

TRAINING EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERS

Before setting out on an emergency humanitarian or development mission, new volunteers with Veoliaforce—the Veolia Environnement Foundation’s operational arm—receive outdoor training. This entails three days of hands-on and theoretical instruction and discussion.



8 a.m.: The place known as “Les Faucherries” definitely looks like the setting for a wildlife documentary. Tranquility, greenery and nature are the words that spring to mind to describe the lake in the heart of the Charnie forest, in France’s Sarthe and Mayenne region. A few ducks swim peacefully around a small island, to the sound of birdsong. In the distance, the stone buildings of an ancient farmstead strengthen the landscape’s age-old feel.

6 p.m.: The decor and atmosphere of “Les Faucherries” have changed radically. The ducks are gone and perhaps the birds are quiet. In any case, it is impossible to hear them. Two generators are running at full speed on the banks of the lake, one powering a water pump and the other floodlights mounted on poles. The lights illuminate a muddy construction site and 20 rain-soaked people. Employee volunteers set up a mobile Aquaforce 5000 water treatment



Employee volunteers set up a mobile Aquaforce 5000 water treatment unit in the heart of the Charnie (Mayenne-Sarthe) forest. Becoming familiar with the latest emergency response techniques is an essential component.

Putting things right again with the resources you have.



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Some are wearing fluorescent yellow jackets with Veolia Environnement's initials. In one corner of the scene, a trailer is towing two cylinders bearing the inscription Aquaforce 5000, the name of an emergency water supply unit. Next to it circular pieces of sheet metal are planted in the ground: Veoliaforce volunteers are tackling the assembly of a drinking water storage tank.

A total of 27 are enrolled in the course. For three days they will alternate between formal presentations by Veoliaforce staff and their business partners, listening to accounts of volunteers with field experience and practical training in tasks such as how to assemble the Aquaforce 5000 or chemically treat water in an emergency.

Twenty-seven volunteers driven by the same desire

Though the 21 men and six women in the group are all driven by the same desire to get involved, they have not necessarily come here with the same motivations. Marie-Hélène Doumet,

for example, a research project manager at Veolia Water, explains her presence by stressing her Lebanese origins. She moved to France in 2005 but joined Veolia Environnement while still residing in Lebanon. "Living in a country with a history and current events like Lebanon's made me more aware of poverty and distress," she explains. Jean-Pierre Cahors, age 53, describes it as "a way to try to put things right again with the resources you have." For this customer care and operations manager for the water distribution network in the Normandy region, the tsunami that hit southern Asia on December 26, 2004, triggered a desire to get involved.

There is no hard-and-fast criterion for joining this volunteer team made up of employees who want to invest their time and expertise in a good cause. "Volunteers are first and foremost motivated," says Franck Haaser, Emergency Response Manager at Veoliaforce.

"After that we look for people of any age, working or retired, from backgrounds as diverse as possible." So a number of positions are represented, including operations technicians, research specialists and communication officers. ...



You cannot be efficient if you are afraid to get your hands dirty! Tomorrow, an Aquaforce 5000 unit will be deployed in the field to respond to an emergency. Its mission will be to supply 5,000 people with enough drinking water to survive.

"An opportunity to talk about humanitarian law."

Thierry Vandevelde

Veoliaforce founder and current Executive Officer of the Veolia Environnement Foundation.

What spurred you to create this humanitarian foundation?

T. V.: Veolia Water Force, since renamed Veoliaforce, was launched in 1998. Given the needs, especially for access to water after disasters, it did not take me long to realize that Veolia and its employees could and should be among the first to respond in an emergency. Since then events have proved us right, as the need for emergency water supplies continues to increase. The other idea, implemented right away, was to create long-term partnerships with the Red Cross or UNICEF, so that together we could respond to needs more efficiently than each of us working alone.

Why are the volunteer training sessions important?

T. V.: The training courses are short. They are not about teaching people their jobs, but familiarizing them with emergency response equipment and having them meet our partners in the field. They are also an opportunity to talk about humanitarian law. Unlike a typical training class, they give volunteers an idea of the framework in which we operate.



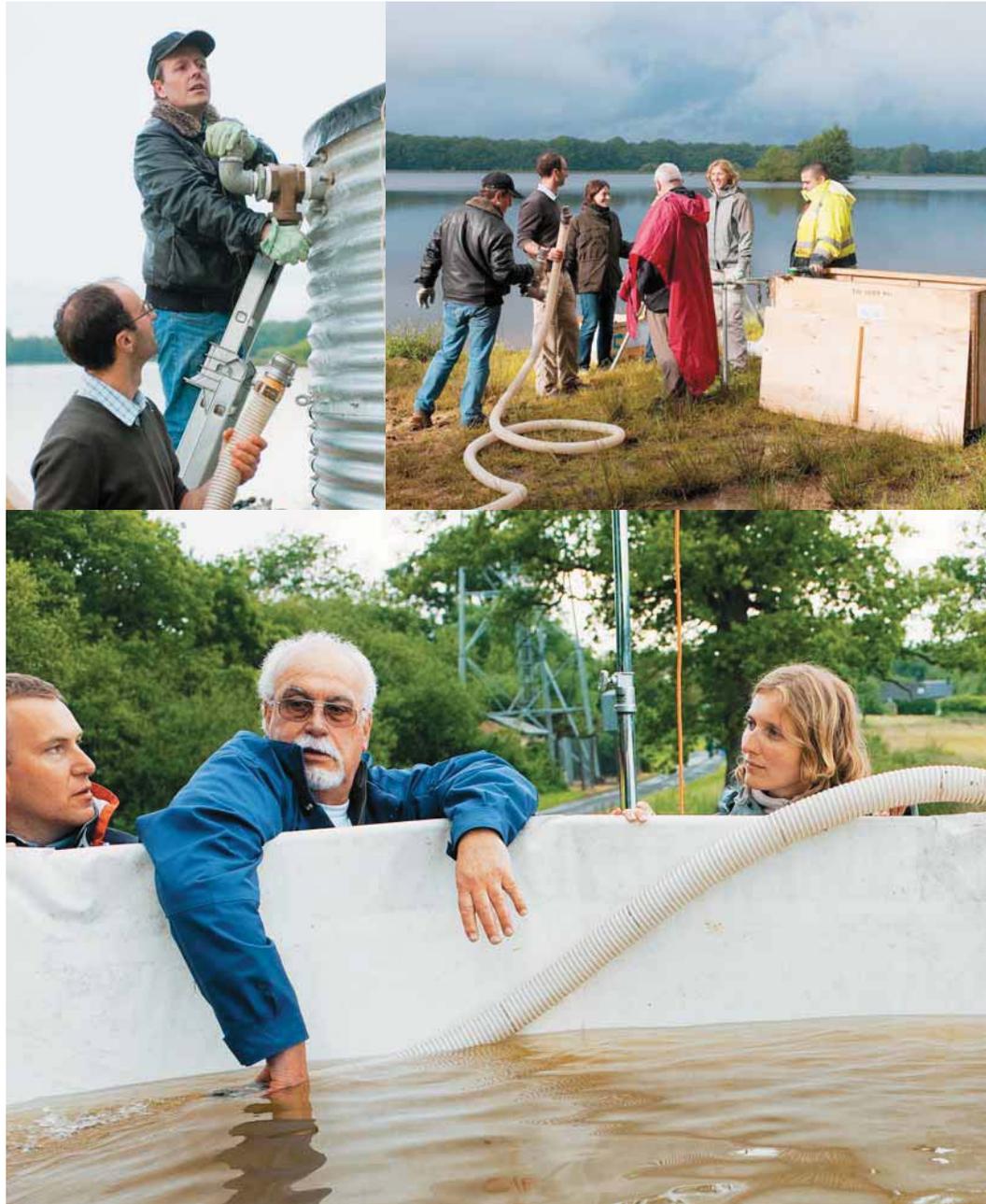
An amazing interpersonal adventure.

Christian Philippe is a technical and operations manager for Central Europe. He has 11 years under his belt with Veolia Énergie-Dalkia, including 10 abroad. Alongside his day-to-day professional life, he opted to become personally involved in humanitarian work. His first impressions of the training highlight the diversity of the group: "All distinctions based on our professional fields fall by the wayside. We are all united by our common interest in sharing and service," he says. He expects to find the same diversity once in the field: "It is always an amazing interpersonal adventure to meet men and women from different cultures."

Getting to know the others

As the organizers see it, the training has two objectives: "Getting to know volunteers better and making sure they understand the organization they are getting involved in," explains Frédérique Héry, Development Projects Specialist at Veoliaforce. Because, once they return to their workplace, each trainee will be able to use his or her new knowledge to act as a spokesperson for the humanitarian network. Veoliaforce now numbers about 500 volunteers and supports many projects, including the upcoming

installation in China and Ecuador of emergency response centers and the training of their local volunteers. Caroline Chau is completing the training to set up the center in Shanghai. The 27-year-old native of Cambodia works in China for Veolia Eau Solutions & Technologies. It was her idea to take the first step, last year, in getting involved in humanitarian work. She met Thierry Vandeveld, Veolia Environnement Foundation Executive Officer and Veoliaforce founder. "He talked to me about his project and I wanted to be a part of it right away. I have come here today to understand what future Chinese volunteers will have to know because, before the end of the year, I will have to do the same thing in China." But, Caroline Chau hastens to add, "I am here because I too want to go out into the field." Ten minutes later, Caroline Chau is back at the storage tank assembly site. Despite the pelting rain the metal sheets now stand two meters high, but still need to be bolted down. Perched on the shoulders of a man from Toulouse built like a rugby player, Caroline Chau is working on the highest bolts. In between tightening them, she stops for a second to chat with her helper. "What's your name? - Alain. And you? Caroline" - she replies. Solidarity is alive and well at Veoliaforce. ■



"Up and running right away!"

Guillaume Cubizolles
28-year-old Operations Manager for Veolia Water in Flaine, Haute-Savoie region, and Veoliaforce volunteer. Dispatched to the field in May 2008.

What were the circumstances surrounding your assignment?

G.C.: I completed volunteer training just after the earthquake in the Sichuan region of China struck. On the last evening of the training, a Wednesday, I got a phone call asking me if I wanted to go. I returned home on the Thursday evening and I left for two weeks on the following Monday.

How did it go when you got there?

G.C.: We were based in Chengdu, 80 kilometers from the epicenter, but we responded close to the area where the earthquake struck. Three of us were from Veoliaforce: a permanent staffer, a hydraulics specialist and me, serving as the chemist. I was the rookie, but the training had prepared me to be up and running right away. We were able to install three treatment plants inside the villages hit. Given the scope of the disaster, we were just a drop in the bucket, but our role was vital: we supplied 15,000 people with drinking water immediately!