

Japan Geoscience Union Meeting 2011

(May 22-27 2011 at Makuhari, Chiba, Japan)

©2011. Japan Geoscience Union. All Rights Reserved.



U021-02

Room:304

Time:May 24 08:55-09:20

Information from Disaster Sciences as Risk and Crisis Management

Satoko Oki^{1*}, Kazuki Koketsu¹, Jiro Tomari¹, Eiji Kuwabara¹

¹ERI, Univ. of Tokyo

For the previous 6 months from the L'Aquila earthquake which occurred on 6th April 2009, the seismicity in that region had been active. In the early March, a technician announced a short-term alert, which confused population in the region. Seismicity became even more active and reached to magnitude 4 earthquake on 30th March, the government held Commissione Grande Rischio (Major Risks Committee) which is tasked with forecasting possible risks by collating and analyzing data from a variety of sources and making preventative recommendations to Dipartimento della Protezione Civile (Civil Protection Department). After the press conference held by the committee, the press reported that one of the members explained the situation as favorable because there is an ongoing discharge of energy. 6 days later, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake attacked L'Aquila and killed 309 people. On 3rd June next year, the prosecutors opened the investigation after complaints of the victims that far more people would have fled their homes that night if there had been no reassurances of the Commissione Grande Rischio the previous week.

This issue became widely known to the seismological society especially after an email titled "Letter of Support for Italian Earthquake Scientists" from seismologists at the National Geophysics and Volcanology Institute (INGV) sent worldwide. It says that the L'Aquila Prosecutors office indicted of manslaughter the members of the Major Risks Committee and that the charges are for failing to provide a short term alarm to the population before the earthquake struck. It is true that there is no generalized method to predict earthquakes but failing the short term alarm is not the reason for the investigation of the scientists according to the article of ANSA. The chief prosecutor stated that "the committee could have provided the people with better advice", and "it wasn't the case that they did not receive any warnings, because there had been tremors". The email also requests sign-on support for the open letter to the president of Italy from Earth sciences colleagues from all over the world and collected more than 5000 signatures in a week. President of the Seismological Society of Japan (SSJ) encouraged all the members to sign up to the letter by sending an email on 14th June. Right after receiving the email, presenter mentioned the difference in the reason of indictment between the Open Letter and the article from ANSA by sending an email with translations to the representative of the SSJ and by giving phone call to the president. Summary of those information was presented at the Annual Meeting of SSJ in October 2010.

Parties concerned to this affair are the victims, researchers, and the policy makers. To learn what kind of information scientists should provide or how scientists communicate to the other two parties, it is of importance to listen to what they expected before and after the affair. In the presentation, we introduce what we should learn based on the interviews in Rome and L'Aquila.

Keywords: disaster information, risk management, crisis management, earthquake prediction, outreach, communication