



Volcanic Risk perception in the Vesuvius population

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A volcanic risk perception study of the population residing near Vesuvius was carried out between May and July, 2006. A total of 3,600 questionnaires with 45 items were distributed to students, their parents and the general population. The largest sample (2,812 questionnaires) was from the 18 towns of the Red Zone, the area nearest to the volcano that is exposed to pyroclastic flow hazards and whose 550,000 residents, according to the civil protection emergency plan (in operation since 1995), should be evacuated in case of an eruption crisis. The remaining 788 questionnaires were distributed in 3 additional towns and 3 neighborhoods of Naples, all within the Yellow Zone, which is an area exposed to pyroclastic fallout hazards. The survey's response rate was very successful (73%). Results indicated that people have a realistic view of the risk: they think that an eruption is likely, that it will have serious consequences for their towns and for themselves and their families and they are quite worried about the threat. However, several other social, economic, and security-related issues were listed as a problem more often than Vesuvius. The study also demonstrated a widespread lack of knowledge about the emergency plan, a lack of confidence in the plan's success and in public officials and low feelings of self-efficacy. People want to be more deeply involved in public discussions with scientists and civil protection officials on emergency planning and individual preparedness measures. It is clear from the results that a major education-information effort is still needed to improve the public's knowledge, confidence and self-efficacy, thereby improving their collective and individual capability to positively face a future volcanic emergency.