

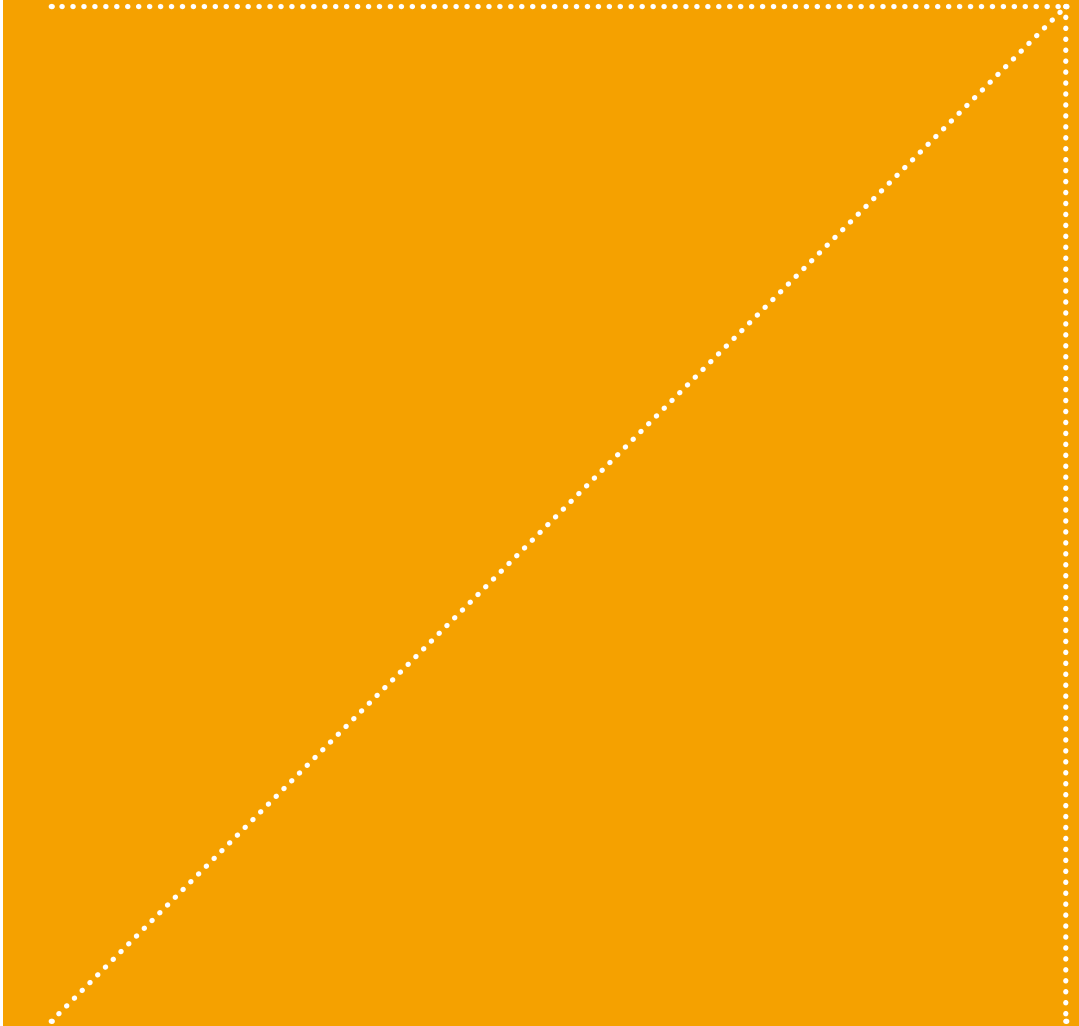
Dutch expertise deployable all over the world

More information

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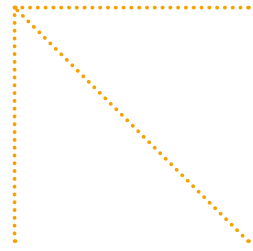
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Ministerie van
Buitenlandse Zaken





Natural and environmental disasters can occur anywhere, and they cannot always be prevented. In the aftermath, it is essential to assess the consequences as quickly and as thoroughly as possible. That is why the Netherlands has developed the Environmental Assessment Module (EAM). It will be ready for use as of 1 September 2008.

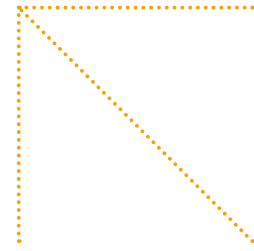
This mobile laboratory can be used for disasters involving hazardous substances. It consists of three specialists and two fully equipped off-road vehicles. The EAM will mainly be deployed in countries that lack the specialist knowledge or capacity needed to deal with environmental disasters.

The EAM is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. VROM has an international reputation as an environment and safety specialist. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs specialises in emergency aid and its humanitarian aid funds can be called on to provide assistance or specific expertise anywhere in the world. The close partnership between the two ministries will now acquire a national and international profile through the EAM.

The two ministries entered into a partnership in response to international demand for specific environmental expertise in the wake of disasters. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a co-initiator of this project because of the role it plays in deciding whether to commit Dutch resources and expertise in countries hit by disasters. The decision whether to deploy the EAM rests with the two ministries jointly. The National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) is responsible for managing and using the EAM.

The EAM concept

The EAM was developed on the basis of the sophisticated concept of a small, flexible



team that can be deployed quickly anywhere in the world. This means that the equipment and the team's logistics need to meet the highest requirements. For rapid worldwide deployment, the team and its equipment must be highly mobile. That is why two off-road vehicles were provided by the Ministry of Defence. One vehicle is equipped as a mobile measurement and analysis unit, while the other contains materials for logistical support. The entire unit can be transported in a cargo aircraft. The EAM is mainly used to assess the medium- and long-term effects of environmental disasters.

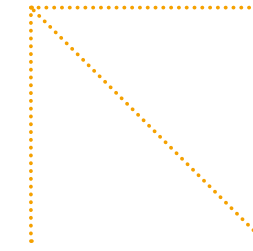
Easily transportable

Once a team has been put together in response to a request for assistance, the operation can start. To ensure maximum flexibility, the equipment consists of modules, which are packed in crates for transport. If only a small team and only part of the equipment are needed, the required material can be taken on board the plane separately. The equipment is perfectly tailored to the situations the team may encounter. The vehicles are equipped with technology for taking samples, performing environmental measurements and analyses. Of course, communication and navigation equipment is standard: the vehicles are equipped with satellite telephones and GPS.



Quick and comprehensive

With this mobile facility, the Netherlands will be able to make a valuable contribution to disaster relief. After a disaster, the effects on the environment and public health can be assessed quickly and comprehensively. Backed by the expertise of eight government institutes and services working together in the Policy Support Team for environmental incidents, the team can identify a large number of chemical substances in polluted material, and advise on the nature of the pollution, and the threat it poses.



Team and training

An EAM team comprises a core team of three members: a field team leader, a sampling expert and an analytical chemist. If necessary, specialists in other fields can be added. At the moment, 15 RIVM staff members have been trained for deployment in a core team. During their training course, staff members are taught how to work under difficult circumstances, deal with different cultures, and work as a team under the UN flag. The UN is expected to call on the services of an EAM team twice a year on average.

Requests for assistance

The Environmental Assessment Module will be deployed only at the request of the UN or other international organisations wishing to make use of the expertise it provides. Countries themselves may also ask the Netherlands for help directly. Taking into account the size of the disaster, the damage and the need for assistance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will decide whether an EAM mission is needed. VROM will then assess whether the operation is feasible. In a disaster area where a UN humanitarian relief operation is already under way, the EAM team will generally work under the auspices of the UN.

