

# The national heritage





Apart from the human cost, the earthquake also exacted a heavy toll on the historic masonry buildings and churches which abound in the Abruzzo region.

In order to preserve the cultural heritage the Italian National Fire and Rescue Service cooperated with the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities. From the very first day after the initial earthquake, Firefighters secured old buildings, removed and safely stored movable works of art and implemented several safety measures.

For the first time in Italy, all these operations were reported and recorded in real time through the web in order to allow data sharing. Highly sophisticated technology was used to immediately protect monuments and works of art, ensuring the best conditions for the future restoration work.







Bell tower of San Felice Martire church in Poggio Picenze (AQ). Piers of the bell tower made of two withes of dressed rectangular stones with debris of smaller size used as fill ( "a sacco" construction). The piers were badly damaged by compression. SAF teams from Tuscany (high angle rope rescue specialists) applied carbon fibres and bi-component fibre-reinforced mortar (fibreglass) to stop the extrusion movement.





Since the foundation of the National Fire Service in 1941, the safeguarding of the Italian national heritage was one of the tasks that give the Firefighters the most pride. However, it was only on the occasion of the earthquake in Umbria and Marche in 1997 that the Fire Service's extraordinary care and attention devoted to the protection of cultural assets even in the most critical emergencies was duly highlighted.

The events of 1997 marked a change in the identification of operational procedures to be adopted on such occasions and in the relevant training of Fire Service personnel responsible for the national heritage protection and salvage.

During the emergency of 1997 the teams charged with the protection of cultural and artistic assets carried out more than 500 specific operations. That experience proved to be essential for the training and professional qualification of Firefighters in safeguarding cultural and artistic assets, both in small and large scale emergencies.

In the following years the co-operation with the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities was intensified and expanded to other sectors. Fire prevention courses were organized in order to promote the use of an engineering approach to cultural heritage fire safety.



#### L'Aquila - major operations

- Spanish Fortress of 1534
- SAF team operations at San Bernardino church
- Collemaggio, salvage of Pope Celestine V manuscript
- S. Massimo Cathedral interior
- Coppito, removal of a capital of the church

