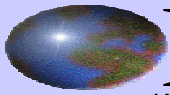


WCDR, jan.05

**A typical example of where  
community action comes first  
=  
heat waves through Europe  
in summer 2003**

Judith Bourgeois - French Red Cross





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# What happened?

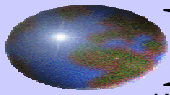
Summer 2003 :

The worst heat wave since 500 years hit **western Europe**,  
and caused, in less than **two weeks**,  
about **22 000 deaths** (maybe 35 000),  
mostly in **big cities**,  
**2/3 of them aged over 75**

= more than the Algerian 2003 earthquake, more than 9/11, almost as much as Bam...

Similar disasters happen also regularly in USA, and in other rich, so-called “developed” countries, causing **more deaths than all their floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and hurricanes combined.**





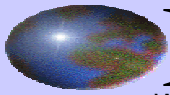
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# How come?

- Slow on-set disaster, striking invisibly, silently
- No early warning system, no clear indicators
- No awareness of danger for victims (ex : elderly do not feel thirsty)
- Summer holidays : northern cities empty, except for those who don't have holidays...
- People in north part of Europe are not used to heat and not prepared nor equipped, as where southern inhabitants have traditional coping mechanisms
- Fragility of community links (ex : Chicago) tending to put elderly out of sight





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# What was done first?

Ex. in France : 750 RC volunteers were activated

☞ Making people drink, putting wet towels, helping to cool down, visiting isolated and/or disabled elderly



= very simple, basic things that anyone could do,  
for someone else, but also for himself

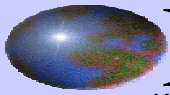


**A typical community-type of response !**



Had people at grass-root level been aware in time,  
their action could have made the difference!





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# Lessons learned

## Actions taken

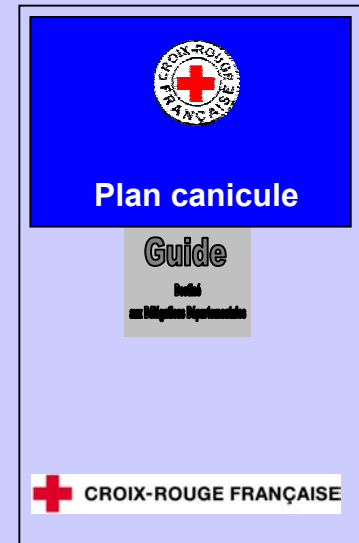
### ■ NEED FOR BETTER PREPAREDNESS

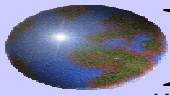
*the following year :*

- contingency plans in place,
- early warning system created,
- Heat wave committees ready to be activated,
- obligation made to have an air-conditioned room for all institutes accommodating elderly...

### ■ NEED FOR MORE CARE FOR ELDERLY and other vulnerable groups

- More awareness? More solidarity?





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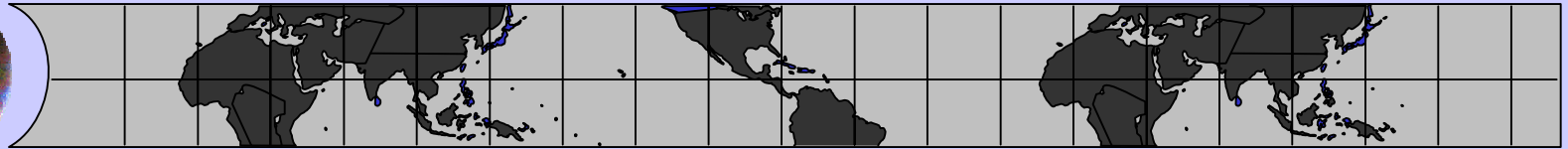
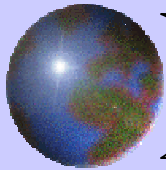
# Most of all :

- Everyone can be helpful in case of disaster
- Sometimes, one single person at grass-root level, without any technical skills, can do more than any professional team and big relief operations.

**GIVE INFORMATION AND MEANS TO PEOPLE,  
AND THEY WILL PUT IT INTO ACTION !**

(even in developed countries...)





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THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION !

