



Office of the  
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# **The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework**

## **THE NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL CONTINGENCIES FRAMEWORK**

The following are the core principles on which the Framework is based:

- 1 Ministers and top management shall provide leadership, direction and support to civil contingencies processes, and shall ensure that appropriate funding and other resources are made available. Senior management shall include civil contingencies activities in their normal business planning activities, risk management frameworks and, where appropriate, audit and assurance arrangements.**
- 2 Organisations shall discharge their civil contingencies preparedness responsibilities in line with the principles set out in this Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework and in other relevant guidance issued at United Kingdom, Northern Ireland Regional, Sub-regional and Local levels.**
- 3 Risk assessments shall be carried out in a systematic manner, as a basis for prioritising civil contingencies activities and ensuring an effective use of resources.**
- 4 All organisations shall develop and maintain civil contingencies plans and other preparations in relation to their functions so that they can deliver those functions for the purposes of preventing an emergency, reducing, controlling or mitigating its effects or taking any other action necessary in relation to it.**
- 5 In developing and maintaining their own preparedness, organisations shall consult, communicate and co-ordinate with other organisations and shall participate as appropriate in regional, sub-regional and local co-ordination forums. All Northern Ireland public service organisations shall communicate and co-operate with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Maritime and coastguard Agency (MCA) and telecommunications providers in the discharge of those organisations' duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.**

## Aim

4. **The aim of the Framework is to ensure that the people of Northern Ireland receive a level of protection and emergency response which is consistent with that elsewhere in the United Kingdom and which meets their needs and expectations.**
5. This can only be achieved through the commitment of Ministers, departments and other public service organisations to having effective civil contingencies arrangements in place which are integrated across different organisations and between the NI regional, sub-regional and local levels. The Framework contributes to this by setting out the key civil protection policies and mechanisms which will be used by those organisations.

## Guiding principles

6. The UK government has established a set of guiding principles for the response to an emergency. It recognises that the response to an emergency needs to be managed flexibly to reflect circumstances at the time, but expects the response in all cases to be underpinned by the same guiding principles:
  - **Preparedness.** All those individuals and organisations that might have to respond to emergencies should be properly prepared, including having clarity of roles and responsibilities.
  - **Continuity.** Response to emergencies should be grounded in the existing functions of organisations and familiar ways of working, albeit delivered at a greater tempo, on a larger scale and in more testing circumstances.
  - **Subsidiarity.** Decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with co-ordination at the highest necessary level. Local responders should be the building block of response on any scale.

- **Direction.** Clarity of purpose should be delivered through a strategic aim and supporting objectives that are agreed and understood by all involved to prioritise and focus the response.
- **Integration.** Effective co-ordination should be exercised between and within organisations and tiers of response as well as timely access to appropriate guidance and appropriate support for the local or regional level.
- **Communication.** Good two-way communication is critical to an effective response. Reliable information must be passed correctly and without delay between those who need to know, including the public.
- **Co-operation.** Positive engagement based on mutual trust and understanding will facilitate information sharing and deliver effective solutions to issues arising.
- **Anticipation.** Risk identification and analysis is needed of potential direct and indirect developments to anticipate and thus manage the consequences.

7. The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework supports the application of these guiding principles in Northern Ireland.

### **Overall objectives for the central government response**

8. The guiding principles above allow for a clearly identifiable set of objectives for the central government response to all emergencies, including multiple incidents where a number of incidents occur close together in the same area or different parts of the country. The strategic objectives for the initial central government response are to:
  - **protect human life and, as far as possible, property and alleviate suffering;**
  - **support the continuity of everyday activity and the restoration of disrupted services at the earliest opportunity; and**
  - **uphold the rule of law and the democratic process.**