



## **The perception of volcanic risk of young people living in the highly populated areas of Vesuvius: implication for emergency management.**

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More than 600 000 people are exposed to volcanic risk in the urban areas near Vesuvius volcano and may need to be evacuated if there is renewed volcanic activity. The success of a future evacuation will strongly depend on the level of risk perception and preparedness of at-risk communities during the current quiescent period. The volcanic risk perception and preparedness of young people is of particular importance because hazard education programs in schools have been shown to increase risk perceptions and students often share their knowledge with their parents. In order to evaluate young people's risk perception and preparedness for a volcanic crisis, a multiple choice questionnaire was distributed to 400 high-school students in three municipalities located close to the volcano. The overall results suggest that despite a 60-year period of quiescence at Vesuvius, the interviewed students have an appropriate level of volcanic risk perception. On the other hand, the respondents demonstrate a clear lack of understanding of volcanic processes and their related hazards. Also, the interviewed students show high levels of fear, poor perceived ability to protect themselves from the effects of a future eruption, and insufficient knowledge of the National Emergency Plan for Vesuvian Area (NEPVA). The latter result suggests that, during a future eruption of Vesuvius, there may not be enough time to educate the large number of people living near the volcano about how to appropriately respond. The inadequate risk education and preparedness of respondents implies that a strong effort is needed to improve communication strategies in order to facilitate successful evacuations. Therefore, it is important to take advantage of the present period of quiescence at Vesuvius to increase

the risk perception of youth in local communities.