures and plans can now be further harmonised and integrated in existing emergency response structures and plans. This project - with its focus on the response part of the safety chain and with the initiative towards a flood contingency plan - will herewith become part of the process of implementing the EU Flood Directive.



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More information about Chain of Safety?

Visit www.chainofsafety.com

C O L O F O N

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