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Guidance

Preparation and planning for emergencies: responsibilities of responder agencies and others

How the government prepares and plans for emergencies, working nationally, locally and co-operatively to ensure civil protection in the UK.

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The Civil Contingencies Act

The [Civil Contingencies Act](#), and accompanying non-legislative measures, delivers a single framework for civil protection in the UK. The Act is separated into 2 substantive parts: local arrangements for civil protection (Part 1); and emergency powers (Part 2).

Part 1

Part 1 of the Act and supporting Regulations and statutory guidance '[Emergency preparedness](#)' establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. The Act divides local responders into 2 categories, imposing a different set of duties on each.

Those in Category 1 are organisations at the core of the response to most emergencies (the emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies). Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties. They will be required to:

- assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning
- put in place emergency plans
- put in place business continuity management arrangements
- put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
- provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only)

Category 2 organisations (the Health and Safety Executive, transport and utility companies) are 'co-operating bodies'. They are less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work, but will be heavily involved in incidents that affect their own sector. Category 2 responders have a lesser set of duties - co-operating and sharing relevant information with other Category 1 and 2 responders.

Category 1 and 2 organisations come together to form 'local resilience forums' (based on police areas) which will help co-ordination and co-operation between responders at the local level. For more on

what LRFs do and contact details for each, see the guide on [‘Local resilience forums: contact details’](#).

The bulk of Part 1 of the Act was brought into force in November 2005 (the duty on local authorities to provide advice and assistance to business and voluntary organisations about business continuity management commenced in May 2006).

Part 2

Part 2 of the Act updates the 1920 Emergency Powers Act to reflect the developments in the intervening years and the current and future risk profile. It allows for the making of temporary special legislation (emergency regulations) to help deal with the most serious of emergencies. The use of emergency powers is a last resort option and planning arrangements at the local level should not assume that emergency powers will be made available. Their use is subject to a robust set of safeguards - they can only be deployed in exceptional circumstances.

Part 2 of the Act was brought into force in December 2004.

See also:

- [Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement programme](#)
- [Category 2 Responders: overview of sectors and emergency planning arrangements](#)
- [Examples of good practice in public sector business continuity management](#)
- [Examples of good practice in public sector business continuity management: exercising](#)
- [Examples of good practice in public sector business continuity management - awareness and training](#)
- [Communicating with the public: the 10 step cycle](#)
- [Expectations and indicators of good practice set for category 1 and 2 responders](#)

Emergency planning

The government aims to ensure all organisations have effective, well-practiced emergency plans in place. This section outlines what we mean by emergency planning, different types of plans, the importance of exercising them and training key staff, and the kind of factors which planners should consider.

What is emergency planning?

Emergency planning should aim where possible to prevent emergencies occurring, and when they do occur, good planning should reduce, control or mitigate the effects of the emergency. It is a systematic and ongoing process which should evolve as lessons are learnt and circumstances change.

Emergency planning should be viewed as part of a cycle of activities beginning with establishing a risk profile to help determine what should be the priorities for developing plans and ending with review and revision, which then re-starts the whole cycle. Plans should focus on at least 3 key groupings of people - the vulnerable, victims (including survivors, family and friends) and responder personnel.

Vulnerable people may be less able to help themselves in an emergency than self-reliant people. Those who are vulnerable will vary depending on the nature of the emergency, but plans should consider: those with mobility difficulties (those with physical disabilities or pregnant women); those with mental health difficulties; and others who are dependent, such as children.

Victims of an emergency - which includes not only those directly affected but also those who, as family and friends, suffer bereavement or the anxiety of not knowing what has happened.

Responder personnel should also be considered. Plans sometimes place unrealistic expectations on management and personnel. Organisations should ensure their plans give due consideration to the welfare of their own personnel. For instance, the emergency services have health and safety procedures which determine shift patterns and check for levels of stress.

Organisations should aim to maintain plans which cover 3 different areas:

Plans for preventing an emergency

In some circumstances there will be a short period before an emergency occurs when it might be avoided by prompt or decisive action

Plans for reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of an emergency

The main bulk of planning should consider how to minimise the effects of an emergency, starting with the impact of the event (ie their alerting procedures) and looking at remedial actions that can be taken to reduce effects. For example, the emergency services may be able to stem the emergency at source by fighting fires, combating the release of toxic chemicals or the extent of floods. The evacuation of people may be a direct intervention which can mitigate the effects of some emergencies. Recovery plans should also be developed to reduce the effects of the emergency and ensure long term recovery. The [National Recovery Guidance](#) provides more detail on recovery issues.

Plans for taking other action in connection with an emergency

Not all actions to be taken in preparing for an emergency are directly concerned with controlling, reducing or mitigating its effects. Emergency planning should look beyond the immediate response and long term recovery issues and look also at secondary impacts. For example, the wave of reaction to an emergency can be quite overwhelming in terms of media attention and public response. Plans may need to consider how to handle this increased interest.

As obvious as it sounds, emergency plans should include procedures for determining whether an emergency has occurred, and when to activate the plan in response to an emergency. This should include identifying an appropriately trained person who will take the decision, in consultation with others, on when an emergency has occurred.

The maintenance of plans involves more than just their preparation. Once a plan has been prepared, it must be maintained systematically to ensure it remains up-to-date and fit for purpose at any time if an emergency occurs.

It may be that multiple organisations can develop a joint emergency plan where the partners agree that, for a successful combined

response, they need a formal set of procedures governing them all. For example, in the event that evacuation is required, the police would need carefully pre-planned co-operation from various other organisations such as fire and ambulance services and the local authority, as well as involvement of others such as transport organisations.

Types of emergency plans

It may be important for an organisation to have more than one emergency plan. It is often the case that organisations have generic plans and more specific plans.

Generic plans are the core plan which enables the organisation to respond to, and recover from a wide range of possible emergencies. They should include procedures which would be used in all instances for ensuring the welfare of staff and the provision of sufficient resources for responding to the emergency.

Specific plans relate either to a particular emergency or kind of emergency, or to a specific site or location. Specific plans are a detailed set of arrangements designed to go beyond the generic arrangements when they are likely to prove insufficient in a particular case. A specific plan usually builds on a generic plan. For example, organisations which deal with hazardous materials may need specific plans for responding to a chemical spillage. Some organisations may have specific plans for conducting specific functions in response to an emergency. For instance, the emergency services will have plans for mass evacuation of an urban area and mass decontamination. Organisations should use their risk assessments to decide whether specific plans are necessary or desirable.

Exercising plans and training staff

Organisations should test the effectiveness of their emergency plans by carrying out exercises, and should ensure that staff involved in the planning for or response to an emergency receive appropriate training. Training plans should also consider other people who have a role in the emergency plans such as contractors and civil protection partners. The plans themselves should explicitly identify the nature

and frequency of training and exercising required. The guide [Emergency planning and preparedness: exercises and training](#) provides more information.

Emergency planning at the local level

Emergency planning is at the heart of the civil protection duty on Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act. The Act requires Category 1 responders to maintain plans for preventing emergencies; reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies; and taking other action in the event of emergencies. These should draw on risk assessments and should have regard for the [arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public at the time of an emergency](#).

The Regulations require plans to contain a procedure for determining whether an emergency has occurred; provision for training key staff; and provision for exercising the plan to ensure it is effective. Procedures should also be put in place to ensure that the plan is reviewed periodically and kept up to date.

Category 1 responders should involve Category 2 responders - and other organisations which are not subject to the Act's requirements - as appropriate throughout the planning process. Category 1 responders are specifically required to have regard to the activities of relevant voluntary organisations when developing plans. The Regulations permit Category 1 responders to collaborate with other organisations in delivering the emergency planning duty.

Category 1 responders also have a statutory duty to publish their emergency plans, to the extent necessary or desirable for the purpose of dealing with an emergency.

Emergency planning at the sub-national level

Planning at a multi-LRF level is different from planning at the local level. For more information on the sub-national tier, see the [Arrangements in England](#) section.

Emergency planning in the devolved administrations

It is equally important that organisations within the devolved administrations conduct effective emergency planning. The devolved administrations section below provides more detail on the extent to which the Civil Contingencies Act duties apply and their individual emergency planning arrangements.

The government works closely with the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments to promote effective emergency planning that is, as far as possible, consistent with that of the rest of the UK.

Emergency planning at the UK government level

The UK government capabilities programme is the core framework through which the government is seeking to build resilience across all parts of the UK. The programme uses risk assessment over a 5-year period to identify the generic capabilities that underpin the UK's resilience to disruptive challenges, and ensures that each of these is developed. These capabilities include dealing with mass casualties and fatalities, response to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents, provision of essential services and warning and informing the public. A full list of the current capabilities can be found in this [guide to the capabilities programme](#).

The government has in place a coordinated cross-governmental exercise programme covering a comprehensive range of domestic disruptive challenges, including accidents, natural disasters and acts of terrorism. The programme is designed to test rigorously the concept of operations from the coordinated central response through the range of lead government department responsibilities and the involvement of the devolved administrations, to the sub-national tier and local responders. More information is provided in the [guide to emergency exercises and training](#).

These national processes feed into the devolved administrations, sub-national and local levels to ensure fully integrated emergency planning at all levels throughout the UK.

The role of the voluntary sector in emergency planning and response

Where appropriate, organisations should consider at an early stage in planning whether voluntary organisations may have capabilities which could assist in responding to an emergency.

The voluntary sector can provide a wide range of skills and services in responding to an emergency. These include: practical support (such as first aid, transportation, or provisions for responders); psycho-social support (such as counselling and helplines); equipment (radios, medical equipment); and information services (such as public training and communications).

Existing emergency planning duties

The Civil Contingencies Act Regulations identify 3 pieces of legislation pre-dating this Act which were introduced separately in Britain and Northern Ireland under sector-specific legislation operated by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and HSE Northern Ireland. These relate to major accident hazards at industrial establishments (Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (COMAH)), to hazardous pipelines (Pipelines Safety Regulations) and to radiation hazards (Radiation (Emergency Preparation and Public Information) Regulations (REPPPIR)). These sector-specific Regulations have established multi-agency emergency planning regimes in co-operation with the operators. To avoid duplication, the Civil Contingencies Act Regulations provide that the duty to maintain plans under the Act does not apply to emergencies which are dealt with by these pieces of legislation.

For more information on how the Act fits with other legislation see chapter 19 of [‘Emergency preparedness’](#).

Important documents

- [Emergency Preparedness](#)
 - Chapter 5: “Emergency planning”
 - Annex 5a: “Examples of generic and specific plans”
 - Annex 5B: “Generic plan: emergency or major incident”

- Annex 5C: “Specific plan”
 - Annex 5D: “Example of a plan maintenance matrix for a local authority”
- Chapter 7 “Communicating with the public” - Contains further detail on communicating with the vulnerable and victims in an emergency
 - Annex 7A: “Communicating with the public: the national context “
 - Annex 7B: “Lead responsibility for warning and informing the public”
 - Annex 7C: “Checklist of suggested protocols”
- Chapter 14: “The role of the voluntary sector”
 - Annex 14A: “Examples of voluntary sector activities in support of statutory services”
- Home Office document [Recovery: an emergency management guide](#)
- [Communicating risk guidance](#)
- [Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Policy Branch](#) - a guide to emergency planning arrangements, risk assessment and other documentation is available on this website
- [London’s strategic emergency plan](#)

Devolved administrations

This section describes emergency preparedness and planning arrangements in the devolved administrations, where these differ from UK government and local arrangements in England. It also outlines how Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act and its associated Regulations apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. More detail on the specific duties under the Act and how they apply in the Devolved Administrations can be found in chapters 2 to 8 of the guidance document [‘Emergency preparedness’](#).

Emergency preparedness in Scotland

In devolved areas the Scottish government is designated as the lead on relevant issues in line with the ‘lead department’ principle at the UK

level. In reserved areas the Scottish government works closely with the UK government to ensure that Scottish needs are catered for.

Overall responsibility for civil protection policy in Scotland sits with the Scottish Resilience Division of the Scottish government.

At the local level in Scotland, 8 strategic coordinating groups based on current police force areas promote effective planning for all types of incidents in their area, involving risk assessment, making generic and specific emergency plans, engaging with the community, training, testing, exercising and reviewing.

- [Scottish government civil emergencies website](#)

Emergency preparedness in Wales

The Welsh government (WG) or Wales Office, depending on the subject matter, is represented on relevant committees and forums within the UK government relating to civil protection. They work closely with UK government departments to ensure that UK civil protection policy and planning is tailored to Welsh needs. A dedicated team in WG supports multi-agency co-operation in Wales and engagement with the UK government on issues relating to civil protection and emergency preparedness.

As in England, local resilience forums (LRFs) are the principle mechanism for multi-agency co-operation on civil protection issues. The respective Chief Constables presently chair the LRFs in the South Wales, North Wales, Dyfed-Powys and Gwent areas. The Welsh Resilience Forum (WRF) provides a national forum for multi-agency strategic advice on civil protection and emergency planning. The forum meets quarterly and is chaired by the First Minister or the Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration. Risk assessment at a pan-Wales level is undertaken by the Wales Risk Assessment Group (WRAG) reporting to the WRF.

A number of other groups provide forums for discussion and co-ordination of civil protection in Wales, including: the Joint Emergency Services Group; the Wales Media Emergency Forum; and the Welsh Borders Resilience Group.

- [Welsh civil emergencies website](#)

Emergency preparedness in Northern Ireland

Civil contingencies in Northern Ireland are largely a devolved matter with responsibilities lying with Northern Ireland government departments. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) in the UK government is, however, responsible for, amongst other things, policing, criminal justice and security in Northern Ireland.

The Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) promotes and co-ordinates civil protection arrangements in Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland government would normally have oversight of civil contingencies arrangements for transferred functions. The 'lead government department' principle applies to Northern Ireland departments as at the UK level.

The Civil Contingencies Group, Northern Ireland (CCG(NI)) is a pan-Northern Ireland multi-agency forum for the development, discussion and agreement of civil protection policy. Co-ordination at local and sub-regional levels may be facilitated by a range of organisations, with police district commanders and district council chief executives taking key roles in co-ordination. Northern Ireland has its own unique constitutional and organisational structures. Unlike in Great Britain, many services are delivered on a Northern Ireland-wide (regional) basis, either by government departments or by their agencies and NDPBs.

- [Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Policy Branch website](#)

The devolved administrations under the Civil Contingencies Act

Scotland

Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act applies to Scotland, with the powers it sets out residing with Scottish Ministers in line with the devolution settlement. While civil protection in Scotland is largely a devolved matter and therefore the responsibility of the Scottish government, certain responders in Scotland are subject to Part 1 of the Act, the Regulations and guidance issued by UK ministers - the

Health and Safety Executive, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency and the British Transport Police.

Wales

The arrangements set out in Part 1 of the Act apply in Wales. However, there are some differences in the requirements which the Regulations place on Category 1 and 2 responders in Wales because of the unique administrative arrangements in Wales. As in England, the principal mechanism for co-operation between Category 1 and 2 responders under the Act will be the local resilience forums (LRFs). The Welsh Resilience Forum (WRF) provides a national forum for multi-agency strategic advice on civil protection and emergency planning. The forum is a non-statutory advisory body.

Northern Ireland

Civil contingencies in Northern Ireland are largely a devolved matter with responsibilities lying with Northern Ireland government departments. The duties of the Act apply only to a limited number of organisations which deliver functions that are not transferred. These organisations are: the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI); the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA); and telecommunications operators. Because these organisations do not represent the full spectrum of response agencies in Northern Ireland, the Regulations treat these organisations in a slightly different way. In practice, it is anticipated that the PSNI, MCA and telecommunications operators in Northern Ireland will undertake their duties under the Act, but will relate to the other public service bodies listed in the Regulations in line with the arrangements in the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework and by participating in Northern Ireland co-operation, co-ordination and crisis management machinery.

Further information

You can find further details on all of the above in these documents:

- ['Civil Contingencies Act 2004: devolution concordat with Scottish Ministers'](#)
- ['Civil Contingencies Act 2004: concordat between the UK government and the Welsh government'](#)

- [‘Emergency preparedness - chapter 10: Scotland’](#)
 - [‘Chapter 11: Wales’](#)
 - [‘Chapter 12: Northern Ireland’](#)

Co-operation for emergency preparedness

Co-operation between organisations is fundamental to emergency preparedness. A large number of organisations will need to co-operate when responding to emergencies, so it is right that organisations co-operate closely in preparedness and planning as well. The government aims to ensure all organisations co-operate in emergency preparedness, and robust co-operation arrangements are in place at every level. This section outlines who should co-operate, and how. It describes co-operation arrangements in place locally and points out the emphasis placed on co-operation within the Civil Contingencies Act.

Who should co-operate?

Organisations will need to co-operate closely with any other organisation who would be involved in responding to and recovering from an emergency which affects that organisation.

That will mean not just partner organisations, but contractors, and voluntary organisations who may be involved in the response. Organisations should consider their need to co-operate with a wide range of public (for example, local authorities, emergency services), commercial (for example, other businesses) and voluntary organisations (like charities and voluntary response organisations).

What co-operation?

Every-day co-operation between organisations is the lifeblood of civil protection work - through visits and seminars, phone calls and emails, and joint projects including exercises.

Many organisations are well used to co-operating in both preparing for and responding to emergencies. The emergency services, for instance, obviously co-ordinate closely when responding to

emergencies. They also co-operate closely in policy and planning, and undertake joint training and exercises. Likewise, utilities companies have close links with local authorities and the emergency services.

Organisations should aim to co-operate bilaterally and attend multi-agency groups and forums to discuss co-ordinated and sometimes joint approaches to the essential aspects of emergency preparedness - risk assessment, emergency planning, business continuity management, and arrangements to warn and inform the public. Such forums should also consider producing multi-agency plans and other documents, including protocols and agreements, and the co-ordination of multi-agency exercises and other training events.

Co-operation at the local level under the Civil Contingencies Act

The principle mechanism for multi-agency co-operation at the local level is the [local resilience forum \(LRF\)](#). LRFs are generally based on local police areas, and bring together all the organisations who have a duty to co-operate under the Civil Contingencies Act, along with others who would be involved in the response.

The purpose of the LRF process is to ensure effective delivery of those duties under the Act that need to be developed in a multi-agency environment.

Co-operation at the sub-national level

Some co-operation and co-ordination takes place at multi-LRF level in England, which brings together representatives of local responders, and is supported by resilience advisers from [DCLG-RED](#), to work together to address larger-scale civil protection issues.

Co-operation at the devolved administration level

Similar co-operation and co-ordination arrangements are in place in the devolved administrations. For instance, in Scotland strategic co-ordinating groups are similar to LRFs, and the Scottish Emergencies Co-ordinating Committee (SECC) provides co-ordination and determines the national strategy for the development of civil

protection. In Wales the Welsh Government (WG) provides that co-ordination, and a Wales Resilience Forum brings together local responders and UK government bodies. In Northern Ireland the Civil Contingencies Group, Northern Ireland (CCG(NI)) is the forum for the development, discussion and agreement of Civil Protection Policy for the NI public services.

Co-operation at the UK level

Government departments who are responsible for contingency planning and response within their own areas (for example, infectious diseases falls to Department of Health; fuel disruptions falls to Business Innovation and Skills), work closely together. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) in the Cabinet Office co-ordinates their work to enhance the country's resilience to the full range of emergencies.

Central government works very closely with the devolved administrations, local authorities and emergency services. Officials attend the full range of multi-agency forums and regularly go out to visit practitioners.

Arrangements in England

The [Department for Communities and Local Government - Resilience and Emergencies Division \(DCLG-RED\)](#) provides the platform for multi-LRF co-operation and planning in emergency preparedness where this would add value by improving co-ordination between local and central response. This section outlines the arrangements in England for emergency preparedness at this level.

Co-operation at the sub-national level

Co-operation at the sub-national level in England is a key element of the UK's civil protection framework. The sub-national tier is not a judgement on the local level; rather, it is a mechanism for improving co-ordination and communication into and out from the centre of government.

Co-operation at the sub-national level involves the representatives of local responders and central government bodies working together to address larger-scale civil protection issues. Co-operation may take place within a multi-agency setting or directly between 2 or more responders.

Role of the sub-national tier

The function of the sub-national tier is to improve co-ordination and communication between central government and local responders and other organisations and to ensure that areas are prepared to respond to events which would affect most or all of the area or which could overwhelm any locality. The successful delivery of the sub-national resilience capability rests critically on local responders and other organisations and central government working together in partnership to ensure effective and co-ordinated planning and response.

Opportunities to collaborate and co-operate at a multi-LRF Level

Planning for and responding to large-scale emergencies cannot be done in isolation in each local resilience forum (LRF). Mechanisms for cross-boundary working and relationship building are essential as some emergencies will overwhelm localities' resources and/or boundaries.

Collaboration and co-operation between localities in England is a well-established and critical way of working in civil contingencies. It is a mechanism:

- for enabling pooling of resources to achieve agreed mutual aims and outcomes
- for avoiding duplication of work between neighbouring LRFs or avoiding activity by an LRF that may be counter-productive to a neighbouring LRF
- to support planning and exercising for emergencies that cross local resilience areas or which could overwhelm a locality
- that enables individual responders, local forums and central government to work together to address large-scale civil protection issues

DCLG-RED works directly with LRFs, supporting collaboration and co-operation in planning for wide-area high-impact events affecting more than one locality. RED has allocated Resilience Advisers to each LRF so that LRFs have named contacts with which to build working relationships. For more information, see [chapter 16 of 'Emergency preparedness'](#) on collaboration and co-operation between LRFs.

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