

OPTIMIZING JOINT PREPAREDNESS FOR MUNICIPAL AND INDUSTRIAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE: FOLLOW THE ZIPPER

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Perceptions of the organisation of safety, the availability of emergency response capabilities and safety policy ambitions within government and industry are often one-sided. Companies invest minimally in safety and only implement what regulations prescribe, maintenance is easily postponed until next year and training of people is something that has to be earned. Governments, on the other hand, keep devising new rules with new registrations, interfere increasingly with the business operations of the company and for every new development in the field of safety a new civil servant is appointed. Both matters are highly exaggerated and are often driven by prejudices that exist because of a lack of knowledge “of the other” and a lack of communication.

Companies with special risk profiles, valuable assets and products and often unique processes have a great interest in a solid safety policy, good systems and procedures to prevent emergencies, people with good (basic) training for a role as emergency responder and properly functioning specialist equipment. The same applies to governments: setting rules and supervising compliance is their basic instrument to safeguard a good (often democratically desired) level of safety in society, and if circumstances require it, government emergency responders must be able to do their work in increasingly complicated and dangerous circumstances. And that requires training, equipment and standards.

Investing in coherence and connection

Companies and governments often invest extensively in what is necessary, because business interests and society demand it. However, when making investments, too little attention is paid to coherence. The coherence that is almost always at issue during emergencies: incident response requires cooperation. If an industrial incident develops even slightly, cooperation is required in the response. Units of the company and local public emergency responders must work together for a successful approach, aimed at control, restoration of

business continuity and order in the public domain. In order to realise these connections during incident management, cooperation in the preparatory phase that precedes it is essential.

See it as a zipper: government and company both have one side of the zipper, the teeth of the zipper represent the themes that both sides must organise for safety and emergency response. Vehicles with equipment, fire extinguishing systems, tools and ICT. People who must

be educated and trained, provided with clothing, PPE and communication equipment. An organisational concept for during the response, with roles, command structure, alarm and escalation procedures, work protocols and codes.

When it comes to an emergency, and company and government have

to work together, the zipper must be able to be closed quickly and effectively. This requires not only the availability of the matters mentioned above, but also a large degree of uniformity of them. A zipper with small round teeth on one side and coarse square teeth on the other side cannot be closed. Where cooperation is required, the teeth must be uniform. Which form they take does not matter

that much, as long as company and government can receive and connect with each other.

Besides uniformity, simplicity is also an important framework for the zipper. A zipper with too many teeth, of which a number are uniform, works sub-optimally at best. Better a simple zipper with identical teeth than a complex zipper with varying shapes.

Existing collaborations according to the zipper

In ports and industrial areas in different parts of the world, collaborative partnerships exist in which companies and governments work together extensively in the fields of firefighting, hazardous materials and emergency response. The Joint Fire Brigades in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, the PII network in the Netherlands and Belintra in Belgium at the national level, the Port Fire Brigade Network Scheldt in Antwerp, Channel Industries Mutual Aid in Houston, Sohar Emergency Response Organisation in Sohar, to name a few. Organisations in which the zipper has been implemented to the maximum.

These are also organisations that are maximally aligned with the capacities, structures and resources of the companies in the service area. Firefighting vehicles are connected to the local fire water network, responders and managers of the company's ERT can communicate with responders and commanders of the joint organisation, and procedures ensure uniform alarm and escalation.

An increase in response capability is no longer more of the same, but a faster availability of special and specialist equipment.

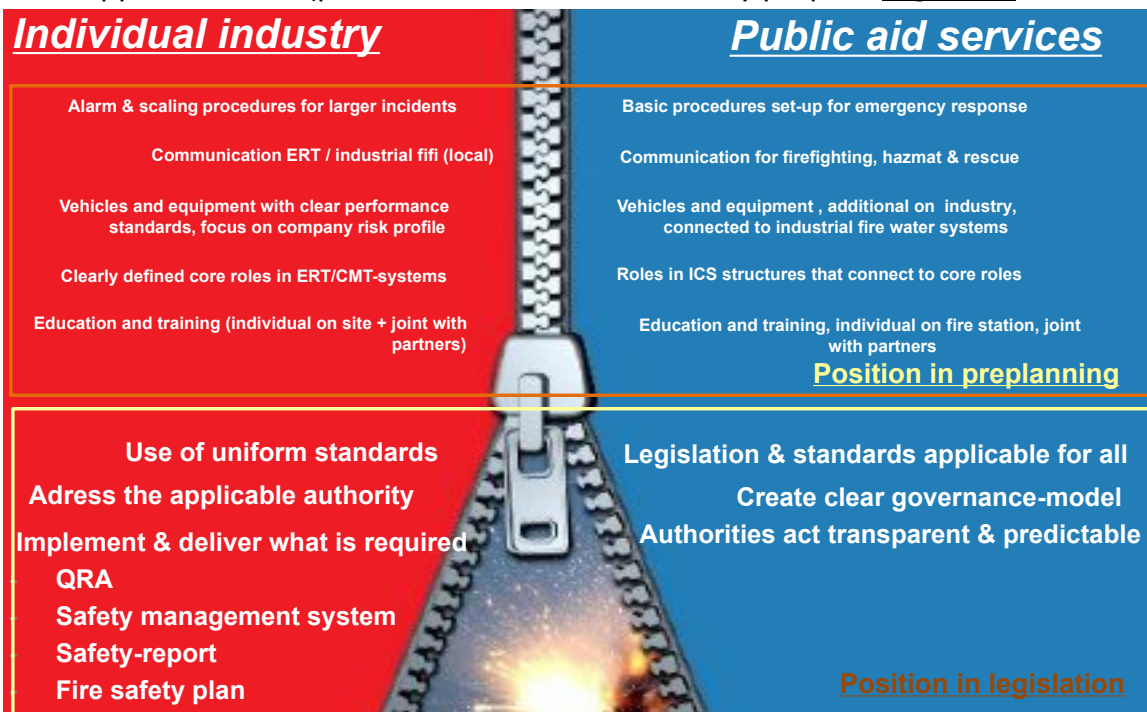
Primary teeth to connect

If such far-reaching cooperation is not, or not yet, in place, a shorter zipper can already help. The metaphor always applies: from joint action during an emergency at an individual industrial company to acting together in a large industrial area with a multi-risk profile and complex continuity interests. The following themes are important to consider first, in order to be able to consider the similarity of the teeth.

Zipper-dilemma (public aid services and industry prepare individually)



Zipper-dilemma (public aid services and industry prepare **together**)



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ALARM PROCEDURES

Uniform procedures for alarm and escalation at both the company and the public services, with special attention to gate management upon the arrival of units from outside a premises or site

COMMUNICATION

Communication systems that make it possible to communicate with each other during the emergency

COMMAND STRUCTURES

Deployment structures with equivalent command structures and command & control, so that emergency response teams and command structures can proceed in an equivalent manner

KEY ROLES

Clarity and mutual alignment of the key roles in the response organisations of the company and emergency services

CONNECTION OF KEY EQUIPMENT TO WATER

Equipment of the company and government with which fire and spill scenarios are addressed must be able to connect to the fire water supplies

Cooperation between company and government, a zipper of at least 5 teeth. Those who can organise these teeth in a similar manner will notice that there are more teeth that determine the degree of success in operational response. The strongest zipper is the zipper with as many identical teeth as possible. Alignment and mutual communication in the preparation are "key", joint training, networking and evaluation a "must". And mutual introduction, getting acquainted and sharing experiences also determine to a great extent the successful outcome of an operation.



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