

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION TOOL

Context

Natural disasters and conflicts often have secondary impacts, including damage to infrastructure and industrial installations. These so-called environmental emergencies may pose a *threat* to the health, security and welfare of the affected population and the emergency responders. Too often, these risks are neglected, resulting in preventable deaths and injuries. It is therefore essential that information on the location of the hazardous facilities and the potential impacts is made available to relevant authorities and emergency responders at a very early stage of the disaster response or even prior to the onset of a disaster. This information will then contribute to targeted mitigation measures and requests for further specialized assistance.



A volcano eruption led to the explosion of a petrol station killing fifty people- Goma, DRC, 2002

Response to natural disasters

The Hazard Identification Tool (HIT) is usually applied to the region affected by a major natural disaster upon receiving the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) M1 alert which puts the UNDAC team on stand-by. The HIT provides a list with potential secondary risks in the affected area, such as large infrastructure, nuclear facilities, hazardous waste storage sites and industrial facilities. The HIT lists the hazardous materials such a facility may contain and translates this information into 'humanitarian language' by indicating the related hazards and possible impacts. Efforts are made to locate the sites as detailed as possible. The primary audience is the OCHA Regional office and the UN Country Team. HITs are also made public through V-OSOCC, ReliefWeb and GDACS.

The way forward

In June 2007, the 7th meeting of the Advisory Group on Environmental Emergencies (AGEE) advised to explore the development of the HIT as a response preparedness tool, i.e. the mapping of potential secondary risks of natural disasters *before* a disaster strikes. This forms part of the *Rosersberg Initiative*, which aims at strengthening the international regime for environmental emergencies preparedness and response.

For more information:

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