



# DISASTER CASE REPORT

70

Agency for  
International  
Development

Washington D.C.  
20523

## ITALY - Accident

### Data

Date: July 10, 1976 (FY 76)

Location: Town of Seveso, Italy, north of Milan

No. Affected: 35 hospitalized, 700 evacuated

No. Dead: None

Damage: An area of about 250 acres was declared badly contaminated and more than 700 people were evacuated; all domestic animals in the contaminated area were destroyed; also heavy losses of crops and goods; ultimate losses in terms of property and human health unknown

### The Disaster

On July 10, 1976, an explosion at a chemical plant near the town of Seveso, Italy, released a grayish-white steam-like cloud that soon settled to the ground. It was later revealed that the cloud contained approximately two kilograms (4.4 lbs) of the chemical commonly called dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known. In the following weeks, many of the domestic animals in the immediate path of the cloud sickened and died, and those remaining were subsequently destroyed. Immediate human effects were limited to some cases of respiratory distress, particularly among children, and several hundred cases of a skin reaction (chloracne). However, the potential for damaged livers, diminished white blood cell counts, neurological disorders, endocrine disorders, and a host of related complications among those exposed cannot be evaluated.

### Action Taken by the Government of Italy (GOI)

The GOI evacuated all inhabitants from areas determined to be contaminated and provided them with shelter, support, and medical care. A decontamination program was carried out and more than 15,000 people in the area were tested for ill effects. The GOI allocated \$48 million to aid the Seveso region. The U.S. and other NATO-member countries were asked to provide technical information on decontamination procedures and medical treatment.

ITALY - Accident

Assistance Provided the United States Government (USG)

Two US Army personnel with chemical engineering and decontamination experience were sent to Italy to confer with Italian officials. Funds allocated for this purpose were.....\$1,500

TOTAL        \$1,500

Assistance Provided by U.S. Voluntary Agencies

None reported.

Assistance Provided by the International Community

None reported.