A Guide to Plan Preparation

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FOREWORD

Planning to respond to emergencies is an integral part of good business practice for all organisations. It is particularly important that public service organisations can continue to deliver their essential functions, and that they are able to respond to the needs of people, businesses and the environment in emergency situations. However, some organisations may have little experience of the emergency planning process and may find it difficult, therefore, to build and maintain effective emergency plans.

This document provides guidance on the process of preparing emergency plans. It offers a framework within which plans can be written in a way which suits the individual organisation and its emergency responses. It is intended to be a practical guide for those directly involved in the planning process,but also contains much which is relevant to everyone within an organisation,from senior management to operational staff. The document is primarily intended for use within public service organisations, but the principles are equally relevant to any type of business.

In the long run, however, a written plan is only useful if it is co-ordinated with plans of other organisations,validated,exercised and implemented when necessary. We would encourage all public service organisations to make sure that they have effective emergency plans which are prepared in line with accepted good practice, and to share those plans widely with other organisations.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1.   This Guide is intended to be used by anyone who has to write or revise an emergency plan. It assumes that anyone starting such a task has some background in, and understanding of, emergency planning policy and practice. However, it is accepted that sometimes someone has to prepare emergency plans who has no experience of the process of plan writing itself. This guidance is therefore designed to go through the process step by step, and to include information which plan writers should be aware of,but which may not be needed for every plan.

1.2.   Every organisation has its own culture and operational procedures, some of which may be defined by statutory duties. A general document such as this one cannot allow for such variations, but they do need to be taken into account in the planning process, as they may affect how an organisation will respond to an emergency. Above all, plans should be grounded in the reality of how an organisation works, rather than adhering rigidly to a planning formula.

1.3.   Plan preparation is not a stand-alone process: it is part of a cycle of risk assessment, plan writing, consultation, testing, exercise, review and revision. Nor is it an exercise for an isolated planner, sitting in an office and uninvolved with managers, operational staff, service providers and the normal day-to-day running of an organisation. Rather, it is an inclusive process, which should involve everyone in an organisation, from the very top down. It should also include people from other organisations who would be involved in, or dependent on, the implementation of the plan. In the end, plans must be owned by those people, at whatever level in the organisation, who would have to implement them.

1.4.   This guide refers throughout to an organisation preparing a plan. In reality, many plans are prepared and used by a discrete sub-unit of an organisation – Directorate, Division,Branch, Unit etc. Where this is the case, "organisation" should be read as "Division", "Unit" etc, as appropriate. Other parts of the organisation should then be included in consultation, planning, training and validation processes in the same way as external stakeholder organisations are.

1.5.   The Central Emergency Planning Unit (CEPU), which is part of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, aims to promote effective Civil Protection within the public sector in Northern Ireland. Further information on plan preparation and on the wider aspects of Civil Protection can be obtained from the CEPU at 1st Floor, the Arches Centre, 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue, BELFAST, BT5 5HD, telephone 028 9052 8863, text phone 028 9052 3154 or on the Unit's website, www.cepu.nics.gov.uk.

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CHAPTER 2

THE POLICY BACKGROUND TO PLAN PREPARATION

Civil Protection

2.1.   The preparation of emergency plans is one part of a much larger process known as Civil Protection. Activities which are undertaken as part of Civil Protection include:

- **Assessment.** Organisations need to be aware of internal and external risk factors and the consequences of any failure in their own systems, those of others, or uncontrollable events such as severe weather.

- **Prevention.** If risk factors are identified which an organisation can eliminate or substantially mitigate, it should do so.

- **Preparation of plans.** A plan will be required which is realistic, robust, flexible and meets all the assessed needs of an organisation, and the likely needs of recipients of the emergency response.

- **Education.** Anyone involved to any extent in an emergency plan should be aware of their role and be given the opportunity to practise actually doing it.

- **Testing / Exercising.** Any plan must be tested to ensure that it encompasses all the outcomes of known or reasonably foreseeable risks and that it would be effective in providing a sufficient and timely response. This testing can range from informal thought-sharing sessions through seminar and tabletop exercises to full scale 'live' exercises of a response. As well as testing the plan, exercises can also test whether the training given to staff has been effective and reveal whether some training needs have been overlooked.

- **Review.** There are a number of circumstances in which a plan may need to be reviewed. Following any test of a plan, or its use in an emergency situation, it is important to analyse whether the planned response was fully effective. Contact numbers and names need to be regularly reviewed and account taken of changes to buildings, work processes and management structures.

- **Response.** Some organisations respond to incidents as part of their core activities. Others may only very occasionally be asked to provide an emergency response. No organisations have regular experience of dealing with major incidents which require a large-scale response from many organisations. It is important therefore that when an incident, and especially a major incident, occurs all organisations are ready and equipped to respond according to their pre-prepared plans.

- **Recovery.** Once an initial response has been made to a major emergency, the source of the incident has been dealt with and the immediate effects mitigated, the emergency is by no means over. In most instances there will be medium and long term effects,

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such as damage to infrastructure, communities and the environment, which will need to be addressed in a co-ordinated and sensitive manner. Not all of the long-term effects will be immediately obvious, so monitoring and research may need to be carried out. Management and co-ordination of the recovery phase is as important as for the immediate response.

2.2.   All aspects of Civil Protection are important and the primary objective of an organisation should be to eliminate or minimise risks. However, no matter how effectively this is done, there will always be some element of uncontrollable risk, and it is therefore important to have effective strategies for responding to, and mitigating the effects of, emergencies. This is where the preparation of plans comes in, because without plans it is unlikely that an integrated, effective and complete response can be made.

Integrated Emergency Management

2.3.   Plans should be prepared within the framework of **Integrated Emergency Management (IEM),** the set of principles agreed in the United Kingdom for carrying out the planning and response aspects of Civil Protection. The underlying aim of IEM is that flexible plans should be developed which would enable an organisation to deal effectively with a major or minor emergency, whether foreseen or unforeseen. Plans should include co-ordination arrangements which will deliver a comprehensive and seamless service to those involved in the emergency. The basic concepts of IEM are:

- The principal emphasis in the development of any plan must be on the response to the incident and not its cause. Plans should be sufficiently flexible to allow them to be applied irrespective of time or place.

- Organisations should plan to deliver in emergency situations the services/expertise/products which they normally provide on a day to day basis, or extensions of these.

- Emergency management arrangements should be integrated into an organisation's everyday working structures. Emergency plans must build on routine arrangements.

- The activities of different divisions/units within an organisation should be integrated.

- Emergency arrangements need to be co-ordinated with those of other authorities and organisations.

- Plans should include the capacity to extend the level of response, up to that required for the outcome of a 'worst case scenario'.
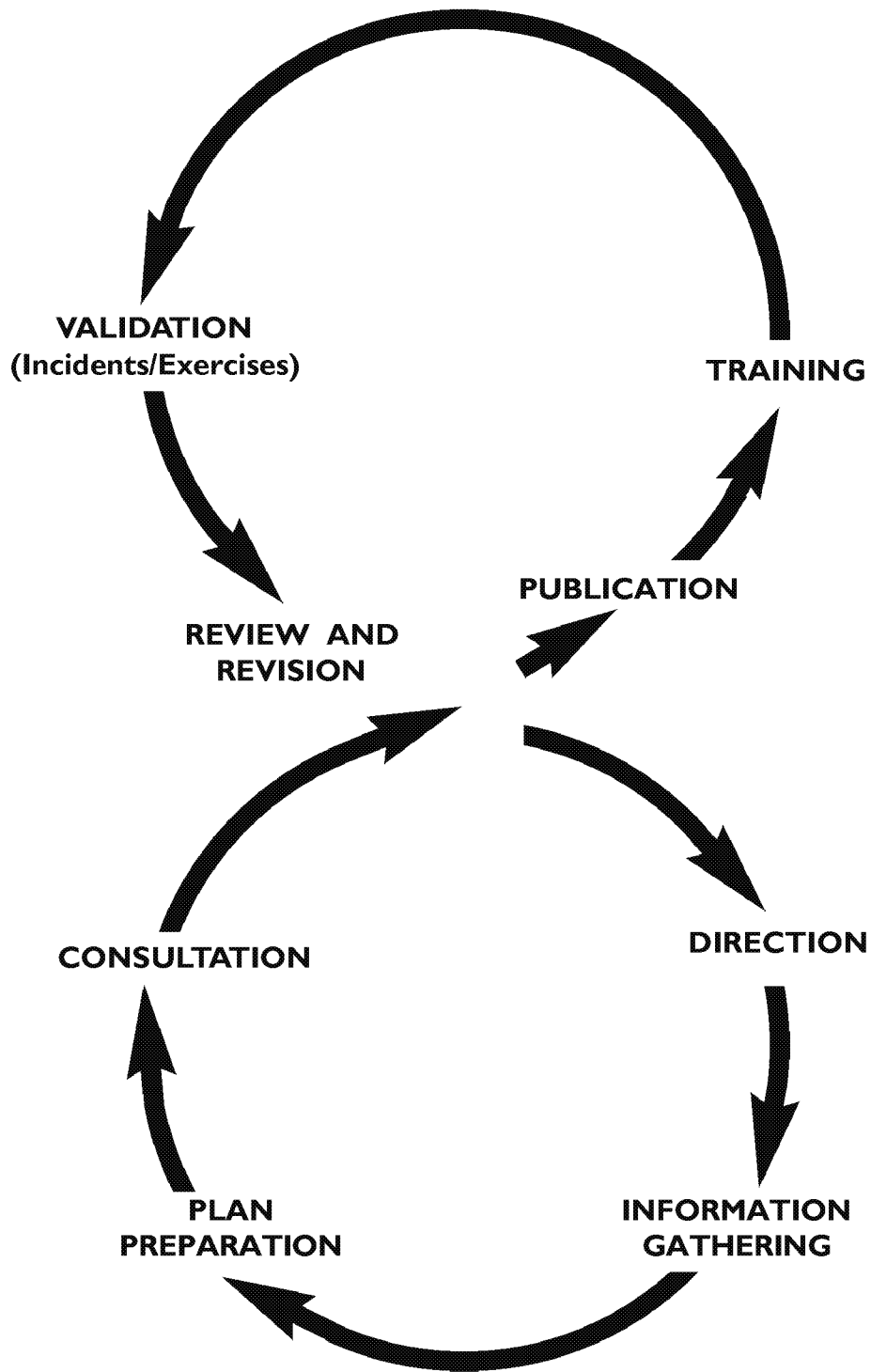
Safety and risk

2.4.   An emergency situation does not absolve organisations from their responsibilities, as employers and occupiers of premises, for the health and safety of staff, contractors and visitors. All emergency plans should therefore take account of the need to maintain the highest possible standards of safety. This will be particularly the case where staff are expected to work in difficult or dangerous situations or where buildings have been damaged or infrastructure services cut as a result of an emergency.

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2.5.   **A key aspect of emergency planning is risk assessment**, the process of identifying hazards and threats and measuring the likelihood of their occurrence and the potential severity of their effects. By doing so, an organisation can come to an understanding of the risks which it faces,internally in its own operations and in terms of external events to which it may need to respond.

2.6.   The degree of rigor which should be applied to the risk assessment process will depend on the nature of hazards and their likely occurrence and effects. The risk assessment process is not covered in detail in this document, but it should underpin all emergency planning.

The planning cycle

2.7.   When a plan is being prepared, the organisation which will implement it, and any other organisations which will depend on it,need to be sure that it will meet its objectives. Plans should therefore be the subject of extensive consultation, both inside and outside the organisation, during the process of plan preparation and afterwards.

2.8.   A plan is never 'finished' in the sense that it can be put away and forgotten about. Once a plan document is produced it has to be **validated** to ensure that the plan would be effective in meeting its objectives and, more importantly, that the planned response would actually work. More information on the validation process is in Chapter 9.

2.9.   Validation is an ongoing process. Organisations change, as does the environment – public expectation, social conditions, legislation etc – in which they operate. Therefore there needs to be a continuous process of review and validation to ensure that a plan remains accurate in its assumptions, objectives and content.

2.10.   The validation and review processes may well result in changes being proposed to the plan. Before these changes are finally incorporated,they should be the subject of a further round of consultation to make sure that staff believe that they would be effective and that they do not have negative knock-on effects on other responses. Diagram I illustrates the planning cycle.

2.11.   This guide deals in detail with the plan preparation aspects of the planning cycle, but the equally important validation and review process should not be ignored.

2.12.   Further information on the general principles underlying Civil Protection and IEM can be found in the publications 'Dealing With Disaster' and 'A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland'. Other publications dealing with exercising and specific types of planning are also available – see Bibliography at Annex A.

VALIDATION
(Incidents/Exercises)

TRAINING

REVIEW AND
REVISION

PUBLICATION

CONSULTATION

DIRECTION

PLAN
PREPARATION

INFORMATION
GATHERING

Diagram 1: The Emergency Planning Cycle

CHAPTER 3

TYPES OF EMERGENCY PLAN

3.1. The terms 'emergency plans' and 'emergency planning' encompass a variety of different plan types and planning related activities. The sort of plan required will depend on the nature of the organisation preparing the plan, the emergency situation(s) which the plan has to address and the type of response which is envisaged.

Business Continuity Planning

3.2. Business Continuity Plans deal with the situation where the effects of an emergency are mainly internal to the organisation preparing the plan, and those effects impair the organisation's ability to carry out its normal functions. Business Continuity Plans cover:

- Steps which can be taken in advance to reduce the risk of and impact of future internal emergencies.

- Steps which should be taken to respond to an internal emergency when it happens, to ensure that essential business is maintained and that normal operations are restored as quickly as possible.

3.3. Business Continuity Plans would also be needed to deal with the situation where the response an organisation makes to an external emergency has a knock-on effect on day-to-day business, perhaps by diverting staff or money away from normal activities.

Emergency Response Planning

3.4. Emergency Response Plans deal primarily with how an organisation will respond to an external emergency, by:

- Delivering services which contribute to resolving the emergency situation.

- Providing for the needs of those affected by it.

- Facilitating the return to normality.

3.5. However, the emergency may also affect the organisation itself, for example buildings may be damaged, or staff and their families caught up in events. These things may restrict the organisation's ability to provide its planned emergency response and may affect day-to-day services.

Types of emergency plans

3.6. Plans should be tailored to the particular situations which they are designed to cover:

Generic Plans deal with the general response of an organisation to a wide range of possible emergencies, in line with the principles of Integrated Emergency Management. A

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generic plan is the most basic type, and every organisation should have one in order to ensure that it is able to make a swift and effective response to those emergencies which are unpredictable in their timing,location and origin. Generic plans usually cover activation, alerting, management and co-ordination aspects of the response to emergencies. They should also outline the type of response (rescue, setting up Rest Centres, providing equipment etc) which the organisation could make to emergencies and the resources which would be available to do so. In preparing such plans, account should be taken both of the need to be flexible in responding to unexpected events and of any statutory duties or agreed response obligations which the organisation already has.

Site-specific plans deal with known locations which assessments have shown to pose specific risks. These plans can be a lot more specific than generic ones because the location and nature of likely emergencies can be predicted with some degree of certainty. Examples of site-specific plans would be airport plans or on-and off-site plans required for certain industrial premises by the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations. However, remember that these sites can be affected by emergencies unconnected with the hazardous activities carried out at them (eg an airport could be affected by flooding), so generic plans are required for them as well as specific ones.

Risk-specific plans deal with activities or events which are potentially or inherently hazardous, wherever they occur. Plans can address the specific response required to the hazard, but should be flexible enough to deal with a variety of locations. For example, the transport of hazardous substances can result in a chemical emergency arising from a traffic accident,and there are specific responses which should be made to ensure the safety of the public and emergency services. Likewise, public events pose specific risks associated with large crowds.

Function-specific plans deal with particular aspects of the response to an emergency – communication, control centre, Rest Centre etc - and should be flexible enough to be implemented in a variety of circumstances. For example, plans for setting up and running Rest Centres could be activated in a whole range of circumstances, ranging from chemical incidents to bomb explosions. Detailed, function-specific plans for setting up individual facilities such as a Rest Centre or a Communications Centre are sometimes called 'Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

3.7.   Most generic plans will need to be supported by detailed plans which are site-, risk- or function-specific. These may be included as annexes to the generic plan or may be held separately, but cross-referenced with the generic plan.

3.8.   Some plans may cross more than one category. For example, flood response plans are largely risk-specific in that they should be capable of being implemented wherever flooding takes place. However, some areas are known to be particularly prone to flooding, and it may be useful to prepare site-specific flood response plans for these areas. Some flooding will involve houses or other occupied properties which have to be evacuated. Plans for accommodating evacuees in Rest Centres are function-specific, but in this case would be activated in response to a particular risk.

3.9.   This document deals primarily with emergency response plans, but many of the principles are equally applicable to business continuity planning.

CHAPTER 4

GETTING STARTED

What is an emergency plan?

4.1.   An emergency plan is **not** a document which sits on a shelf or in a filing cabinet. An emergency plan is **especially not** a fat document which gathers dust on a shelf or gets buried in a filing cabinet. Emergency planning is more than a written plan: it is a dynamic process involving a whole range of activities.

4.2.   An emergency plan is therefore best viewed as a dynamic set of arrangements and procedures by which a group of organisations, an individual organisation, or part of an organisation, responds to an emergency situation. These arrangements and procedures should be recorded in a master document (which is usually what is referred to as 'the plan'), but they should also be part of the culture, management processes and induction and training programmes of organisations. All, or particular bits,of the plan may additionally be recorded in the form of aide-memoires,checklists,job descriptions and Standard Operating Procedures.

4.3.   Preparing a plan is **not just** about writing down what should be done, but **is also** about making sure that the plan meshes with those of other organisations,meets the needs of the customers of the emergency response (who may be the public, other emergency responders or other parts of the same organisation), and can be activated by trained and competent staff.

Setting the parameters

4.4.   First, everyone needs to agree that the organisation, or part of the organisation, has a role to play in a particular or general emergency and that a plan is required, or that an existing plan needs a substantial review. It is important that senior management support the planning process, by making the necessary staff and money available and by lending their authority to the project. It is equally important that the people who will have to implement the plan are committed and involved, to the extent that they can own the plan as 'theirs'.

4.5.   Once a decision has been taken to prepare a plan,the next decision is what the plan should include. Agreement should be reached on:

- Why the plan is needed and what emergency circumstances it would, or would not, cover.

- What the plan is expected to achieve.

- An appropriate plan template which can be used across the organisation and which is (as far as possible) compatible with plan templates used by other partner organisations.

- In what circumstances, and by whom, the plan would be activated.

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- Issues which might affect how the plan develops, such as statutory requirements, legal precedents and the plans, roles and responsibilities of other organisations.

- What assumptions can reasonably be made in the plan about the availability of resources and infrastructure. Most plans (except those specifically related to infrastructure failure) assume that services such as telephones, electricity and transport will be available at normal operational levels during the emergency response. However, experience is that in emergency situations local services can fail, either because of damage or overload. Similarly, most plans assume that staff will be readily available for the response, whilst during holiday periods and periods of severe weather this may not be the case.

- The timescale within which writing and initial validation of the plan should be complete, with key dates along the way by which progress can be measured.

Finding the right people

4.6. The production of an emergency plan is a co-operative venture, involving operational and support staff and management within an organisation or part of an organisation. However, it is normally most effective to appoint one person to co-ordinate:

- Receipt and collation of plan inputs.

- Production of plan outputs.

- Training of staff and validation of the plan.

These tasks are best co-ordinated by someone with a direct, up-to-date knowledge of the activities which the plan would cover, but also with a good background in emergency planning.

4.7. People able to contribute to, or to co-ordinate, plan inputs and outputs, training and validation may not be easy to find in an organisation, and it may be necessary to invest in training for a range of staff as the first step in the plan preparation process.

Formats and tools

4.8. A framework or template, used appropriately, is a great help in starting to write a plan. A plan template which is consistent with this guidance document is at Annex B. The design of the plan template (framework) should be one of the first decisions taken in preparing a plan, as this will guide the rest of the work. Ideally, the same framework or template should be used for all plans within an organisation. The template should also be, as far as possible, consistent with those of other organisations involved in planning for the same events. However, frameworks and templates need to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the specific needs of the organisation and the planned response. There is a real danger of simply filling in the boxes and assuming that the plan will work because it fits in the framework.

4.9. Similarly, plans prepared by other organisations should be used with caution, as what works for one organisation or location may be completely inappropriate for another.

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4.10.   Plan writing, and the many rounds of consultation which accompany it, can generate a lot of paper. It is therefore most efficient to produce the plan as an electronic document,which can be changed easily and distributed by e-mail. Paper copies should be provided,however, for consultees unable or unwilling to use e-mail. Whatever format the document is maintained and circulated in, proper document security procedures should be maintained: see paragraphs 6.8. – 6.11.

4.11.   While it is useful to store plan documents electronically, hard copies should also be kept for those occasions when staff have no access to computers or the power has failed.

Researching the background

4.12.   Before starting out on preparation of a plan,some research is nearly always necessary. The sort of questions which could be asked are:

- Does any sort of plan for this function/situation already exist within the organisation? If yes, can it be revised, or does a new plan have to be started from scratch?

- Does experience of emergency response already exist in the organisation, but has never been formally written down? How can this be experience be tapped? What other relevant expertise do staff have?

- Do any other organisations with similar responsibilities have plans which could act as a model for the new plan?

- Do any other local organisations have plans which may cover all or some of the same responses? Where does the division of responsibilities lie and how will the plans fit together?

- Are there any publications which set out good practice for the response envisaged, or are there reports of incidents from which lessons could be learned?

- Have any other organisations actually responded to the sort of events which the plan is intended to cover? Would they be willing to share their experiences, at least on an informal basis?

- What legislation and statutory duties are relevant to the plan? Are there any legislative changes in the pipeline which may affect the contents of the plan?

- What are the structure and management arrangements of the organisation(s) preparing the plan? What technical details about the emergency response need to be understood?

- What expectations do the customers for the response – other organisations or the public – have of it and what do they want from it?

4.13.   A Planning Group (see para 4.15.) will be an important source of this sort of information, but additional information should be sought from publications, other organisations and the emergency planning community. The Emergency Planning College and the Emergency Planning Society may also be able to contribute.

4.14.   A balance needs to be struck between in-depth research and getting on with writing the plan. The timetable for plan preparation set at the beginning of the project will partly

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determine how much time is available for research. Considerable time can be saved in the later stages by assembling all the necessary information and making full use of existing plans, plan frameworks and people's experience. However, at some stage it will be necessary to start writing.

Producing the outputs

4.15.   As stated above, the designated plan co-ordinator should not prepare the plan outputs (plan document, summaries, checklists, training and exercise schedules etc) in isolation. A **Planning Group** should be formed to help gather information and to advise on any technical or operational details. The Group would also act as a 'sounding board' during the plan-writing process and would provide comments on drafts. The type of plan being written, and the nature of the response envisaged, will dictate the membership of the Planning Group. Staff who would have to activate and implement the plan should always be represented on the Planning Group, as should appropriate managers, both line managers of the operational staff and strategic managers for the organisation. Others who could contribute to a Planning Group would include technical or professional staff, personnel and finance managers, press officers and training staff. If the plan being prepared involves other organisations, or requires close integration with other plans, representatives of appropriate organisations may attend the Planning Group.

4.16.   The Planning Group may not have to meet round a table very often once the parameters of the plan have been set and any necessary research carried out, but they should be available informally to help and advise the plan co-ordinator throughout the planning process. The Planning Group will agree the first draft of the plan before it is circulated to a wider audience for consultation.

CHAPTER 5

PLAN CONTENTS

This chapter sets out the basic elements which make up an emergency plan. Obviously, the detail will vary with the type of plan and response which it covers. **A plan framework which is consistent with this chapter is at Annex B.**

Section 1: Introduction to the plan

An introduction at the beginning of the plan should be used to explain what the plan is intended to achieve. This will be of particular importance for those unfamiliar with the plan. The introduction should also contain a statement of commitment to the plan by the organisation's senior management. This could take the form of a Foreword or endorsement, signed by a senior officer (eg the Chief Executive) in the organisation. Departments may wish to seek the endorsement of Ministers.

It is important that the introduction leaves readers of the plan in no doubt about its scope, so as to avoid incorrect expectations of it:

a.   **Describe why the plan is needed.** This helps people inside and outside the organisation understand the context of the plan.

b.   **Describe what the plan will achieve.** It is important that the plan states its objectives so that everyone is clear about what it is, and is not, supposed to achieve. Setting objectives is particularly important, as the plan will be judged on whether or not it achieves its objectives, rather than on whether it is, or would be, successful in meeting the needs of a particular emergency situation.

c.   **Identify the type of emergency which the plan will address.** For a generic plan, this should not be too prescriptive since the intention is to give those reading, or being trained in, the plan, a broad feel for the types of scenario in which it might be used. Site-, risk-, or function-specific plans can give more detailed information on the circumstances in which they would be invoked.

d.   **Define the criteria for invoking or activating the plan.** *This is a key element of the plan*, as one of the biggest problems with emergency response is to persuade people to activate plans. Often, an organisation will try to respond to an incident in an ad hoc way, and by the time anyone acknowledges that the plan should be activated it is too late for it to be effective. The plan should specify in what circumstances it should be invoked, how these circumstances will be identified and who (always more than one person) has the authority to invoke the plan. The mechanisms of plan activation are covered under Section 3, but the introduction should set out the principles of activation circumstances, responsibility for activation and any interactions with other organisations' plans which would influence the decision to activate the plan.

e.   **State clearly the assumptions made** on issues such as availability of resources and infrastructure.

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Section 2: Areas of responsibility

It is wise to describe responsibilities in terms of positions, posts or appointments rather than using individuals' names. This limits to some extent the number of times the plan has to be revised to take account of personnel changes. It also emphasises that the responsibility rests on the post, not the individual.

Setting out responsibilities clearly serves to:

a.   **Give an unambiguous outline of individual post-holders' responsibilities.** As well as giving these post-holders a clear view of their own responsibilities, this will enable other people, inside and outside the organisation, to identify with whom they need to make liaison links.

b.   **Describe the organisation's crisis management structure.** In line with the principles of IEM, this should be as close as possible to the day-to-day management structure, as this is what most people are comfortable with and are likely to use in a crisis anyway. Any necessary differences between crisis management arrangements and day-to-day practices should be especially emphasised.

c.   **Describe the responsibilities of other organisations involved in the same response.** Few emergency responses can be entirely contained within one organisation. There are nearly always other organisations involved in some way in responding to the same event. It is important that the responsibilities of other organisations are clearly set out so that there is no danger of misunderstandings, overlaps, duplication or gaps. This section needs to be compiled in close consultation with the organisations involved. For some organisations or responses where inter-agency working is particularly important, for example District Council plans, this issue may warrant its own section in the plan.

Section 3: Activation procedure

a.   **Describe how an alert to an emergency, or potential emergency, would be received and authenticated**. In most cases, notification could come from a number of sources, official, unofficial and media. The plan should set out the likely routes of notification. Arrangements for formal alerts from official sources, eg the emergency services, should be agreed between the two organisations and written into the plans of both. The plan should also identify the person who should receive the formal alert and any other people who might become aware of unofficial alerts or alerts arising from the media (many organisations first hear about emergency events when the media contact their Press Office looking for a statement!). All alerts should be authenticated. Formal alerting arrangements may include authentication arrangements, such as a telephone number which can be contacted to confirm the message. Informal alerts and press information should be followed up with relevant organisations. The plan should specify who would authenticate the alert, usually either the initial recipient or the person responsible for implementing the plan (see below). People likely to receive emergency alerts, including switchboard operators and night security staff, should be given appropriate training for the tasks they are expected to perform.

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b.   **State when, and on what timescale, the organisation can receive and respond to alerts.** Ideally, an organisation should be able to receive and respond to an emergency alert at any time of day or night, 365 days per year. However, the reality is that many organisations without a regular need to provide an emergency response do not have robust alerting arrangements for outside working hours. Some organisations may not need to be able to respond on this basis, but they should confirm this with internal and external stakeholders during the planning process. Many public service organisations would not be primary responders, but their services may be needed in hours, days or weeks following an incident. The plan should clearly state, for the benefit of other organisations, the hours within which an organisation can be contacted, and both projected timescales for providing a response, and a realistic assessment of what resources the organisation could mobilise in that time, allowing for weekends and holidays.

c.   **Define who is authorised to implement the Plan.** There should always be a number of people with this authority, to allow for leave and sickness. These would normally be senior managers or people with a good strategic overview of the organisation and the required response, but in certain circumstances other staff may be authorised, especially where it is clear that any alert will result in activation of the plan. Depending on the nature of the organisation and plan, it may be appropriate to make a formal declaration of a major incident or emergency, or simply to convey the message that the plan should be implemented. In any case, formally implementing the plan should alert all staff with roles to play that they should put the plan into action, and it should not be necessary to re-state any arrangements which are already in the plan. In any given situation, the person authorised to implement the plan may decide that there is insufficient information available on which to base a decision, or that it is too early in the incident to implement the plan. In these circumstances, staff may be placed on 'standby' as a means of ensuring that if or when the time comes to respond, the organisation can do so with minimum delay. Although responsibility for deciding when a plan should be implemented normally lies with the organisation producing the plan, any circumstances in which the activation of one organisation's plan would require the activation of plans by other organisations should be explored at the planning stage and protocols agreed for consultation or notification when a plan is about to be activated.

d.   **Describe the callout arrangements which would be used to inform staff of the need to activate the emergency plan or go on standby.** Once a decision has been taken to activate the plan or to place staff on standby pending further information or developments, the message needs to be transmitted to all relevant staff. This is usually done by callout cascades whereby the person making the decision to activate the plan contacts a few key senior staff and they in turn contact their own teams. In this section, it might be best to list people by the post or appointment they hold, and to put personal names and contact details in the alerting arrangements appendix to the plan (see Chapter 5, Section 8). Efficient methods of contacting people (eg text pagers on a group paging system) are technically possible and should be investigated, especially where the speed of the response is important. Many organisations depend on an ad-hoc call-out system which cannot guarantee the availability of staff. This is a risky strategy: a proper 'on-call' rota, with staff properly paid to be available is much preferable. Individual organisations will have to carry out a risk analysis and a cost-benefit analysis of their options, but if it is decided not to have formal call-out arrangements, the decision should be defensible in any post-disaster inquiry. Callout arrangements should be able to cope with some nominated staff being unavailable – deputies and fall-back arrangements should be set out clearly.

e.   **Describe standby arrangements which would be made in the event of an immediate response not being required.** In some circumstances the immediate impact of an incident may not be clear, or the organisation's services may not be required in the immediate response phase. This section should set out what actions would be taken if staff were placed on standby, eg collection of equipment, setting up of emergency co-ordination centres, cancelling meetings. It should be made clear that if one organisation, eg the Police, decides to activate its plan, other organisations should not necessarily follow suit if their response is not immediately required or if there is insufficient information for a decision to be made. However, the plan should identify circumstances where the activation of one plan indicates a need to place resources on standby or where organisations need to respond together and therefore co-ordinate activation of plans.

f.   **Describe the procedures for changing staff from standby to 'response'.** These are likely to be similar to the initial callout arrangements, but may need to be adjusted to allow for any emergency communications systems and operations rooms which are set up during the standby phase. There may also be a need in some cases to move from response to standby, if the initial response phase has passed but more events are expected, or if it turns out the organisation's services are not immediately required. For example, prolonged periods of severe weather could give rise to response-standby cycles.

Section 4: Emergency response

a.   **Describe the organisation's own procedures for the setting-up of an emergency response.** It is very useful in this context to use some form of diagram or flow chart to show the sequence of events.

b.   **Describe the organisation's call-out procedures**, over and above the initial alerting procedures set out under Section 3.

c.   **Specify how, and to where, staff will report.** Depending on the nature of the emergency and the response which the organisation is making, travel may be hazardous, incident sites may be dangerous, and not all staff will be required at once. It may be useful if the plan requires staff to initially report in by telephone to a central co-ordinator – there should be a fall-back arrangement for when telephone contact is not possible. Only the essential minimum number of staff should be asked to respond immediately, since others may be needed for relief shifts later on during the response. The first task of this initial response team on arrival at their place of duty should be to assess the situation and the resources the organisation will need, both in the short and long term. A manager should be appointed to organise the supply of staff, shifts, practical support etc, based on the initial and ongoing assessments of the operational staff.

d.   **Describe the emergency communications links and communications equipment to be used in a response.** This should be a brief description of the key elements and this paragraph must be supplemented with a communications annexe or plan (see Section 8).

e.   **Define links with, and membership of, relevant co-ordination and crisis management groups,** both those set up within the organisation and any set up by lead organisations.

f. **Describe any changes to organisational and management structures needed to ensure an effective emergency response.** These need to be as few as possible, to avoid confusion. If significant changes to normal procedures are necessary, staff should be trained in them and given regular opportunity to practice.

g. **Define support staff requirements.** These are the people (admin staff, caterers, stores staff, drivers etc) needed to give back-up to the direct responders listed in Section 2. They are often overlooked in plans, and so are unaware, or unsure, of their contribution to the emergency response. As with the direct response staff, the plan needs to allow for support staff to be rotated to ensure that everyone gets adequate breaks. The plan also needs to indicate what staff will keep normal business going, or at least maintain priority activities (see 4.q. below).

h. **Describe how flexibility is to be achieved.** Emergency situations change and develop over time, often in unpredictable ways, so the plan must indicate how the organisation will ensure that its response remains appropriate throughout. This could be achieved, for example, by gathering and updating information on the situation, periodic assessments / reviews of the effectiveness of the response, arrangements to increase, decrease, prioritise or switch resources, and regular consultation with other responders.

i. **Describe how a graduated response can be delivered.** The objective should be to match the response to the need. Remember, for some organisations not on the front line of the response, the greatest demand can come hours, days or even months down the line. This will require foresight, monitoring of the situation and a planned, managed, release of staff and other resources in response to need.

j. **Specify the location and role of the organisation's Co-ordination / Management / Control Centre(s).** These may include agency or divisional Control Centres, an overall organisational Control/Co-ordination Centre and any inter-agency Co-ordination facilities provided as part of the organisation's lead function. The nature of the organisation's response will determine how sophisticated the Control Centre facilities should be. At a minimum, facilities should include good communications (preferably using a number of different technologies and routes), access to basic office equipment (photocopiers, computers, printers etc) and accommodation for meetings. A designated backup location is preferable, in case the first choice is unavailable. Designated Centres do not need to be near the scene of the incident so long as communication facilities are good. However, site-specific plans may use accommodation close to the risk site, but away from any likely hazards.

k. **Clearly identify Co-ordination / Management / Control Centre managers and define their role.** Staff will also have to be identified to provide support to the manager – logging incoming or outgoing messages, preparing situation reports, managing communications etc.

l. **Clearly identify how information will flow for the production of situation reports and updates as well as for media briefing.** Everyone should be aware of information flow lines, especially administrative staff who will have to support them. Information should not only flow upwards from operational staff to senior management and the media, but situation reports and notification of decisions made need to flow back down the chain so that operational staff are aware of what is happening.

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m.　　**State the role of the organisation's Head.** This should be a key strategic role – senior managers should not get involved in operational detail. Record who will take on this role in the absence of the Head of the organisation.

n.　　**Describe the activities to be undertaken for the maintenance and preservation of records.** In any inquiry or legal proceedings arising from the emergency, all documents relating to an organisation's planning, training, exercises and response will be discoverable. Similarly, all decisions should be properly documented for future audit. The plan should therefore describe how information relating to the emergency, and decisions taken by individuals or committees will be recorded. This logging process can be either paper or IT-based, so long as permanent records are kept. Routine document destruction and clearing of electronic documents from directories should be suspended. Papers and electronic records relating to the emergency should be collected and placed in secure storage.

o.　　**Describe the organisation's media liaison arrangements.** This will cover how the media can be used to get essential public information across and how the organisation will respond to media requests for information, interviews and analysis. Organisational Press Officers have a key role to play in the issue of public information, and they should be involved at the planning stage as well as during an emergency. They will have the necessary contacts with the media and can advise on wording, protocols etc. Any press releases or emergency announcements should be cleared with the lead organisation for the emergency.

p.　　**Define links with other organisations** at the appropriate levels (operational, tactical, strategic) and describe how communications and inter-agency working will be managed. A flow chart may be a useful way of visualising connections. Include references to any protocols, Memoranda of Understanding or Service Level Agreements which relate to the emergency response set out in the plan.

q.　　**Identify which normal services must be maintained and to what standards.** This will allow critical business needs to be taken into account when making decisions about resourcing the response. This is where emergency response plans and business continuity plans meet.

r.　　**Describe the arrangements for formally moving to a new phase of the response or standing down the response.** It is important that the response is fully managed throughout its duration and not just in the initial stages. There should be formal arrangements for making decisions are about scaling down a response, moving to a new phase or standing down the response altogether. These decisions should be taken in full consultation with other organisations involved in the response. There should also be formal arrangements for informing staff and other responding organisations about these decisions.

Section 5: Long-term response

Even while the initial response is underway, planning should start for the long-term effort which will be necessary to promote recovery, restore normality and help individuals and communities come to terms with what has happened. This is much easier if advance thought has been given to the issues which may need to be addressed, and the organisation has some idea of how it will approach them.

a.   **Describe the likely long-term aspects of the response.** All plans should allow for some level of long-term participation in recovery, debriefing, review of procedures, and possible inquiries into the emergency. The effect of these on organisational resources should not be underestimated. If it is anticipated that the type of emergency for which the plan is written may require a significant long-term commitment to recovery, indicate what staff would be involved in the long-term recovery team and where they would be accommodated. The long-term response will have to dovetail with the immediate one, and the same staff will often be involved in both, although not necessarily. Staff health and safety and welfare issues should be considered.

b.   **Describe the shift working arrangements and the staffing levels likely to be needed,** where the response goes on beyond 8 hours or so (less if the response is physically or emotionally challenging for staff). The plan should include some indication of shift length, hand-overs, overlap, briefing and debriefing of staff, to avoid having to develop these from scratch during an emergency. However, the plan should be sufficiently flexible to allow these details to be tailored to individual circumstances. It may help to include an appendix with some basic information on overtime or shift-working payments which staff may be entitled to, and contact details for the appropriate Personnel or Pay staff. This could then be given to staff working in an emergency to help them with enquiries and claims.

c.   **Consider the long-term implications to delivery of normal services.** The plan should allow for a review of the whole of the organisation's functions in the light of new long-term commitments.

d.   **Describe the factors involved in recovery.** Recovery, of individuals and communities, is a long-term and complex process requiring a multi-agency approach. The plan should allow for liaison with other organisations, participation in joint ventures and working with the individuals/community affected to determine their needs and wishes.

e.   **Describe the factors involved in, and responsibilities for, restoration of normal services.** Cross-reference with the business continuity plan.

f.   **Describe how the information needs of the public are to be met.** There may be an ongoing interest in the emergency and the people involved in it. This will be especially the case at anniversaries of the event or when similar circumstances occur. A strategy for dealing with interest from the media, public representatives, interest groups and individuals will help to identify likely needs for information and maintain a consistent information flow. Co-ordination of information with other organisations will ensure that there is no duplication or contradiction.

g.   **Describe how the information needs of the organisation's own staff are to be met,** including those staff not directly involved in any response. Staff are as interested as the media and the public in what is happening and why the response is being managed the way it is. Keeping them well informed builds team spirit, provides a common purpose and helps non-response staff understand why they are having to carry extra workloads in order to release response staff.

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Section 6: Training

a.   **Describe how all relevant staff will be familiarised with the plan.**

b.   **Identify what staff training requirements are necessary for effective implementation of the plan.** These should be supported by an action plan setting out individual activities and timescales.

c.   **Identify what joint training with other organisations is needed.** This should be the subject of discussion, agreement and a joint action plan as above.

Section 7: Validation and review

This section would set out how the plan is to be validated and reviewed. More information on these aspects of planning is in Chapter 9.

a.   **Nominate the post or staff appointment which will be responsible for reviewing, amending and updating the plan.** The work involved in this should be written into their job description, annual business plan and personal objectives and should be allowed for in the loading of the post. Any skills which an individual post-holder needs to acquire / develop in order to be effective in reviewing plans should be included in their Personal Development Plan, or equivalent.

b.   **Consider how best the plan can be validated** to ensure that is capable of being implemented and would be effective in meeting its objectives.

c.   **Set out how and when sections 1 - 6 and all appendices will be reviewed.** It is normal to review on a regular basis but the timescale will vary for different sections and appendices, eg contact lists have to be reviewed much more frequently than long-term response activities. In addition to this timetabled review cycle, reviews should be carried out after incidents and exercises and where there have been changes to organisational structure, communications arrangements or resources available. The plan should indicate how the need to respond to these sort of events by carrying out a review will be identified and actioned.

d.   **Describe the exercise programme for validation.** Unless an organisation is already very experienced at exercises, it is best to start with fairly simple exercises of part of the plan and build up to more sophisticated exercises involving a number of different aspects of the plan. The length of an exercise cycle will be related to the length of the review cycle. All aspects of the plan should normally be exercised every 3-5 years.

e.   **Describe the arrangements for debriefing exercises and incidents to extract information on the effectiveness of the plan.**

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Section 8: Appendices

For ease of use and to ensure that key aspects of the plan are clear, it is usual to put details of responses and subsidiary plans into appendices at the end of the main body of the plan rather than to include them as part of the different sections. The nature of the appendices will change with the type of plan (generic, site-specific, event-specific etc). In general, generic plans may have a lot of appendices and subsidiary plans, dealing with specific risks, locations or functions. Where the main body of the plan is focused on a particular issue, there would be less need for appendices and subsidiary plans.

Appendices to plans could include:

a.   **Emergency contact list for the organisation.** This would be included in almost all plans and should include phone/pager numbers, radio details and addresses as required. It should cover the main first responders, their roles and a brief description of what events they should be notified of and any deputies or alternative alerting arrangements in the event of the first choice being unavailable. This appendix is what the initial contact will use to initiate the emergency response, so it is very important that it is kept up-to-date.

b.   **Emergency contact links for other organisations** including mutual and cross-border aid. This is another essential element of the plan, which should include alternative contact names/posts and means of communication and should be kept up-to-date.

c.   **Emergency resources, including communication systems and equipment.** This should include instructions on the location of resources, how they can be accessed (on a 24 hour basis, if that may be necessary) and operating instructions. Standard operating procedures for Control or Co-ordination Centres and other arrangements may be included here.

d.   **Security, access and identification of staff.** Even in an emergency it will be necessary to maintain an adequate level of safety, especially if staff are likely to be going into hazardous locations or working under stress. Building security should also be maintained for any Co-ordination or Management Centres.

e.   **Outlines of staff responsibilities,** on the basis of post held and emergency management/response role, not individual names. These job/role descriptions will be the main documents which post-holders need in order to understand their own role in the emergency and what is expected of them. A number of related documents may be required, each setting out the function, objectives and working methods for a post (Safety Manager, Control Centre Manager, Chairman of the internal Co-ordination/Control Group, Control Centre Support Staff etc).

f.   **Financial authority and records of expenditure.** This should give guidance on who has authority to make spending decisions and how those decisions will be made and recorded.

g.   **Insurance and legal considerations including preservation of records.** This should be prepared in consultation with the necessary finance and legal advisers.

h.   **Media policy and where to find competent or trained spokespersons.** Again, involve organisational Press Officers, but make sure that the appendix contains enough information for general readers to understand how the media response will work and who they should go to for help and advice if they are approached directly by representatives of the media.

i.   **Message handling, log sheets and log keeping.** A very important aspect of emergency response which is often overlooked. No matter how urgent and hectic the response, there should always be people whose job it is to keep a trace of information as it flows into and out of the organisation and to record discussions and decisions taken. The information in this appendix will supplement that in Section 4.n. on making and preserving records.

j.   **Briefing and hand-over procedures.** If the response is likely to extend over a period of time, shift-working will be necessary to ensure that all staff receive sufficient rest. This appendix should describe how shift handovers (or other handovers if people's roles will change during the response) will be managed. Information on additional payments to which staff may be entitled, and how to claim them may also be included either here or in a separate appendix – see Chapter 5, Section 5 b.

k.   **Debriefing methods.** It is important that,after the emergency, everyone has a chance to talk about their experience of the response. This is firstly so that they can work through any effects the experience may have had on them and secondly so that information can be gathered on how the response went, what worked and what didn't and whether the plan was an effective tool for responders. Personal debriefing and lesson-learning debriefing are separate processes and require facilitators with different skills. This appendix should set out what arrangements will be made for both and where it would be possible to get specialist assistance, if required.

l.   **Safety and staff health monitoring and counselling.** An emergency situation does not absolve an organisation,or its employees,from their obligations under health and safety legislation. This appendix should set out what steps will be taken to ensure the well-being of all staff, including provision of safety equipment, working hours arrangements, workload management systems and welfare and counselling arrangements. It should also specify what post-holder(s) will be responsible for overseeing the safety and welfare of staff,both during the emergency and afterwards.

m.   **Contractors' obligations for service provision in any emergency.** Many organisations rely on a range of contractors (from both the public and private sectors) to deliver services on their behalf. Where these services may be required in an emergency situation, there should be a contractual agreement, such as a contract, Service Level Agreement (SLA), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or protocol, covering things such as response times, resources to be provided, roles and responsibilities and financial arrangements. Don't forget IT support, communications support, out-of-hours catering, cleaning and transport.

n.   **Emergency Communications Directory. This is probably one of the most important parts of the plan,ranking alongside alerting mechanisms,action lists, key emergency contact numbers and communications facilities.** In contrast to the initial call-out contact list in Appendix i, this appendix would detail the contact

arrangements which would operate during the emergency response, and would include both communications protocols and contact details, eg phone numbers (land-line and mobile), for key responders inside and outside the organisation, and for emergency operations rooms, Control and Co-ordination Centres, etc.

It is likely that some organisations involved in the response will have preferred means of communication,eg internet or internal e-mail systems are increasingly used and some organisations have developed reporting templates which should be used for sending information in a pre-designated format. Within the organisation preparing the plan, there may be protocols for handling incoming and outgoing information to ensure that it is logged and passed without delay to the relevant person. This sort of information should be recorded in the Emergency Communications Directory.

Some of the phone numbers contained in the Emergency Communications Directory may only be activated when an emergency occurs, for example phones in emergency Control or Co-ordination Centres are not normally activated until the Centre is required. Therefore, instructions for setting up an emergency Centre should include calling everyone on the contact list to notify them that it is up and running, and to confirm the protocols and numbers/addresses being used.

Issues to consider when putting together the Emergency Communications Directory include:

- There will always be difficulties in keeping the Directory up-to-date, but special consideration must be given to doing so. The Directory will reflect the depth and breadth of pre-planning liaison and will therefore be dependent upon the extent to which this has occurred.

- The Directory should be a stand-alone document and should be capable of easy amendment. Consideration should be given as to how the directory is made up since there will always be confidentiality aspects in its contents, especially as home and ex-directory numbers are likely to be used (see below). The Directory could therefore be divided into sections, each with separate and discrete distribution lists.

- Where possible, at least one contact number for all key organisations or individuals involved in the plan should be unlisted in public or general internal phone directories, not routed through organisational switchboards,and not available to the general public or non-emergency users. This would permit information to be exchanged, even when public numbers, help-lines and switchboards are overwhelmed. As far as possible, all key contact details should be listed in the Directory, including fax numbers, e-mail addresses and websites. Ideally, contact lists should cover 24-hour / 365 day arrangements and should include both the most effective means of alerting any particular organisation, and back-up arrangements.

CHAPTER 6

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

6.1.   Once the background information has been gathered, and the Sections of the plan written, a master document needs to be prepared which incorporates all key information in a format which is accessible and easy to refer to.

Layout and additional pages

6.2.   Depending on the nature and purpose of the plan, helpful additional inclusions and formats could be:

- A contents page.

- A clear statement of contact numbers and addresses for anyone with queries about the plan, or amendments to contribute.

- A distribution list, so that recipients of the plan know who else has received it.

- An amendments sheet, so that the holders of copies can record when the copy was amended. This helps to tell at a glance whether any given copy of the plan is up-to-date. Plan contents should only be changed by the document originator: any recipient (whether individual or organisation) with an amendment to suggest should go to the originator rather than either changing only their copy or sending amendments direct to other recipients of the plan.

- Tables, lists, text boxes, flow-charts and diagrams, used wherever possible to break up the text and to help people to visualise responses and interactions.

- Pages and paragraphs numbered for ease of reference.

- Different colours of paper used for different sections or appendices, to divide the document up and to make it easier to navigate.

- Labelled dividers between sections and/or between appendices to help people find what they want quickly.

- Maps used to convey spatial information such as the locations of rendezvous points and areas of special risk. Be careful not to try to get too much detail into a small area and think about how the plan is going to be reproduced for circulation – will black-and-white be acceptable or will you need to produce large numbers of expensive colour copies?

- Action lists to summarise the next steps in validating the plan, training staff and maintenance of the contents.

Document style

6.3.   The plan document should be distinctive (easy to identify on a shelf) and durable. While it is useful to prepare the plan in an electronic format, and sometimes to transmit it electronically, paper-based copies should also be held for those times when computers are

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inaccessible or unavailable. There may also be contents in the plan, such as maps, which are not easy to incorporate into an electronic document.

6.4.   Consideration should be given to the binding to be used for paper plans. Ring binders allow individual pages to be amended and inserted, thus saving the cost of reprinting the whole document every time something needs updated. The drawback to this is that unless everyone with a copy of the plan is diligent in inserting amended pages and destroying superseded ones, copies can become out of date. The plan originator has no quality control over other people's copies unless they are periodically recalled, checked and updated, which is time-and labour-consuming.

6.5.   Permanent binding ensures that the plan does not get into a mess, but a full new plan has to be printed every time amendments are made. This tends to mean that originator organisations wait until they have a substantial number of amendments before printing and issuing updated versions to holders of copies of the plan. An alternative to waiting would be to ask copy holders to make manuscript changes to the document between reprints, but this caries all the drawbacks associated with issuing updated pages for a ring binder.

6.6.   In general, most organisations put their plans in ring binders and try to ensure that amendments are inserted by asking plan holders to sign a receipt saying that they have done so. At least then if someone's plan is out of date and they respond wrongly as a result, the originator organisation can show that it has taken reasonable steps to ensure that plans were updated (provided, of course, that it chases up any unreturned receipts).

6.7.   Plan binders should be clearly labelled with the title of the plan and the date it was produced/amended. Edition numbers may also be used to clearly identify successive revisions.

Circulating drafts and updates

6.8.   Plan writing, and the many rounds of consultation which accompany it, can generate a lot of paper. This is why it can be efficient to produce the plan as an electronic document, which can be changed easily and distributed by e-mail. However, be sure that all recipient organisations have compatible technology - for example, don't e-mail copies in the latest Microsoft Word version if you know that some organisations are still working on a previous version of Word: it is usually possible to back-convert Word documents to previous versions, but not to read newer versions with old software. Also check that organisations and individuals are comfortable with electronic documents. It you send a consultation document electronically to someone who never reads their e-mail, you have not effectively engaged with them. In any case, hard copies and electronic backups should be made at each stage in the process in case of IT failures.

6.9.   Even if consultation drafts are circulated electronically, it may be helpful to issue the final version as a hard copy. Everyone will need one anyway, and by controlling the printing rather than letting recipients print copies off an e-mail, it is possible to use some of the layout and style suggestions above to improve accessibility and ensure that the plan looks professional and is thus likely to be treated seriously.

Document Control

6.10.   Whatever medium is used to produce and circulate a plan document, confusion can arise over different drafts, so that some people end up using an early draft instead of the final agreed version. Recipients might make their own copies, especially if the document is e-mailed,and make amendments, resulting in their having a copy of the plan which is different from the master copy. Also, recipients may pass the plan on to third parties. This is not usually, in itself, a problem, but the originator of the document then has no record of who should receive amendments, and copies get out of date.

6.11.   A document control system which would help to avoid problems could include:

- Marking drafts clearly as such.

- Giving each draft or revision a version or edition number, printed at the foot of each page, so that people can easily check that they have the current version. Some word-processing packages have built-in version-management tools which can be used.

- Dating pages. Any individual pages,such as telephone lists,which are amended without a whole new document being printed should be given a new date.

- Giving each circulation copy a number, and recording to whom each copy was sent. Anyone not on the distribution list can apply to the document originator and be issued with a numbered copy.

- Providing a document receipt to be signed and returned by the person receiving the document or updates. This allows a check to be made that the papers are being received by the right person.

- Asking recipients to destroy any outdated material when revisions are circulated. The document receipt can also be used to ask people to sign that they have destroyed previous versions.

CHAPTER 7

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICATION

7.1.   Once a plan document is more-or-less complete, it needs to be circulated both within the organisation and outside. The early stages of the plan preparation should have identified direct stakeholders, and they should all now be involved in the consultation process. The contents of a plan should not come as a complete surprise to any recipient: they should already have been involved in discussions during the information gathering and plan writing processes. However, it is not until the plan is put together that people can fully see how it is intended to work as a whole, and where they fit in.

7.2.   The completed draft should be circulated widely, with a request for comments and suggestions for amendments. A reasonable period should be allowed for replies,depending on the nature and complexity of the plan and the time of year (give a longer consultation period over a holiday time). Consultation with regular contacts, for example within the Planning Group can be carried out on a mutually acceptable timetable. Wider public consultations should be carried out in compliance with the 'Guide to Consultations Methods for Northern Ireland Public Authorities', which suggests a minimum of 12 weeks for replies (available at www.consultationni.gov.uk).

7.3.   Most recipients will be content to make comments on paper but it may be productive to hold meetings with any individuals or organisations with a substantial input to the plan or particular difficulties with it.

7.4.   Replies should be acknowledged (a standard proforma could be used if there is going to be a delay in dealing with replies in detail), and correspondents told what has been done in response to their comments and suggestions. Where it is not possible to make suggested changes (for example, because of knock-on effects on the rest of the plan) this should be explained and alternatives or compromises suggested. On issues involving key aspects of the plan, agreement should always be reached on a way forward which is acceptable to everyone.

7.5.   If changes are made to the draft following consultation, a revised draft should be circulated and everyone asked to approve it. It is best at this stage to operate a positive reply policy (as opposed to "if we don't hear from you we will assume that you are content") to ensure that everyone has seen and considered the draft. It may be necessary to go through this 'consult-redraft-consult' cycle several times until everyone is happy with the plan.

Equality Issues

7.6.   Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 states that:

"(1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

a)   between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, or sexual orientation;

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b) between men and women generally;

c) between persons with a disability and persons without; and

d) between persons with dependants and persons without.

(2) without prejudice to its obligation under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group."

7.7. The Act sets out detailed provisions for the enforcement of these duties. One provision is that each public authority must prepare an Equality Scheme to show "how the public authority proposes to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to the relevant functions". Each authority must screen all its policies, written and unwritten, for potential discrimination or inequalities in relation to the nine groups specified in the 1998 Act. Where a policy is found to have potential for an adverse impact, an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) should be carried out. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, which must approve Equality Schemes, has indicated that it will interpret 'policy' very widely, to include most activities an authority undertakes which have an external impact.

7.8. Plan writers should refer to their own Equality Scheme and take advice on whether or not the plan would require to be screened and an EQIA produced. The consultation process for an EQIA is likely to involve a much wider range of organisations than would normally be involved in the consultation on the form and content of the plan, and therefore has the potential to identify stakeholders and issues not previously recognised. It is useful, therefore, to give thought to equality aspects early in the plan preparation process and, as far as possible, to develop the EQIA in parallel with other activities.

7.9. Whether or not an EQIA is required, all planners should be aware of any potential for their plans to discriminate against, or impact adversely on, any particular groups of people, including, but not only, those groups specified under Section 75 of the 1998 Act. Where any adverse impact is anticipated, the plan should draw attention to this potential and set out:

- Actions to be taken to reduce the risk of any group experiencing an adverse response.

- Proactive actions to be taken during a response to identify and address the particular needs of different section of the community.

7.10. When preparing a plan, it is important never to loose sight of the end customer for the emergency response, which is often either directly or indirectly the public. The response should not just be effective in dealing with the emergency situation but should also meet the needs and expectations of customers. The organisation will be judged on how it was *perceived* to have responded, as much as on objective performance criteria. Every opportunity should therefore be taken to establish the concerns and needs of potential recipients of the emergency response and to make sure that these are addressed in the planning and response processes. It may also be necessary to undertake some educational or awareness-raising activities to ensure that customers of the response understand what will happen and why, and how they can contribute to a successful outcome.

Publication

7.11.   Once all consultations have been completed and the final form of the plan document agreed, it can be formally published. It is normal to have a Foreword to the plan signed by a senior figure within the organisation, possibly the Chief Executive, Permanent Secretary or Minister. This emphasises the support of senior management for the plan in particular and the planning and response processes generally.

7.12.   Publication of the plan may be an opportunity to give some publicity to it and to the general emergency planning and response arrangements in the organisation. Publicity could be in the form of a launch, perhaps by the person who has signed the Foreword, with stakeholders from inside and outside the organisation invited. It may also be useful to hold a short seminar, to present the plan document and to explain something of how the plan will operate and the linkages which it involves.

CHAPTER 8

TAKING IT ALL APART - DOCUMENTATION AND TRAINING

Documentation

8.1.   Once a master document has been produced for a plan, thought needs to be given to how the actions and activities required by it can be cascaded down into the working and management practices of the Divisions, Units and individuals involved.

8.2.   Where the master plan states that a particular group of people will carry out a task or provide a service, that group will need a specific plan to show how they will do so. A group plan (or an organisational plan if there is no group one) will then need to be cascaded down into job descriptions for individuals. These job descriptions would cover not only how the person would act in an emergency but also day to day planning, liaison, training and exercising activities relevant to the plan.

8.3.   Some of the appendices to the master document will, themselves, be subsidiary plans, for example, the callout procedures, the Emergency Communications Directory, and instructions for setting-up and staffing Emergency Centres. Other subsidiary plans may not need to appear as appendices, but their existence, and relevant contact details, should be noted in the master plan.

8.4.   **Where plans cascade, special care should be taken to ensure that any changes made in one level are reflected in all levels.**

8.5.   Some organisations have found it useful to provide staff with small, durable (eg laminated) checklists, summaries of plans and/or contact lists which they can carry with them at all times and which will guide them through the first few stages of an emergency response. These are based on, or extracts from, the main plan document and they help to ensure that nothing or no-one critical is missed in the confusion which is an almost inevitable part of the initial response to an emergency.

8.6.   Other useful subsidiary documents to a plan could include:

- An induction pack for new post-holders, which familiarises them with their emergency responsibilities.

- Training material, some of which may be delivered through formal courses and some of which staff can work through at their own pace.

- Background material on relevant aspects of emergency response, including reports of cases where plans had to be activated, research, population statistics, public surveys.

- Briefing material for other organisations, giving background on the organisation producing the plan and a summary of relationships and inter-dependencies.

- A draft media pack with background information on the organisation, Press Office information and draft initial statements, which could be quickly worked up to give the media something to keep them going until more information was available.

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Training

8.7.   When a plan is complete, all staff in the organisation need to be aware of it. In particular, everyone should know what the objectives of the plan are and in what circumstances it would be activated. Contrary to the widely-accepted belief that people will panic in an emergency, experience shows that it can more often be difficult to persuade people that an emergency exists and that they should react to it. People tend to stick to familiar routines, even when circumstances are clearly not normal;which is why emergency responses should be as close as possible to every-day processes and why it is important to train people in their emergency roles and to give them opportunity to practice them.

8.8.   An important message to get across to staff is that the plan is there to be used. They should be reassured that they can and should activate the plan as soon as it becomes apparent that an emergency response may be required. Many organisations have experienced situations where use of an emergency plan would have greatly speeded up their response or prevented problems from becoming crises, but no-one thought to activate it. It is nearly always easier to activate a plan and then scale back the response if the emergency does not develop as feared,than to try to muddle through in an ad hoc way and then call on the plan as a last resort.

8.9.   Participation in emergency planning activities should be part of regular job descriptions for both management and staff with a role in delivering any aspect of an emergency response. The skills which they need for both planning and response should be part of their regular training needs assessments and personal development plans.

8.10.   Senior management are sometimes overlooked in emergency training programmes, but they need to understand their role and that of other people so that they can give the necessary strategic direction to the organisation. Given the demands on senior management time, a short presentation is likely to be the most acceptable form of training, but opportunity should be sought to incorporate some element of 'awareness-raising' into strategic planning processes, conferences/courses aimed at senior management and Board meetings.

8.11.   Where individuals have a role to play in any aspect of emergency response, they should receive appropriate training. Training is especially important where the plan requires someone to undertake a different role from their everyday one or where activities are required which are not normally part of a job. For example, during an emergency, information and decisions have to be recorded (logged), to ensure that nothing is overlooked, as a briefing tool for new staff/shifts and as a permanent record for any future inquiry. Emergency logging systems normally work differently from day to day document management and minute-taking processes. Therefore staff who have been designated as log-keepers or information-handlers should be given training in their emergency roles, including an opportunity to practice doing it under pressure.

8.12.   Training should not only be carried out through formal training courses. Nor should it only be specifically aimed at the particular role which an individual will play: people need to be aware of the wider picture and of the policy background to emergency planning and response. Training opportunities include:

- General emergency planning courses and conferences organised in Northern Ireland for a cross-organisational local audience. These not only impart relevant information, but give staff the opportunity to meet people they are likely to be working with.

- General emergency planning courses and conferences organised elsewhere. These give staff a broader view, the chance to meet people from other organisations working in the same field and an opportunity to share experiences and ideas on a wider basis.

- Courses covering specific functions or activities. May be available from training organisations such as the Emergency Planning College or arranged in-house to meet identified training needs.

- Seminars and workshops which bring people together informally to discuss emergency planning and response issues of mutual interest.

- One-to-one training from someone already experienced in the role or in delivering the emergency service.

- Job-shadowing people inside or outside the organisation.

- Regular meetings with key partner organisations to discuss emergency plans, experiences of emergency responses and how organisations can improve their liaison and working arrangements.

- Circulation of emergency planning magazines and books.

- Debriefs of incidents and exercises, which give people an opportunity to discuss what went well, what didn't and how the response could be made more effective. Training is not the primary purpose of a debrief, but can be a useful secondary outcome.

- Exercises designed to give people the opportunity to practice undertaking their emergency role, under some pressure but in a safe environment. This type of exercise should be distinguished from one designed to validate a plan – see Chapter 9.

8.13.   Whilst it is usually most effective to train people individually or in small groups according to their particular needs, staff should also occasionally be given the opportunity to train with people from across the organisation and from other organisations likely to be involved in the response. The networks developed on such occasions can be extremely valuable in both the planning process and the response to an emergency.

CHAPTER 9

VALIDATION, REVIEW AND REVISION

9.1. No matter how much information has been gathered and consultation carried out, no matter how comprehensive and brightly coloured the plan document, the plan is not complete until it has been **validated** – demonstrated to be effective in meeting its objectives. There are various activities which contribute to the validation of a plan, and a validation strategy should contain elements of all of them:

    i.   Consultation and discussion.

    ii.   Exercises and exercise debriefs.

    iii. Checking the continued validity of the plan in the light of changes to staff, new organisational structures, or the social and political environment in which the plan would operate.

Consultation and discussion

9.2. Consultation and discussion,both within the organisation and with response partners,is the first step towards validation. This process goes on throughout the plan preparation phase as the response objectives are developed,the stakeholders identified and comments on the draft plan sought. Planners should be careful that in consulting others,the emphasis should be on the likely effectiveness of the plan rather than on conforming to a set pattern or simply ensuring that references are accurate. Once a plan document is complete, consultation does not stop. Those responsible for maintaining and activating the plan should keep in regular touch with stakeholders and try to be involved with their planning activities, eg as participants in, or observers at, training and exercises.

Exercises and exercise debriefs

9.3. Exercises and exercise debriefs are key methods of validating plans. Normally there will be an exercise cycle set out for each plan, starting with simple exercises, perhaps of individual aspects of the plan (call-out, communications, Control Centre etc) and developing over time into more complex, multi-functional exercises. The intention is normally to validate all aspects of the plan,both individually and as an integrated part of the whole, over a 3-5 year exercise cycle. **Validation exercises assume that staff have received the necessary training and are able to carry out their emergency roles, so that the lessons learned relate to the effectiveness of the planned response and not to the skills of staff.** However, given that exercise budgets are normally very limited,it is often the case that exercises have to include elements of training and validation. Where this is the case, particular attention should be given to designing the exercise and setting objectives,so that clear lessons can be learned about the likely effectiveness of the plan.

9.4. Information on the types of exercise which can be used for validation, and how to organise them,can be found in 'A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland' and the Cabinet Office 'An Exercise Planner's Guide'-see Annex A.

9.5.   All exercises should be followed by debriefs – opportunities for all participants to comment on how well the response met the plan objectives and to share any lessons learnt from the exercise. How debriefs are organised will depend to some extent on the size and complexity of an exercise. Debriefs can be divided into:

- 'Hot' debrief meetings held immediately after an exercise is complete, which give participants the opportunity to share learning points while the experience is still very fresh in their minds.

- 'Cold' debrief meetings, held days or weeks after an exercise, when participants have had an opportunity to take a considered view on the exercise and how effective the plan or plans were.

9.6.   'Hot' debriefs will necessarily consist of verbal reports and discussions, which should be recorded for use in plan reviews. 'Cold' debriefs give opportunity to gather both verbal and written comments, perhaps through the circulation of a post-exercise questionnaire in advance of the debrief meeting. Again, all contributions should be recorded for future use. Some exercises may be sufficiently covered by one sort of debrief, but for large exercises it may be useful to hold both 'hot' and 'cold' debriefs in order to maximise learning opportunities.

9.7.   Where an exercise involves only one organisation, or one part of an organisation, a single debriefing process may be sufficient to gather all the information arising from the exercise. Where a number of discrete organisations or divisions take part in an exercise, it may be necessary for each to debrief their own contribution individually and then for an additional multi-agency debrief to be held for all the participants to come together to specifically address inter-agency issues arising out of the exercise. Most multi-agency debriefs will be 'cold' debriefs, as each organisation will need some time to consider the issues it wants to raise, but, by agreement, it is possible to hold a multi-agency 'hot' debrief, especially if it is not intended to hold any 'cold' debriefs.

9.8.   After an exercise has been debriefed, a report should be produced and an action plan developed for implementing actions which the debriefs identified as necessary. Actions may include changes to the response plan, changes to operational procedures or additional training. The key questions of whether or not the plan met its objectives, and whether those objectives were appropriate, should not be lost in the detail.

9.9.   **Following an incident, or a near-miss, debriefs should be held in the same way as for exercises.** This process is useful, even if a plan is not implemented, as there may be lessons to be learnt about triggering activation of the plan or using the plan in wider circumstances than originally envisaged.

Checks of plan contents

9.10.   Checks of plan contents often focus on matters of detail – checking names, contact arrangements and the locations of rendezvous points, for example. However, the wider picture should not be forgotten. The assumptions which were made at the beginning of the planning process, the objectives of the response, the response activities and how they are to be resourced, the environment in which the response takes place, and inter-organisational working protocols should all be scrutinised and checked for validity.

9.11. Some organisations make a point of **reading through plans** in groups at regular intervals. Comments such as "why did we put that in?" or "what on earth does that mean?" are not unusual when coming back to a plan after an interval. Problems identified in this way can be rectified before they cause difficulties in a real emergency.

Review of plans

9.12. The above means of validation will gather information on how well a plan meets its objectives, and how effective those objectives are in providing a response which meets the needs of the situation. This information should be used to review the plan and, if necessary, to revise it.

9.13. All stakeholders should be involved in reviews of the plan, as during the original development process. It may be useful to re-convene the Planning Group as part of the review process. Reviews may address two aspects of a plan:

- Details such as telephone numbers, addresses and resources available for deployment.

- Fundamentals such as the plan objectives, planning assumptions and basic response activities.

9.14. Details of a plan should be reviewed on a regular basis – not more than six-monthly, and preferably 3-monthly. Fundamental reviews of a plan may take place at any time, for example following an incident or an exercise, or in response to major structural changes in an organisation. If nothing precipitates a fundamental review, one should be carried out as a matter of routine at regular intervals. These intervals will be dictated by the nature of the plan, but would normally be no greater than 3-5 years.

9.15. Equality issues in relation to the content of plans should also be reviewed at regular intervals, especially since this is a developing policy area.

Revision

9.16. Validation and review should be followed by revision of the plan. The lessons learned and changes identified should be used to make amendments to the plan. If only the detail of a plan is revised, it may be sufficient to circulate the revisions to all initial recipients of the plan. This may be done by circulating a list of changes, individual revised pages or a complete new plan. The method used will depend on the size of the plan, the number of changes to be made and whether the original format is easy to make changes to – individual pages can easily be changed in a ring binder but are not useful if the plan has a spiral or permanent binding. Care should be taken to ensure that out-dated copies of pages or plans are destroyed and that new versions are clearly marked as such. Changing the colour of binders or pages can make it easy to see at a glance what version of a plan is being used. Where fundamental changes to a plan are involved, consultation should be carried out on the amendments and a new planning cycle commenced.

9.17. All revisions made to a generic or organisational plan should be reflected in the specific or division/unit plans which flow from it. Similarly, if it is found necessary to change a specific plan, any knock-on effects on other plans should be identified and notified to the relevant plan co-ordinator.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

10.1.   Preparation of an emergency plan can seem like a daunting process at the outset,especially if there is no existing plan to use as a model. However, it is better to have some plan than none at all.

10.2.   Many plans do not need to be large or sophisticated. Some may only be a few pages long. This Guide has had to cover all types of plan, and so can appear more complicated than it really is. The important thing is to get started – do the research and put something down on paper. Plans can be refined, expanded and improved over time through the training and validation processes.

10.3.   Never forget that a plan document is not an end in itself. What is important is the planning process, which should be a part of the everyday management culture of the organisation.

So – don't just sit there – start planning.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following documents contain further information on general principles of emergency planning.

Dealing With Disaster, Third Edition, the Cabinet Office (ISBN 185 893 9208), available from: Brodie Publishing, 110 – 114 Duke Street, Liverpool, Tel 0151 707 2323. Price £7.50 plus £2.00 p&p, or the Cabinet Office UK Resilience publications site: www.ukresilience.info/contingencies/cont_publications.htm

A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland, available from the Central Emergency Planning Unit, Northern Ireland, 1st Floor, Arches Centre, 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue, Belfast, BT5 5 HD, tel 028 9052 8862, or on the CEPU website: http://cepu.nics.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Standards in Civil Protection, available from the Central Emergency Planning Unit, Northern Ireland, 1st Floor, Arches Centre, 11-13 Bloomfield Avenue, Belfast, BT5 5 HD, tel 028 9052 8862, or on the CEPU website: http://cepu.nics.gov.uk

Guidance on specific aspects of planning is available from:

A Guide to Evacuation in Northern Ireland, 2002 edition. Available from the Central Emergency Planning Unit, details as for 'A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland'.

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Disasters: Planning for a Caring Response, Disasters Working Party. The Stationary Office (ISBN 0 11 3213700).

Wise Before the Event: coping with crises in schools, by William Yule and Anne Gold. Published by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, London, 1993.

The following are available on the Cabinet Office UK Resilience publications site: www.ukresilience.info/contingencies/cont_publications.htm

Standards for Civil Protection in England and Wales.

Civil Protection Magazine.

The following are available on the Cabinet Office UK Resilience business advice site: www.ukresilience.info/contingencies/cont_bus.htm

How Resilient is Your Business to Disaster?

Why Exercise your Disaster Response?

Exercise Planner's Guide.

Recovery: an Emergency Management Guide.

Business Continuity Management – Preventing Chaos in a Crisis.

The following are available from The Emergency Planning Society, Northumberland House, 11 The Pavement, Popes Lane, London, e-mail headquarters@emergplansoc.org.uk.

Peoples Rights - Organisational Wrongs (Conference Transcript), Price £10 members / £15 non-members inc p&p

Responding to Disaster, the Human Aspects, Price £10 inc p&p

Transportation of Dangerous Goods – the emergency response. Price £5 members / £10 non-members inc p&p.

Other useful publications:

Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. The Stationery Office. ISBN 0 11 300095 2

The Event Safety Guide: a guide to health, safety and welfare at music and similar events. The Stationery Office. ISBN 0 7176 2453 6

Guide to Fire Precautions in Existing Places of Entertainment and Like Premises. The Stationery Office. ISBN 0 11 340907 9

EMERGENCY PLANNING
PLAN FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN

a. Describe why the plan is needed.

b. Describe what the plan will achieve.

c. Identify the different types of emergency which the plan will address.

d. Define the criteria for invoking or activating the plan.

e. State clearly the assumptions made.

2. AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

a. Give an unambiguous outline of individual post-holders' responsibilities.

b. Describe the organisation's crisis management structure.

c. Describe the responsibilities of other organisations involved in the same response. This may, in some instances deserve a section to itself.

3. ACTIVATION PROCEDURE

a. Describe how an alert to an emergency, or potential emergency, would be received and authenticated.

b. State when, and on what timescale, the organisation can receive and respond to alerts.

c. Define who is authorised to implement the plan.

d. Describe the callout arrangements which would be used to inform staff of the need to activate the plan or to go on standby.

e. Describe standby arrangements which would be made in the event of an immediate response not being required.

f. Describe the procedures for changing staff from standby to response.

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4. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

a. Describe the organisation's own procedures for the setting-up of an emergency response.

b. Describe the organisation's call-out procedures.

c. Specify how, and to where, staff will report.

d. Describe the emergency communications links and communications equipment to be used in a response.

e. Define links with and membership of relevant co-ordination and crisis management groups.

f. Describe any changes to organisational and management structures needed to ensure an effective emergency response.

g. Define support staff requirements.

h. Describe how flexibility is to be achieved.

i. Describe how a graduated response can be delivered.

j. Specify the location and role of the organisation's Co-ordination / Management / Control Centre(s).

k. Clearly identify Co-ordination / Management / Control Centre managers and define their role.

l. Clearly identify how information will flow for the production of situation reports and updates as well as for media briefing.

m. State the role of the organisation's Head.

n. Describe the activities to be undertaken for the maintenance and preservation of records.

o. Describe the organisation's media liaison arrangements.

p. Define the links with other organisations.

q. Identify which normal services must be maintained and to what standards.

r. Describe the arrangements for formally moving to a new phase of the response or standing down the response.

5. LONG-TERM RESPONSE

a. Describe the likely long-term aspects of the response.

b. Describe the shift-working arrangements and the staffing levels likely to be needed.

c. Consider the long-term implications to delivery of normal services.

d. Describe the factors involved in recovery.

e. Describe the factors involved in, and responsibilities for, restoration of normal services.

f. Describe how the information needs of the public are to be met.

g. Describe how the information needs of the organisation's own staff are to be met.

6. TRAINING

a. Describe how all relevant staff will be familiarised with the plan.

b. Identify what staff training requirements are necessary for the effective implementation of the plan.

c. Identify what joint training with other organisations is needed.

7. VALIDATION AND REVIEW

a. Nominate the post or staff appointment which will be responsible for reviewing, amending and updating the plan.

b. Consider how best the plan can be validated.

c. Set out how and when sections 1 - 6 and all appendices will be reviewed.

d. Describe the exercise programme for validation.

e. Describe the arrangements for debriefing exercises and incidents to extract information on the effectiveness of the plan.

8. APPENDICES

a. Emergency contact list for the organisation.

b. Emergency contact links for other organisations.

c. Emergency resources, including communication systems and equipment.

d. Security, access and identification of staff.

e. Outlines of staff responsibilities.

f. Financial authority and records of expenditure.

g. Insurance and legal considerations including preservation of records.

h. Media policy and where to find competent or trained spokespersons.

i. Message handling, log sheets and log keeping.

j. Briefing and hand-over procedures.

k. Debriefing methods.

l. Safety and staff health monitoring and counselling.

m. Contractors' obligations for service provision in any emergency.

n. Emergency Communications Directory (this should be a stand-alone document capable of being amended easily).