

RESTRICTED



Government
Office for Science

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Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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16th October 2013

Dear Prime Minister

I welcome the 2013 National Risk Assessment (NRA) and agree that the very high priority areas look correct; as such I am happy to recommend its approval. I commend the additional work on departmental risks that has been undertaken by departmental Chief Scientific Advisors and the Natural Hazards Partnership, to ensure that the best possible scientific evidence is used.

However, I feel there are a number of actions which could further strengthen the NRA:

- As was discussed in Cabinet yesterday morning, I agree with Francis Maude that thorough review of the NRA for next year is necessary. The key issue is to ensure that the NRA is used, and does not become a heavy document that is filed in secret filing cabinets! In particular, a good risk register should drive thinking about how risks can be prevented, mitigated, handled if they transpire and to clear up afterwards. The NRA is used fairly effectively for the handling and clear-up, but variably to drive decisions about prevention and mitigation.
- I think that the NRA could also be used more effectively to prepare for the handling of emergencies as they arise. Indeed I have been working closely with the Cabinet Office to ensure scientific scrutiny of key risks. As part of this work I have requested that scientific briefing papers are created for each of the very high priority risks; considerable work has already been done in creating these for both T44 and H23.
- Although a number of duplicate risks have been removed from this year's NRA, I believe more could be done to reduce the overall number of risks. Whilst I am content for risks to be moved across from the NRA to the NSRA continued scientific review of these should be conducted.
- It would be helpful for future iterations to have a behavioural science viewpoint; for example how people react in the event of an evacuation, or how first responders react in an emergency situation.

I would be pleased to help in the further evolution of the NRA.

I am copying this letter to members of NSC (THRC), Sir Jeremy Heywood and Sir Kim Darroch.

(ours sincerely)

Personal Data

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