My security

Disaster alert !

Timely warnings save lives

On 26 December 2004, a giant wave swept over land killing more than 200 000 people in South-East Asia. Despite a lag of several hours between the earthquake and the impact of the Indian Ocean tsunami, nearly all the victims were taken by surprise as there were no tsunami detection and warning systems in place.

ISO is finalizing work on two standards that will improve people's disaster preparedness and response, save lives and reduce injuries. These standards will share best practice among countries and ensure that, no matter where we come from or what language we speak, we can understand an emergency warning anywhere in the world.

Warning people...

The first standard, ISO 22322, *Societal security – Emergency management – Public warning*, provides principles and generic guidelines for developing, managing and implementing public warnings before, during and after incidents, giving response organizations the tools to alert emergency responders and people at risk so that safety measures can be taken. Effective public warning requires systems that monitor identified risks in a defined area and provide evidence-based information about disasters (hazard monitoring).

It must also be clear when and how to launch an appropriate message to people at risk (warning dissemination). All public warnings should consist of both an alert and a notification message. The alert is designed to stimulate auditory and/or visual senses to attract attention, and must take into consideration the characteristics and conditions of people at risk, while the notification message communicates appropriate safety actions to be taken in case of emergency.

...and making sure they understand

The second standard, ISO 22324, *Societal security – Emergency management – Colour-coded alert*, will strengthen public warning even further by specifying visual alerts and the use of various colours.
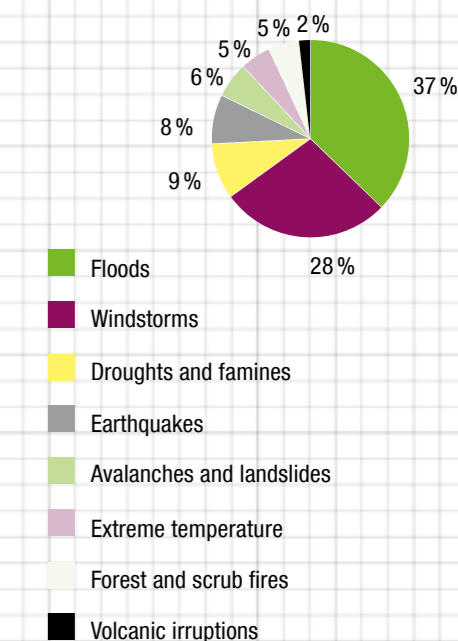
Colour-coded alerts serve to notify people at risk of recent status changes in safety or danger to ensure they can take safety actions appropriate to the type of hazard.

As things stand at the moment, though, there are several colour systems in use around the world, and even within one country. To eliminate confusion, ISO 22324 provides a standardized approach to danger warning procedures, regardless of hazard type, to make sure people will know what to do, no matter where they are.

ISO 22322 and ISO 22324 are expected to be published in early 2014. ∎

> " All public warnings should consist of both an alert and a notification message.

90 % of natural hazards are of meteorological origin

5 % 2 %
5 %
6 %
8 %
9 %
37 %
28 %

- Floods
- Windstorms
- Droughts and famines
- Earthquakes
- Avalanches and landslides
- Extreme temperature
- Forest and scrub fires
- Volcanic irruptions

Source : WMO

The author

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