

**A Guide to  
Emergency Planning Arrangements  
in  
Northern Ireland**

**REFRESHED SEPTEMBER 2011**

# **A GUIDE TO EMERGENCY PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

## **NOTE ON THE REFRESHED VERSION SEPTEMBER 2011**

The principles of emergency planning in Northern Ireland as set out in this Guide are largely unchanged since it was published in 2004. However, there have been a number of changes in nomenclature and terminology in the years since and some civil contingencies arrangements have been developed and enhanced as a result of experiences of emergencies here.

This document has therefore been refreshed to reflect current organisation names, terminology and civil contingencies arrangements and structures.

**Personal Data**

**Name Redacted**

**CIVIL CONTINGENCIES POLICY BRANCH**

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

## FOREWORD

By their very nature emergency situations can creep up on us unawares or can happen suddenly and catastrophically without any warning. Experience shows that emergencies often happen when we are least expecting them and in ways which we did not anticipate. Many different agencies contribute to the response to an emergency, and the effectiveness of that response is often a reflection of the thoroughness of their preparations.

In order to provide a comprehensive response to any situation that might arise, the emergency services and public service organisations must be able to work together in a co-ordinated way. To achieve this, organisations need to integrate their emergency planning procedures and exercise collectively hence this guidance. This is the second edition of the guidance and replaces the version published in 1998. It is intended to act as a framework on which plans can be built in a structured manner so that plans are compatible and easy to build together into an effective response to any emergency, whatever the cause and circumstances.

Many people, from a wide range of backgrounds, have contributed to the production and I am grateful to them for their time and effort. It is intended to complement, rather than replace existing guidance, such as the emergency procedures manuals of the emergency services and the Home Office publications, 'Dealing with Disaster'.

In particular, developments related to the Civil Contingencies Bill (currently being debated in Parliament) will need to be reflected in Northern Ireland. Although it is likely that organisations within the Devolved Administration, including Northern Ireland Departments and their agencies, will not have statutory civil protection duties placed on them by the Bill, it is nevertheless intended that a similar administrative framework will be drawn up for Northern Ireland. This will in due course require existing guidance, including this document, to be reviewed. Nevertheless, the principles set out in this document are essentially those on which the Bill is based.

I would ask that you take time to read this guidance and consider how it can help your organisation to be better prepared to respond to an emergency.

Nigel Hamilton

Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service

May 2004

# CONTENTS

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
1 Civil Protection Principles Summary	1 8
2 Principles of Emergency Planning Summary	10 17
3 Delivering and Managing an Emergency Response Summary	18 44
4 Managing Civil Protection Policy and Practice in Northern Ireland Summary	48 54
5 Roles of Northern Ireland Organisations Summary	55 71
6 Very Large Scale Emergencies: Challenges for Public Service Organisations Summary	72 91
7 People Issues Summary	93 108
8 Communicating with the Public: Emergency Information and Media Liaison Summary	110 126
9 Inquests, Inquiries and Legal Proceedings Summary	128 134
10 Business Continuity Summary	135 139

## **Annexes**

A Glossary of Terms and Acronyms	140
B Bibliography	150
C A Guide to Planning and Running Exercises	154
D Co-ordination: Lead Organisations and Crisis Management	180
E Sources of Specialist Help and Additional Resources	194

## CHAPTER 1: CIVIL PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

### Purpose of this document

- 1.1. Emergencies do not happen to a set pattern or timetable, however public service organisations are not powerless to prevent them or reduce their impact or to prepare to respond. It is possible to be alert to the risks and threats to business and infrastructure stability. Being risk-aware permits organisations to anticipate the form disruption might take, the outcomes and the circumstances under which they may occur. They can take steps to reduce the probability of emergencies happening and minimise the effects when they occur. However, emergencies will continue to happen, and consequently it is paramount to have emergency response plans. No single response pattern will be equally appropriate to all emergencies, so emergency plans must be sufficiently flexible to respond to events as they happen. The key to an effective response is, therefore, to apply sound principles, founded on experience, to the problem in hand. This guidance document focuses on principles of planning, response and emergency management and the involvement of Northern Ireland public service organisations in these activities. It also gives some general advice on good practice in emergency planning and response.
  
- 1.2. The Guide is not intended to be prescriptive; but rather a framework within which organisations can manage and co-ordinate their civil protection activities. It takes account of accepted good practice, the emergency planning guidance produced by professional associations (such as the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), and the lessons learnt from incidents across the UK. This document is complementary to, and should be read in conjunction with, the Cabinet Office guidance documents 'Emergency Preparedness' and 'Emergency Response and Recovery' which are the primary policy and practice guides for good practice in emergency planning in the United Kingdom.

- 1.3. Civil Protection has its own vocabulary, partly derived from emergency services terminology and partly peculiar to it. As far as possible, words, phrases and acronyms specific to Civil Protection are explained where they are first used in this text and at intervals thereafter. As a further help to readers, there is a glossary at **Annex A**. As far as possible, this Glossary represents the most widely agreed use of terminology, but the exact words, phrases and meanings used by the emergency services and others varies depending on their particular responsibilities. Organisations working with others on planning and response should ensure at the outset that they have an understanding of the terminology and definitions which each use.

### Civil Protection

- 1.4. Civil Protection is a broad term covering the activities that are undertaken by organisations to protect the population and the environment from natural and man-made risks and to prepare an effective, co-ordinated response to any emergency that occurs. Civil Protection should be an integral part of the activities of both commercial and public service organisations, and should not be restricted to those organisations, or parts of organisations, which are specifically identified as 'emergency responders'. Activities that 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. This assessment must involve staff at all levels and must be open and honest to be effective. **Assessment is not a one-off activity.** Organisations are continually changing. In Northern Ireland, devolution has introduced major changes in the public services, both in terms of structure and of working practices. Not only are organisations changing, but the social, political and economic environments in which they operate are in a continuous state of flux. Organisations therefore need to have procedures for monitoring changing internal and external environments and adjusting their Civil Protection arrangements accordingly.

- **Prevention / Reduction / Mitigation.** If risks are identified which an organisation can eliminate or substantially reduce, for example by introducing monitoring or changing working practices, it should do so. Where risks are outside the control of an organisation, it may still be able to take steps to limit the consequences or mitigate the effects. For example, if a basement containing a computer server is found to be at risk of flooding in exceptionally wet weather, it may not be possible to stop the flooding, but moving the server to an upper floor will prevent a flood from disrupting the organisation's computer system. Whilst there will always be some element of cost-benefit analysis in deciding what prevention/reduction/mitigation steps should be taken, the full cost of providing a response, and of post incident restoration and restitution, should not be underestimated.
  
- **Preparedness.** This involves a range of activities, including:
  - **Preparation of plans.** Plans will need to be realistic, robust, and flexible and meet all the assessed needs of an organisation. They should clearly state where responsibilities lie, what is expected of responders, what services and resources will be required and how to access them, who has authority to take decisions, how communication will work, what management arrangements will exist, and how actions will be co-ordinated with other responding organisations. Any plan should be measured against known or anticipated risks to ensure that it can deal with all foreseeable outcomes. Plans should be owned, and preferably prepared, by the people who will have to operate them and who know best what will, or will not, be effective. Information on the process of plan preparation can be found in the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) publication 'A Guide to Plan Preparation', see the Bibliography at **Annex B**.
  
  - **Education.** Anyone involved to any extent in an emergency plan should be aware of their role and be given the opportunity to practice actually doing it. They should be aware of the sensitivities that exist in most emergency situations, especially if they will come into contact with people who have been



involved in an incident or their friends and relatives. In some cases, training can be incorporated into emergency exercises, but some additional training will almost certainly also be required. Emergency response roles should be explained to new staff and to anyone transferred or promoted, and should form part of normal staff induction and training, supplemented by handbooks, checklists and action cards.

- **Validation.** Any plan must be validated 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 validation can range from informal 'brain storming' sessions through seminar and tabletop exercises to full-scale 'live' exercises of a response. As changes occur to an organisation or the outside environment, checks should be made to ensure that the basic principles of the plan, such as objectives and assumptions remain valid. See **Annex C** for further information on validation exercises.
- **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 hold debriefing sessions 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. Organisations do not have regular experience of dealing with major incidents that 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 large-scale emergency, the source of the incident has been dealt with and the immediate effects dealt with, the emergency is by no means over. In most instances there will be medium and long-term effects, 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 the immediate response.

- 1.5. All aspects of Civil Protection are important and the primary objective of an organisation should be to eliminate or minimise risks. More information on steps which organisations can take to integrate Civil Protection into all aspects of their activity is available in the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch document, 'Northern Ireland Standards in Civil Protection' – see Bibliography at **Annex B**.
- 1.6. However effective prevention, reduction and mitigation are, there will always be some element of uncontrollable risk, and it is therefore also important to have effective strategies for responding to, and reducing the effects of, emergencies.

### **Resilience**

- 1.7. Resilience is a concept which has come to the fore recently, as awareness has increased regarding the potential vulnerability of the national infrastructure which provides the essentials of life for the population. Resilience is about an organisation's ability to respond effectively to emergencies or major incidents whilst also ensuring that its services are not inherently vulnerable to disruption.

### **Defining emergencies**

- 1.8. This guidance refers mainly to planning for, and responding to, a large-scale emergency. Organisations involved in emergency planning use the terms 'major

emergency', 'major incident', 'disaster' and 'large-scale emergency' more or less synonymously. It particularly refers to:

- human welfare;
- the environment; and
- security matters.

A useful working definition for any of these terms is:

**'Any event or circumstance (happening with or without warning) that causes or threatens death or injury, disruption to the community or damage to property or to the environment on such a scale that the effects cannot be dealt with by the emergency services and public service providers as part of their day to day activities.'**

- 1.9. Each of the emergency services has its own precise definition of a major incident, since there are specific situations which will trigger a response under the service's major incident plan, but they all encompass more or less the above definition. Traditionally, emergency planning starts from the point where the situation has gone, or threatens to go, beyond the normal experience of organisations and their ability to cope by using day to day arrangements. However, many of the principles can be applied to smaller situations which may not be a major emergency to the responding organisation but which would be seen as a disaster by the people or businesses affected. It is important to understand that people's definitions of disaster are subjective: flooding affecting two or three houses may not be a major incident or disaster to the responding public service organisations, but it would feel like one to the householders involved.
- 1.10. For many years emergency planning has been closely associated with planning for discrete major incidents, i.e. individual events happening in a defined location at a given point in time, such as train crashes, stadium disasters or explosions. Events have shown that emergencies can also be widely distributed, develop slowly over a

period of time and be the outcome of a range of contributory factors coming together in unanticipated ways. Widespread flooding, the Foot and Mouth outbreaks and the H1N1 Swine Flu Pandemic are some examples of such events. Traditional major incident planning methodology does not always address such events effectively, so organisations need to think laterally and be flexible in approaching the planning process.

- 1.11. Certain kinds of activity carry particular risks. These include industrial sites, transport operations and gas pipelines. Since experience and risk analysis can indicate the most probable types of incident associated with these activities and the likely consequences of these incidents, it is possible to make site-specific or function-specific plans in advance for the appropriate actions to be taken. Such plans will smooth the response to incidents and remove some of the necessity to make decisions under crisis conditions. Plans should still, however, be sufficiently flexible to allow for unforeseen emergencies or for prevailing conditions being different from those envisaged.
- 1.12. Although this guidance focuses on large-scale emergencies on land within Northern Ireland, it should be borne in mind that incidents happening outside Northern Ireland, including maritime incidents, may well require a response by Northern Ireland organisations. Conversely, incidents happening in Northern Ireland can involve people from GB, Ireland or further afield.
- 1.13. No single organisation in Northern Ireland possesses all the skills and resources necessary to respond to a large-scale emergency. Neither is there all-embracing legislation which requires organisations to be involved in emergency planning or which stipulates what exactly everyone's responsibility is. The overriding motivation for emergency planning must be the safety and welfare of the public and the environment. In order to achieve this, organisations providing public services (even indirect services) need to respond together in a co-ordinated manner.

## **CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY**

### **CIVIL PROTECTION PRINCIPLES**

Emergencies arise from diverse circumstance and have diverse effects. It is possible to be aware of risk and to take some steps to prevent emergencies happening or reduce the effects they will have. However, some emergencies cannot be prevented and a response must be planned for and delivered in a flexible way which allows for the uniqueness of each emergency. This document focuses on emergency planning and response, which are elements of a wider Civil Protection mechanism.

Civil Protection covers a range of activities designed to reduce the exposure of the population and the environment to risks to their safety and well being and to ensure that when emergencies happen, the response by the public services and others is effective.

Activities which are undertaken as part of Civil Protection include:

- assessment;
- Prevention / reduction / mitigation;
- preparedness;
- response; and
- recovery.

Integral to Civil Protection is the concept of Resilience – that public services should not be inherently vulnerable to disruption, should be capable of recovering quickly and should continually assess potential risks to the continuity of their services and take steps to ensure that disruption does not occur.

Many words and phrases are used to describe emergencies. A useful working definition of the sort of emergency which is addressed in this document is:

‘Any event or circumstance (happening with or without warning) that threatens death or injury, or disruption to the community, or damage to property or to the environment on such a scale that the effects cannot be dealt with by the emergency services and public service providers as part of their day to day activities’.

Responding to such events normally involves a range of organisations, each providing their own services but working together in a co-ordinated manner to ensure an effective response.

## CHAPTER 2

### PRINCIPLES OF EMERGENCY PLANNING

2.1. Experience has shown that it is not possible to predict what emergency will happen, or where and when it will happen. Even in circumstances when an event, such as a Foot and Mouth outbreak, can be foreseen, it is difficult to predict all the effects that it will have. Effective emergency plans should therefore be flexible, enabling an organisation to deal with major and minor emergencies, foreseen or unforeseen, developing suddenly or over a period of time. The response of any organisation should merge with that of other organisations so as to deliver a seamless service to the public. In order to ensure this, plans should be prepared in accordance with the principles of Integrated Emergency Management.

#### Integrated Emergency Management

2.2. Integration of emergency management arrangements encompasses a number of concepts, some of which overlap.

- **The principal emphasis in the development of any plan must be on the response to the incident and not the cause of the incident.** There are an infinite number of possible emergency scenarios and it is impossible to plan for them all. However, incidents tend to result in a restricted range of short and long term outcomes such as a need for evacuation, environmental pollution, a need to treat large numbers of casualties or a need to make secure and then repair damaged infrastructure. By concentrating on planning to deal with outcomes, it is possible to respond to a very large range of incidents by invoking a limited number of response plans. Such plans need to be flexible: to allow for all weathers and times of day/night, to work when key people are on holiday and to be usable even when the outcomes of an incident have unexpected complications.

- **Emergency management arrangements should be integrated into an organisation's everyday working and management structure. Emergency plans should build on routine arrangements.** A plan which requires a response which is very different from how normal business is conducted or a reporting structure which is very different from the usual one, requires a very high level of staff training and testing, because in times of crisis people naturally cling to procedures they know and are confident with. Whatever the plan, everyone in an organisation who would contribute to the response must know what is expected of them and how they fit into the overall picture, and must be involved in tests and exercises.
- **The activities of different departments within an organisation should be integrated.** The overall response to a major emergency will often need input from a number of different departments or branches within an organisation. Effective planning must identify these contributions and establish protocols in order to achieve an efficient and timely response to an incident. Within an organisation, departments/branches/units must be working to a common framework and objective to ensure a fully integrated response.
- **Emergency arrangements need to be co-ordinated with other responding organisations.** Major emergencies will almost always span physical and functional boundaries and they may progressively encompass more and more organisations. If the response is to be effective in meeting the needs of everyone involved in a major emergency, all organisations need to be aware of their role, the roles of other responders and how to manage the interface with other organisations. This level of co-ordination rarely exists on a day-to-day basis within the public services and should therefore be a particular focus of planning.
- **Plans should include the capacity to extend the level of response,** either for emergencies on different scales or where an incident begins small but escalates into



a much larger one. At some point, additional resources or management mechanisms must be brought into play because of the scale of the incident. The triggers (number of casualties, likely length of the response period etc) which indicate that the response should be escalated should be clearly identified. The plan should outline the arrangements for obtaining additional resources, activating any additional management or co-ordination mechanisms and integrating these new elements with the rest of the response.

### The planning cycle

- 2.3. **Planning is not a one-off activity.** Organisations and their resources are prone to change, as is society and the environment. A plan sitting on a shelf is almost certainly out of date in some respects, and its contents are probably a mystery to the people who are supposed to implement it. In a major emergency there will be no time to read the plan: staff who are not already familiar with the planned response will respond as best they can using familiar processes and procedures which may or may not cope with the situation.
- 2.4. Effective emergency planning is a cyclical process involving not just initial planning but education, exercise, review and rewriting. This ensures that the plan is up-to date and that staff are familiar with it and confident that it will deal effectively with the emergency. The planning cycle encompasses a number of activities, which reflect the Civil Protection processes set out in **Chapter 1**.
- **Assessment / Direction.** 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. This assessment must involve staff at all levels and must be open and honest, and will inform the basic decisions about the objectives and scope of a plan.

- **Information gathering.** Planners need to gather information internally and externally on the likely response required, the people and organisations which would be involved in any way, the needs of customers of the response and the resources which would be available.
- **Preparation of plans.** The detailed content of an emergency plan will depend on the response to be delivered and the nature of the organisation preparing the plan. However, it is useful if a common template is used for different plans within an organisation, and by different organisations for plans relating to the same response. A sample plan template, and advice on using it, is included in the CCPB publication, 'A Guide to Plan Preparation', see the Bibliography at **Annex B**.
- **Consultation.** Plans should not be prepared by a single person, working in isolation. A planning group, involving key personnel from inside and outside the organisation, is a useful tool. There should also be widespread and effective consultation with stakeholders of all sorts.
- **Publication.** Plans should be widely circulated within and outside an organisation, to ensure that everyone who has a contribution to make to the planned response is familiar with it.
- **Training.** Anyone involved to any extent in an emergency plan should be aware of the overall planned response and their own role in the plan and should be given the opportunity to practise actually doing it. Training will not be a one-off event: there will be a need to remind staff of their role and ensure that new staff and those transferred or promoted are fully informed. Formal training events can be supplemented by on-the-job training, handbooks, checklists and action cards.
- **Validation.** The principal means of validating a plan is through exercises designed to test whether the plan can be implemented successfully and achieve its objectives.

Exercises can range from informal 'brain storming' sessions through seminar and tabletop exercises to full-scale live exercises of a response. More information on exercise programmes is in **Annex C**. Near-misses, small events and emergency incidents can also test the validity of the plan, if steps are taken to learn lessons and consider whether the plan either would have met or did meet real needs.

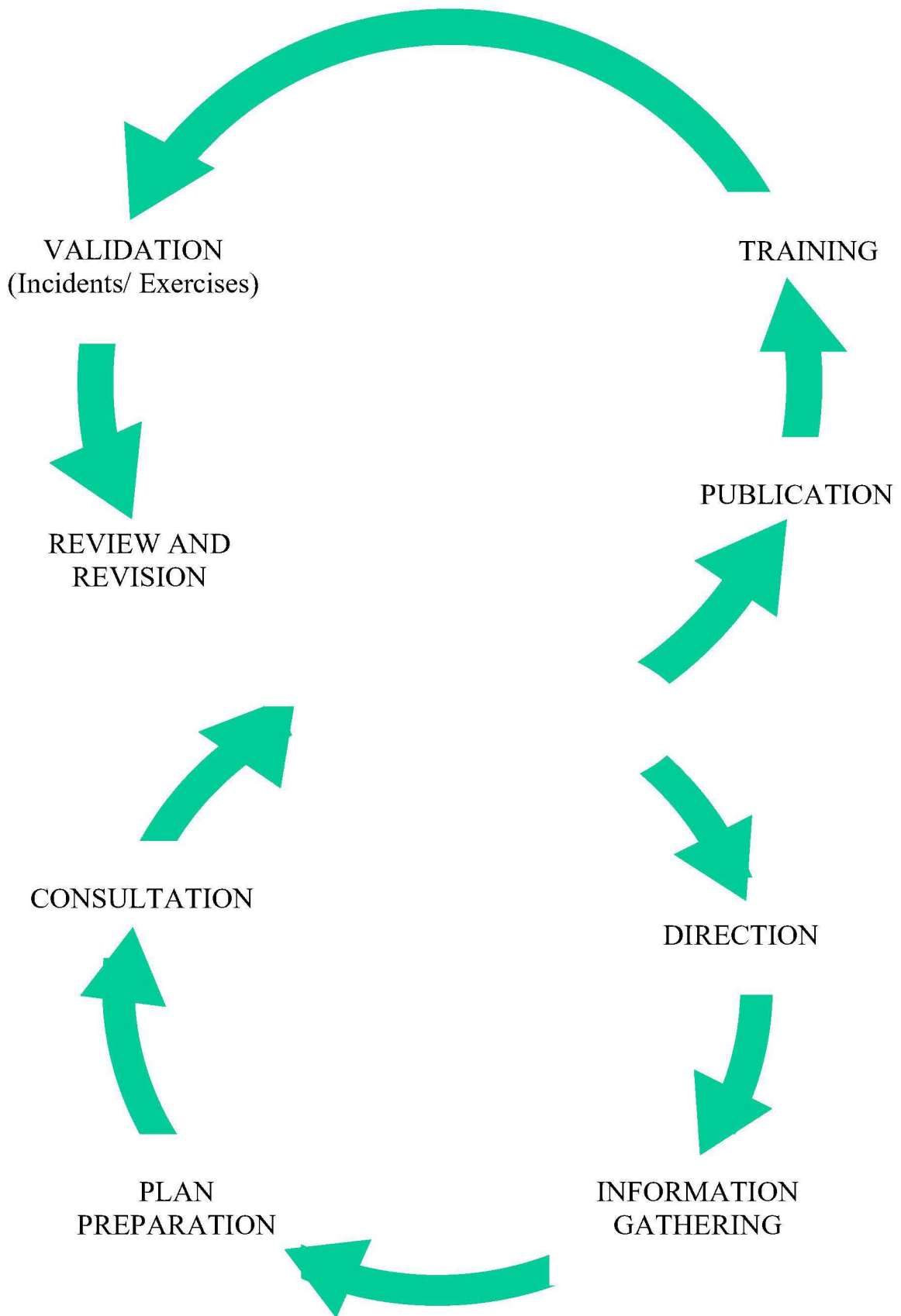
- **Review and revision.** Following any test of a plan, or its use in an emergency situation, it is necessary to analyse whether the plan was fully effective. It might, for example, contain assumptions that proved unfounded or omit some actions which the exercise showed to be necessary. Deficiencies should be corrected and the plan revised. Quite apart from any review following an exercise or incident, a plan which contains contact numbers and/or names will need regular review of contact lists to reflect staff changes and any changes in contact details. Plans should also be reviewed when an organisation makes any changes to its buildings, work processes or management structure. Any plan which has not been used for a real incident or exercised for 1-3 years (depending on the nature of the plan) should be reviewed, even if there are no immediately obvious reasons for doing so. Often such a review can uncover parts of a plan which are no longer applicable. Following a review, any changes should be notified to all recipients of the original plan. Where there are substantial changes to be made to the plan, it may be necessary to re-engage in consultation and re-train staff in the use of the amended plan.

*Diagram1 illustrates the planning and review cycle.*

- 2.5. **Finally, when an emergency happens - use the plan! Too often no-one knows that the plan exists, no-one thinks that it is applicable to the particular incident or no-one knows who has the authority to set the wheels in motion.** As a result staff respond as best they can and by the time someone remembers that the plan exists the response may have taken a life of its own, and can only be brought back in line with the plan with great difficulty. The risk of this happening can be minimised by

ensuring that the planned emergency response is fully integrated into an organisation's normal working practices and by ensuring that the plan specifically states when it is to be used, who triggers any special arrangements which have to be made and at what point in the response various things should happen.

**DIAGRAM 1: PLANNING AND REVIEW CYCLE**



## CHAPTER 2: SUMMARY

### CIVIL PROTECTION PRINCIPLES

Because emergencies vary so widely in their causes and outcomes, preparing multiple plans for a range of specific scenarios is not either efficient or effective. Emergency Planning and response in the United Kingdom is therefore carried out in line with the principles of **Integrated Emergency Management (IEM)**, which are that:

- the principal emphasis in the development of any plan must be on the response to the incident and not the cause of the incident;
- emergency management arrangements should be integrated into an organisation's everyday working and management structure. Emergency plans should build on routine arrangements;
- the activities of different departments within an organisation should be integrated;
- emergency arrangements need to be co-ordinated with other responding organisations; and
- plans should include the capacity to extend the level of response.

Plan writing is only one aspect of **preparedness**. It is part of a **planning cycle** which includes:

- assessment of risk / direction of planning effort;
- information gathering;
- preparation of plans;
- consultation;
- publication;
- training;
- validation; and
- review and revision.

## CHAPTER 3

### DELIVERING AND MANAGING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

#### Responding to localised major incidents

- 3.1. Major incidents are normally thought of as events that occur suddenly and unexpectedly and affect a defined area or group of people. Examples are transportation accidents, fires, explosions, crowd-related incidents and chemical releases. The primary response to such incidents is normally provided by the emergency services, with appropriate backup from other public service organisations. However, it is sometimes the case that the primary response comes from a non-emergency service organisation, with the emergency services in support.
- 3.2. When major incidents happen, they are usually immediately obvious, although the scale and full implications may not be fully realised at the outset. Arrangements for reporting them are well known and used. The 999 / 112 system is the primary means by which incidents are reported to the emergency services. Some sites with known risks, such as airports, have special arrangements for notifying the emergency services of a threatened or actual emergency. Once notified of an incident, the emergency services, or other responders, have arrangements for cascading the emergency alert to other emergency services or public service organisations whose services appear, from initial information, to be required.
- 3.3. Occasionally, an incident can require an urgent response from an organisation other than the four main emergency services. An example would be an oil spill in a river or coastal area, where the DOE NI Environment Agency (NIEA) would implement its pollution control arrangements. Alert and response arrangements for such situations are usually known to those likely to be involved or to receive the first alerts and they are advertised as appropriate in the press, specialist publications and telephone directories.

3.4. Whatever the nature of the incident, it is generally agreed that all organisations which provide a response will be working to common aims, which will include:

- saving life;
- preventing escalation of the incident;
- relieving suffering;
- safeguarding the environment;
- protecting property;
- facilitating criminal investigations and other judicial, technical and public enquiries; and
- continuing to maintain normal services at an appropriate level and inform the public.

3.5. In the aftermath to an emergency, other aims become important:

- promoting self-help and recovery;
- restoring normality as soon as possible; and
- evaluating the response and identify lessons to be learned.

### **Principles of the initial response**

3.6. **The initial response to a major incident will normally be made by the emergency services.** In most cases the PSNI will be the lead emergency service, undertaking their own response and co-ordinating the front-line response. In the case of a fire or a chemical incident, the NI Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) will be in charge of the incident site and the immediate response, with the PSNI managing any wider response. With the PSNI coordinating the shoreline based reception, HM Coastguard



will be the lead emergency service for the search and rescue element of the response, with the PSNI in control of the shore-based reception and casualty treatment processes. The Ambulance Service and other front-line responders carry out their professional functions under the overall co-ordination of the lead emergency service.

- 3.7. Other organisations will be drawn progressively into the response as the incident develops or as the situation becomes more organised and coherent. What follows applies primarily to emergencies where the response required goes beyond day-to-day experience, although much of it is also applicable in more routine situations.

### **Duties of initial responders**

- 3.8. Where a major emergency arises from an incident occurring at a defined location, the first individual or team to respond in the formal sense will normally be from the emergency services (although people in the locality may have made some response).

**In these circumstances the first duty of the senior initial responder is to:**

- **survey the scene and assess the situation to determine the location, size, scope and nature of the emergency;**
- **report this information back to control and specify the initial response that will be required, including what other agencies should respond. Make sure the information is passed to other responders;**
- **establish whether there are any casualties, and if so approximately how many;**
- **establish the location of any known hazards and advise on safe access routes and rendezvous points;**
- **set up an initial incident management system, including maintenance of an incident log, pending arrival of more senior officers and specialist control vehicles; and**

- **make initial contact and co-ordination arrangements with other services arriving on scene.**

3.9. This first responder will retain responsibility for directing and co-ordinating the response until relieved by a more senior officer or someone from a more appropriate organisation.

### **Developing the response**

- 3.10. In the very early stages of an incident, a number of steps need to be taken to secure the site, ensure the safety of responders and develop an effective managed response.
- 3.11. Once resources begin to arrive at the scene of an incident, overall control would pass to the appropriate lead emergency service, which would set up at least one cordon around the scene. For incidents where there is a continuing danger, two cordons are normal: an inner one around the incident site within which only direct responders are permitted and an outer one which encompasses managers and secondary responders. The inner cordon would be controlled by either the PSNI or the NIFRS, depending on the nature of the incident. The outer cordon would normally be controlled by the PSNI. Access to both cordoned areas would be through Control Points where responders could be logged in and out for safety reasons and where briefing would be given on any particular hazards, operations under way and signals for evacuation of the site.
- 3.12. Control of specific functions should be agreed between the responders, depending on the nature of the incident. Activities such as fire fighting, search and rescue, decontamination, securing of damaged infrastructure and treatment of spilled chemicals need to be clearly under the control of a single organisation in order to ensure safe working practices and effective response. Where necessary, the emergency services have agreements on who is responsible for certain activities.

- 3.13. Outside the inner cordon, arrangements need to be made for the assembly of survivors (to ensure that as far as possible everyone is accounted for and to note particulars so that follow up action can be taken if need be) and treatment of any casualties from the incident pending their transfer to better treatment facilities.
- 3.14. Rendezvous and marshalling arrangements need to be established early on to ensure that co-ordination is quickly established and that traffic congestion does not hinder the response. Initially a rendezvous (RV) point would be established close to the scene, where responders could meet and operational control could begin to be established. Known hazard sites such as airports have a number of predetermined RV points. The initial alert, or the report from the first responder, should specify which of these points should be used, having regard for the position and nature of an incident and the nature and direction of spread of any hazard such as chemical clouds or toxic smoke. In other places, the first responder will assess the situation, identify a safe RV location and notify other responders. The RV point is normally identified by an emergency service vehicle parked with its emergency lights on. Other vehicles should switch off emergency lights on arrival at the scene, to avoid confusion. As the response to an incident builds up, support vehicles and those waiting to take their turn in the response should be marshalled at a convenient location close to the scene but out of the way of the immediate response. This might be a car park or adjacent emergency service base such as a fire station. Again, for known hazard sites one or more marshalling areas should be identified as part of the planning process.
- 3.15. Where there have been fatalities, it may be necessary to establish a body holding area at the scene of the incident where bodies can be kept in a safe and respectful manner before being transported to proper mortuary facilities. Body handling is the responsibility of the PSNI, and no bodies should be disturbed or moved without reference to the Senior PSNI Officer in charge except where access to a live casualty is hindered and would place the live casualty at further risk to life.

- 3.16. Representatives of the media can be expected to arrive at an incident site before, or at the same time as, the emergency services. They need to be given facilities for briefing but to be kept separate from the emergency response. Emergency service plans include an early response by press officers to liaise with the media. **Chapter 6** deals in more detail with public information issues.

### **Managing incidents**

- 3.17. **It is important that the emergency services, and any other organisations involved, establish incident management arrangements at an early stage in the response.**

Management has two components:

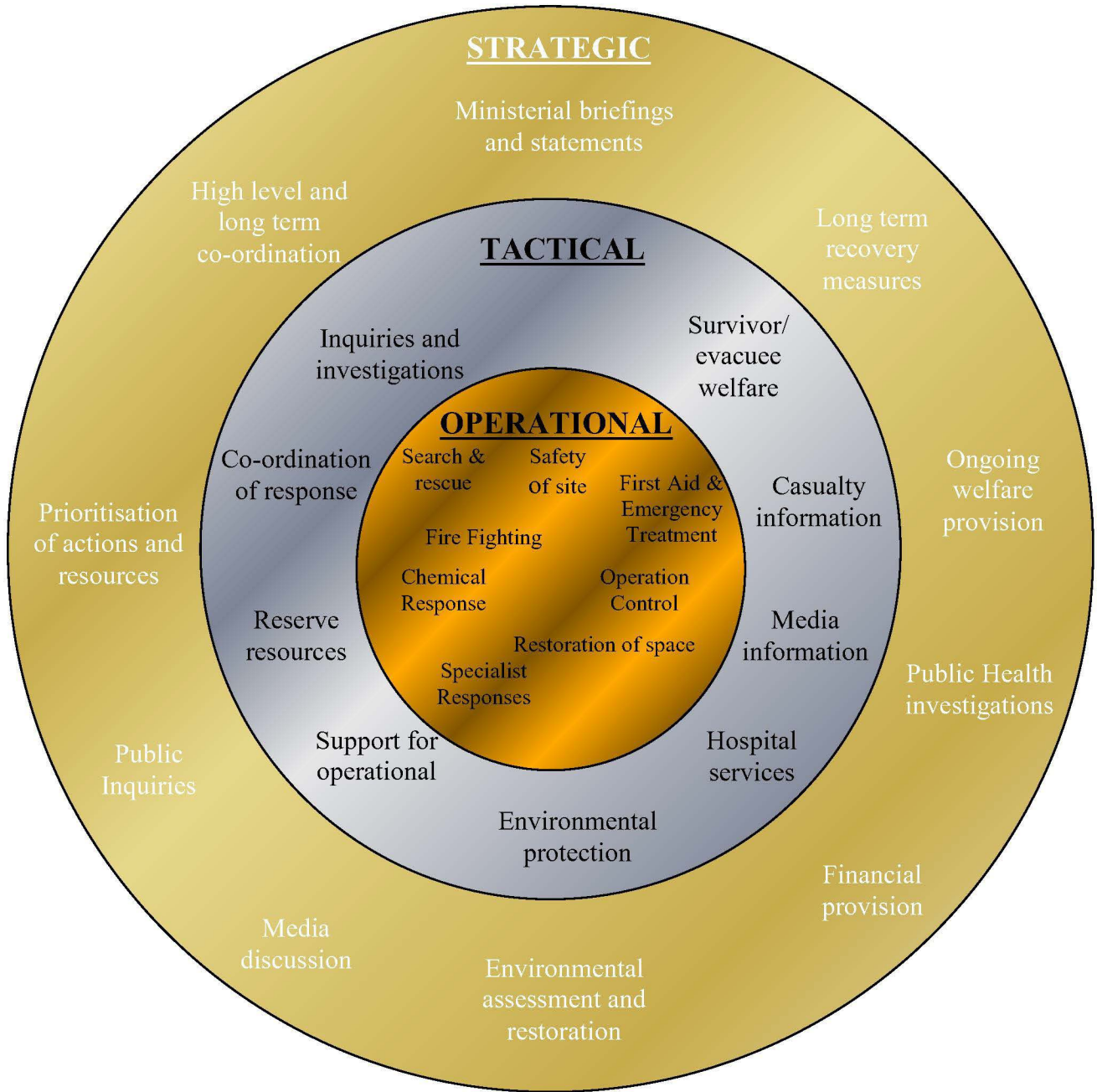
- management within each responding organisation, ensuring that internal communication, co-ordination and control functions are established as necessary to deal with the immediate response, foreseeable medium-and long-term issues, and unanticipated problems, as they arise; and
- inter-organisational management and co-ordination, to ensure that organisations work together in a controlled and coherent way in order to meet the immediate response needs, manage foreseeable medium-and long-term issues and deal with any inter-agency problems which arise. A lead organisation (see paragraphs 3.38 – 3.47) will bring together a group of representatives of organisations, which will share information, co-ordinate activities and provide corporate management of interagency aspects of the emergency, such as agreeing priority activities and best use of available resources.

- 3.18. In major incidents, each responding organisation will implement its own management arrangements and the lead organisation, normally the PSNI for land-based emergencies, will establish inter-agency arrangements. Early implementation of inter-agency management and co-ordination arrangements

ensures that actions or requests for resources are not duplicated and that no gaps are left in the response.

- 3.19. Both within organisations and between organisations, up to 3 levels of management can be involved in the response to a major incident: operational, tactical and strategic (*Diagram 2*).

# A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland



**DIAGRAM 2: LEVELS OF RESPONSE**

- 3.20. **Operational** level management deals with the activities being undertaken at an incident site and is primarily task orientated. Inter-agency management and co-ordination at operational level ensures that different organisations work harmoniously and safely together and that all priority tasks are addressed using available resources. Many day-to-day incidents are dealt with at this level, without the need to invoke any other management arrangements. This level of management is sometimes known as **'Bronze'**.
- 3.21. **Tactical** level management provides support for the operational response, including administration and staff management facilities, ensuring safety of operational staff and providing situation reports for senior management and press officers. Inter-agency management and co-ordination at tactical level includes managing sets of tasks to which a number of organisations contribute, determining priorities where resources are limited and providing mutual aid in order to address priority tasks. A tactical level response is usually only necessary where there is more than one incident or site, where a particularly large or complex response is required or if decisions need to be taken as to priority and the best means of proceeding. This level of management is sometimes known as **'Silver'**.
- 3.22. **Strategic** level management involves establishing policy, determining strategy, anticipating requirements and making senior command decisions. Inter-agency management and co-ordination at **strategic** level would include establishing common policy frameworks for tactical and operational level staff, sharing and redistribution of resources, agreeing prioritisation of immediate, medium-term and long-term demands for action and resources, joint strategic planning for recovery, review of responses and any follow-up policy action at inter-agency level. This level of management would be used only in very large or complex incidents where there was a need to give support to the Tactical Commander, prioritise the allocation of resources or determine strategic plans for the return to a state of normality. This level of management is sometimes known as **'Gold'**.

- 3.23. These levels of incident management operate within the individual responding organisations in a way which suits the working practice of each organisation. For example, the PSNI operational commander would be at the site of the incident, usually at, or inside, the inner cordon, the PSNI tactical commander would be close to the incident site at a place with suitable accommodation and communications facilities and the PSNI strategic commander would be at a central location such as PSNI Headquarters. In contrast, the NIFRS operational commander(s) would be on the ground at the immediate scene of the incident and the NIFRS tactical commander would also be close to, or at, the incident. It is unlikely that the NIFRS would require a Strategic Commander, although strategic decisions may be made by Officers at NIFRS Headquarters. In general, command of NIFRS operations remains at the incident.
- 3.24. For inter-agency management and co-ordination, the same levels exist and would normally, in a major incident, be set up and run by the PSNI along the lines used for PSNI internal management. Thus the inter-agency operational group would be based at the incident site, the tactical group would meet at a convenient location close to the incident site and the strategic group would meet at a central location. The other emergency services (and any other organisation directly involved in the response) would send representatives to each inter-agency group set up by the PSNI. Ideally, the representative sent to inter-agency management and co-ordination meetings would be the operational, tactical or strategic commander as appropriate, but where their duties prevent them from attending, a representative would be sent who had authority to commit their organisation to actions agreed by the group.
- 3.25. Similar levels of inter-agency management and co-ordination would be established for the search and rescue element of a major marine emergency, but they would be chaired by HM Coastguard, and the strategic group (if one was required) would meet in the Maritime and Coastguard Agency headquarters in Bangor. Inter-agency operational and tactical level management would normally be undertaken by an on-scene commander appointed by HM Coastguard from among the responding craft, working closely with the HM Coastguard Operations Room.



- 3.26. In a prolonged major incident, inter-agency management and co-ordination arrangements may need to operate over a long period. As operational, tactical and strategic commanders from individual services have roles to play within their own organisations they cannot usually stay at the inter-agency headquarters. The normal arrangement in this case is for liaison officers from each participating organisation to set up a base at the co-ordination centre to act as channels for communication and to conduct routine business. Commanders from the organisations would then meet formally at intervals to discuss relevant inter-agency issues and make decisions.
- 3.27. At all levels, the management role is a function and not a rank. Who fills the role will depend on availability of staff and their expertise. In the early stages of an incident response, managers, especially at operational and tactical levels, are likely to be relatively low in rank. As the response gains momentum and draws in additional staff, the management function may move to officers at higher rank. Management positions should not be left unfilled simply because there is no-one present of an 'appropriate' rank.
- 3.28. For rare incidents where neither the emergency services nor any other public service organisation has a clear lead function but where a co-ordinated approach to a localised incident would improve the delivery of services to the public, for example in the aftermath of a severe storm, the local district council may, in consultation with the PSNI District Commander, agree to take on a co-ordination role. The co-ordination arrangements set up by the district council would normally be at tactical level.
- 3.29. Where the PSNI have been undertaking co-ordination of the immediate incident response, the District Commander may, by agreement, pass the tactical co-ordination function to the district council at a suitable point when the direct operational response is substantially complete but action needs to be taken for clean-up and recovery.

### **Complex incident sites and multiple incident sites**

3.30. Some incidents produce a number of discrete sites or individual problems. For example, a plane crash can spread debris over a large area, start fires and create casualties among those aboard the plane and those on the ground. Severe weather can produce a number of different emergencies, including cars with trees fallen across, houses with no roofs and vulnerable people left without heat and light. A fire at a site where liquid petroleum gas is stored may require a primary fire fighting response, but it may also be necessary to evacuate residents within range of a potential gas explosion and to divert traffic away from the area in order to allow free movement of emergency service vehicles.

3.31. In these situations, each incident or response may be assigned its own operational management, with, if necessary, a tactical manager taking an overview of all. In a very large incident, a number of tactical managers may be needed, not only to deal with individual sites or responses, but also to manage backup functions such as personnel and supplies. A strategic management level would then bring together the threads of the whole response.

### **Widespread or slowly developing emergency**

3.32. Emergencies can exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:

- no defined incident site, and often no incident to directly respond to;
- no notification through the 999 / 112 or other emergency systems;
- limited involvement of the emergency services, and correspondingly greater involvement of the non-emergency public services;
- slowly developing appreciation that the situation may or already does constitute an emergency;
- response and management may be established first at strategic or tactical level and then lead to operational activity; and

- all the implications not immediately apparent or predictable: some may only be appreciated in the medium-to long-term.

3.33. Emergencies which fall into this category, include:

- plant, animal or human disease outbreaks;
- widespread environmental pollution arising, for example, from maritime or overseas incidents;
- social effects of events happening outside Northern Ireland, causing, for example, an influx of refugees or distress among Northern Ireland relatives of people directly affected by an incident elsewhere;
- infrastructure failures, such as widespread utility failures;
- supply chain failures, especially in critical resources such as food and fuel; and
- severe weather events such as prolonged extreme high or low temperatures or drought.

3.34. In some of these cases the realisation that a major emergency has occurred dawns slowly and there is no obvious site for a response to be conducted. The emergency is identified not through receipt of 999 / 112 calls, but as a result of alerts from elsewhere, routine sampling and monitoring, information from businesses or the media and the actions of individual people. Nevertheless, the effects of such 'silent' emergencies can be devastating, as demonstrated by the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001, which had widespread economic, social and environmental repercussions.

### **Managing widespread or slowly developing emergencies**

3.35. The lack of a well-defined incident site does not mean that there is no need for the situation to be responded to and managed. While the principles outlined above for

response to, and management of, major incidents are equally valid for this sort of emergency they may be applied in different ways. To start with, organisations likely to encounter such emergencies need to have systems in place for detecting the early signs of an emergency and assessing the likelihood and potential extent of disruption. Detection may be achieved through having effective communication arrangements with similar organisations in GB and elsewhere, monitoring of media reports, being in touch with businesses and infrastructure organisations or through routine sampling and monitoring procedures. The information being received from such sources needs to be analysed by organisations to ensure that they have a realistic understanding of how the events may affect or are affecting Northern Ireland.

- 3.36. Having identified a potential or actual emergency, a response strategy needs to be developed and agreed within an organisation and, where necessary, in consultation with other organisations involved. This can mean that tactical or strategic management arrangements are put in place before any response, or at least any managed response, begins. However there will still, in the long run be a need for operational response and management to deal with the immediate effects (treatment of disease, accommodation for people displaced), tactical response and management to ensure a proper supply of resources to the operational responders and strategic response and management to deal with policy, public information and long term issues.
- 3.37. The lead role in emergencies like these is likely to be taken by a government department or agency rather than an emergency service, but there will still be need for inter-agency co-ordination, which may include the emergency services, government departments, agencies, NDPBs, health and education authorities and district councils. Depending on the nature and extent of any given emergency this may be through local/ sub-regional co-ordination arrangements, the lead government department or the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) – See **Annex D** for details.

## Lead organisations

3.38. A lead organisation is the organisation with primary responsibility for a particular type of incident. Lead responsibility involves two, related functions:

- The lead organisation needs to maintain its own civil protection programme, which would include the preparation of emergency plans for its own functions and managing its own response, including co-ordinating the actions of constituent parts of the organisation, and, where appropriate, associated agencies, NDPBs etc; and
- The lead organisation also has responsibility for co-ordination of inter-agency aspects of civil protection for those functions for which it has particular responsibility, including facilitating corporate management and co-ordination of the response, in order to ensure a coherent and complete response.

3.39. The **lead government department** principle is a UK-wide concept which deals primarily with **strategic level** responses to emergencies. Some key aspects of lead government department principles in Northern Ireland are:

- Most incidents are handled at a local level by the emergency services, district councils, Health and Social Care bodies and other locally based organisations, without the direct involvement of government departments using the principles set out in the Protocol for Multi-Agency Co-ordination of Local Level Response and Recovery. In situations where a developing emergency goes beyond the capacity of local organisations there is a mechanism by which emergencies which are initially managed at local level can be escalated to a strategic level, where co-ordination would fall to either a lead government department or the NICCMA.

- Where it was immediately clear that an emergency would require strategic-level co-ordination, the lead department would assess whether or not it was capable of dealing with the situation within its own resources. If it seemed that the numbers of agencies involved would be very large, and that strategic co-ordination would be required, the department would ask OFMDFM for the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) to be activated (**see Annex D**).
- It is important for all levels of government to be clear in advance about which department would be in the lead for as many potential challenges as possible. The lead department list at **Annex D** outlines the lead responsibilities for a range of possible scenarios.
- Where for Level 1 emergencies there is no identifiable Lead Government Department, or where responsibility is not clear, OFMDFM will agree the lead role with relevant departments. For Level 2 and 3 emergencies the NICCMA would be activated.

3.40. Although these principles are stated for departments at strategic level, they also apply at operational and tactical levels. At operational and tactical levels, not only departments, but also emergency services, agencies, NDPBs, district councils and commercial companies (for example, utility firms or chemical site operators) may find themselves taking a lead role. It is therefore more appropriate to talk about 'lead organisations' than purely about 'lead government departments'.

3.41. In some cases, the same organisation will have lead responsibility at operational, tactical and strategic level. For example, in a major incident such as an aircraft crash, the PSNI would set up the operational co-ordination at the site, tactical co-ordination at a suitable site nearby and, if necessary, strategic co-ordination at PSNI Headquarters. In other cases, the lead organisation would vary according to the level at which the

co-ordination was taking place. For example, in a human disease outbreak, the relevant Health and Social Care Body would have the lead responsibility at operational and tactical level, but, should strategic level co-ordination be necessary, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety would have the lead role at that level which would be the overall lead government department.

### **Lead organisation activities**

3.42. The exact activities undertaken by a lead organisation would vary according to the nature of the emergency and the level at which co-ordination was being undertaken. However, the main activities would be:

- **Preparation.** Co-ordination does not happen spontaneously. Like all other aspects of emergency response and management it needs to be planned and practiced. Organisations need to consider what lead responsibilities they may have and plan their management and co-ordination strategy accordingly, this might include developing and formalising contact with other organisations likely to be involved in the response, identifying resources which would be used, including staff, accommodation and communications equipment, and developing monitoring systems which would give early warning of a developing emergency.
- **Acting as a communications and information focal point.** The lead organisation needs to have a good overview of the emergency and the response, which is being made. Receiving and collating reports allows it to identify where problems are occurring and what resources are required. At strategic lead government department level it also allows monitoring of progress and scale in order to identify if central co-ordination arrangements through the NICCMA are required.
- **Facilitating discussion and decision-making.** This is the core of the lead organisation's role. In some circumstances the role of the lead organisation will be

purely to facilitate co-ordination – to ensure that all organisations know what each other are doing and that all are working together without difficulty. In other situations, the lead organisation may have to facilitate corporate management by all the responding organisations of the inter-agency aspects of an emergency response. The degree of input which the lead organisation would make to this inter-agency management function will vary. In the immediate operational response to a sudden emergency, the lead organisation may well have to make decisions on behalf of other organisations about short-term priorities or issues on which it has specialist information, such as the safety of responders. In doing so, it may have some influence over what other organisations do, but it will not take over management of other organisations' resources or dictate how tasks should be carried out. At tactical and strategic levels, the lead role is much more about bringing together organisations and facilitating corporate management of such issues as priorities, allocation of resources, mutual aid, particular inter-agency difficulties which had arisen, any duplications or gaps in the response, and any advance planning needed for the next stage of the response. This would normally be through round-table meetings of appropriate staff from all participating organisations, supported as necessary by liaison officer arrangements. However, in some slowly-developing emergencies it may be possible to achieve co-ordinated decision-making by correspondence – effective e-mail systems make this much more feasible – and in very fast-developing situations, or where it is impossible to get people together, it may be necessary to work by telephone.

- **Co-ordinating information for the media and the public.** It may be necessary to bring together a number of sources of information to provide advice and safety information to the public and/or those caught up in the emergency and to give a coherent and co-ordinated message to the media. Even where organisations are putting out their own media information, they should clear it with the lead organisation. This would normally be the responsibility of the lead organisation's press office, although in very large-scale emergencies the involvement of a central



arrangement, for example through Executive Information Service (EIS), may be necessary.

- **Preparing briefing.** Managers in responding organisations, and especially in the lead organisation, will want to know what is happening and what the emerging issues are. A co-ordinated information brief allows everyone to gain a clear view of needs and whether additional resources or management input is required. At strategic level, co-ordination of information for Ministers, the Executive and the Assembly may be an important part of the lead organisation's role. Equally, staff across responding organisations need to know what is happening, whether they will be affected and why they are being asked to undertake certain tasks. The lead organisation would have the information and contacts to facilitate the preparation of co-ordinated briefing for staff.
- **Developing and progressing the response.** As emergencies develop the response activities required change and the emphasis gradually moves away from the immediate emergency response to recovery, reconstruction and risk reduction. The main organisations involved in this stage of the response may be very different from those involved in the initial response. The lead organisation therefore needs to monitor how the response is developing and identify when it would be appropriate to move the lead role to another organisation. It would then discuss with that organisation arrangements for managing a smooth transfer of lead responsibilities. In prolonged or complex emergencies, lead responsibility may change several times.
- **Learning lessons and reviewing plans.** The lead organisation, having brought together information throughout the emergency response and facilitated discussion and decision-making, is in an excellent position to facilitate inter-agency discussion on lessons learnt from the emergency response, the effectiveness of inter-agency response, management and co-ordination aspects of existing plans and any revision or new plans needed.

3.43. In considering the role of the lead organisation, two principles need to be understood by all responders:

- **the lead organisation does not take on responsibility for, or control of, the resources or emergency response and management activities of other organisations; and**
- **the lead organisation facilitates joint discussion and decision-making but it does not have to do all the resulting work.**

3.44. It is quite reasonable for an inter-agency management and co-ordination group, under the chairmanship of the lead organisation, to spread tasks, including research, particular activities and co-ordination of specific functions, between the organisations represented, according to their resources and specialist knowledge. The co-ordinating group would continue to receive reports on these issues and deal with any inter-agency problems which arose, but organisations would get on with their own responses and with any activities allocated to them. For example, a Health & Social Care Trust may have a lead responsibility for co-ordination of rest centre accommodation for people evacuated from their homes, but may agree that the normal staff of the building being used (for example, a Council leisure centre) would continue to deliver the building services (heating, catering etc), as they would be familiar with the layout, equipment and services. At strategic level, the lead organisation may, through the inter-agency management and co-ordination group, ask other departments to co-ordinate activities in relation to, for example, supply of staff for the response and monitoring economic effects.

### **Identifying lead organisations**

3.45. In most common emergency situations, problems do not arise with identifying a lead organisation. Organisations are well aware of their response roles and the lead role has been well-practised and is understood by everyone. This can be so much the case that organisations do not really identify what they are doing as 'lead' - it is just

part of their job. This can be seen most clearly among the emergency services, where lead responsibility for dealing with incidents is well defined and understood. The PSNI would normally take on a lead role in incidents where a threat to life or property was involved or where a crime was suspected. The NIFRS has well-defined lead responsibilities for situations involving fire, chemicals or entrapment. It is less common for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) to have a lead role, but it may do so in an incident where the primary problem is treatment of casualties, as in a crushing situation in a crowd.

- 3.46. Identifying the lead role in unusual situations or complex emergencies can be more difficult. If lead responsibility was to flow from the principles of Integrated Emergency Management (IEM), it would relate to the effects of an incident. This makes sense in that information gathering is a key aspect of the lead organisation's role and the main responder would have access to the best-quality information. IEM principles can be applied in some cases: for example, lead responsibility for the response to severe storms would depend on the nature of the most serious problem caused by the storm, whether road closures, homelessness or danger to sick and vulnerable people through loss of power and communications. However, many large-scale emergencies have a large number of possible outcomes, which are difficult to predict. Since pre-planning is an essential element of the role of lead organisations, it is often necessary to identify lead organisations according to their responsibility (at whatever level) for the cause of the emergency. At strategic level, lead responsibility will often be defined by policy responsibility rather than responsibility for delivering services. For example, DHSSPS does not itself deliver healthcare services, but would have strategic responsibility for emergencies, such as disease epidemic, where the primary effects were on the health of the population.
- 3.47. All of this means that the allocation of lead responsibilities, outside of the emergency service arrangements, is to some extent empirical. At strategic level, there is a list of lead departments (**Annex D**). If there is no pre-identified lead OFMDFM would work with departments to agree lead responsibility as the need arises.

- 3.48. Localised emergencies where there is a need for inter-agency co-ordination at operational and, sometimes, tactical level, are referred to in paragraph 3.28 and 3.29.
- 3.49. Where it is clear that an emergency has occurred, or is threatened, to which a strategic response is required, but where the correct lead organisation cannot be identified, CCPB can advise on appropriate co-ordination arrangements. Any organisation which becomes aware of an emergency situation requiring strategic co-ordination and is uncertain of lead responsibility, but believes it would be useful to invoke lead government department or NICCMA arrangements, may approach CCPB to discuss an appropriate way forward.

### **Lead organisations in action**

- 3.50. Here in Northern Ireland, the principles of lead organisations have been applied for many years. For example, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) took on lead responsibility for the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak.

### **Increasing the scale of the response**

- 3.51. The emergency services all have definitions of what constitutes for them a major incident. As soon as an officer in charge of an emergency situation recognises that it displays one or more of the characteristics of a major incident, pre-planned measures are put in place to manage the response and deal with the problems which are peculiar to major incidents. Other organisations which would respond to an emergency situation should similarly have mechanisms for measuring or anticipating the scale of an actual or threatened emergency and for matching the response to need.
- 3.52. Major incidents normally require an immediate high input of resources. To have maximum effect, activities such as saving life and limiting the effects of the incident must begin immediately. Responders converge on a chaotic scene where, while it is immediately obvious that an extraordinary response is required, there may not be time

to carry out a full survey of needs. The emergency services will deploy what resources are available while making urgent assessments of need. As the response progresses (over hours, days or weeks depending on the nature of the incident) it is likely that fewer, but more specialised staff will be involved. An exception may be where an apparently minor incident turns out to be more serious than originally expected, for example where a vehicle involved in an accident is discovered to be carrying a hazardous material. In this case the number of organisations involved would increase as the situation developed.

- 3.53. For emergencies where the effects are dispersed, it is likely that only a few people will be involved in identifying and assessing the problem and deciding a strategy. Numbers of responders, both individuals and organisations would then increase as the response developed. There would normally be more time to find and deploy appropriate staff, but the whole response may extend over a much longer timescale.
- 3.54. Nevertheless, large-scale emergencies, whether occurring catastrophically or developing over a period of time, stretch resources to the limits. All organisations, including the emergency services, match their allocation of staff, money, vehicles and equipment closely to known everyday requirements. There is rarely a pool of extra staff or a stockpile of emergency equipment which can be called upon when a response is required to a major incident. All emergency plans must therefore specifically include information on where help can be obtained in order to enable the organisation to fulfil its part in the response. Help can come from:
- **Mutual aid arrangements**, where assistance can be drawn from organisations delivering similar services in a different geographical area or from organisations in the same area which deliver different services but which use similar technology and/or skills. All such mutual aid arrangements should be formally agreed and set down in written agreements which include when and how the arrangement would be triggered; what quantity and type of help could be provided; cost recovery;

indemnity; health and safety; and timescales. An example would be mutual aid arrangements within the Northern Ireland Civil Service and its agencies for the enhancement of one organisation's call handling capacity using volunteer staff with appropriate skills from other organisations in a managed and co-ordinated manner.

- **Commercial suppliers**, whose contracts should include provision of an emergency response where appropriate. This is especially the case where services previously supplied from within an organisation have been contracted out. If additional catering, out of hours attendance, supplies of equipment or suspension of normal working practices would be required, these should be agreed in advance. All organisations should also be aware of the effects which a major emergency could have on their own core business and have contracts for repair of damaged buildings and equipment and replacement of everything from office accommodation to computers and stationery.
- **Volunteers**, both those in established organisations and those members of the community who have no formal contacts with voluntary organisations but who feel that they have skills which would be useful. Normally emergency response organisations would work only with established voluntary organisations who, through training and participation in exercises, can supply a service of guaranteed quality and extent. However, in many major emergencies individuals will want to make some contribution to the response and will volunteer their services. Where organisations feel that they can use this ad hoc volunteer manpower, proper supervision, insurance and management arrangements should be made.
- **Military aid arrangements** through the Military Aid to the Civil Community (MACC) scheme. This permits military personnel and equipment to be used where there is danger to life or major disruption to the community. Military aid arrangements will normally be made and managed through the PSNI in emergency situations, but where military resources are acting in direct support of a government department

there will be a need for liaison arrangements to co-ordinate the activities of departmental employees and military personnel.

- 3.55. More information on possible sources of help in emergencies is at **Annex E**. Public service organisations which may need to call on assistance should have contacts with sources of help and have agreed systems for callout, insurance, reimbursement of expenses etc.

### **Transition to recovery**

- 3.56. **When the initial response phase to an incident is complete, the emergency is by no means over.** The move from an active response focused on preserving life and property and on providing immediate care services, to a managed transition to normality will require changes to the incident management structure, to the organisations involved and to the type of management response (hot crisis management to planned, objective centred management). One of the most obvious changes is that the lead responsibility will normally move from an emergency service to a public service organisation or in a very large emergency strategic level co-ordination may pass to the Crisis Management Group.
- 3.57. Recovery and reconstruction processes can last for months or years and require a management and service delivery commitment equal to, or greater than, the initial response. Affected individuals and communities can require social and psychological support for an extended period. If the cause of the incident remains a threat, for example, a river liable to flood, it may be necessary to allay public fears by carrying out work to remove the source of concern or at least to reduce the risk of a repeat incident. If there has been damage to the environment, it may take many years for plant and animal communities to be re-established.

- 3.58. In planning the response to the effects of emergencies, the need for such long-term action should not be overlooked. Long-term issues need to be considered early on in a response, as actions taken at this stage can affect the long-term recovery prospects. For example, fire-fighting water runoff can carry toxic chemicals into watercourses, affecting the environment and any public water supplies which are drawn from affected watercourses.



## CHAPTER 3: SUMMARY

### DELIVERING AND MANAGING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE

When emergencies happen, the priorities for response are agreed to be:

- save life;
- prevent escalation of the incident;
- relieve suffering;
- safeguard the environment;
- protect property;
- facilitate criminal investigations and other judicial, technical and public enquiries;  
and
- continue to maintain normal services at an appropriate level and inform the public.

In the aftermath of an emergency, other priorities emerge:

- promote self-help and recovery;
- restore normality as soon as possible; and
- evaluate the response and identify the lessons learnt.

While each emergency is unique, and there is an enormous range of potential emergency situations, it is possible to identify two types of emergency which involve responses from rather different sets of organisations:

**Localised major incidents**, where the initial response is usually provided by the emergency services or other specialised emergency response teams. These incidents may be very serious and involve a large number of casualties, but they are generally

easily identified as emergencies, the area they affect can usually be relatively well defined and the potential outcomes of the incident predicted.

**Widespread or slowly developing emergencies**, where the potential seriousness and outcomes may not be apparent at the outset and where the frontline emergency services may have a supporting rather than leading role to play in the response. The emergency may have no identifiable physical boundaries or may affect a large number of widely dispersed sites.

**Responding to localised emergencies** requires a co-ordinated and rapid deployment of resources in a planned way. Most of these resources will come from the emergency services and other emergency responders, who have established systems for responding to emergencies and managing that response both within and between agencies. The PSNI will normally have responsibility for overall management of the incident, including co-ordination of the work of all agencies attending the scene. The NIFRS will normally take the lead in ensuring the safety of responders and the public from fires and chemicals. Where there is no emergency service involvement, co-ordination may fall to a local public service organisation or the district council.

**Responding to widespread or slowly developing emergencies** requires first that the emergency is identified and then that a planned response is made and co-ordinated. There may be an opportunity to contain the emergency or reduce the severity of the effects. There may be no focus for an operational response (where the incident was outside Northern Ireland, for example) or there may be many incident sites spread across a wide area.

**Managing either sort of emergency** has two components:

- managing the response within individual organisations; and
- managing and co-ordinating the overall response if two or more organisations are involved.

Both types of management can be conducted at one or more levels:

- **Operational**, or **Bronze**, level management primarily task orientated – it is about managing the delivery of services;
- **Tactical**, or **Silver**, level management provides support for the operational response; and
- **Strategic**, or **Gold**, level management is about strategy and policy, not just immediately, but in the medium and long term.

The levels of management used will depend on the seriousness and extent of the incident. Many emergencies can be managed at operational level alone. Sometimes operational and tactical levels are required, but only in the most exceptional circumstances will Strategic management need to be added.

Inter-agency co-ordination and management at any level usually involves an inter-agency group, organised and chaired by a lead organisation, and attended by all the organisations involved in the response

A **lead organisation** is the organisation with the primary responsibility for a particular type of emergency. In addition to managing its own response, the lead organisation should facilitate co-ordination between all responders by making contact with them and arranging co-ordination / management meetings as necessary. In localised, defined boundary incidents, the initial lead organisation is likely to be the PSNI, but may also be another public service or the district council. In widespread or slowly developing incidents, the lead role is more likely to be taken by a public service organisation. Chairmanship and membership of the interagency co-ordination / management group may change as the incident and response progresses.

The role of lead organisations would be:

- preparation – planning for co-ordination;

- acting as a communications and information focal point;
- facilitating discussion and decision-making;
- co-ordinating information for the media and the public;
- preparing briefing;
- developing and progressing the response; and
- learning lessons and reviewing plans.

In doing these, the lead organisation does not take on control of the resources of other organisations, or responsibility for their statutory duties.

Lead organisations for particular events / outcomes can be identified from the table at **Annex D**, or where this is not specific enough, from consideration of which organisation has the key role to play in the particular incident. In cases where it is not possible to identify a lead organisation, the local district council (in the case of localised, defined boundary incidents) or OFMDFM (in the case of emergencies requiring a government strategic response) may advise on a lead department or facilitate co-ordination.

## CHAPTER 4

### MANAGING CIVIL PROTECTION POLICY AND PRACTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

- 4.1. In order to provide an effective 'seamless' service in the event of a large-scale emergency, public service organisations have to share a common policy and practice framework for civil protection, which allows the activities of organisations to be co-ordinated but which still provides sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of the very wide range of organisations involved in delivering public services. However, policy cannot be set in stone. It must be responsive to changes in the system of government in Northern Ireland, changes in the expectations of the public and their elected representatives, and changes in local and world social, economic and political environments. It must also be able to learn from experience and be capable of application to actual situations.
- 4.2. Northern Ireland therefore needs mechanisms, which enable civil protection policy to be reviewed, discussed and amended in the light of a changing environment and experience of implementing arrangements in both exercises and real emergencies. These structures should involve as wide a range of organisations as possible, while still remaining compact enough for strategic policy making to be effective.

#### The Civil Contingencies Policy Branch

- 4.3. The aim of the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) is to promote the development of Civil Protection within the public sector, thereby contributing to ensuring the efficient and effective operation of all institutions of government. It seeks to do this by providing information and expertise to planners within organisations and by facilitating the co-ordination of planning between organisations through formal committee structures, informal meetings and discussions. It also represents Northern Ireland interests in policy discussions at national and international level. The CCPB is located within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM). Its customers are primarily the government

departments and agencies but the emergency services and other public service bodies are also involved.

### **The Civil Contingencies Group (NI)**

- 4.4. The Civil Contingencies Group (NI) (CCG (NI)) is an official level group, which is the forum for the development of links between organisations and the development, discussions and agreement of Civil Protection policy for the Northern Ireland Public Services.
- 4.5. The CCG (NI) will meet on a regular basis to review strategic issues arising. The frequency and timing of regular meetings will depend on the strategic issues to be discussed. CCG (NI) may also establish sub-groups or working groups to deal with development of policy and good practice guidance on particular topics or areas of concern.
- 4.6. In addition to its policy role the CCG (NI) has a role within NICCMA where strategic multi-agency co-ordination is required for Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies. For more information see para 4.13.
- 4.7. The terms of reference for the CCG (NI) include:
  - periodic review of Civil Protection policy in Government departments and public bodies in Northern Ireland, as appropriate, and seeking/gaining agreement on policy principles and standards;
  - maintenance of liaison between Government departments, the emergency services and other key public service bodies and district councils;
  - dissemination of information to and within member organisations on Civil Protection policy, current issues and risks and the response required to particular emergency situations;

- collection and collation of information necessary to inform policy development or the response to emergencies and to provide briefing on particular issues or emergencies;
- the facility to establish standing or ad hoc sub-groups or working groups to develop policy for, or report on, particular issues or functions; and
- as part of the NICCMA discussion and co-ordination of non-emergency service responses to emergencies which require a multi-agency strategic approach but which do not require the active involvement of Permanent Secretaries or Ministers.

4.8 The Group is chaired by the Director of Corporate Services in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) (within which the CCPB is placed).

Members represent:

- CCPB;
- 12 Northern Ireland Departments;
- Northern Ireland Office (NIO);
- Executive Information Service (EIS);
- Food Standards Agency Northern Ireland;
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG);
- PSNI Service of Northern Ireland;
- NI Fire & Rescue Service;
- NI Ambulance Service; and
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

4.9. Member organisations nominate a senior member of staff (approximately Grade 5 equivalent) with a direct responsibility for emergency management as their representative.

4.10. When an emergency occurs which requires multi-agency strategic co-ordination i.e. a Level 2 or Level 3 emergency, a number of other groups can be formed as part of the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Arrangements (NICCMA). Structures within the NICCMA include:

### **Crisis Management Group**

4.11. Within the NICCMA, the Crisis Management Group (CMG) is a top-level strategic co-ordination group for NI. Membership may be at ministerial or top management level, depending on the issues it raises. CCPB can arrange for appropriate elements of the NICCMA to meet on receipt of a request from the lead department or another concerned organisation where an emergency or potential emergency requires a multi-agency response. If the severity of the incident requires the immediate attention and involvement of Permanent Secretaries and Ministers a CMG meeting may be called.(Paras 6.45 - 6.49 and **Annex D** refer).

### **Role of CMG within the NICCMA**

4.12. The role of CMG within the NICCMA would include:

- Directing and co-ordinating the efforts of NI departments in responding to the emergency.
- Assessing the wider impacts of events and decisions on infrastructure, systems and people.
- Identifying (from the start of the response) the key issues for consequence management and long-term recovery.
- Deciding on the relative priorities to be attached to the management of the various elements of the overarching response.
- Establishing the strategic direction of the co-ordinated public information policy.



## **Role of CCG(NI) within the NICCMA**

4.13. The Civil Contingencies Group (NI), (CCG(NI)) discharges the strategic central co-ordination function during emergency situations when CMG has not been convened, but otherwise works in support of CMG to co-ordinate the response across the NI departments and other organisations such as the emergency services and district councils, in line with the strategic direction set by CMG. In particular this will involve:

- Commissioning the Central Operations Room to seek assessments and updates of action from each member organisation.
- Identifying the priorities and interdependencies to be addressed and the actions required by member organisations.
- Establishing working groups to deal with interdependencies or cross-cutting issues.

4.14. It would be the responsibility of each member organisation involved in the NICCMA groups to brief its own staff, management and Minister on the situation and the response which they were making. OFMDFM would keep the First Minister and deputy First Minister informed and would arrange for other appropriate bodies such as the OFMDFM Committee to be informed of developments as necessary. Other departments would similarly make arrangements for relevant bodies to be briefed.

4.15. All arrangements would be flexible and could be adapted to suit the situation. For example, membership of the NICCMA groups could change as a situation developed, and working groups could be formed to consider specific issues and report back. The NICCMA arrangements would be stood down once co-ordination at this level was no longer required but a group of those organisations which were involved may continue to meet for a period to undertake a review and agree lessons learned and actions for future planning.

### **Central Operations Room (COR) within the NICCMA**

4.16. The Central Operations Room (COR) controls the flow of information into and out of CMG and CCG(NI). Its role is to:

- Commission and collate situation reports from the NI departments and other key organisations and pass these to CMG and CCG (NI).
- Provide reports and assessments on behalf of CMG and CCG(NI) to the Cabinet Office, the Northern Ireland Office, NI departments and other key organisations.
- Facilitate liaison between responders on specific issues.

4.17. The COR function is discharged by Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) staff, augmented as necessary with staff from OFMDFM.

### **UK arrangements**

4.18. The **Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS)** is responsible for civil protection policy development and co-ordination in England and Wales and for UK-wide policy, where it is required. It also provides the secretariat to a range of official and ministerial committees that determine UK civil protection policy and which would meet to discuss strategic policy in an emergency with widespread effects. In any emergency affecting both Northern Ireland and England and Wales, the CCPB and CCS would work closely together, and Northern Ireland would be represented as appropriate on any UK level committees.

## CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

### MANAGING CIVIL PROTECTION POLICY AND PRACTICE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Preparing for and managing large-scale emergencies requires there to be a structures in place to ensure that organisations work together with a common understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The aim of the **Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB)** is to promote the effective development of civil protection in the public sector.

**The Civil Contingencies Group (NI) (CCG (NI))** is a forum for the agreement and co-ordination of emergency planning policy. It is chaired by OFMDFM and draws its membership from the emergency services, government departments, agencies, NDPB's and district councils.

In very large emergencies with widespread effects or implications, central government strategic management may be needed. When it is clear that strategic inter-agency co-ordination is required within central government, the **Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA)** would be involved. Further details of CCG (NI) and CMG arrangements can be found at **Annex D**.

In an emergency, or potential emergency, which is likely to involve a number of government departments and other organisations, the CCPB may set up a **Central Operations Room (COR)** to collect and collate information for NICCMA strategic groups and for OFMDFM officials and Ministers.

The **Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat** has oversight of UK-wide policy arrangements and for helping in the co-ordination of the UK response to a very large emergency affecting the country, through its secretariat role for Ministerial Committees with oversight of civil protection policy in the UK.

## CHAPTER 5

### ROLES OF NORTHERN IRELAND ORGANISATIONS

5.1. This Chapter considers in more detail the roles of Northern Ireland public service organisations in large-scale emergencies. It is, however, only a summary, and cannot cover all the roles of all organisations.

#### The Emergency Services

##### **Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)**

5.2. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has the overall responsibility to co-ordinate and manage the response to an emergency where there is danger to life, damage to property or the environment, or a possibility that a crime has been committed. Its role will include any or all of the following:

- saving of life in conjunction with the other emergency services;
- co-ordination of the other emergency services and other subsidiary organisations;
- control of access to /egress from the site and the protection and preservation of the scene;
- evacuation procedures, if necessary, in conjunction with the other emergency services, government departments and social services;
- the investigation of the incident, in conjunction with other investigative bodies, where applicable;
- the collation and dissemination of casualty information. Identification of victims on behalf of the Coroner, who is the principal investigator when fatalities are involved;
- restoration of normality at the earliest opportunity; and
- traffic control.

- 5.3. The co-ordination role is most evident where the incident is confined to a defined site or sites. The PSNI will normally establish cordons to ensure public safety and to control access to the incident site. It will also instigate incident management arrangements which will include liaison with the other emergency services and organisations involved in the response.
- 5.4. In emergencies where no crime has been committed (at least in NI) and where the emergency services are not directly involved in the response, the role is to maintain law and order as in normal circumstances.

### **The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)**

- 5.5. The Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) responds to fires, chemical accidents and incidents such as road traffic accidents where specialist equipment is needed to save life. Its primary roles are:
- saving life and preventing the loss of life;
  - extrication of trapped casualties;
  - preventing further escalation of an incident by tackling fires, dealing with released chemicals etc;
  - information gathering and hazard assessment to give advice to the PSNI and enable them to advise on appropriate safety measures for the public and responders;
  - liaison with the PSNI regarding the provision of an inner cordon;
  - liaison with the Ambulance Service Incident Officer;
  - decontamination of people exposed to dangerous materials;
  - the safety of all personnel (where the fire and rescue services have primacy) involved in the rescue work within the designated inner cordon;
  - consideration of the effect the incident may have on the environment, and the action to be taken to minimise this in cooperation with the relevant Government Department or agency;

- Assisting the PSNI with recovery of the dead;
- participating in investigations as appropriate, and preparing reports and evidence for enquiries; and
- standby during non-emergency recovery phase to ensure continued safety at and surrounding the site if necessary.

5.6. In the direct vicinity of a fire or chemical spillage, the NIFRS would normally be the lead emergency service, controlling access to the immediate site and taking decisions on how the incident should be handled, in liaison with the PSNI and other sources of expertise.

5.7. The NIFRS will not necessarily respond to an incident where a fire or threat to life is not present or where there is no one trapped and where no chemicals are involved in the incident. The NIFRS has limited resources and they need to be available at all times for situations where lives are at risk.

### **The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)**

5.8. The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) is the primary source of front line care for people injured in an incident. The emphasis is on stabilising patients, beginning treatment where necessary and transporting them to the most appropriate hospital. Where casualties are few this might mean a relatively straightforward transfer to hospital, but in incidents involving multiple casualties, the ambulance service would co-ordinate a complex system involving immediate care, casualty clearing stations, paramedical and medical response teams, hospital bed and specialist facility identification and provision of transport. This would be under the control of an Ambulance Incident Officer, in co-operation, where necessary, with a Medical Incident Officer.

5.9. The Ambulance Incident Officer would co-operate with the PSNI and NIFRS as appropriate to ensure safety of both responding staff and casualties.

## The UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)

- 5.10. **HM Coastguard** has the primary responsibility to initiate and co-ordinate civil maritime search and rescue (SAR) within the UK Search and Rescue Region. HMCG has its Northern Ireland Headquarters in Bregenz House, Bangor, Co. Down. This Marine Rescue Sub Centre (MRSC) operates a 24-hour 7day service and uses the latest communications technology to respond to maritime incidents. These are heard of via the 999 service, over maritime radio, or through automated distress alerting equipment. MRSC Belfast initiates and co-ordinates response to maritime emergencies in NI coastal waters and out into the Atlantic, and in the inland waters of Lough Erne and Lough Neagh. It co-ordinates the tasking of helicopters and mountain and cave rescue teams throughout the Province, calls on the services of it's Coast Rescue Teams for coastal searches and mud and cliff rescues, and also tasks and co-ordinates the on-scene activities of the RNLI, Royal Navy, commercial shipping, pleasure craft and SAR aircraft from a variety of sources.
- 5.11. HMCG liaises closely with other marine rescue centres in GB and Ireland as appropriate to an incident, so as to make best use of available resources. It also liaises with the PSNI and other shore-based organisations to ensure a co-ordinated rescue effort.
- 5.12. The **Counter Pollution and Response** branch (CPR) of the MCA is responsible for responding to pollution from shipping and offshore installations. The CPR branch is regularly called upon to respond to a wide range of maritime incidents, and has developed a comprehensive response procedure to deal with any emergency at sea that causes, or threatens to cause, pollution. The CPR is based on a regional response with central operational, technical and scientific support. A Regional Operations Manager Counter Pollution and Salvage is based in each region, supported by scientists, mariners, cost recovery specialists and logistics support specialists in MCA HQ Southampton.

- 5.13. The **Survey and Inspection** branch of the MCA manages the UK Shipping Register and the technical surveying staff undertakes regular, detailed surveys of UK ships. They also inspect foreign registered ships visiting UK ports, and unsafe ships can be detained. The branch also provides certification and examination services for seafarers, and ensures they are qualified and competent to undertake their work in line with international standards.

### Departments, Agencies and Other Public Services.

#### Government departments

- 5.14. Departments have primary responsibility for setting policy on civil protection for themselves and their agencies, Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) etc.
- 5.15. Government departments have some responsibilities for immediate response to emergencies: the extent to which the core department is involved in delivering a direct emergency response varies from department to department. However, most departmental involvement in civil protection centres on:
- **Strategic actions to create or promote a safe society**, for example, through development of statutory safety requirements and codes of practice, monitoring and enforcement of safety standards, pursuing policies which take full account of safety considerations, for example in planning road systems, and providing an effective administrative, legislative and budgetary framework within which public and commercial service providers can undertake civil protection activities. The objective should be to produce a resilient society, which is resistant to disruption and able to cope with emergency events and recover quickly.
  - **Identifying situations which have implications for the safety of the public or the environment, or for the business of the organisation.** Departments should be aware of their own existing areas of vulnerability and of changes, for example, in legislation or in how a service is delivered, which would create new



risks or vulnerabilities. Departments should also be aware of circumstances, events or developments in the external environment, for example, local or world trade patterns or international political changes, which could have a detrimental effect on its operations, its associated areas of activity, or on Northern Ireland generally. Having identified such situations, the department should make strategic adjustments to counter the threat, and/or prepare emergency plans which would enable it to deal with any problems which do arise.

- **Putting in place appropriate civil protection frameworks**, including a coherent emergency management programme, sufficient resources, departmental co-ordination arrangements, liaison arrangements with associated agencies, NDPBs and other service providers, liaison arrangements with other organisations and arrangements for contributing to NI and UK civil protection policy-making processes.
- **Provision of essential services**. It is essential that partner organisations work together to plan for the maintenance of essential services and utilities (electricity, gas, oil, water etc). During an emergency or disruption to supply, departments will also be expected to have effective liaison, reporting and briefing arrangements in place for ministers, senior officials and others.
- **Business Continuity Planning**. Departments deliver services which are essential to the smooth working of government, business and society generally. Many of the most vulnerable people in society depend on services provided, directly or indirectly by departments. It is therefore important that departments are able to keep their business going through periods of potential disruption. Disruption may result from internal factors such as failure of IT systems or fire in an office building, or from external factors such as failure of essential services or inability of staff to travel to work. Disruption may also occur where the response which a department is making to an emergency situation reduces the staff or money available for normal business. Depending on circumstances, departments may have to prioritise the services which they provide and concentrate on the most critical ones during a period of disruption.

- **Planning their response to emergencies.** This will involve planning a response to emergencies in line with the principles of IEM and in co-operation with other responding services. It also includes planning, where applicable, to manage inter-agency co-ordination arrangements in line with lead responsibilities. The planning process should include consultation, training and exercises as set out in paragraphs above.
- **Providing support to the emergency services,** for example equipment, expertise, accommodation or specific services.
- **Responding directly to emergencies** where the emergency services are not involved and/ or where the emergency affects some element of the department's services or area of policy responsibility. This may include strategic management of the departmental response where the main operational responder is one of the department's agencies, NDPBs or even private sector utilities.
- **Providing medium-or long-term support to people, communities and environments** affected by emergencies, for example planning of medical and psychological support services, facilitating rebuilding of both the physical environment and communities and taking steps to address the causes of the emergency in order to prevent recurrences.
- **Providing information for senior officials, Ministers and other elected representatives,** to enable them to respond effectively to the situation.
- **Providing information, statements and opportunities for interviews to the media,** both as a means of informing the public of appropriate responses to the emergency and in order to meet demand for information on causes and outcomes of the emergency.

5.16. Many of these activities are an integral part of departments' roles and responsibilities or are closely related to functions which departments carry out on a routine basis. This indicates how deeply civil protection is embedded in the day-to-day work of departments. More information on how civil protection should be built

into business planning and management processes is available in the CCPB documents 'Northern Ireland Standards in Civil Protection' and 'The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework', see Bibliography, **Annex B**.

### **Representational Role in the Civil Contingencies Group (NI) and the NICCMA**

5.17. Departments participate in central policy and response co-ordination arrangements through the CCG (NI) and the NICCMA as necessary. In order to keep committees to a manageable size, it is necessary in most cases for departments to represent the interests of associated organisations. Departmental emergency planning arrangements should include mechanisms for consultation and information sharing in order to ensure that business units, agencies and NDPBs are fully involved. Where the service provided to the public by a department is mainly delivered by agencies, NDPBs, district councils etc, memoranda of understanding, licensing conditions or contracts should include specific arrangements for emergency planning and stipulate what level of planning and response would be expected.

### **Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), District Councils and similar public service organisations**

5.18. Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs), district councils and similar public service organisations deliver services within a statutory and budgetary framework set by departments. The relationship of these organisations to their parent department varies greatly: some are closely associated with the core of the department, others operate almost independently under a Chief Executive or a government-appointed Chairperson and Board. Most deliver services to the public, to businesses or to other public service organisations, and as such would be in the front line of emergency response.

5.19. The responsibilities of Agencies, NDPBs, district councils etc in civil protection mirror the responsibilities of departments, but are more tightly focussed on their particular area of operation (whether geographical or functional areas), and tend to

involve a greater emphasis on operational delivery of an emergency response.

Civil protection activities would include:

- where appropriate, **creating and maintaining a statutory framework** which encourages safety and resilience;
- **monitoring** the particular areas of responsibility and expertise of the organisation, and the environment in which it operates, for existing and new risks and vulnerabilities, and taking action to ensure that appropriate risk reduction and mitigation measures are taken and emergency responses planned;
- **allocating appropriate resources** to civil protection, creating a civil protection programme, monitoring its progress and reporting as requested to the parent department;
- **Business Continuity Planning**, to ensure that services, whether direct to the public or to other organisations, can be maintained through periods of disruption, and quickly restored when interrupted;
- **planning in partnership** with other organisations with common interests (eg all Education and Library Boards), or with parent departments, to reduce risk, increase resilience and prepare emergency response and business continuity plans;
- **responding to emergencies**, whether directly where the emergency involves services or responsibilities of the organisation or in support of another organisation;
- where appropriate, **taking the lead in co-ordinating the inter-agency response to emergencies** or contributing to departmental lead arrangements;
- **preparing and implementing programmes** for long-term support of individuals, communities and environments affected by the emergency; and

- **preparing briefing** for senior management, parent departments, Ministers and other elected representatives and for the media, in co-operation with departments and lead organisations.

5.20. Some agencies, NDPBs etc have a much greater emergency response role than others. Here are a few examples:

### **Health and Welfare Services**

5.21. **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)** is required to maintain a state of readiness and build resilience to allow it to lead the response to health emergencies where they occur in, affect, or have the potential to affect, Northern Ireland. DHSSPS' role extends to supporting Health and Social Care (HSC) bodies in their planning, preparation and response to all types of emergencies arising from any accident, infectious epidemic, natural disaster, failure of utilities or systems, or hostile act that poses any threat to the health of the community.

5.22. Following the restructuring of the HSC sector on 1 April 2009 and the creation of new bodies, the newly created Public Health Agency (PHA), Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Business Support Organisation (BSO) each have new roles and responsibilities in relation to emergency preparedness.

5.23. The **Public Health Agency (PHA)** is responsible for responding to public health emergencies, which are defined as “any event that presents a serious threat or potential threat to the health of the population or local community” and includes chemical and biological emergencies. The PHA will:

- (i) provide robust local arrangements 24/7 that include an early assessment of the actual or likely impact the incident may have on public health and public safety;

- (ii) ensure that an effective ongoing public health response / advice is provided to chemical contamination or other pollution incidents, which would impact upon the health of the population; and
- (iii) facilitate the long-term monitoring and follow-up of exposed patients and responders as appropriate.

**5.24. HSC Trusts will**

- (i) liaise and cooperate with other key HSC staff, agencies (including district councils), designated voluntary organisations and the emergency services to ensure an integrated response to major incidents and follow-up support with long term counselling where required;
- (ii) provide an out-of-hours contact and 'on-call' service;
- (iii) liaise with the NIAS to receive casualties from the incident requiring further medical assessment and treatment; and
- (iv) provide decontamination of casualties who arrive independently of NIAS (self referrals).

5.25. Each HSC Trust and front line health and social care provider is required to have comprehensive, robust and flexible plans to address any major incident or emergency situation. Where two or more Trust areas are affected, the PHA and HSCB (supported by BSO) will coordinate the response.

**Major industrial hazards**

5.26. The potential for large industrial sites, in particular those using or storing particular chemicals, to experience emergency events resulting in injury to staff or the local population and/or damage to the environment has been recognised. The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001, require that on-and off-site plans be prepared for certain such sites. DETI through the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI) and the DOE NIEA are jointly responsible

for ensuring that the Regulations are implemented and that appropriate arrangements are in place to protect staff, the community and the environment in the event of an accident involving hazardous materials at these sites. In addition, the HSENI and the Department of Environment are jointly responsible for co-ordinating the production of plans for the off-site response to an accident.

## **Flooding**

5.27. Flooding involves a number of agencies depending on the exact cause. The Rivers Agency, NI Water and Roads Service co-ordinate their emergency plans for flooding through the inter-agency flood liaison group and would work together as necessary to respond to flooding incidents.

## **Damage to domestic property and homelessness**

5.28. If an emergency has caused substantial damage to domestic properties, for example if a severe storm has damaged or removed the roofs of homes, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has a responsibility to carry out repairs to its own properties, and may also offer emergency safety and weatherproofing repairs to private landlords and owner/occupiers. Anyone made homeless by such an emergency must be provided with accommodation by the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive, in association with Health and Social Care Trusts, provides a homelessness service 24 hours a day. It is also able to call on its own technical staff and contractors to carry out emergency repairs at short notice.

## **District Councils**

5.29. District councils provide a number of services to their local communities and have a particular position of leadership in their communities. The ways in which district councils may contribute to emergency response include:

- Provision of district council Services in response to the emergency situation, and continued provision of other Council services at appropriate levels;

- Co-ordination of the local response, where appropriate, by the Chief Executive – in most situations this would be discussed with the PSNI, which would have the initial co-ordination role in major incidents; and
- Co-operation with other organisations involved in providing an emergency response, for example by providing buildings, staff, advice or equipment when a situation has gone beyond normal experience and exceeded the capacity of organisations to deal with a situation within their own resources.

5.30. **The role of district councils in emergency planning is a developing one, and organisations should engage at local level with the Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) when preparing their emergency plans.** LGEMG is a strategic planning committee, with membership drawn from district councils, the Local Government Staff Commission, the Local Government Division of the Department of the Environment, the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch and other involved organisations. It is a forum for development of policy on the involvement of district councils in emergency planning and response, and co-ordination of district council activities to ensure an appropriate degree of standardisation of approach. In pursuit of its objectives, LGEMG has developed a template emergency plan for district councils and has an ongoing programme of training events and production of guidance and consultation papers.

## Utilities

5.31. The utilities are industries, which provide the essentials of life such as electricity, gas, oil and petrol, telecommunications, water and sewage treatment and disposal. Extensive or prolonged failure of any of the main utilities would in itself constitute a major emergency, depriving the population of the means of heat, light, or emergency communications or threatening supplies of drinking water and safe disposal of sewage. In addition, the provision of an effective response to an emergency often depends on the availability of power and communications facilities, and in some cases enhancement of services. Providers of essential services should work through their lead department to ensure that up to date emergency plans are



in place to cope with any disruption. They should ensure that plans are regularly revised and tested and that effective liaison, reporting and communication channels with departments are in place.

- 5.32. Because of the very extensive supply networks that the utilities operate, their services are particularly vulnerable to disruption. Consequently, the utilities, whether publicly or privately owned, tend to be proactive in planning to prevent disruption and minimise the effects of emergencies, and have a significant emergency response capability. Organisations that depend on the availability of normal or additional services from the utilities in an emergency should ensure that they have proper contracts with them, specifying what level of service will be provided. Organisations should also have adequate emergency backup facilities where these are assessed to be necessary.

### **Voluntary organisations**

- 5.33. Voluntary organisations can contribute in many ways to an emergency response. Some organisations, such as St John Ambulance, the British Red Cross and the Salvation Army have emergency response as one of their core activities. Others have resources which should be called upon in an emergency. Where public service organisations wish to use the services of voluntary agencies as part of their response to a major emergency, the nature and level of the voluntary organisations' contribution, how the arrangements would be activated and when, and what management arrangements would operate should be specified and written into plans. Opportunity should be given to volunteers to train and exercise along with the full-time staff whom they would be supporting. Activities where volunteers can fulfil an important function include:

- **welfare activities** – assisting at rest centres, providing food and dry clothing and helping people complete claim forms;
- **social and psychological aftercare** – befriending and welfare support;

- **medical support** – providing back-up ambulance services, first aid, and hospital patient services;
- **search and rescue** – mountain, cave, coastal, marine and inland waterway services; and
- **communications** – providing radio operators, messengers or translators as a backup to the conventional communications methods.

5.34. Other possible sources of help to public service organisations are listed at **Annex E**.

### **Industry and commercial organisations**

5.35. Industry and commercial organisations may have a direct and front-line part to play in delivering the response to an emergency. This is especially the case where a company's operations or products are directly involved in the emergency and the company can provide expertise and trained manpower to deal with problems. The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001 place specific responsibilities for safety and on-site emergency planning on certain companies storing or using dangerous chemicals.

5.36. Some public services, such as domiciliary care, have been contracted out to private firms and where this happens the public agency with the statutory responsibility for the service should identify what service levels should be maintained or what emergency response may be required from the commercial service provider and ensure that necessary provisions are written into contracts. The same would be the case where services which may be required to support an emergency response (catering, plant maintenance, waste management) have been contracted out.

5.37. A number of commercial companies have developed professional expertise in emergency planning. These include companies which promote and stage major public events such as sporting fixtures and pop concerts, law firms which specialise in legal actions following an emergency, and research and training organisations

which market their products to the emergency services and other emergency response providers.

## **CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY**

### **ROLES OF NORTHERN IRELAND ORGANISATIONS**

A large number and range of organisations contribute to the response to emergencies in Northern Ireland. These include:

#### **The Emergency Services**

- Police Service of Northern Ireland;
- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service;
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service;
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency; and
- Frontline services provided by Health Care Bodies.

#### **Departments, agencies and other public services**

- Government Departments;
- Agencies, Non-Departmental Public Bodies, and similar public service organisations;  
and
- District Councils.

#### **Utilities**

Industry and commercial organisations

#### **Voluntary Organisations**

## CHAPTER 6

### VERY LARGE-SCALE EMERGENCIES: CHALLENGES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

- 6.1. The scale of event or incident which constitutes a major incident or emergency will vary from organisation to organisation, as an organisation's ability to deal with emergencies will depend to a large extent on the degree to which emergency response is part of its everyday responsibilities. Those organisations with most experience of emergencies will normally have better-developed and more practised responses than organisations with more routine responsibilities, and thus will be able to cope with larger responses within their normal procedures and resources. This means that what constitutes an emergency for one responding organisation might be regarded as a routine process for another responder.
- 6.2. In general, any situation where the emergency services are responding and have implemented major incident procedures will probably require other responders to implement their emergency plans also. However, when the emergency services decide that it is not necessary to implement their own emergency plans, either because the situation does not primarily require an emergency services response or because the situation is of a scale which they can cope within their day-to-day resources, the non-emergency public services may well have to implement their emergency plans.
- 6.3. Whatever the capacity of an organisation, large-scale emergencies happen very rarely, and even the emergency services do not use their major incident plans very often. Even when organisations have prepared plans, trained staff and held exercises, responding to very large-scale emergencies presents a considerable challenge, and can stretch public service organisations to the limit. However, by being aware of the potential challenges, and making arrangements to meet them, organisations can greatly increase the effectiveness of their response.

## Challenges of large-scale emergencies

6.4. When compared with day-to-day incidents and minor emergencies, large-scale emergencies generally require a larger commitment of resources over a longer period of time.

The problems of increased scale and duration of response include:

- finding sufficient staff and equipment, including personal safety equipment;
- overload of communications systems;
- poor information flow and communication co-ordination between responders;
- a need to provide identification and safety equipment for responders;
- the provision of food and other welfare needs to operational staff and tactical and strategic management teams;
- the organisation of shifts and rotas;
- a need for hand-over and briefing arrangements to ensure continuity;
- setting up administrative procedures for maintenance of incident logs;
- document handling and financial management;
- special media management arrangements; and
- new intra-and inter-organisational management requirements.

## Staffing and equipment

6.5. The maintenance of a large-scale response over a prolonged period places an enormous strain on organisations. Emergency responses often require special operational or management skills and experience. People with such skills and experience are usually thinly spread in an organisation. Sometimes, it may be possible to borrow staff with suitable skills from other organisations. For example, if Roads Service needs extra qualified chain saw operators to clear roads of fallen trees, it may be able to get help from staff from the Forest Service or agricultural or

forestry contractors. Problems may arise, however, in widespread emergencies with a range of outcomes, when organisations all need to call on their own specialist staff and have no spare capacity to lend to others. This is where inter-agency tactical or strategic level management is useful to agree priorities for the use of what staff and skills are available.

- 6.6. Experienced emergency managers may be harder to find than staff with particular operational skills. Normally, a manager needs to know how an organisation works, and to have good internal contacts on a day-to-day basis in order to be effective in managing an emergency response. This makes it very difficult to 'borrow' suitable management staff. As part of its civil protection programme, therefore, an organisation may identify a need to build up the emergency management confidence and skills of its management team through awareness-raising sessions, training and exercises.
- 6.7. Responding to emergencies can absorb a lot of equipment and stores. In the example of chain saw operators given above, the limiting factor may well be availability of suitable chainsaws rather than lack of operators. An emergency involving a large number of people in poor weather, for example at a out-door concert, can require the immediate supply of a large number of conventional or foil blankets to provide comfort and avoid hypothermia.
- 6.8. In many cases it may not be cost-effective to stockpile equipment, in which case arrangements should be made in advance for equipment to be borrowed, hired or bought at short notice. However, organisations should be sure that they could obtain the necessary quantities of equipment within the timescale in which it will be needed. **The development of 'just in time' supply systems may mean that there are simply not enough stocks readily available to meet projected need.** Because of this, organisations may want to re-consider whether stocks of equipment which would be vital for protecting life or the environment need to be built up and held in reserve in a way which was not necessary a few years ago.

Equipment held in store for emergency use should be kept serviced and available, and perishable stores should be replaced at appropriate intervals.

### Communications and information flow

- 6.9. Any large-scale emergency, especially if it results from a sudden catastrophic event such as a plane crash, will begin in chaos. One of the first priorities of the professional emergency responders will be to assess accurately the extent of the incident and to arrange for the appropriate number and type of resources to be mobilised. In order to do this, and to mount an ordered response, a great deal of information needs to be passed between on-site responders and their control rooms and between different organisations, both on-site and at management level. This information is often very important in ensuring that responders approach an incident scene in a safe manner and are properly equipped for the situation which they find.
- 6.10. One factor common to most post-incident reports on major emergencies is that communications were in some way inadequate. This may have been because of failures in equipment (flat radio or mobile phone batteries, areas of poor reception, damage to telecommunications equipment as a result of the incident) or in procedures and protocols (no-one told us, the information came too late, the information went to the wrong person).
- 6.11. **All organisations should consider, as part of their emergency planning process, whether their communications systems are sufficiently robust to handle the demands of a major emergency.** Where close working is needed with other organisations, agreement should be reached, preferably at the planning stage, as to what information needs to be passed, how, to whom, and when. Communications arrangements should be tested regularly as part of the organisation's exercise programmes.
- 6.12. Communications systems with sufficient flexibility to continue to function under extreme conditions are expensive to set up and maintain. The extent to which



investment must be made will depend on an assessment of the cost of communication failures to an organisation, not just in financial terms but also in terms of the damage to the quality of response.

- 6.13. Frequently, problems with communication arise not because of technical difficulties but because of out-of-date contact lists, poor message handling and inappropriate use of jargon. All organisations should, as part of their emergency planning programme, identify those with whom they would have to communicate in an emergency situation and ensure that adequate contacts are made and maintained. It is often useful to list contacts in terms of posts and responsibilities, rather than just by name, but even so, contact lists should be updated regularly, and should be reinforced by regular personal contacts between representatives of the organisations, for example, at exercises and training events.
- 6.14. Each organisation has its own set of specialist terms, abbreviations, acronyms and other jargon, which are not necessarily understood by others. Some words are even used differently by different organisations. For example, a casualty to an NIAS paramedic is someone who has been injured in an incident, but to a Coastguard officer a casualty is a ship in trouble. Emergency situations put people under pressure and they may forget that not everyone understands their particular jargon. The ideal, of course, is that communications should be unambiguous and free from jargon, but given that emergency responses often require quite specialist input, this is not always possible. It is important that plans clearly define how particular terms are used and that training includes sharing the meaning of essential jargon with other organisations. The Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat maintains a Lexicon of UK Civil Protection Terminology which establishes common, agreed definitions for terms used in multi-agency civil protection. Organisations are encouraged to cross-reference definitions given in their own documents to the Lexicon and to adapt the definition given in the Lexicon.

## Welfare and safety

- 6.15. **Organisations are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of their staff, even in emergency conditions.** Many staff who would not normally use protective equipment may need to do so in emergency conditions. For example, in an incident where dangerous chemicals have been spilled, staff treating casualties or clearing up afterwards may need protective clothing and even some form of breathing apparatus or mask. They not only need to be supplied with protective equipment, they may well need training in how to use it effectively. Emergencies which happen at night or in poor visibility may require staff to be provided with reflective or high-visibility clothing. The emergency services are all issued with such clothing as a matter of course, but other responders may not be.
- 6.16. Where particular hazards are present, staff may need to be logged into and out of a cordoned area, and may not be permitted to enter without appropriate safety equipment. This will normally be managed by the co-ordinating organisation, usually the PSNI or NIFRS, but managers of the staff concerned should also take steps to ensure their safety.
- 6.17. Health and safety extends to ensuring that proper arrangements are made for rotation of staff, breaks from work, refreshments and psychological support. In prolonged incidents, the arrangements for these are an important part of the role of the tactical management level. Members of tactical and strategic management teams will also need to be provided with physical and psychological support. Formal processes for helping individual staff to deal with their experiences (often referred to as 'debriefing' or 'defusing') should be offered, but should only be carried out by appropriately trained staff. Many organisations maintain contracts with professional organisations to provide this type of help and support to staff. Otherwise, organisational Occupational Health professionals or Health and Social Care Trusts may be able to advise.

- 6.18. In order to protect staff, victims and the integrity of a site where a crime may have been committed, emergency responders will all need to have an acceptable form of identification to present to the manager in charge of co-ordinating response activities. This is important not only at the immediate scene of an incident, but also at sites such as hospitals, rest centres and any inter-agency co-ordination centres. Identification may be in the form of official identity cards, or passes issued by the co-ordinating organisation. Where operational staff may have to work with responders from other organisations, they may need to have clear identification of their organisation and role on their uniforms or clothing (including protective and high-visibility clothing).

### **Shifts, continuity and record keeping**

- 6.19. **A response which extends over days, weeks or months, sometimes 24 hours a day, cannot be sustained by a single team of people.** Staff at all levels will need breaks and so must have colleagues and deputies who can share their responsibilities. This means that more than one person should be trained in each response and management role envisaged by an organisation's emergency plans. Staff should work in shifts to ensure that everyone gets adequate rest and a chance to get away from the intensity of the emergency response. The length of shifts will vary according to the type of work being undertaken. Administrative staff may be able to work for 8-10 hours in an emergency, but operational personnel working in difficult and dangerous circumstances may need to change shifts every 20 minutes. Some work, for example dealing with relatives of people missing or killed, is emotionally rather than physically difficult, and the needs of staff engaged in this type of work also need to be considered.
- 6.20. If there are to be shift changes, organisations will need systems for ensuring that incoming shift staff and those covering for others can be briefed about the situation. Depending on the level at which staff are working they may require information on the progress of the response, any hazards, actions in hand, possible future problems and policy decisions made or to be made. Briefing systems can vary from

whiteboards which are regularly updated with key information, through verbal presentations, to written situation reports and briefings. The aim should be to ensure that new staff could quickly grasp what is happening, what issues are current and what needs to be done.

- 6.21. Inter-agency co-ordination meetings will normally start with an update of events. Individual organisations will need to have prepared briefings on their own aspects of the response for the meeting and after the meeting should disseminate consolidated briefing to management and responders so that they are able to gain an overview of the situation.
- 6.22. The core source from which briefing can be prepared is the incident log. This is a record kept by each participating organisation of events, messages passing within the organisation and between it and other organisations, decisions taken (and why) and information and instructions issued. The lead organisation will keep not only its own record, but also a record of decisions and actions taken collectively as part of the co-ordinated response.
- 6.23. Maintaining a comprehensive log is a difficult process, not least because it is something which most organisations do not do on a day-to-day basis. Planning for emergencies should therefore include planning to maintain and manage a log. A number of staff will probably be required to do this and all should be trained in what to do and given the opportunity to practice.
- 6.24. Keeping a log also entails managing the flow of communications into, around and out of an organisation. Verbal, written and electronic communications all need to be recorded and tracked. It is important that messages can be traced and there is some check maintained to ensure that they reach the correct person in a timely way and that any actions required are carried out. The emergency services generally use electronic logs, and have procedures for passing all communications through a nominated officer. Other organisations which may not use logging procedures very often may find that paper-based systems are easier.

- 6.25. Both logs and records of individual messages, discussions, decisions, instructions and actions need to be kept and stored securely but accessibly. In the short term they can be used to prepare briefing and, in due course, provide material for discussion at any debrief. In the longer term they may be needed to justify expenditure and bid for additional funds, report to regulators, Assembly Committees or the NI Audit Office and be produced for any inquiry, investigation or legal action which may follow the emergency. No records, no matter how informal, should be destroyed. Electronic records of e-mails, documents and personal notes should be kept as securely as paper documents. Where an organisation has a system for destruction of paper or electronic archives, records relating to an emergency response should be taken out of the system so that they are not accidentally destroyed.
- 6.26. All public service organisations are subject to tight financial controls, which may not be appropriate to an emergency situation. It might, for example, be necessary to spend money for which no budgetary cover exists or to enter into contracts without proper tendering procedures. Such possibilities should be explored as part of an organisation's emergency planning process and as far as possible understanding should be reached on what flexibility would be appropriate and what minimum accounting standards should apply. Whenever possible, decisions in respect of such an emergency should be taken at an appropriately senior level. In any case, financial considerations should not constrain an emergency response where lives are at risk or substantial damage to property, infrastructure or the environment is threatened.

### **Media management**

- 6.27. Large-scale emergencies of all kinds attract media attention. The sheer numbers of media representatives converging on the scene of an emergency, or on the organisations responding to an emergency can be overwhelming. In a world of highly competitive media outlets and 24-hour news broadcasting, the demand for information, analysis, response and action can place enormous additional strain on

responders and managers. Most organisations have press officers or staff with specific training in media relations whose job it would be to manage the media interest and involvement in large-emergencies. In all circumstances all contact with the media must come via the Press Office.

- 6.28. **Chapter 8** deals in greater detail with the arrangements that should be put in place to ensure that interactions with the media remain positive and helpful.

### **Managing the emergency response**

- 6.29. Given that it is impossible to prepare prescriptive response plans for every eventuality, and that plans need to be flexible, good management is critical to the effectiveness of emergency responses. Those public service organisations that have limited emergency response functions have generally a management structure which reflects the needs of day-to-day routine administration. This structure may not be particularly suited to, or practised in, management in a major emergency situation. Nevertheless in most cases it will have to be used, as it is what everyone is familiar with.
- 6.30. Emergency planning, training and exercising tends to concentrate on the immediate operational response to an emergency. While the need to ensure the effectiveness of services delivered to the public in times of emergency cannot be understated, there is also a need to make sure that this response is supported by the best possible management. It can happen that excellent work carried out by operational staff is undermined in the public consciousness because management failed to respond to the wider issues, the first response was not backed up by adequate recovery measures or communications failed between those affected by the emergency and management of responding organisations.
- 6.31. While the details of the operational response vary greatly depending on the emergency event, management structures for emergencies are fairly standard.

**Chapter 3** has already dealt with the principles of operational, tactical and strategic management. The paragraphs below consider how these principles can be applied to Northern Ireland public service organisations in large-scale emergencies.

### **Managing large-scale emergencies**

6.32. Outside of the emergency services, managers will normally have relatively little experience of managing an organisation during an emergency. They may, however, have had previous experience of the operational aspects of responding to emergencies or of delivering the sort of services required in an emergency situation. It is tempting therefore for them to jump in and start to get involved in the operational response. This may not do any harm in small emergencies, where the resources of the organisation are not stretched (though it may undermine lower-level management and hamper operational staff), but in a large-scale emergency the role of management is crucial in making sure that the response is properly equipped and resourced, that the health and safety of staff is ensured and that the longer-term and wider implications of the emergency are identified early on and a strategy put in place to address them.

6.33. The role of management, especially senior management, in an emergency should be:

- In advance of any emergency occurring:
  - **Make sure the organisation is prepared.** Senior managers across every public body in Northern Ireland who set the aims and objectives of the organisation should acknowledge the need to be prepared for an emergency and ensure that sufficient funding and priority is allocated to the emergency planning function.
  - **Monitor the environment in which the organisation works.** Management have information about how the organisation is functioning, what the pressures on it are, what is happening in the specialist or

professional organisations with which it works, and what legislation or policy decisions are in the pipeline. This can all be used to identify new or changing threats to the effective operation of the organisation, or likely sources of emergency events. By recognising and responding to such triggers, management can ensure that the organisation takes steps to reduce the risk of emergencies happening, increase the resilience of the organisation and its partners and ensure preparedness. Risk management is an integral part of corporate governance requirements and risk assessment in relation to emergency planning and business continuity should be part of core functions of a business.

- When an emergency happens:
  - **Stay out of the way of direct service providers.** A manager with little recent experience of operational response should not become involved with the service delivery in an emergency situation. Training and exercises should have reassured management that those delivering the direct service are competent to do so.
  - **Gather information.** As in day-to-day situations, a manager needs to know what is going on in their own organisation and in other organisations. This information should be used to both brief senior management/directors/chief Executives/Ministers and to ensure that information is provided to front line staff and the general public.
  - **Provide resources.** Those directly delivering a response will require adequate and timely resources. These may be physical, such as machinery, manpower or money; or organisational, such as authority to take decisions or commit their organisation to a particular course of action.



- **Think health and safety.** Operational staff may well be so engaged with the response that they do not think about health and safety issues and do not take regular breaks or time off. It is up to management to identify and deal with these issues and to ensure that staff have access to adequate equipment and rest.
  
  - **Think tactics and strategy.** Managers will be detached from the immediate response activities which will probably be overwhelming the operational personnel. They should therefore be focusing on tactical and strategic management issues required to support, and give direction to, the operational response. Tactical issues would include priorities, health and safety, maintaining the response through introduction of shift working patterns and financial management. Strategic issues would include the application of existing procedures and the need for new ones, mobilisation of resources at organisational level, likely long-term issues arising for the cause, outcome or response to the incident and briefing Ministers and the NI Executive.
  
  - **Participate in inter-agency co-ordination and management activities.** This may be through direct contact with management in other responding organisations or as part of inter-agency management groups at tactical or strategic level.
- When the immediate response is nearing an end:
    - **Manage the recovery phase.** Once an immediate emergency has been dealt with, the responsibility for managing the long-term recovery and reconstruction phase will fall to government departments, agencies NDPB's and district councils. It is important that this is done in a co-ordinated manner both within and between organisations.

- **Consider what changes need to be made to reduce risk and improve preparedness.** Lessons need to be learned, both in terms of how the emergency developed and how the organisation responded. Managers need to drive this process, through review of the factors which led to the emergency happening and debriefing processes which cover not only the organisation's operational response, but also its emergency management processes. Managers of lead organisations need to facilitate the debriefing of inter-agency aspects of the emergency.

### Structuring emergency management

- 6.34. Sometimes the day-to-day management systems of the non-emergency public services are not sufficient to meet the demands of a very large emergency, so it may be necessary to plan for special major incident management arrangements. Special arrangements may be required because of the extraordinary demands which an emergency places on an organisation and the need for intra- and inter-agency co-operation and direction on a scale which the day to day system of government in Northern Ireland does not allow for. As far as possible these special arrangements should relate to the requirements of Integrated Emergency Management, i.e. they should reflect regular working practices, and organisations should expand their regular functions to cover the emergency situation.
- 6.35. As set out in **Chapter 3**, organisations need to structure their emergency management arrangements into operational, tactical and strategic functions, and to deliver management and co-ordination functions at both intra-organisational and inter-organisational levels. Special arrangements may include the establishment of intra- organisational tactical and strategic management groups, the establishment of sub-groups to deal with specific issues or responses, the appointment and authorisation of representatives to inter-agency groups and the bringing together of representatives of core departments and responding agencies, NDPBs and other associated organisations.

## Delivering management within organisations

- 6.36. Within organisations, management systems for large-scale emergencies can be structured to fit in with the particular needs of the organisation.
- 6.37. For those organisations with direct service delivery responsibilities, **operational** management will normally fall to local managers where responses are being provided and these would focus on making best use of personnel and equipment in order to meet the needs of the situation.
- 6.38. **Tactical** level management within organisations may focus on supporting any organisational response, co-ordinating the activities of different parts of the organisation and providing information and briefing to senior management. During and/or in the aftermath of an emergency, there would normally be regular tactical management meetings where information could be brought together from across the organisation, and, where appropriate, associated agencies NDPBs etc, issues discussed, decisions taken and briefing for the press and senior management prepared. Between meetings, tactical management staff would liaise closely with operational managers and deal with issues arising within their own functional area.
- 6.39. **Strategic** level management would normally only be required in the most extreme circumstances. Those public service organisations that are tightly focussed on service delivery may only be able to deal with issues up to tactical level and may have to pass strategic issues to their parent organisations. Conversely, some organisations, such as government departments which deal purely with policy and finance, may only need to operate at strategic management level in order to take up and deal with aspects of an emergency situation which do not fall to any of their agencies because, for example, they involve national, policy and legislation issues. As with tactical management, strategic management would normally involve meetings of senior managers from across the organisation, and its related agencies, NDPBs etc, to consider specific strategic issues. The issues to be discussed may originate from UK strategic management arrangements such as the National

Security Council (Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies) (NSC (THRC)); from the NI Executive Minister; from the Chief Executive or other senior staff, from monitoring of the overall situation; from media sources; or from issues referred up by tactical managers because they could not be resolved at that level. Between meetings, strategic managers would stay in close touch with tactical managers whether inside the organisation or in related ones, deal with any strategic issues which did not need to be discussed at the management meetings and make arrangements to implement any decisions taken at meetings.

- 6.40. Strategic management meetings would normally be chaired by one of the most senior people in the organisation, up to Ministerial level. Meetings would normally be fewer and less frequent than at tactical level, and in some situations, especially where the issues involved were to do with long-term policy, recovery or risk reduction strategies may be able to be resolved by correspondence.

#### **Delivering inter-agency co-ordination and management**

- 6.41. Because organisations need to plan their management interactions in advance, there is less room for flexibility in inter-agency co-ordination arrangements.
- 6.42. In local level emergencies the lead emergency service, lead agency or district council would normally trigger multi-agency co-ordination through a sub-regional multi-agency response group as set out in the protocol for multi-agency co-ordination of local level response and recovery. Where the emergency services (first responders) do not clearly have a primary role in responding to an incident the response group would normally be convened by the relevant district council. However where the first responders have a primary role in the response, PSNI can convene the multi-agency response group. Where another emergency responder organisation eg Public Health Agency, would have more appropriately chair the multi-agency response group, this would be determined by agreement.

- 6.43. Where an emergency response is being co-ordinated at local level and a potential need for escalation has been identified by two or more relevant responding organisations, then Civil Contingencies Policy Branch or if more appropriate the lead government department, will convene an assessment group of key responders in line with the protocol for escalation of the multi-agency response. This group would determine whether the event requires escalation to multi-agency strategic level co-ordination either by the lead government department or by the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA).
- 6.44. When using local or strategic co-ordination arrangements, not all organisations will be involved in the response to the same extent and therefore different responders may activate their internal crisis management arrangements to a different level which reflects an appropriate response for them. Thus within the same emergency response some organisations may activate their internal strategic management arrangements while others activate an operational level response only. The most effective way to deliver inter-agency management is often through multi-agency co-ordination meetings. For such meetings organisational representations should be determined not only by that organisation's level of response but by the level of the co-ordination group and the authority required to participate effectively in the decision – making process. Some issues, particularly in slowly-developing emergencies, may be effectively co-ordinated by e-mail correspondence.

**Strategic Management: The Crisis Management Group (CMG)/ Civil Contingencies Group (NI) (CCG (NI))**

- 6.45. Inter-agency strategic co-ordination in very large scale (level 2 and 3) emergency would be delivered through the NICCMA which are detailed in **Chapter 4** and **Annex D**.
- 6.46. The purpose of the NICCMA would be to provide a corporate approach to strategic management and co-ordination in relation to the disaster response. Each organisation would continue to manage its own elements of the response, as

outlined above, but the NICCMA would enable resources to be shared and used to the best possible effect, future problems to be anticipated and solved and strategic priorities set for the overall response and recovery.

- 6.47. Where the issues to be dealt with were primarily the responsibility of the non-emergency public services, the NICCMA would operate as the primary strategic group, with the emergency services being involved as appropriate. However, where there were both emergency service and other public service interests to be taken account of, for example where a terrorist incident resulted in significant loss of life or damage to the infrastructure or environment, the NICCMA may operate in parallel with the strategic co-ordination group of the lead emergency service (normally PSNI).
- 6.48. If an emergency services strategic group was operating and the NICCMA was also established, there would be a representative of the NICCMA on the emergency services group and vice versa in order to facilitate effective sharing of information. The overall lead would normally initially lie with the lead emergency service and the NICCMA would support it and deal with management issues in relation to the consequences of the emergency event. At a point where the immediate emergency response had been substantially completed, responsibility for residual strategic co-ordination and management requirements may pass to the NICCMA. As the response and recovery processes progressed, the NICCMA may decide to continue to function as the forum for co-ordination and strategic management, or it may decide to pass responsibility to a lead organisation.
- 6.49. Where a large-scale emergency can be anticipated and it is clear from the outset that a very high level of strategic management and co-ordination would be required, the NICCMA may be triggered in advance to review departmental planning and agree management arrangements.

**Managing terrorist chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents**

6.50. Terrorist attacks, especially those involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials, have potential to create problems on a scale which exceeds that of any foreseeable natural or accidental emergency. Inter-agency management arrangements for such incidents would focus on both the PSNI strategic co-ordinating group (for the direct response to and investigation of the incident) and the NICCMA (for public service consequence management), but in addition would also require organisations to deliver specific functions, such as anti-terrorist actions (NIO), disease control or mass casualty handling (DHSSPS) or environmental protection (DOE).

## CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

### VERY LARGE SCALE EMERGENCIES

What constitutes a large-scale emergency will vary from organisation to organisation depending on resources and experience, and each organisation will have to decide for itself when it is appropriate to implement major incident or major emergency plans and procedures.

Very large emergencies require a response of a scale and duration not normally encountered. Problems arising from this include:

- finding sufficient staff and equipment, including personal safety equipment;
- overload of communications systems;
- poor information flow;
- a need to provide identification and safety equipment for responders;
- the provision of food and other welfare needs to operational staff and tactical and strategic management teams;
- the organisation of shifts and rotas;
- a need for hand-over and briefing arrangements to ensure continuity;
- setting up administrative procedures for maintenance of incident logs;
- document handling and financial management;
- special media management arrangements; and
- new intra-and inter-organisational management requirements;

Effective management of an organisational response to a very large emergency begins before the incident happens. The role of management in advance of, during, and after a large – scale emergency includes:



- make sure the organisation is prepared;
- monitor the environment in which the organisation works for signs of potential problems;
- stay out of the way of direct service providers;
- gather information;
- provide resources;
- think health and safety;
- think tactics and strategy;
- participate in inter-agency co-ordination and management activities;
- manage the recovery phase; and
- consider what changes need to be made to reduce risk and improve preparedness.

While management of emergencies should normally make use of existing management structures, the non-emergency public services sometimes need to make additional management arrangements when there are no adequate day-to-day arrangements.

Special arrangements should follow the pattern of operational, tactical and strategic management, depending on the needs of the situation and the role of the organisation.

Interagency co-ordination in strategic level emergencies will take place through the lead department and / or the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA).

Terrorist Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear incidents have potential to create problems on a scale greater than natural or accidental events. A number of different management and co-ordination mechanisms may be necessary in such circumstances.

## CHAPTER 7

### PEOPLE ISSUES

#### Behaviour of people in a crisis

- 7.1. It is a common misconception that people are going to panic in a crisis. Experience shows that unless the cause of the emergency is visible and obviously threatening, it is very difficult to get people to take appropriate action. There is a very strong tendency to underestimate the seriousness of the situation, and the dominant emotion is often curiosity, which brings people towards the source of the danger.
  
- 7.2. This myth about panic can lead those managing an incident into reluctance to release detailed information or to take decisive action “in case people panic”. In reality, a lack of information forces people to try to find out things for themselves, or convinces them that the authorities are trying to hide something terrible from them. This leads to people taking inappropriate actions and can in itself lead to panic. It is therefore important that plans include ways of communicating with people involved early in an emergency, so that they have the necessary information to protect themselves and their families.
  
- 7.3. Even when there is an obvious need to take action in an emergency, people often behave in an apparently inappropriate manner: using main exits from a burning building and ignoring more convenient fire doors or collecting luggage from overhead lockers before making an emergency evacuation of a plane. This can be because there is a strong tendency to follow normal behaviour patterns even in abnormal situations. Training and practice not only test the effectiveness of emergency procedures, but they condition people to making a proper emergency response. Fire drills and safety briefings are examples of the sort of training which can increase the probability of people making an appropriate response to an emergency.

- 7.4. People who have previous experience of being caught up in a similar incident are more likely to react quickly and appropriately, but people who have been through a number of false alarms will often be very hard to convince of the need for urgent action.
- 7.5. Anxiety and panic are most likely to happen where families become separated. Plans should give priority to re-uniting families or providing authoritative information on the whereabouts of evacuees and casualties. This will reduce stress among those caught up in an emergency and ensure that people searching for missing relatives does not hinder operational responses. Anxiety and stress also arise from a lack of information, false information and partial information. Often in emergencies there is a genuine lack of good-quality information and good reasons why what information there is cannot immediately be made public. Nevertheless, all organisations should be aware of the overwhelming need which people in an emergency have for information on the fate of relatives and friends and should have co-ordinated plans for gathering and passing on this information in a managed manner.
- 7.6. When emergency plans are being made which involve managing people or providing a service to those involved in a major emergency, some thought needs to be given to how people can be expected to behave, what people will expect of the response and whether the plan will deliver the service which people really want. There is a good deal of research available, often, as studies of real incidents and their aftermath, and this should be taken account of by those preparing plans. The Humanitarian Assistance Unit of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has published 'Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies' which can be found at:  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hac\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hac_guidance.pdf)

## What people need

7.7. At a very early stage in an emergency there is a need to identify who is involved in, or affected by, the incident. For example:

- passengers in a transport accident and their friends and relatives who know that they were on a particular motorway/bus/train/aircraft/boat;
- people living in the vicinity of a fire or industrial accident;
- people whose workplaces, homes or entertainment centres are affected by floods, bombs or toxic substances;
- people who are suffering from, or have relatives or friends suffering from, a disease; and
- people whose livelihood has been threatened or destroyed by the emergency.

7.8. By identifying who is involved, decisions can be taken on how the operational response is to be carried out, what secondary arrangements (such as evacuation or health monitoring) are needed and how long-term recovery will be carried out.

7.9. In operational terms there may be need for:

- rescue from life threatening or difficult situations;
- emergency medical treatment;
- means of recording information on, and identifying, the injured and dead;
- advice on how to respond to the emergency;
- help to respond if the resources to do so are not immediately available;
- reassurance to people involved in a prolonged incident, that they have not been forgotten and that their interests are being looked after; and
- means of contacting friends and relatives and help in reuniting separated families.

7.10. Secondary help is normally provided by public service organisations and by those commercial companies which are directly involved in the incident (transport companies, owners of sites) or which provide a public service (telecommunications, electricity, catering). Help required can include:

- temporary accommodation and refreshments;
- practical help with funeral arrangements and hospital visiting;
- information on who is involved and what has happened to them;
- emergency financial support;
- clean, dry clothing;
- means of transport;
- help to contact relatives;
- accommodation for pets;
- replacement of lost or forgotten medicines;
- insurance claim forms and help to complete them;
- social security advice and claim assistance;
- advice on dealing with damaged and potentially dangerous homes or commercial property;
- first Aid for shock and minor ailments not immediately identified;
- activity and entertainment, especially for children, as a distraction from waiting and worrying; and
- special support for the old, frail, disabled and those with chronic illnesses.

7.11. Long term assistance required may include:

- re-housing, or special accommodation for those unable or unwilling to return home;
- infrastructure repairs and work to prevent re-occurrence of the event;

- monitoring of public health for long term psychological or physical effects;
- counselling and social support; and
- support for communities.

7.12. **Very early on in any incident, assessments need to be made as to what response is required, not only in the immediate operational sense but taking account of secondary assistance and long term needs.** It may be necessary to carry out primary rescue or evacuation tasks as a matter of priority, but the emergency services need to be able to hand people over to other professional support services, as they have neither the manpower, equipment or training to provide all of the secondary response. If the secondary services are not quickly in place the people involved will not receive the support which they need and would expect.

7.13. Those providing secondary services should therefore identify what would be their contribution in an emergency situation requiring secondary support and making sure that the emergency services, especially the PSNI, know what they will provide and how the response can be triggered.

7.14. It should not be supposed that everyone involved in an emergency will need exactly the same services, or that the services provided for one emergency will necessarily be appropriate or adequate for a similar emergency elsewhere. Where there is an immediate threat to people's safety, it will not always be possible to identify and meet individual needs, but where time is available, for example if there is pre-warning of the emergency, if it develops slowly, or in the recovery stages, organisations providing services to the public should make some assessment of the requirements of the community and individuals involved. There may be a particular need to make sure that any communications on personal safety issues are accessible to people with disabilities and to those for whom English is not a first language and to ensure that in an evacuation situation, some provision is made for

people with reduced mobility. Similarly, any accommodation which it is planned to use for evacuees, survivors or friends and relatives should have access and facilities for the disabled and should provide a variety of spaces for different groups or individuals.

**7.15. The effectiveness of long term support can be affected by decisions or actions taken in the early stages of an incident.** For example, monitoring of people for any long term health effects is possible only if records are made of everyone involved or affected by the incident, even those who showed no immediate symptoms and did not require any secondary support. There must be some means of contacting these people afterwards, so at least names and telephone numbers must be collected. This is especially important where the incident happens in a commercial or recreational setting where the affected population cannot be identified from the geographical location of the incident. The emergency services are unlikely to understand the need for actions that support long term monitoring and recovery strategies unless these have been previously discussed and planned for.

**7.16. Emergency responders will also need support, particularly where the response is prolonged or particularly harrowing.** Support required could include:

- refreshments at the response scene, especially to provide warmth or prevent dehydration;
- facilities for taking meals, away from the 'front line';
- washing and changing facilities;
- shift rotas to ensure that everyone gets proper rest;
- equipment and protective clothing to, at minimum, meet Health and Safety requirements;
- briefing arrangements to ensure everyone knows what is happening and what their contribution is;

- briefing arrangements to ensure everyone knows what is happening and what their contribution is;
- medical and first aid facilities;
- quiet space to prepare, unwind or think;
- someone to talk to about experiences, both at the time and afterwards; and
- access to professional debriefing and counselling services, should these be needed.

### **Delivering what people need**

7.17. There are few organisations in Northern Ireland with an explicit statutory duty to provide the sorts of assistance listed above. Nevertheless it is expected that public service organisations will provide for the necessities of those caught up in emergencies as part of their overall duty of care. The impetus in planning to meet the needs of people in emergencies must be not a legal duty, but a desire to ensure that everyone involved receives the best possible care and support. The public, elected representatives and the media all have an increasing awareness of emergency responses and expectation of the service which they will receive from both the public and private sectors. As the media highlights examples of good practice, the pressure increases on all organisations to attain those same high standards.

7.18. As an added incentive, failure to respond adequately will leave organisations, Chief Executives and Ministers open to censure by the media, official inquiries and Parliament. Emergency Planning, like insurance, can be regarded as an unnecessary expense when all is well and nothing has happened for a long time. However the cost of getting the response to an emergency wrong can be crippling to an organisation. It is possible to get technical aspects of the response right, but to handle the people issues so badly that the response is still perceived to have failed, as adverse publicity can destroy public confidence in all aspects of the



organisation's operations. For all organisations involved in post-incident enquiries and litigation, the cost of legal representation, compensation and loss of staff through stress related illnesses can divert resources away from core day-to-day activities and distract management from taking forward improvements to the services or products the organisation supplies. Public services are subject to censure by watchdog bodies and the Assembly and Parliament, and commercial organisations may be vulnerable to failure or take-over by competitors. With the advent of corporate liability legislation, public service organisations, private companies, corporate bodies (such as Boards of Directors) and individual employees may all be cited in litigation.

- 7.19. Effective planning will enable organisations to structure their civil protection strategies, identify the role which they would play, the resources which they should contribute and the way in which they should manage their contribution and co-ordinate it with that of others. These processes, properly documented and carried through, would form the foundation of any defence against litigation.

### **Casualty Bureau**

- 7.20. The PSNI Casualty Bureau operates in circumstances where there have been multiple injuries or fatalities.

The Casualty Bureau has three fundamental tasks:

- to obtain relevant information on the persons involved, or potentially involved;
- to process that information in order to identify individuals involved, especially those missing, injured or killed; and
- to provide accurate information to relatives and friends, the Investigating Officer and the Coroner.

- 7.21. As much information as possible on survivors, those taken to hospital and the dead would be collected, usually by PSNI officers. Telephone contact arrangements would be advertised for friends, relatives and those with information on possible

victims. Information gained from the telephone enquiry system would then be matched with that coming from rest centres, hospitals and mortuaries in order to provide information to friends and relatives and to identify the dead and those too seriously injured to identify themselves. Since Health & Social Care Trust staff also need the same sort of information to assess what assistance needs to be arranged, they should work closely with the PSNI to avoid causing distress by making multiple requests for the same information.

## **Evacuation**

7.22. In some emergencies consideration has to be given to whether it is necessary to organise an evacuation of an area. Evacuation is normally a last resort, where there is obvious immediate or long-term danger to people and where buildings would provide inadequate protection. The most frequent reasons for evacuations are fire, flooding, contamination and explosive dangers. Care must be taken that evacuation does not expose people in transit to more danger than if they had sheltered from the danger. More information on evacuation can be found in the CCPB document, 'A Guide to Evacuation in Northern Ireland' (see Bibliography, **Annex B**).

## **Rest centres**

7.23. Central to the co-ordinated provision of practical support to those involved in an evacuation incident is a Rest Centre. Rest Centres are places where people evacuated from premises (including residential, industrial, commercial, entertainment and education properties) can go to receive appropriate shelter and welfare care until they can return to the evacuated area or be otherwise accommodated. The type of facilities offered will depend on the characteristics of individual events, and the population evacuated. More information on Rest Centres is in the 'Guide to Evacuation in Northern Ireland' publication, (see Bibliography, **Annex B**).

## Friends and relatives

7.24. In many cases concerned friends or relatives will visit the scene of an incident or somewhere where they believe that information will be available on what is happening. In the case of transport accidents there will already be people waiting at the terminus to meet travellers and their numbers will be swelled by people hearing about the accident and having reason to believe that someone they know might be involved. In other situations, friends and relatives will try to get to incident sites or into dangerous areas, especially if children are involved. It is important to provide information and support for friends and relatives and to get as much information as possible from them about those potentially involved. The information coming from friends and relatives can be fed into the Casualty Bureau system and matched with passenger manifests or building occupation records.

7.25. Friends and relatives will need:

- high quality information, as early in the incident as possible, as to what is happening, who is involved and what has happened to their own friends/relatives;
- somewhere private to await information, away from the response scene and protected from the public and the media; and
- practical help such as refreshments and private facilities.

7.26. They may also need:

- support from trained social work staff, counsellors, befrienders or faith community representatives;
- help to visit an incident site or hospitals; and
- opportunity, if they want it, to recount their experiences or express their feelings to others through the media.

### Religious and cultural needs

- 7.27. Religious and cultural needs frequently require a specific response to be made to help those involved, and their friends and relatives, to come to terms with what has happened. Faith Community representatives, such as clergymen or priests, often have an immediate, front-line role in comforting the distressed, injured and dying. Some religions have particular requirements for rites at the time of, or as soon as possible after, death and the performance of these is of great importance. The treatment of the injured and of dead bodies often has particular cultural or religious significance, which should be acknowledged. There are also cultural and religious issues to be taken into account in the provision of food, which should be appropriate to the needs to those involved. This could mean that vegetarian or other special foods need to be provided and non-alcoholic or caffeine-free drinks made available. In some cases, the preparation and serving of food will also require special consideration. In Northern Ireland it is easy to assume that we know what the religious and cultural needs of people will be. However there are a wide variety of cultures and faiths in the resident population and any incident could involve tourists or business travellers. Organisations planning for provision of services to those involved in an incident, or their friends and relatives, should include in their plans provision of foreseeable cultural and religious needs and contact points for advice and support from the various faith communities. The Home Office and Cabinet Office have published 'The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies: some Guidelines' which can be found at [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/faith\\_communities.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/faith_communities.pdf) Further guidance can also be obtained from the Community and Local Government website: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/846112.pdf> (see also Bibliography, **Annex B**).

### Foreign nationals

- 7.28. Where foreign nationals are involved in an incident, their governments may request facilities for visiting them and participating in any enquiry or investigation into the incident. The extent to which they will be facilitated will be a matter for decision by

Ministers, but in general the principle would be to meet all reasonable requests. There may be a need for translators at rest centres and hospitals and for visiting foreign dignitaries. Plans should therefore include means of securing translation services. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) has arrangements for facilitating the response to emergencies involving foreign nationals and should be contacted if it becomes apparent that foreign nationals are among those involved in an emergency.

### **Appeals, memorials and commemorations**

7.29. In many major emergencies in the past there has been a spontaneous demand for some form of appeal or memorial fund by which people can mark the event and provide comfort or relief to those involved. Experience has shown that it is necessary for such funds to be properly constituted in order to ensure that legal requirements are met and that money is disbursed in a fair and timely manner. In order to ease the burden on hard-pressed authorities in this respect, the British Red Cross administers a Disaster Appeal Scheme, which provides a legally sound framework for a disaster appeal fund. Similar schemes can be provided by specialist legal firms, a number of which have experience of administering disaster appeals. It would not normally be appropriate for a government department to launch or sponsor a disaster appeal fund. In theory, anyone can create a disaster appeal fund, including media representatives, charities, individuals, commercial organisations and community groups, but it would normally be best to be led by a reputable body, such as a district council, which could then seek input from other interested groups. Experience has shown that in most cases, donations in kind, e.g. clothes, blankets, toys, are difficult to administer and should be discouraged. Where there is a genuine need for particular items, and these cannot be obtained from voluntary or commercial sources, it may be possible to find staff not directly involved in the response, or charities with expertise in collection and distribution of goods who can organise the collection, sorting, checking and distribution of gifts.

- 7.30. Professional response staff should not be diverted from caring for those involved in an incident in order to administer an appeal. However, the information gathered and the contacts made by welfare professionals, for example at Friends and Relatives Reception Centres, will be valuable in identifying who should receive support from any collection or fund.
- 7.31. Where there have been deaths as a result of a major emergency, it can be helpful to those involved, the bereaved and the community if the event is marked in some way by a memorial service or act of commemoration as appropriate. The families of the bereaved should be allowed to decide on the timing of this and on what form it should take. However the likelihood of national involvement and extensive media coverage requires a greater degree of thought, planning and preparation than for a private funeral or memorial service. The organisation of a memorial service is normally therefore led by a public body, such as a council, or a religious group. Planning for a memorial service or other commemoration should include all the relevant faith communities, representatives of the deceased, advisors on media coverage and security, the local community and those who provided the emergency response.
- 7.32. Even if there were no fatalities, it may be restorative for a community to mark the event by some form of thanksgiving service or commemoration.

### **Equality issues**

- 7.33. 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;

- 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.”

7.34. 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.

7.35. In preparing emergency plans, writers should refer to their own Equality Scheme and take advice on whether or not any given 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.

7.36. 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; and
- proactive actions to be taken during a response to identify and address the particular needs of different sections of the community.

7.37. When preparing a plan, it is important never to lose 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 is *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 process. It may 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.

7.38. The same principles apply when delivering an emergency response, whether or not there is a specific emergency plan. Within the limitations imposed by the emergency, people should be treated with sensitivity and account should be taken of their individual needs. Equality issues need to be explicitly considered and any practicable steps taken to ensure that no individual or group receives discriminatory or inequitable treatment. It may be useful for organisations, such as the emergency services and Health & Social Care Trusts, which work closely with people during emergencies to nominate someone with an understanding of the response but with no immediate involvement in it to have a specific responsibility to review the response on an ongoing basis to identify where actions can be taken to promote equal treatment and address any particular difficulties, such as a need for interpreters or for appropriate food and drink.



## CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY

### PEOPLE ISSUES

While some emergencies impact to a greater or lesser extent on the natural and built environments, the focus of many emergency responses is to ensure the safety and well-being of the people involved and to meet their needs for physical, emotional and psychological support.

In order to provide this support effectively, organisations preparing emergency plans should have some understanding of how people respond to emergencies and what their needs and expectations are. It is possible to deliver a technically excellent response but to be perceived to have responded badly because people issues were not adequately addressed.

Many of the services provided to people in emergencies are not delivered by the emergency services but by a range of secondary responders from both the public and private sectors. The plans which these secondary responders prepare should be linked with those of the emergency services and other direct responders to make sure that people receive a seamless service.

Services may need to be provided across a wide spectrum. Some people will require medical attention, even if they were not injured in the incident itself. Others will be concerned about friends and relatives, perhaps because families have got split up or because communications are difficult. Some people will need physical and financial support and others will require comfort, friendship and someone to help them with 'red tape'. Where the opportunity exists, many people will make their own arrangements and not avail of services provided. It is therefore often the case that those who do use services are those with special needs or who are socially excluded. Planning needs to take account of this.

In many emergencies there is a limit to what can be done to tailor or personalise the emergency response or to meet the full range of people's needs – time may be of the essence and safety issues have to be addressed as a priority. However, pre-planning will help to identify the issues likely to arise and there may be opportunity to build good practices into the response. For example, pre-identified Rest Centres can be checked for accessibility, disabled facilities and safety for young children.

Where the opportunity exists to investigate and meet the needs and expectations of a community and individuals within it, this should be done. It may be that a plan is being prepared for a known hazard site, or that an emergency is developing relatively slowly and there is an opportunity to be proactive in planning the response. It may also be necessary to educate people in appropriate actions or realistic expectations. Because emergency responders are focused on the activities in hand, which can often be overwhelming, it may be useful for organisations to nominate someone who has an understanding of the response but no immediate involvement to review people aspects of the response and whether anything can be done within the constraints of the situation to improve the delivery and targeting of services.

All emergency plans should be assessed against the requirements of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and organisations' own Equality Schemes.

## CHAPTER 8

### COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC: EMERGENCY INFORMATION AND MEDIA LIAISON

- 8.1. There are two interlinked aspects to media involvement in emergency situations. Firstly, emergency services and other public service organisations need to get important messages about public safety and the emergency response across to those directly affected by the emergency and the wider public. Often the media, especially television and radio, are the key means of getting such instructions and information across. Secondly, there is the need for organisations (including Government departments) involved in emergency situations, either as responders or because something has happened to them, to liaise with the media who want to tell the story.
- 8.2. **All contact with the media must be directed through the relevant Information Service (in the case of Northern Ireland departments this would be the Departmental Press Officer. Press Officers will clear statements and interviews and co-ordinate the flow of information. They will advise on time scales, when a press conference is appropriate and all aspects of publicity.**

#### The Media

- 8.3. We live in an information-hungry age, and major emergencies are of interest to a great number of people who have no direct connection with the events. The information industry includes newspapers, magazines, radio, television (both terrestrial and satellite) and the internet. It employs large numbers of people, has access to the very latest in communications technology and has sophisticated and wide-ranging networks of information gatherers. As a group, the people who work for the information industry, and the products which they sell, are generally referred to as 'the media'. However, it should be appreciated that the different sections of

the media have different strengths, interests and audiences and that a 'one size fits all' approach would be inappropriate.

- 8.4. From an emergency response viewpoint, the most immediate and most obvious media are television and radio news. The immediacy of these media means that intensive reporting of an emergency may often fade once the direct response is over and often long before the recovery and reconstruction processes have been completed. The more reflective and in-depth media, such as newspapers, magazines and television documentaries/investigations would then come into their own. However, anniversaries and similar events elsewhere will renew interest from the news and other media from time to time, even after a number of years have passed.
- 8.5. When a large-scale emergency happens, or even a small event in a sensitive area or involving a famous or important person, the media will often know at the same time as, or before, the emergency services and other public services do. Often the first notification to reach public service organisations comes from media representatives wanting a statement or information. In some cases where the emergency is not immediately obvious or develops over a period of time, the media may be an integral part of the situation, for example by bringing issues to public attention or pressing organisations for reports and answers.

### **Building relationships**

- 8.6. In Northern Ireland the media, especially locally-based media, are accustomed to having regular and direct access to Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Agency Chief Executives and senior public service officers. Both individuals and organisations have close working relationships with the local media, and with local representatives of the UK and international media, and use the media to get across policy information, offer advice on public services and promote the services they provide. The media will expect to have an equally close relationship

with, and access to, senior representatives in an emergency situation. This can be very helpful when there is a need to get urgent safety information across to people affected by the emergency event, but does place pressure on emergency responders and Press Officers. Much of the information which the media will press for in an emergency situation will go beyond the broadcast of emergency instructions and safety announcements. Media representatives will also be asking questions about the cause and likely progress of the emergency, what inquiries will be carried out, whether the response has been effective and how people involved are reacting. However, in the early stages of a large-scale emergency, reliable information is often scarce and distributed over a number of organisations. Organisations may genuinely not have the information which the media want or may need to protect the shocked, injured or bereaved from premature media exposure. Senior officials and Ministers may wish to reserve any substantive comment until the details of causes and effects are objectively established. A careful balance therefore needs to be struck between providing essential safety information, meeting the reasonable demands of the media and ensuring that quality information is offered in a timely way.

- 8.7. In both normal situations and emergencies, it is helpful if key representatives of the media know about an organisation and how it works, what its responsibilities are and who the main management and policy setting figures are. If this sort of information is already in media hands, or immediately available to it, for example through a website, it saves time and effort for an organisation in an emergency, and gives the media something to work on while information is gathered on the specific event. Care should of course be taken to ensure that any information held by the media or contained on websites is up-to-date.
- 8.8. Organisational representatives and Press Officers who have good working relationships in the media will carry more authority when it is necessary to manage the information flow. When information is not available, or cannot immediately be released, Press Officers should be prepared to be as open as reasonably possible

about why this is, but should be visibly proactive in trying to meet reasonable requests from the media and in getting out the organisation's key messages.

## **Communicating information in emergencies**

### **Urgent information**

- 8.9. In an emergency situation, it is often necessary to give information or instructions to the public. This may be reassurance that they are not at risk, emergency telephone contact numbers, advice to shelter in buildings or to evacuate certain areas, information on what the public can do to reduce risk of the emergency spreading, or advice that an emergency situation has passed. The emergency services have only a limited capacity to communicate directly with the public. This is usually by low-technology methods such as loud hailer, door to door calling and limited telephone contact. Few public service organisations have even this capacity. Sophisticated telephone alerting systems are available, but these are expensive and most useful where it is possible to pre-identify a reasonably limited group of people likely to be affected, for example in known high-risk flood areas or around a hazardous industrial site. The media are vastly more sophisticated in their communication abilities than public service organisations and there are few houses, businesses or recreational areas without access to television or radio. The media are therefore a very valuable means of communicating in an emergency and in some instances may be the only means.
- 8.10. The main television and radio service providers can arrange for emergency broadcasts to be made when approached by organisational Press Officers. Organisations which identify a potential need to make such broadcasts should ensure that their Press Officers have the necessary 24-hour contacts in all the local media outlets. The wording of any emergency communication with the public needs to be carefully considered as to when and how the message should go out. There is a good deal of research on how people perceive and understand information and those likely to be managing communications with the public in an emergency should be aware of this and of established good practice.

- 8.11. Broadcasting organisations are usually happy to carry statements and instructions, preferably delivered by an official spokesperson from the emergency services and other organisations when there is a need to communicate the sort of public safety messages mentioned in paragraph 8.9. They would not want to appear to be the originator of such information and may not want to be giving it their particular endorsement, so as to preserve their own editorial independence. They may, however, carry strictly factual information, such as emergency contact numbers, without having it broadcast by a spokesperson.
- 8.12. Providing that the principles of media independence are recognised and the protocols observed, reporters at the scene of an incident can be used to get statements and information across to their audience. While emergency responders and their Press Officers should avoid as far as possible making speculative statements or advising actions on the basis of incomplete information, there are circumstances where “no comment” is unacceptable and where public safety demands that advice be based on whatever information is available. Organisations should have well understood policies on how such circumstances should be handled. The media will also have their own guidelines on what is or is not appropriate, and reputable journalists will want to make sure that the information they have is accurate and reliable. If there is a lack of information, however, speculation will fill the vacuum.
- 8.13. The effectiveness of the television and radio in disseminating urgent information will vary depending on the time of day and the nature of the population to be warned. The media audience in the early hours of the morning, for example, is very small, and people in a commercial setting such as a shopping centre may not have access to the media. The ever-increasing number of both radio and television providers also creates problems in reaching a significant proportion of the audience, especially since some broadcasters are not UK-based. Once people know that something is happening, they will usually tune in to appropriate media sources, but getting that first warning across can be difficult if the proper media outlets are not utilised.

- 8.14. The amount of information which can be got across in emergency announcements is very limited. The message must focus on what the danger or emergency is and what people need to do about it. Basic information contained in television and radio broadcasts can, however, be supplemented by more detailed material on television text services and the internet. Most news agencies have the capacity to update their text services and internet sites quickly and regularly. They can also direct people to organisational websites which may carry advice or general information. These websites, provided they are well managed and can be updated with latest news and advice, are also a useful source of information for the media and will take some of the pressure off organisational Press Officers and emergency responders.
- 8.15. Organisations which anticipate having to make urgent emergency announcements, either generally or to a specific area or group of people, need to have considered in advance how best this can be achieved within the resources likely to be available at the time and to have made the necessary plans, contacts and agreements.

### **Less urgent information**

- 8.16. Sometimes there is slightly more time to get information on an emergency or its aftermath across to the public. This may be because the situation can be anticipated and it is possible to give advice in advance, because the situation is developing slowly and there is opportunity to prepare a more thorough information strategy than for a sudden incident, or because the information relates to recovery and reconstruction processes which are usually spread over a period of time. More time to prepare and disseminate information allows a much wider range of media resources to be used, and more detailed information given.
- 8.17. If organisations wish to get very precise information across, particularly in the printed media, they may have to take out advertisements at commercial rates. This happened for example with the Foot and Mouth outbreak, where advertisements were placed giving the public advice on access to the countryside and precautions to be taken if visits to farms were unavoidable. Northern Ireland departments have



contracts in place for the preparation and placing of advertisements and these can be accessed through departmental Press Officers. Other organisations should make sure that they have suitable arrangements which can be accessed at short notice.

- 8.18. Television text services and the internet will probably still play an important role. Information on websites should be in an accessible format, and should be well cross-referenced with other sites containing official information. Where possible, a single web-site should be used by related organisations in order to bring together all relevant information on one site. The Executive Information Service (EIS) can provide this facility for Northern Ireland Government departments and other Public Service Organisations through the NI Direct website, and the Cabinet Office News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) provides co-ordinated information on a UK-wide basis.

### **Identifying and targeting audiences**

- 8.19. When communicating messages relating to an emergency, it is important to identify very clearly the target audience and the best way of reaching them. Local free papers, for example, are usually delivered to every house in the catchment area, reaching a much greater number of households than newspapers which are sold, but they are usually only printed once per week, so may not be appropriate where the message is urgent. If the target audience is young (for example where schools are involved in an emergency) it may be most effective to target music channels on the radio, or consider the use of social media sites.
- 8.20. Where time permits, other means of communication can be used which do not directly involve the media. Leaflet drops through doors are an effective way of ensuring that all households or businesses receive information which they can keep and refer to. Royal Mail and other distribution organisations offer services of this sort and printing and sorting can be arranged at short notice. Depending on the time and day of the week, leaflets can often be produced and distributed within 24 hours. Information stands or posters in places where people gather, such as

doctors' surgeries, libraries and shopping centres can also be effective ways of getting information across. Opportunities for communicating in socially and culturally appropriate ways should be explored, for example by using specialist media outlets and providing information in a range of languages.

### **Working with the media in emergencies**

- 8.21. In a major emergency, media facilities must be provided early on in the incident: otherwise individual media organisations make their own arrangements and co-ordination of the media becomes difficult. Organisations providing an emergency response should include in their emergency plans the criteria which would indicate that a full media management response was required and an indication of what steps would need to be taken to put the necessary arrangements in place.
- 8.22. Responsibility for co-ordinating the response to the media would normally be part of the overall lead organisation arrangements. Thus, for major incidents which happen in Northern Ireland, the PSNI Press Office will normally initially take the lead and other Press Offices should co-ordinate their activities with the PSNI. In emergencies where the emergency services are not involved or where the immediate incident has passed, co-ordination of the media response may fall to one of the Government Information Services, to the Press Office of a lead organisation, or to the district council.
- 8.23. As with overall inter-agency management and co-ordination, this does not mean that the lead organisation is the only one which can deal with the media. In the very early stages of a major incident, it may be that it is most effective to refer all media representatives to one organisation, normally the PSNI. The PSNI would then ensure that representatives of relevant organisations were included in any press conference and would co-ordinate access for the media to the incident site and arrange for suitable responders to be interviewed. Other than this, the role of the co-ordinating organisation would be to have an overview of what information is available and how and when it can be shared with the media, to agree with other

organisations what the overall message should be, and to co-ordinate media briefings, statements and press conferences as appropriate. Individual organisations would deal with the media on issues specifically relating to them, within the overall strategy agreed at inter-agency level.

8.24. In the past the urgency in providing material to the media depended on proximity to the main news bulletin times or printing schedules. With dedicated news channels and 24 hour coverage there is no longer the luxury of being able to say that something will be available in time for the midday or early evening bulletins. This increases the pressure on Press Offices to produce a continuous stream of information and to monitor the output of the media in case any response is necessary or any misrepresentation needs to be challenged. There is also increased competition between media organisations for audience share, and therefore for the latest information, the best pictures, the most authoritative 'talking heads' and most exciting sound bites. This, again, puts pressure on public service Press Officers who have to be seen to be dealing fairly and equitably with all media organisations.

8.25. Most reputable media representatives will prefer official, good quality information to gossip and hearsay and it is to everyone's advantage if sufficient official material is available to avoid media crews having to go looking for unofficial sources. Facilities for the media should include, as appropriate:

- A public relations manager (Media Liaison Officer in the PSNI) who could co-ordinate the media information input from the responding organisations. This manager would normally be provided by the lead emergency service or other lead organisation. They would be a member of any strategic management group formed. In limited, local incidents, the PSNI would normally have the lead role in relation to the press, but where this was not appropriate, or where the PSNI had agreed to hand lead responsibility for the recovery phase of a local incident to the district council, the district council Press Officer would take on the public relations

manager role. Where the situation was widespread or fell clearly within the remit of a government department, the department's Press Officer would have this role and would play a major role in collecting and disseminating information to Ministers and the media. Whether or not EIS within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister would take charge would depend on the nature and extent of the emergency.

- A media liaison point where media representatives arriving at the site can be met by press officers. This is particularly important if the emergency attracts interest from media organisations without a full-time media presence in Northern Ireland as arriving personnel may have no contacts in Northern Ireland.
- Official accreditation to identify bona fide media representatives. Locally-based media representatives will normally already have suitable accreditation (NUJ card), but incoming media personnel may not. A system needs to be set up to direct these people to the media liaison point, to check their status and to issue appropriate accreditation.
- A media centre with communications facilities (telephone, fax, computer modems, satellite reception/broadcast facilities) and facilities to monitor media coverage.
- Access to people who have been involved in the incident and are willing to tell their story.
- Access to the incident site for cameras and reporters to obtain first-hand pictures and eye witness reports. This may be on a 'pool' basis where one team is allowed onto the site on the understanding that they share pictures/reports with other crews.
- Access to emergency response personnel who can talk about the progress of the response and their own experiences.

- Regular briefings and statements from senior people who carry credibility.
- Maps, pictures, diagrams or models which help visualise the site or nature of the incident.
- Translators, where the emergency involves, or has implications for, non- English-speaking people. Press conferences and interviews will require simultaneous translation and any statements or written information will need to be translated.
- Fair treatment for all genuine media personnel: there is intense competition between media teams to have the first news or an exclusive story and any perceived favouritism will lead to disaffected crews seeking opportunities elsewhere.

### **Press statements, conferences, sound bites and photo opportunities**

8.26. Information can be given to the media informally or formally, proactively or in response to demands. In a major emergency situation, especially where fatalities have occurred, the emphasis tends to be on formal communications. These can come through press statements, press conferences and organised opportunities for interviews and location photography. In preparing these, the public relations manager or Government Press Officer will take account of the needs of the different media and the pressures on them to provide timely contributions to bulletins and articles as well as the key message which those in charge want to get across. After any immediate response to an incident has been completed and the recovery phase is underway there may be opportunity for more informal, in-depth coverage.

### **Using the internet and social media**

8.27. The internet and social media networks are an increasingly important source of information in emergencies and allow public service organisations to deliver up-to-date information direct to audiences. The NI Direct website should be the primary

on-line vehicle for public service information in an emergency, with other organisational websites directing enquirers to NI Direct. Departments should consider in advance what sort of information would be required in emergencies which have a high likelihood or which are foreseeable and should work with Press Officers to develop templates for NI Direct and information-gathering networks so that pages can be rapidly set up and frequently updated when required. Departments should also work with their Press Officers to understand the information needs of mobile and social media users and how these can be best met in an emergency.

### **Telephone helplines and call handling**

- 8.28. The internet and organisational social media sites are ways in which the public services can communicate directly with those affected by an emergency. Another means of direct contact is through a telephone helpline or call centre. Many organisations in both the public and private sectors operate routine telephone contact services, particularly where there is a well-defined customer-provider relationship, as with the utilities and financial services. Some organisations which experience recurring interruptions to service have developed the capability to extend their regular call centre operations at times of disruption to meet demand for direct and specific information which is relevant to individual customers.
- 8.29. The public sector already operates a number of telephony services, including the flooding incident line which provides a single point of contact for Roads Service, Rivers Agency and NI Water. It is important that organisations in both the private and public sectors are able to meet demand for telephone-based information services in an emergency situation as failure to do so can create anxiety, impede the identification of and response to customer needs and undermine confidence in the organisation concerned. Therefore all organisations should consider the likely demand for telephone based services in an emergency and identify and put in place the call handling capability they require to meet their needs.

8.30. While internal telephony capability can be bolstered, it may not always be possible to develop sufficient capability in-house and there is potential in an emergency for other organisations to lend trained telephone agents to assist.

8.31. Within the NI Civil Service (NICS) work is underway to formalise mutual aid arrangements for telephony services by –

- developing contingency arrangements to formalise the system of calling for volunteers for call handling within the NICS at short notice to provide mutual aid; and
- making provision within NI Direct to accommodate the provision of additional volunteer workforce, complemented by existing DFP contact centre staff and NI Direct's own call agents. The objective is for NI Direct to have established emergency telephone and web capabilities within 12 hours of being activated in an emergency. This is dependent on having pre-planned and agreed activation arrangements which include the establishment of a two-way communication link with the lead organisation so as to facilitate the provision of timely, up to date information.

In support of these arrangements NICS organisations should consider to what extent they may need to seek mutual aid to augment their call handling capacity and liaise with NICS Central Personnel and NI Direct as necessary.

8.32. Non NICS organisations should consider what mutual aid arrangements they can make to ensure that they can meet the need in an emergency for telephony-based services.

8.33. All organisations should consider when they are making contracts for day-to-day telephony services whether it would be effective and economic to include in the contract an ability to escalate capability in an emergency.

### **The media in prolonged emergencies**

- 8.34. A prolonged emergency will place strains not only on the resources of immediate responders but on the public relations manager and staff and on the media representatives covering the event. Press Offices should have mutual aid arrangements for providing a 24-hour rota system as is the case for the NI Departments through the Collaborative Communication Process. Provision of (separate) catering and rest areas for organisational Press Officers and the media will help to maintain good relationships. The major media organisations can field outside broadcast vans and staff support caravans. Parking facilities, with utility hook-ups, may be required for these. The media will have some arrangements with the utilities for providing these, but it may be helpful if the public relations manager arranges basic facilities for any long term site.
- 8.35. In an emergency with a critical phase which extends over a number of days or weeks, the media presence will gradually build up as organisations not initially interested start to take up the story and as organisations with no physical presence in Northern Ireland begin to move resources in. This should be taken into account when a media centre is first chosen as it can be difficult to re-locate people part-way through the response.

### **Involving senior management, Ministers and the Assembly**

- 8.36. Media representatives will be interested in more than one aspect of a major emergency. Initially the focus will be on the operational response, but very quickly questions will be raised about policy issues, responsibilities, background influences and the adequacy of preventative measures. The “who is to blame question” will arise at an early stage. These are questions not for the operational managers, or even the tactical managers, but for strategic managers, politicians, legislators, policy setters and regulatory authorities. The media will want statements from these people long before there is any clear idea of what, if anything, went wrong to cause the incident and why events unfolded as they did. Likewise, Ministers will want



information on what is happening and statements may need to be made in the Northern Ireland Assembly or to the Executive. Ministerial briefing statements should be factual and avoid speculation on causes or liabilities. This should be the case too for the media, but they will press hard to try to extract opinions and initiate discussions.

- 8.37. **Especially in the early stages of an incident, those in direct contact with the media need to be well trained in media handling and to have the support of professional press officers who will set up appropriate interviews and advise on content and messages.** The emergency services often include media techniques as part of senior officer training. This is much less common in public service organisations. Agency Chief Executives, senior officials and those who are likely to be managing an emergency response should consider whether they require training. The emergency planning process should include consideration of an organisation's policy on dealing with the media and all those likely to have to deal with the media should know what this policy is.
- 8.38. EIS will normally handle all the media activities of Northern Ireland departments in a major emergency through the Collaborative Communication Process, as this allows the response of all departments to be co-ordinated and press office resources to be used to best effect. EIS Press Officers have extensive experience of working with senior officials and Ministers and will be able to advise on statements and protocol. Agencies and other affiliated organisations should discuss their own media strategies with their parent departments and have arrangements in place for co-ordination of information going to the media. The EIS will work closely with the PSNI Press Office and other Press Offices involved as provided for in the Collaborative Communication Process.

## **VIP visits**

8.39. In major emergencies senior politicians and other public figures may wish to visit the scene or hospitals where those affected by the incident are being treated, in order to see for themselves what the situation is, to express the feelings of the general community and to thank emergency responders. EIS can advise on and co-ordinate such VIP visits, along with the Press Offices of the organisations involved. In general visits should not take place where there is still danger or while the emergency response is still ongoing. VIP visits require a structured programme which offers the media opportunity for interviews and pictures. This should not distract essential resources from the response. Emergency plans should acknowledge that a major emergency will generate VIP visits and provision should be made for providing facilities which ensure that such visits make a positive contribution to the overall response.

## **UK-wide emergencies**

8.40. In emergencies where there are UK-wide dimensions, local Press Officers will need to co-ordinate their activities with their counterparts in Great Britain. In order to facilitate co-ordination of the media response in such circumstances, the Cabinet Office would establish a News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) which would bring together information from across the UK and provide central briefing for the media. The NCC would also maintain a co-ordinated public and media information website, which would bring together information and advice from all public service organisations involved.

## CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY

### COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

The term 'Media' is often used as a general term for the full range of broadcast and print outlets. Different sections of the media have different strengths and priorities and any plans for interacting with the media in emergency situations needs to take account of these.

There are two main aspects of the media involvement in large scale emergencies:

- the need of public service and other organisations to communicate with the public in order to deliver safety advice, provide information on the emergency and advertise the availability of response or support services. The broadcast, print, internet and social media networks will all be valuable vehicles for such communication; and
- the needs of the media for information, explanation, visual material, comment and analysis. Among the sources they will use for this are the public services and other responders.

The ways in which media are used to deliver information to the public will vary depending on the sort of information to be communicated and the timescale available to do so. For urgent safety information, radio and television are accessible to a large portion of the population and are usually respected as sources of authoritative information.

Cell broadcasting, the internet and social media networks are also valuable ways of communicating up-to-date information to a large number of people. Where a complex message needs to be communicated, and where time permits, it may be better to use websites, television text services and the print media (newspapers, magazines) which people can take time over and refer back to. In either case, media outlets will want to maintain editorial integrity and not appear to be simply following an 'official line'.

Information will therefore usually be presented as a statement from the originating organisation and in some cases it may be necessary for the public services to pay for advertising.

Public Service press officers, including emergency service press officers, work with the locally-based media on a regular basis. Both sides know each-other and maintain good working relationships. However, emergency situations are different from normal business. The time frames are more demanding, and information may not be available as soon as the media would like. The lead press office may be from the emergency services, the district council or a government department. Other press officers will still issue material in relation to their own organisation, but will always clear it with the lead press office, who would co-ordinate overall bulletins and press conferences. For Northern Ireland Civil Service organisations, EIS will support organisational Press Officers through the Collaborative Communication Process.

**It cannot be over stressed how important it is that the lead press office co-ordinates all media contacts. Freelance or one off actions by individuals or organisations may undermine the whole operation. Damage done cannot always be repaired.**

Organisations can communicate directly with customers and the public in general through telephone services and in many cases the public will expect to be able to report problems and get information by telephone.

Organisations should therefore consider how they can meet public expectations by:

- ensuring that their day-to-day call-handling systems have sufficient surge capacity;
  - making mutual aid arrangements to obtain additional trained call-handling staff from other organisations;
- and/or
- having call-off contracts for additional call handling capacity either through NI Direct or commercial call-handling firms.

## CHAPTER 9

### INQUESTS, INQUIRIES AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

9.1. The arrangements for investigating deaths, especially unexpected deaths or those in suspicious circumstances are long-standing and well-established. In addition, it is increasingly common for emergencies to be the subject of one or more Inquiries designed to find out what went wrong, whether the response was effective and what underlying causes may have to be addressed, for example by new regulation, inspection processes or policy changes. Inquiries may be held even where no deaths have occurred, for example where an incident resulted in serious pollution of the environment. It is also increasingly common for criminal and civil litigation to follow emergencies.

#### Coroners' inquests

9.2. If an emergency situation results in fatalities, the PSNI act as the agent of the coroner to investigate the circumstances of the death(s). There will also be a post mortem examination and possibly an inquest to investigate the cause of death. It is insufficient to say that someone died from, for example, an air crash. The medical cause of death (heart attack, asphyxiation etc) has to be established if at all possible by the coroner and the jury. If it is suspected that the death is associated with a criminal act, the Coroner may wait to see if a prosecution is to take place before holding an inquest. The inquest can therefore happen some months, or even years, after the incident. This can be very stressful and distressing for relatives and friends of the deceased. Coroners' Offices and the PSNI officers acting for the Coroner should ensure that, as far as possible, the procedures for the Coroner's inquest are explained in terms which are meaningful for the people involved. Many Coroners' Offices already have information leaflets for use in day-to-day situations. Consideration could be given to preparing similar leaflets for use in situations where there have been deaths associated with large-scale emergencies.

## Inquiries

- 9.3. A major emergency is often followed by an Inquiry. At the most basic level, any organisation involved in an emergency should afterwards review what happened and why, how effective the response was and whether emergency plans were sufficient. This process is normally called debriefing. Debriefing can be internal to one organisation or can be inter-agency, bringing together all the organisations involved in a response. In a large-scale emergency, individual organisations should hold their own debriefs but should also be involved in multi-agency debriefs of specific functions and/or the overall response. Any problems identified through the use of debriefing processes should be analysed, solutions found and changes implemented.
- 9.4. In some situations there is a statutory requirement to hold an inquiry following an incident. This is the case, for example, with aircraft accidents which must be investigated by the Air Accident Investigation Branch. Other incidents can be investigated by regulatory or inspection authorities according to circumstances. These are primarily technical inquiries which concentrate on discovering the immediate cause of the incident with a view to determining what steps need to be taken to prevent a recurrence. They are not directly concerned with allocating blame or liability.
- 9.5. In circumstances where there is widespread concern over a major emergency or where there is reason to believe that an incident raises serious questions, a Public Inquiry can be held. The decision to convene a Public Inquiry would be made by the NI Executive, a Minister of the Executive, or in the case of non-transferred matters such as civil aviation, a Whitehall Minister. Various pieces of legislation permit Inquiries to be held in particular circumstances, or an Inquiry can be specially authorised by Parliament or the Northern Ireland Assembly. Public Inquiries usually have wide-ranging terms of reference permitting them to inquire into background policies and practice, the events leading up to an incident, the causes of the

incident, the efficiency of the response and measures which might be taken to reduce the risk of similar events occurring in the future. A senior judge, if possible one who has experience of other inquiries, or knowledge of the issues being addressed normally chairs them.

- 9.6. Technical and Public Inquiries are primarily concerned with discovering the facts about what happened and learning from an incident. Nevertheless, in the course of the Inquiry, evidence may be presented which would indicate either a criminal or civil liability. In addition, the Chairperson will form opinions on whether any person or organisation failed in statutory or common law duties and the final report of the inquiry will reflect this. It is likely that any suggestion in the Inquiry that anyone was at fault would be followed by criminal investigation or civil litigation. In theory, evidence given at enquiries is confidential and cannot be used subsequently in any criminal investigations or civil actions. However, Inquiry sessions may be attended by the legal representatives of interest groups, including those made up of victims of that or other similar incidents. For this reason, people and organisations involved in an Inquiry normally retain the services of legal professionals to monitor proceedings and advise on how to conduct themselves. This can have the unfortunate, but understandable, effect of making the Inquiry more difficult than it would otherwise be.

### **PSNI investigations**

- 9.7. If there is reason to suppose that a criminal act was a contributory factor to an emergency, the PSNI will begin an investigation in parallel with the response. This can mean that the site (or sites, in the case of multiple incidents or a large, widespread one) of an incident is regarded as a crime scene and that the activities of other agencies are restricted to those essential to the saving of life, so as to preserve evidence. This can create tensions in the response, for example where the need to record and investigate the scene of a fatality requires that a body cannot be moved or covered as soon as would otherwise be the case. The PSNI will need to take decisions on how to handle such cases, based on the importance of evidence relative to the distress caused.

- 9.8. Because of the need to identify witnesses and people with potential evidence, the PSNI will record details of those involved and to do this will require access to hospitals, survivor reception centres, friends and relatives centres etc. This information-gathering can be combined with gathering information for a Casualty Bureau, if one is set up. Any opportunity should also be taken to co-ordinate with information-gathering being carried out by other agencies such as Health & Social Care Trusts.
- 9.9. If there is a Statutory or Public Inquiry, evidence given to them cannot usually be directly used as PSNI evidence. It may therefore be necessary to take statements from people who have already given evidence to an Inquiry. Where this is unavoidable, the reasons for asking for another statement should be explained.
- 9.10. If a case comes to court, witnesses may be called to give their evidence in person. It should be recognised that for many people this will be a stressful experience, and they should be offered information, help and advice as appropriate.
- 9.11. The PSNI will act as agents for the Coroner in investigating suspicious or unusual deaths, whether or not any criminal action is suspected.

### **Civil litigation**

- 9.12. Even where no criminal action is found to have been associated with emergencies, there is still the possibility of civil proceedings being taken by people who have suffered a loss. Civil cases can be brought against individuals, organisations or companies. The civil courts require a lower level of proof than the criminal courts, so, for example, a case may be taken for negligence leading to deaths, even where there was insufficient evidence for criminal prosecution. Civil cases can also be brought to seek compensation, whether or not criminal activity was involved. Increasingly, groups of survivors of emergencies, or relatives of those killed are getting together to initiate class actions in the civil court.



## Being prepared

- 9.13. Any organisation which may be involved in the response to an emergency should take legal advice on its potential liabilities. There is a school of thought that it is better to be unaware of your liabilities and to have no emergency plans than to have plans which fail to deliver an appropriate response. This is unlikely to form an adequate defence if the liabilities are reasonably obvious, if there was experience of similar events in other places or if planning is carried out by other organisations in similar areas of business or with similar responsibilities.
- 9.14. Plans should conform to any statutory requirement and to published guidance on good practice, such as this document, 'Emergency Preparedness' and 'Emergency Response and Recovery'. They should take account of how similar plans are constructed by other organisations and of any lessons learnt from exercises or previous incidents. Plans should be validated by exercises or other appropriate tests. Evidence should be available that other organisations required to participate in a response, or with whom co-ordination would be necessary, are aware of the plan and have had opportunity to comment upon it and, where appropriate, participate in exercises.
- 9.15. If an incident is followed by an Inquiry or litigation, there will almost certainly be a requirement at some stage for all organisations involved in the response to make available all documents and records relating to the incident and any planning or training which preceded it. It is important therefore that all emergency planning records, including electronic records, are professionally kept and are easily retrievable. Even in the heat of an emergency, detailed and accurate logs should be kept of messages received, advice given, actions taken and discussions held. These logs should be started as soon as the organisation becomes aware that something has occurred which might become a major incident - decisions and actions in the early stages can be critical to the outcome of the incident and are therefore very important in any subsequent inquiry. Deciding how logs are going to

be maintained and by whom and how documents are to be handled and stored should be an integral part of an organisation's emergency planning activity.

- 9.16. Electronic records are particularly liable to be destroyed as part of routine 'housekeeping' activities. Steps should be taken to protect all records relating to emergency planning and the response to an emergency so that they are available for scrutiny at a later date. Any procedures for destroying paper records, even informal notes or scribbled messages, should also be suspended immediately it becomes apparent that an incident may have legal consequences. No attempt should be made to amend records at a later date.
- 9.17. Staff at any level, including those not directly involved in the response can be called to make a statement to an inquiry or court. This can be very stressful to the individuals involved and can undermine staff morale. Organisations should support their staff by providing witness training and welfare facilities as required.

## CHAPTER 9 SUMMARY

### INQUESTS, INQUIRIES AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Large-scale emergencies are often followed by one or more inquiries. These may take the form of:

- a Coroner's Inquest, where there have been fatalities associated with the emergency;
- a Technical or Public Inquiry, to consider the cause of the emergency, the response, and whether lessons can be learned to prevent future incidents or improve emergency planning arrangements; and
- a PSNI investigation, if there is reason to suppose that a crime has been committed.

An emergency may also result in civil litigation, for example, people may seek compensation on the basis that some organisation or individual has been negligent.

Organisations should consult their legal advisers to make sure that they have correct procedures in place for the making and keeping of records during and after an emergency, as documents relating to it will be required for any Inquest, Inquiry or legal proceedings. Consideration should also be given to ensuring that staff is given any necessary training to familiarise them with witness procedures, should they be called to give evidence.

## CHAPTER 10

### BUSINESS CONTINUITY

10.1. There are three main scenarios in which organisations can be affected by emergency situations (although there are many variations on these).

- an event happening in the community, to which the organisation has to provide a response. Examples would be transport accidents, flooding, incidents involving chemicals or animal disease outbreaks;
- an event happening within an organisation which affects its ability to deliver its services to agreed standards. Examples would be a fire in a building occupied by the organisation, loss of access to computer services due to major hardware or software failures, or fraud leading to financial difficulties; and
- an event affecting both the organisation and the community, so that the ability of the organisation to both respond to the event and to maintain its own business is compromised. Examples would be disease epidemics, major infrastructure failures, and accidents where groups of staff are among those affected.

10.2. This guidance document deals primarily with the arrangements necessary to respond to events happening outside in the general community. In these cases the organisation can expect to be fully resourced and to be in a position to respond according to its emergency plans. All such incidents will have some knock-on effect on the normal business of an organisation, as few have spare capacity of both staff and equipment just waiting for an emergency to occur. It is also possible that expenditure on emergency response would have a detrimental effect on an organisation's budget to the extent that the ability to deliver more routine services has to be reviewed. However, any readjustment of targets and services should be

capable of being managed within normal business planning and public expenditure processes.

### **Threats to business**

- 10.3. Events can occur within an organisation which constitute an emergency for that organisation but not for the community in general. These events could seriously affect the ability of the organisation to continue to function. In the case of commercial organisations this can have a serious effect on profits and can sometimes lead to company failure. Public service organisations are less likely to collapse altogether, but they may fail to meet statutory or contractual obligations and to deliver services to an acceptable standard.
- 10.4. Some organisations, primarily utilities, emergency services and financial organisations, deliver services which are so critical to the normal processes of daily life that a major internal failure could precipitate an emergency in the community. For example, any failure in the electricity generation or distributions system, although primarily a problem for the businesses involved, could lead to a range of potentially dangerous or life-threatening situations in the community. Similarly, a serious failure in the banking system could lead to business failures and a serious downturn in the economy.
- 10.5. Some events affect both the community and organisations. For example a serious outbreak of influenza would place extreme pressures on the health services at a time when staffing levels would be low owing to staff themselves being influenza victims. Other organisations may also find themselves unable to deliver their normal services owing to staff shortages. Failures in the utilities would also have widespread effects. For example, a failure in the telecommunications system would affect the ability of organisations, especially those dependant on telephone services, to interact with their customers and could also affect internal communications, making it difficult to serve those customers who do get through.

## **Business Continuity Planning**

- 10.6. Planning to deal with emergencies which primarily affect the ability of organisations to do business is called Business Continuity Planning. It is a key element in creating a resilient society and it is closely linked to wider civil protection arrangements. This is especially the case for government departments and agencies and for infrastructure organisations. As with Civil Protection generally, Business Continuity Planning involves not only planning to respond effectively when an incident occurs, but also involves identifying critical business processes, reviewing risks to business continuity, reducing those risks, taking steps to reduce the effects on business of events outside the organisation's control and planning to respond to events in such a way as to maintain critical business processes and ensure a quick resumption of normal services.
- 10.7. Business Continuity Planning should be carried out in line with the principles of Integrated Emergency Management – plans should be flexible, should relate to the normal management and business processes of the organisation and should be co-ordinated both internally and with suppliers, customers and the emergency services. The British Standard for Business Continuity Management, BS25999-1, embodies best practice principles which organisations should have regard to when undertaking Business Continuity Planning.
- 10.8. Business Continuity Planning has traditionally focussed on maintaining computer and communication services and has therefore often been regarded as something of concern only to Information Technology departments within an organisation. For organisations which depend heavily on technology and communications these are obviously key issues, but Business Continuity Planning goes much further than making sure that computers have adequate backups. Business Continuity Planning for all aspects of a business is essential for effective corporate governance and as such should be a concern of Chief Executives, Boards, Permanent Secretaries and Senior Management groups.

- 10.9. Business Continuity Planning has long been established in the commercial environment and a wide range of publications and consultancy services offer advice on how to go about Business Continuity Planning. The Bibliography at **Annex B** gives information on some publications which focus on Business Continuity Planning in the public sector.

## **CHAPTER 10 SUMMARY**

### **BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

Emergencies do not only happen outside organisations. Some emergencies will affect both an organisation and its outside environment, affecting the ability of the organisation to continue to deliver its normal services and to provide an emergency response to the community. Some emergencies, such as fire in offices or computer failure, are serious for the organisation involved, but only affect the community to the extent that the organisation is unable to deliver its essential services.

Organisations need to identify their vulnerabilities to business interruptions and make arrangements to reduce risk, mitigate the effects of emergencies. They also need to have plans for recovery of business processes if interruptions do occur. This Business Continuity Planning process is an essential part of an organisation's normal business planning process, but shares many characteristics with planning to respond to external emergencies.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

Each organisation uses its own terminology, which fits its particular needs. In some cases, the same words can have different meanings for different organisations. The following represents the most common use of terms, but where particular terms are critical to a plan, it should be checked that all stakeholders understand the definitions used.

**Business Continuity** - the strategic and tactical capability of an organisation to plan for and respond to incidents and business disruptions in order to continue business operations at an acceptable predefined level.

**Business Continuity Plan** – documented collection of procedures and information developed, compiled and maintained in readiness for use in an incident to enable an organisation to continue to deliver its critical activities at an acceptable predefined level.

**Casualty** – 1. Person killed or physically, psychologically or mentally injured as a result of war, accident or civil emergency

2. (In a maritime emergency) Vessel in distress
3. (For Casualty Bureau purposes) Person known, or believed, to be involved in an incident, including evacuees, survivors, and deceased.

*Notes: 1) In its general definition (1) using the term Casualty to refer to one, more or all of the deceased, the injured and the otherwise affected provides scope for confusion and distress. Responders are urged to use unambiguous terms such as 'deceased' and 'physically injured'.*

*2) To avoid confusion during maritime emergencies, the term 'casualty' should not be used without qualifying that it relates either to people or the vessel.*

**Casualty Bureau** – Initial point of contact and information, maintained by the PSNI, for all data relating to casualties.

**Casualty Clearing Station** – entity set up at the scene of an emergency by the ambulance service in liaison with the Medical Incident Commander to assess, triage and treat casualties and direct their evacuation.

**CCG (NI) - Civil Contingencies Group (NI)** – a strategic lead inter-agency group which considers Northern Ireland civil contingences policy and supports the Crisis Management Group to co-ordinate the emergency response across the NI departments and other public sector organisations.

**CCPB** – Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, a Branch within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, which promotes the development of effective Civil Protection arrangements in the public sector in Northern Ireland.

**Civil Contingencies** – risks to civilian health, safety, and property from emergencies as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act (2004).

**Civil Contingencies Secretariat** – a Unit within the Cabinet Office which has policy responsibility for Civil Protection, specifically for England and Wales but also for trans-UK issues.

**CMG** - Crisis Management Group - within the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements, the Minister-led strategic co-ordination group which is responsible for setting the overall strategy for the NI Administration's response to a Level 2 or Level 3 emergency.

**Control** - The application of authority, combined with the capability to manage resources, in order to achieve defined objectives.

**Co-ordination** - the integration of multi-agency efforts and available capabilities, which may be interdependent, in order to achieve defined objectives.

**COR** – Central Operations Room – a part to the NICCMA that manages the flow of information into and out of the CMG and CCG (NI).

**Cordon** –naturally delineated or improvised perimeter indicating an area of restricted access.

**Coroner** - a legal official charged, along with a coroner's jury, with ascertaining the cause of death in cases of accidental or unexpected death or death in suspicious circumstances.

**DARD** - the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

**DCAL** – the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.

**DE** – Department of Education.

**DEL** – the Department for Employment and Learning.

**DETI** - the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

**DFP** – the Department of Finance and Personnel.

**DHSSPS** - the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

**Disaster Appeal Scheme (DAS)** - a scheme run by the British Red Cross for setting up a disaster appeal quickly, but having regard for all the legal requirements and with prearranged systems for collection of donations.

**District Council** – any one of the 26 local Councils in Northern Ireland, including those normally called City or Borough Councils.

**DOE** - the Department of the Environment.

**DOJ** – the Department of Justice

**Domiciliary care** - care given in the home to the elderly and disabled, including home helps, meals on wheels and attendance by care assistants.

**DRD** – the Department for Regional Development.

**DSD** – the Department for Social Development.

**EIS** – the Executive Information Service, which supplies central Press Office services for the Northern Ireland Departments, as a supplement to those provided by Departmental Press Offices.

**Emergency** – An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment or the security of Northern Ireland or the UK as a whole.

Damage would be serious if:

- the emergency would be likely seriously to obstruct an organisation in the performance of its functions; or
- it is likely that the organisation would consider it necessary or desirable to act to prevent reduce, control or mitigate the emergency's effects, or otherwise take action; and would be unable to act without changing the deployment of its resources or acquiring additional resources.

**Evacuation** – removal, from a place of actual or potential danger to a place of relative safety, of people and (where appropriate) other living creatures.

**Evacuation Assembly Point** – Building or area on the periphery of an area affected by an emergency, to which evacuees are directed to await transfer to a survivor reception centre or rest centre

**FCO** – Foreign and Commonwealth Office – a UK-wide department with its Headquarters in London

**Gold** – The strategic level of command and control (above **Silver** level and **Bronze** Level) at which policy, strategy and the overall response framework are established and managed for individual responder agencies.

**HSC Trust** – Health and Social Care organisation responsible for the delivery of community, hospital and social care.

**HMCG** - Her Majesty's Coastguard, a body within the Maritime and Coastguard Agency responsible for initiating and co-ordinating civil maritime search and rescue within the United Kingdom search and rescue region.

**IEM** - Integrated Emergency Management - a multi-agency approach to emergency management entailing six key activities – anticipation, assessment, prevention, preparation, response and recovery.

**Lead organisation** - The Department or Agency responsible for preparedness for an emergency for which it is the designated lead. When an emergency occurs the lead organisation would co-ordinate the multi-agency response at the appropriate level, or provide input to the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (Level 2 and 3 emergencies).

**LGEMG** – the Local Government Emergency Management Group, the policy co-ordinating group for district council emergency planning.

**MCA** – Maritime and Coastguard Agency – executive agency of the Department for Transport, comprising Her Majesty's Coastguard and the former Marine Safety Agency.

**Media Liaison Point** – area adjacent to the scene for the reception and accreditation of media personnel and for briefing on reporting, filming and photographing.

**MLA** – Member of the [Northern Ireland] Legislative Assembly.

**Multi-Agency** – Involving the participation of several agencies.

*Note: frequently used interchangeably with inter-agency or joint-agency.*

**NDPB** - Non Departmental Public Body, a body which has a role in the processes of national government, but which is not a government department, or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arms length from Ministers. Different types of NDPB exist. In emergency planning terms the most important are executive NDPBs which carry out a wide range of administrative, regulatory, executive or commercial functions on behalf of Government.

**NIAS** - Northern Ireland Ambulance Service.

**NICCMA** - Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements – the totality of the arrangements by which the NI Executive provides strategic co-ordination in appropriate emergencies.

**NIFRS** - Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service.

**NIHE** – the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, responsible for the provision of public housing and accommodation for homeless persons.

**NI Water** – A Government Owned Company and the statutory water and sewerage undertaker, operating under licence and at arm's length from central government structures. The Minister retains overall policy and political oversight and sets strategic objectives. The actual delivery of water and sewerage services is, however, the responsibility of the Company, subject to regulatory oversight by the NI Authority for Utility Regulation and environmental regulators.

**NIO** – Northern Ireland Office – a Whitehall government department with responsibility for national security functions in NI.

**NSC (THRC)** – National Security Council Sub-Committee on Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies - The Ministerial Cabinet Sub-Committee which will come together in both policy and crisis response modes in relation to national security.

**OFMDFM** – the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (Northern Ireland).

**Operational** – *general definition* – relating to an emergency service’s actions undertaken in response to an incident.

*specific definition* – the level (below tactical level) at which the management of ‘hands-on’ work is undertaken at the incident site(s) or associated areas, equating for single agencies to bronze level.

**Operational Control** - the control and co-ordination mechanism for the direct operational response to an incident. Also called the **Bronze Control**.

**Operational response** – the active, hands-on response to an incident, providing direct services to bring an incident to an end and ensure public safety. Also called **Bronze response**.

**PSNI Incident Commander (PIC)** – the senior PSNI Officer in charge of co-ordinating the response to an incident.

**PSNI** - Police Service of Northern Ireland.

**Public Information Centre** - a place where people affected by an emergency can go to get advice on how to deal with practical and welfare problems.

**Rest Centre** - building, including overnight facilities, for the temporary accommodation of evacuees.

**Rest Centre Co-ordinator** – the person or contact point whose role is to co-ordinate the setting up of a Rest Centre on receipt of notification of the need, or potential need, for one to be established.

**Rest Centre Manager** – the person who has overall responsibility for the delivery and co-ordination of welfare services to evacuees in a Rest Centre.

**Regional Health Command Centre (RHCC)** - A group to provide leadership and health advice to the HSC Bodies, CMG/CCG NI, ministers and the general public during large scale incidents e.g. SARS, CBRN.

**Rivers Agency** – an Executive Agency of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development responsible for flood defence and land drainage.

**RNLI** - the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a voluntary organisation which provides lifeboats round the coasts of the British Isles, and on some NI inland waters.

**Roads Service** - an Agency of the Department for Regional Development, responsible for road building and maintenance.

**RV Points** - Point to which all resources arriving at the outer cordon are directed for logging, briefing, equipment issue and deployment.

**SCG** – GB Strategic Co-ordination Group - Multi-agency body responsible for co-ordinating the joint response to an emergency at the local strategic level.

**SCG** – NI Emergency Services Senior Co-ordinating Group - the Northern Ireland emergency services' strategic policy group.

**STAG** – Scientific and Technical Advisory Group to NICCMA.



**Strategic** – the level (above **tactical level** and **operational level**) at which policy, strategy and the overall response framework are established and managed. Also called **Gold Level**.

**Strategic Control** - the control and co-ordination mechanism for providing strategic policy support to an incident. Also called **Gold Control**.

**Strategic Response** – the response to an incident which considers medium to long term issues about policy, responsibilities and activities of organisations, effects on budgets and future prevention / mitigation strategies. Also known as **Gold response**.

**Tactical** – level (below strategic level and above operational level) at which the response to an emergency is managed.

*Note: the terms tactical and silver are frequently used interchangeably for single agency operations.*

**Tactical Control** - the control and co-ordination mechanism for providing tactical support to the operational control. Also called **Silver Control**.

**Tactical Response** – the response to an incident which provides management support to operational service providers, ensuring that they have the equipment and manpower required and considering issues such as health and safety of responders. Also known as **Silver response**.

**Telecommunications** - in this document includes the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), internal networks such as those managed by the NI Civil Service and the PSNI service, mobile telephone networks and data links for fax, electronic mail and communications between computers.

**Translink** – publicly-owned transport company operating Citybus, Ulsterbus and Northern Ireland Railways.

**Utility** – company providing an essential community service, especially water, energy, or telecommunications.

**Volunteer Manager** – someone appointed, usually by the Rest Centre Manager, to coordinate the input of volunteers, especially ad hoc volunteers, into the running of a Rest Centre or other activities.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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

**Emergency Preparedness: Guidance on Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, its associated Regulations and non-statutory arrangements**, Cabinet Office.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/emergprepfinal.pdf>

**Emergency Response and Recovery**, Cabinet Office, 2009.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/emergency-preparedness>

**Northern Ireland Standards in Civil Protection**, available from the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, Room A5.02, Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SR or tel 028 9052 8641, or on the CCPB website: <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/standardsincivilprotection.pdf>

**Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework:**

[http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/ni\\_civil\\_contingencies\\_framework\\_-\\_refreshed\\_september\\_2011-2.pdf](http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/ni_civil_contingencies_framework_-_refreshed_september_2011-2.pdf)

**Guidance on specific aspects of planning in Northern Ireland is available from:**

**A Guide to Evacuation in Northern Ireland**, available from the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, Room A5.02, Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SR or tel 028 9052 8641, or on the CCPB website:

<http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/aguidetoevacuation.pdf>

**A Guide to Plan Preparation**, available from the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, details as for 'A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland' or on the CCPB website: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/planpreparation.pdf>

**Cabinet Office guidance documents.**

The following link brings you to the publications which are available on the Cabinet Office UK Resilience website: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience>

The following are available on the Cabinet Office UK Resilience business advice site:

**How Resilient is Your Business to Disaster?**

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/how-resilient-business-disaster.pdf>

**Why Exercise your Disaster Response?**

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/why-exercise-your-disaster-response.pdf>

**Exercise Planner's Guide.**

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/the-exercise-planners-guide.pdf>

**Other useful publications:**

**Crowd safety**

The Northern Ireland Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds. The Stationery Office. ISBN 9780337088711. <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

**Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (5<sup>th</sup> Edition).** The Stationery Office. ISBN 9780117020740. <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

**The Event Safety Guide:** a guide to health, safety and welfare at music and similar events. The Stationery Office. ISBN 9780717624539

<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

### **Business Continuity**

**The Definitive Handbook of Business Continuity Management.** Edited by Andrew Hiles and Peter Barnes, Wiley, 2001. ISBN 9780471485599

<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

**A Guide to Business Continuity Planning.** James C Barnes, Wiley, 2001.

ISBN 9780471530152

<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

**The British Standards Institute publications:**

**BS25999-1: 2006 Business Continuity Management: Code of Practice**

(<http://shop.bsigroup.com/en/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030139870>)

**BS25999-2:2005 Business Continuity Management Systems: Specifications**

(<http://shop.bsigroup.com/en/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030169700>)

### **Welfare issues**

**Disasters: Planning for a Caring Response,** Disasters Working Party. The Stationary Office. ISBN 9780113213702

<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

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

<http://www.gulbenkian.org.uk/publications/publications/51-WISE-BEFORE-THE-EVENT.html>

**Key Communities, Key Resources: Engaging the capacity and capabilities of faith communities in Civil Resilience**, Communities and Local Government: London, 2008.  
Publication only available online.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/846112.pdf>

**The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies: Some Guidelines**, Home Office and Cabinet Office, 2005.

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/faith\\_communities.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/faith_communities.pdf)

**Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies: Non-statutory guidance on establishing Humanitarian Assistance Centres**, Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hac\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hac_guidance.pdf)

## ANNEX C

### A GUIDE TO PLANNING AND RUNNING EXERCISES

#### Introduction

C1.1. It is generally acknowledged that an organisation ought to maintain emergency plans in order to be prepared to deal effectively with incidents or occurrences which could have a serious effect on the organisation, its staff, shareholders and customers. Providing an emergency response is the primary business of the emergency services, but many organisations, both in the public and private sectors, are required from time to time to deal with the effects of emergency situations. Especially where an organisation does not deal with such situations on a daily basis, it is important that at all times its arrangements for responding to emergencies are:

- accurate;
- up to date;
- capable of being implemented;
- user friendly;
- flexible; and
- straightforward.

C1.2. There are many obstacles in maintaining an up-to-date plan. They include:

- changes in staff due to recruitment, promotion, restructuring and retirement;
- changes in the resources available as buildings change, services are agentised or privatised and stockpiles are run down; and
- changes in the outside world, causing whole new sets of problems.

C1.3. To be sure that emergency arrangements will work in a real emergency, they have to be tested, or 'validated' as the emergency planning jargon has it. Validation needs to happen not only when a plan or arrangement is first put in place but also at intervals thereafter. The main (but not only) means of validating plans is to exercise them.

C1.4. There are a number of good reasons for holding exercises:

- they validate plans, or elements of plans;
- they increase the likelihood of the organisation surviving the emergency and continuing to be able to serve its customers;
- they expose staff to pressure which would be expected of them in an emergency;
- they give opportunity for emergency responders who would not normally work together to do so in a comfortable environment where they can get to know one-another and build up trust;
- they demonstrate to the community, shareholders and customers that an organisation takes its emergency planning seriously; and
- they permit new ideas and techniques to be tested in safe conditions.

C1.5. However exercises also can have drawbacks:

- both planning and execution of exercises use up staff time and divert people away from their primary tasks;
- some (but not all) exercises can be costly to stage;
- poorly designed exercises, or exercises where objectives are not met, can reflect badly on an organisation; and
- exercises can encourage a false sense of security as exercise conditions can never replicate exactly those encountered in a real situation.

It makes sense, when planning an exercise, to maximise the benefits and get good value for the resources it expends. This guide covers aspects of exercise design to help those who are commissioning, designing and running exercises decide how best to go about it.



## C2. GETTING STARTED

B2.1. Setting up an exercise is not easy. Some people are asked to do so when they have little experience of participating in them, never mind organising them. Other people have been involved in exercises which were unsatisfactory in some way and are not sure how to improve things. The first problem is:

### Where to start?

C2.2. Trying to work out where to start planning an exercise is rather like trying to find an end in a loop of tangled string. Every decision will depend in some part on other decisions which have not been made yet. In order to get best value from an exercise, **the best place to start is to decide what you want to achieve from an exercise.**

### Aims and objectives

C2.3. **An effective exercise should be objective driven.** Planning should start with a careful consideration of why an exercise is being contemplated. **The exercise is not an end in itself - 'to hold an exercise' is not a valid aim.** The exercise aim should be clearly stated. It may be to **test aspects of the plan** such as contact and alert arrangements or the validity of assumptions on who would respond and how. The exercise may be primarily intended as a training process, to inform those who would have to respond to an emergency and give them practice in doing so, or it may be used **to explore possible solutions** to problems which have been identified.

C2.4. The overall aim of an exercise should be kept simple: complex or multiple aims require complex exercises which should only be attempted, if at all, when both planners and participants are experienced and confident. Within the stated aim there may be a number of subsidiary objectives. Both aim and objectives should be clearly and unambiguously stated. A template may be:

AIM: To ....., in order to: ....

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the exercise, participants will have ....

a.

b.

etc.

C2.5. Few emergency responses involve only one organisation or one part of an organisation. At the beginning of the exercise planning process, possible participants should be identified and invited to be involved. Those organisations which wish to participate should be encouraged to set their own objectives within the overall aim. As the exercise planning progresses, more organisations may have to be added and some may drop out.

### **C 3. GETTING GOING**

C3.1. Exercise planners should not work alone. The organisation, or part of an organisation, which is primarily running the exercise should take the lead in making the arrangements, but other people from within the organisation and from other participating organisations should be involved throughout the planning process. The emergency services will nearly always be involved to some extent and their expertise in managing both incidents and exercises is invaluable. In addition it may be useful to involve technical experts and emergency planners from other organisations to ensure that the scenario is realistic and that it allows each participating organisation to achieve their objectives. These people will make up an exercise planning group.

#### **Setting up a planning group**

C3.2. The planning group should be small enough to work quickly and efficiently. This may require some organisations to be excluded from the main group but to be consulted as necessary or involved in sub-groups planning particular aspects of the exercise. Careful thought needs to be given to which individuals should participate in the planning group. Ideally the planning of the exercise should be carried out by people who are not going to be operationally involved in carrying out the exercise. Because they would know the whole scenario from the beginning and would have gone through the expected responses, their reactions in the exercise would not be realistic. However few organisations have the luxury of a dedicated emergency planning officer who has no allocated role in the planned response to an emergency. The options are usually:

- have your exercise planners play their normal role, but acknowledge the limitations as regards exercise realism;
- play the exercise with your planners' deputies as if the exercise planners were all on holiday when the incident happened. Whether this is a satisfactory solution depends on what objectives have been set for the exercise; and

- bring in exercise planners from other organisations, either those working in a similar field or consultants specialising in exercise design.

Some compromises will have to be made, and the final solution may well be a combination of these options.

### **What sort of exercise?**

C3.3. Exercises come in a range of styles and formats. In an ideal world the size and format of an exercise should be decided on the basis of what best enables all participants to meet their objectives. In reality the type of exercise chosen will also depend on time, people and finances available, on the experience or otherwise of the exercise planners and on the constraints imposed by statutory obligations.

Exercises generally fall into three categories:

#### **Seminar exercises**

C3.4. **These are exercises where an audience listens to a speaker or panel of speakers talking about an emergency response plan or a particular problem with emergency response and has an opportunity to ask questions, contribute ideas and discuss ways in which the response could be carried out.** This type of exercise is usually used for training purposes, to inform people about their role in an emergency plan, or to explore possible solutions to problems with an emergency response. It is particularly useful where a new plan is being developed or where there is uncertainty about the best way to respond. These exercises can involve a large number of people, if necessary, at minimal cost and with limited preparation time.

#### **Table-top exercises**

C3.5. **These are exercises where emergency responders form syndicate groups or sit round a table and describe the actions which they would take in order to**

**respond to an emergency.** In general the scenario is fed to them bit-by-bit, with participants being asked to respond to each situation as it arises. Visualisation of the exercise incident may be aided by maps and models which can be moved or updated as the exercise progresses. A table-top is usually held in 'exercise time' with individuals or groups being given time to decide what their response at a particular stage of the incident would be and then time being taken to discuss the decisions made and the consequences of these for other responders and the victims. However it is possible to run a table-top in 'real time' with the participants forced to deal with a developing situation at a pace which mirrors how a real incident would develop. This allows participants to experience the sort of pressure which a real situation would require, but limits the opportunity for reflection and discussion. Table-top exercises can vary from straightforward exercises of one particular aspect of a response to very complex exercises involving many simultaneous problems and many players.

### **Live exercises**

**C3.6. These are the classic type of exercise which usually involve a lot of emergency service vehicles turning up at the scene of an 'incident' which has been artificially laid out by the exercise planning group.** A live exercise can range from a relatively straightforward incident, such as a passenger boat in difficulty, to a complex site involving crashed vehicles, chemical contamination and multiple casualties. All exercise players carry out the tasks which would be required of them in a real incident at the rate that a real incident would demand. Volunteers play the parts of casualties, onlookers, the media and evacuees. Players get a feel for what working on a real emergency would be like, but there is little time for discussion of options or review of decisions. Obviously live exercises are more suited to some scenarios than others: it is difficult to hold a live exercise of the response to widespread flooding or heavy snowfalls.

### Combined exercises

C3.7. **It is possible to combine different types of exercise.** For example, a seminar-style session where people are informed about an emergency situation and their part in dealing with it, can be immediately followed by a table-top exercise to check whether participants have understood the problems and their roles. A live exercise of a part of a response can run alongside a table-top exercise of another part of the same response.

C3.8 In general, the seminar exercise is the least difficult and least expensive to organise and the live exercise the most difficult and expensive, but this does not mean that a live exercise is intrinsically superior to a seminar or table-top one. Each type of exercise fulfils a slightly different function and allows different objectives to be met. The exercise design team will want to arrange the type of exercise which best meets their needs within the constraints of time, resources and legislation.

### Deciding on the scale of an exercise

C3.9. **Any type of exercise can be run on almost any scale. It is not always necessary to exercise all parts of a planned response at the same time, so small exercises can be organised to test bits of plans.** However there are occasions where an organisation will want to test the whole of a response in one go or will want to involve a very large number of people. Small-scale exercises can be organised more quickly, at less cost than large exercises, but still require the same thorough preparation and focus on meeting objectives. Large-scale exercises, especially live exercises, require both planners and participants to be confident and practised in order to get full value out of the time (usually no less than a year of planning and preparation) and resources invested.

C3.10. Often, modest-scale exercises, properly planned and followed up and repeated as necessary, are more effective than very large exercises where resources are concentrated on the event and little thought is given to preparations or post-

exercise evaluation. A major live exercise can look attractive and impressive without the participating organisations gaining any value from it except, perhaps, positive public exposure. In some cases such visible commitment to public safety can be a legitimate aim in itself, but too often such exercises are held without anyone having a clear idea of why they are doing so.

C3.11. The emergency services use their operational procedures every day and do not normally need practice at closing off roads or putting casualties in ambulances. Other organisations which do not use their emergency response procedures nearly as often will need to exercise them at intervals. Organisations planning exercises should not assume that the emergency services will always be available to participate at the scale which they would like. An exercise may offer little value to an emergency service, or there may be just too many organisations wanting to run exercises. With goodwill all round this problem can be circumvented. Not all organisations need necessarily play the exercise at the same level. For example a player may make a token appearance, with one vehicle or person representing a larger response, or the lead organisation may play the part of the absent service, using a script provided by it.

### **Setting a scenario**

C3.12. A scenario is the story round which an exercise is based. It can be simple or complex according to the objectives of the exercise. In general, simple scenarios are preferable as they allow participants to focus on key actions and decisions. The main elements of a scenario are:

- The initial incident - what happens, when and where;
- The participants - what resources are available to deal with the incident;
- The effects of the incident on the community and environment;
- How the incident develops, including information, problems and new developments to be fed into the exercise as it progresses.

- C3.13. Scenarios should be founded on realistic risk assessments of the main threats or vulnerabilities faced, so that although emergency planning aims to provide a flexible response to any situation, the exercise tests the effectiveness of that planning in situations which are liable to arise. Some exercise scenarios will be based on a risk assessment of a 'likely' incident and some on a 'worst case' situation. Risk assessment can be fairly informal, but it is advantageous for organisations to take a formal, objective view of their risks from time-to-time, using recognised techniques. Training and advice on risk assessment is widely available.
- C3.14. In constructing the scenario, especially in deciding how it should develop within the exercise, the planning group will probably have to make some assumptions about how the main response organisations will deal with the situation. This is why it is useful to have representatives of these organisations on the planning group. It is possible to specify only the initial incident and to allow 'free play', where the participants have full control over how the incident develops. This however runs a risk of the exercise going off at a tangent and failing to meet its aim. Normally some discipline is applied to the play and participants are told how the incident develops.
- C3.15. Exercise scenarios often require a great deal of background detail to be available so that participants' questions can be answered and enough information given to enable decisions to be taken (although this information should normally be limited to what would be available in a real incident). Often more information will need to be collected than is finally used.
- C3.16. **Developing a scenario can be a very valuable part of the emergency planning process.** As the planning group collect information and review what decisions will need to be taken by exercise participants, gaps in response plans, and situations where there is no clear 'right' way to proceed can become obvious. The planning team can choose to propose solutions to these problems, incorporate them in plans, and use the exercise to see if the solutions work. On the other hand, it may be useful to leave these gaps and let the exercise players try to resolve them as they



come to them. This can reinforce a message about the adequacy or otherwise of plans and procedures and offers an opportunity to creatively look for solutions.

**C3.17. A scenario should enable all the objectives of the participating organisations to be met. The exercise planning group should go back over their objectives when the scenario has been set to make sure that nothing has been left out.** It may be that once the type and scale of the exercise has been decided and the scenario written, some of the objectives are found not to fit. The group must decide whether to amend the objectives or to re-think the exercise. This can be tedious and frustrating, but by refining the exercise and the objectives in this way, the best possible value will be extracted from the exercise.

## C 4. ON THE DAY

### Running an exercise – hardware

C4.1. In order to run an exercise some or all of the following will be needed in addition to whatever equipment is necessary for the exercise response itself;

- accommodation or a site suitable for the purpose and with all necessary amenities;
- notice boards, whiteboards, photocopier, clocks or stopwatches, stationery;
- first aid kits, means of identification (name badges, armbands, tabards), all-weather clothing, for live exercises;
- means of communications, including pre-printed message sheets, static and mobile phones, fax machines (preferably one for outgoing and one for incoming faxes), e-mail and radios, along with exercise-specific directories;
- systems for logging and managing messages - both within the exercise and as part of the exercise direction and evaluation procedures;
- means of recording exercise play for debriefing and training purposes: video and stills cameras, tape recorders;
- maps, models, plots of pollution plumes;
- transport for volunteers and exercise directing staff;
- catering;
- facilities for word processing; and
- labels for doors, buildings, exercise areas.

## Running an exercise: people

C4.2. To run an exercise, especially a large one, a range of people are needed in addition to the actual exercise participants:

- a controller, to monitor how an exercise is going and steer it in the right direction;
- directing staff to assist the controller, possibly drawn from the planning team;
- messengers to carry messages within the directing staff and between them and the exercise players. (These are additional to any messengers required within the exercise.);
- typist to type up any urgent messages;
- administrative staff to count players in and out, log messages and take notes. (Again these are additional to the administrative staff required within the exercise.);
- safety and first aid teams for live exercises; and
- observers to watch how the exercise, or a certain aspect of the exercise, goes and report back to the participants for debriefing purposes. Participating organisations normally supply observers, but one or more neutral observers are also useful for an objective viewpoint.

## Controlling an exercise

C4.3. All exercises create artificial situations which are not necessarily true to reality. In a real emergency, the objectives of the response are usually fairly basic - to save life and protect property, to provide welfare support, to minimise environmental contamination etc. The objectives of an exercise are often very different - to instruct staff, to test systems, to give people practice in working together.

- C4.4. For a straightforward exercise, such as a communications test, the exercise arrangements can be made in such a way as to ensure as far as possible that the objectives will be met (but never underestimate the ability of people to muddle up even the simplest instructions).
- C4.5. **For a more complex exercise, if the objectives are to be met, it is not possible to simply set the scenario and let the participants get on with it. There needs to be someone who has a clear view of the objectives and what needs to be done to ensure that they are achieved.** That person needs to be able to manage the progress of the exercise to ensure that it stays on course. This is the role of the **exercise controller or director**.
- C4.6. The exercise controller is usually supported by a number of **directing staff** (known sometimes as **distaff**) who monitor what is happening, report back to the controller and act as the controller's messengers. In many cases it is convenient for the controller and directing staff to be drawn from the exercise planning group, as these people have a good knowledge of the scenario and what is supposed to happen. However if the planning group members are required to play the exercise, it may be necessary to bring in directing staff from other organisations or other parts of the lead organisation.
- C4.7. In most cases an exercise does not involve the full spectrum of people who would normally be involved in an emergency response. This is especially the case with table-top exercises. In order to simulate the contribution of the missing people and organisations, there is usually some form of **control group** which is physically separate from the exercise play and which sends messages and information into the exercise and responds to requests for information from exercise players. The control group can take the part of the public ringing for advice and to report incidents, operational staff on the ground collecting information, technical experts, senior management and Ministers and emergency services. All the necessary messages and the information required to give advice have to be prepared before the exercise. Some queries will be made for which there is no pre-prepared answer,

or the exercise may go in unexpected directions, so the control group should include people who can generate realistic answers on the spot. However all unscripted material going into the exercise should be checked with the controller or directing staff.

C4.8. Of course, most exercises do not require hordes of directing staff and control group members. Often one or two people can fulfil all the roles, provided that they are aware of what will be required of them.

C4.9. There are various ways in which the controller can manage the exercise:

- the amount of information or type of query going into the exercise from the control group can be varied. This can resolve some situations where the exercise was getting stuck or add new problems if the players seem to be getting on too well;
- in a tabletop exercise, where it is usual to stop play at intervals and review what has happened, the controller can reposition the play at the beginning of each new session by acknowledging what has happened to date but dictating the start position for the new session;
- in 'freeplay' situations where the play is allowed to flow naturally, the directing staff need to be very alert to what is happening and the controller needs to act quickly and decisively to keep the play on course, by adding information or new problems;
- in extreme situations where the exercise play is going badly off the rails, the controller may need to stop the play, resolve any difficulties and restart the play from a new position; and
- some exercises, especially complex or technical ones, may require an umpire or umpires to resolve difficulties on the spot and to ensure that the participants are playing honestly. The umpire(s) must work closely with the directing staff and must understand what the exercise is trying to achieve.

**Other things to think about.**

C4.10. There are a range of things which exercise planners have to consider, which can affect how an exercise goes:

**Weather**

C4.11. In most seminar and table-top exercises, the weather can be planned as part of the scenario. Some scenarios may centre on severe weather, such as storms or snowfall, and the problems which it causes. The response to other emergencies, such as toxic gas leaks, will be determined to an extent by the prevailing weather conditions. In other situations weather can be used to add complications to scenarios. By specifying exercise weather, the planning group can tailor the play to meet exercise objectives. It is possible to play table-top exercises using real weather, providing there is some way of obtaining real-time weather information, but this reduces the degree of control which the planners/directing staff have over the scenario.

C4.12. Live exercises nearly all have to use whatever weather comes along on the day. Exercise plans should include clear information on what weather conditions would make it unsafe to start or continue with the exercise, who will decide whether to cancel or abandon it and how the information will be communicated to all the players. Even when weather does not affect the running of the exercise, it may be necessary to provide protection from the elements for participants and any volunteers acting as casualties, evacuees etc. In a surprising number of cases exercise casualties have suffered from exposure or sunstroke and become real casualties.

**Time**

C4.13. Responses which extend over a number of days can be compressed into a much shorter time in an exercise. This can be done most easily in a table-top or seminar exercise where participants can be given a limited time to consider what their

response would be over a period of hours or days, or where play can be stopped and restarted at a different exercise time/date. It is possible to compress time in a live exercise, for example by stopping the exercise and moving exercise time by a number of hours or days. To do so successfully requires careful directing and can disrupt the feeling of reality which is one of the main benefits of a live exercise. In assessing the effectiveness of an exercise where time is compressed, the exercise planners should be aware that there will be a level of uncertainty over whether actions could really be done in the time which players estimate they would take.

C4.14. Major emergencies do not normally confine themselves to normal office hours. The response to a major emergency may continue over a period of days or months and for at least part of that time a 24 hour per day effort will be required. Because of financial and manpower constraints, exercises are usually very limited in duration. Even when a very big exercise extends over a number of days, play is normally concentrated in the normal 9-5 office hours, with minimal activity overnight. While it is recognised that these sort of constraints are inevitable, exercise planners should be aware that the exercise will not necessarily expose the sort of stresses that 24 hour operation would place on organisations.

## **Communications**

C4.15. In an exercise, communications work on a number of levels. Exercise participants need to be able to communicate with each-other, the controller and directing staff need to be able to communicate without the participants overhearing, and the directing staff, control group and umpire have to be able to communicate with participants and visa versa.

C4.16. Whole exercises can concentrate on testing a communications link or chain, for example calling up the people on an emergency contact list to check how easily they could be contacted and whether they knew what to do on receipt of a message. In such cases the communications used would be those normally

available for real incidents. In other exercises where communications are incidental to the objectives, it may be necessary to construct artificial systems of communication.

- C4.17. In table-top exercises and seminar exercises, much of the communication can be done by word of mouth or on paper. All significant communications, eg situation reports, requests for information and inputs from the control group, should be made in writing so as to minimise the problems of imperfect memory and ambiguity which come with verbal instructions. Putting everything in writing also helps in the review of the exercise afterwards as there is a permanent record of communications. Where there is a lot of verbal communication, such as 'report back' sessions at a seminar or table-top exercise, one or more of the directing staff should act as note takers to make a record of what was said. In all types of exercise it may be useful to have pre-printed message forms which prompt users to specify from/to, date/time and degree of urgency. This makes the jobs of messengers and log keepers much easier.
- C4.18. Where telephone and radio networks are used for communications, users should always preface messages with the agreed exercise codeword or signal. Users of the network who are not involved in the exercise should be warned that there will be exercise traffic which should be ignored. It may be useful to draw up exercise directories for telephone numbers of players, thus avoiding problems with wrong numbers/extensions.
- C4.19. As with real events, communications in exercises can be a major problem, with overloaded systems, bottlenecks where messages have to be logged, typed or copied, and breakdowns. Whilst all these may give greater reality to the exercise and be significant learning points, every effort should be made to prevent communications difficulties causing an exercise to fail to meet its objectives. Of course, if the aim of the exercise is to test backup communications arrangements, failure of normal communications can be built into the scenario.



## Finance

- C4.20. All exercises involve some expense, if only in staff time and stationery. The expense is split between the lead organisation and those other organisations which contribute manpower, vehicles, equipment and management time to the overall exercise. Generally the larger the exercise, the greater the expense. As an example, a major live County-wide exercise in England in 1996 cost the lead organisation £40,000. About half of this went on new equipment and the rest on consumables such as accommodation, catering and communications. This figure did not include the considerable expense incurred by other participants.
- C4.21. Any organisation commissioning an exercise should be aware of the cost implications. The type and scale of the exercise will largely be dictated by the budget available, or in most cases lack of a budget. Even where money is available, the exercise should be tailored to the experience of planners and participants so as to be good value for money. An expensive exercise is not necessarily a good one.
- C4.22. The lead organisation should not presume that participants will be happy to supply whatever manpower and resources are asked of them. It will be necessary to negotiate dates, duration and scale of play to enable all organisations to live within their own budgets. In some cases it may be necessary to pay organisations' exercise expenses if their contribution is crucial to the exercise but they have no budget for it.
- C4.23. The cost of exercises can be minimised by co-ordinating exercise programmes across organisations with mutual interests and by making the best possible use of statutory exercises such as those held at airports and COMAH sites. Commercial organisations such as transport operators, manufacturing industry and privatised utilities, who would be looking to public services for an emergency response, may be willing to provide finance, equipment or accommodation for exercises as a goodwill gesture.

## Media

C4.24. Live exercises often make good material for the media but organisations should consider carefully before inviting local media to cover the exercise. Good media coverage helps the local population understand what is going on and how the public services are prepared to provide help to the community in times of emergency. Involving the media also gives organisations an opportunity to build positive relationships with them and promote understanding of the emergency response. Table-top and seminar exercises are less photogenic but could also be used to educate media representatives and build relationships.

C4.25. There are of course risks involved. If an exercise goes badly, it does so rather visibly, or the media may be critical of some aspect which they did not like or understand. It is best if media attention is kept away from exercises where the objective is to explore solutions to problems and is concentrated on those where a live exercise is a culmination of a development and testing programme and there is reasonable expectation that the exercise will go smoothly.

C4.26. In any case, media coverage of an exercise should be co-ordinated by one of the participating organisations so as to avoid confusion. Media reporting on the exercise should be briefed not to become involved in the exercise play or to confuse their role with that of anyone playing the part of TV or newspaper journalists within the exercise.

## Safety and insurance

C4.27. Seminar and table-top exercises normally entail no particular danger to participants. However live exercises can put players, volunteers and directing staff in potentially dangerous situations. At the planning stage, every effort should be made to ensure that the exercise is capable of being carried out safely. The planning group may have to make delicate judgements about the degree of risk they are prepared to take in order to have a realistic scenario.

C4.28. Where there are potentially hazardous situations, the organisations involved may want to appoint one or more safety officers to the site to ensure that all operations are carried out in accordance with health and safety instructions and to act as emergency responders should anything go wrong. The exercise instructions should include signals and code words to use for real emergencies, such as injuries to people, and to indicate that the exercise should be abandoned because of dangerous conditions or other problems.

C4.29. In any case, all exercise participants should be covered by insurance, either arranged by their own organisation or by the lead organisation.

## **C 5. AFTERWARDS**

C5.1. When time and energy has been spent on organising an exercise there is a natural tendency to relax after the exercise is over, or indeed to collapse from exhaustion. However the full value of an exercise is only gained from a thorough post-exercise programme of evaluation and plan revision.

### **Debriefing**

C5.2. Immediately after the conclusion of an exercise it is usual to hold a short evaluation session (known in exercise jargon as a 'hot debrief') to give all the players an opportunity to comment while events are still fresh in their minds. This evaluation should concentrate on major problems and lessons learnt and a brief consideration of the extent to which objectives were met. In most cases it is sufficient to ask representatives of organisations or functional groups (emergency services, utilities, welfare providers) to give a verbal report to the rest of the players. Where exercise players are not together at the end of the exercise, as with communications exercises or multi-site exercises, players can be asked to complete a log sheet or comment form to indicate how their part in the play went.

C5.3. With some small seminar and tabletop exercises, the hot debrief provides the lead organisation with sufficient material to prepare an exercise report. However it is usual for the lead organisation to give participants a chance to sit back and examine the exercise and their part in it and to report their experiences in a more measured, formal way. This 'cold debrief' should be completed within a few weeks of the exercise so as not to lose momentum.

### **Post-exercise report**

C5.4. Information from the debriefings, the directing staff and observers should be brought together into a post-exercise report. It is not necessary for the report to contain the whole scenario or a blow-by-blow account of the exercise. It should concentrate on the objectives of the exercise and to what extent they were

achieved, any flaws or gaps in plans and procedures and action points to remedy them. For a small exercise, a single page may be sufficient, and even for large exercises the post-exercise report should be short and to the point.

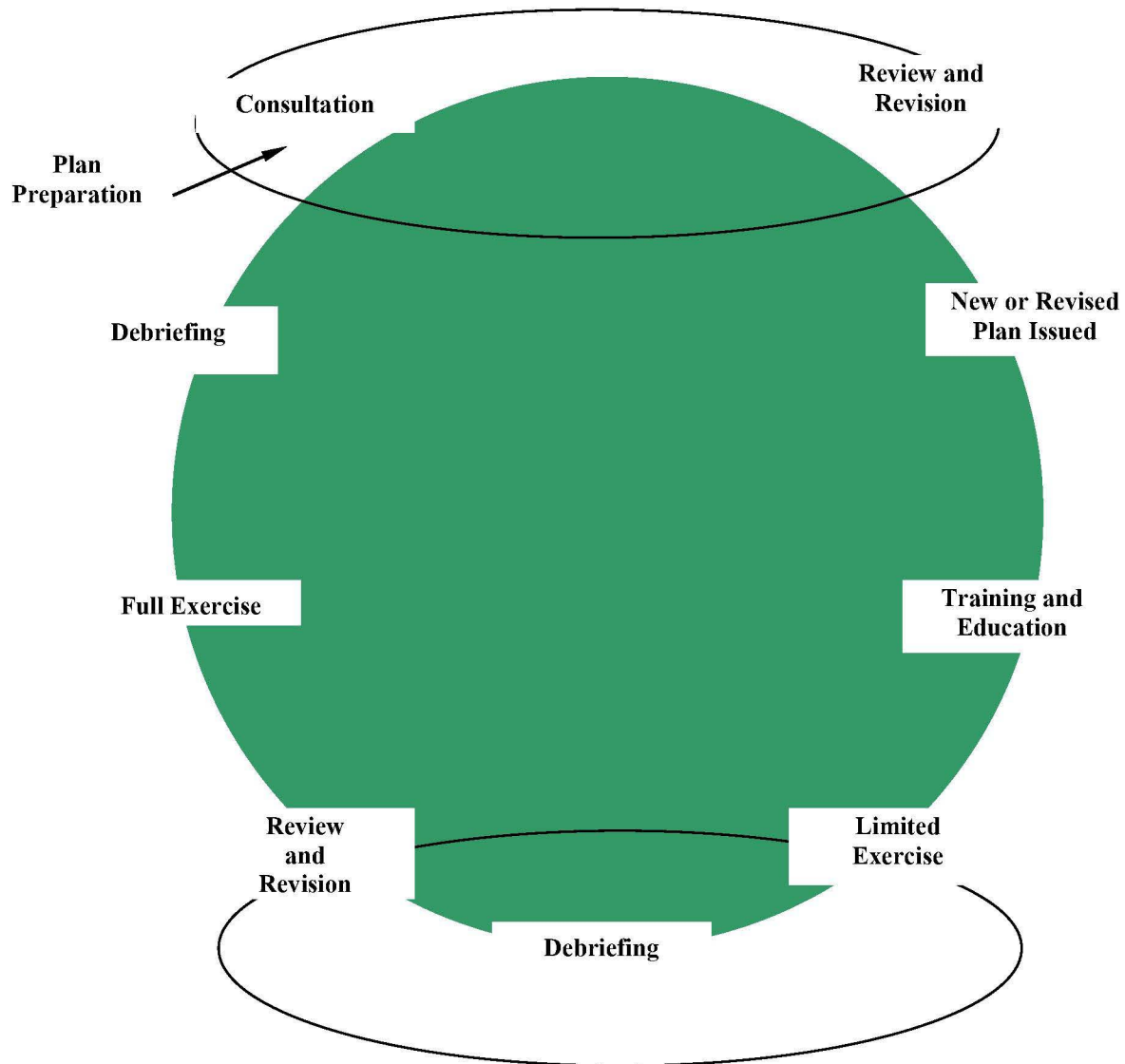
- C5.5. It may be useful to produce a concise post-exercise report for circulation to participating organisations and interested parties such as other emergency planners, and a slightly more detailed - and more candid - version for internal consumption,

## C 6. THE EXERCISE CYCLE

- C6.1. **Exercises are not one-off events but elements in a planning and validation cycle (Figure 2).** Organisations preparing a new plan, or which have not had a coherent validation strategy, should start with simple exercises and work upwards. It is not a good idea to jump straight into a full-scale live exercise. It is preferable to build up experience and to validate plans by holding a series of exercises which test elements of the plan separately. There are a number of ways of dividing up a plan for exercise purposes.
- C6.2. **Horizontal slicing** divides a plan into operational, tactical and strategic levels. These levels can be exercised individually in whatever way best suits their nature and needs. In many organisations a basic operational response is well tried and tested and exercises may concentrate on looking at extreme events which would stretch capacities. The tactical and strategic levels of command are unlikely to be much used, so it may be wise to begin exercising them with low-level scenarios which do not put too much pressure on participants until they have gained some experience and confidence.
- C6.3. **Vertical slicing** divides complex emergency responses into separate functions such as communications, welfare arrangements, search and rescue, evacuation or casualty arrangements. For each element, the exercise includes operational, tactical and strategic levels as appropriate. Elements can be exercised in relative isolation from other aspects of the same response: inputs from aspects not being played can be provided by the exercise control group. Vertical slicing is most useful for exercising operational aspects of emergency response or tactical and strategic management within organisations. It is not useful for exercising co-ordination arrangements.
- C6.4. As vertical slicing is the most common method used for running limited-scale exercises, there is a danger that the co-ordination element is never exercised or

properly thought through. **An exercise programme should include samples of both vertical and horizontal slicing.**

- C6.5. As each exercise is completed, the lessons learnt can be built into plans and procedures and a further exercise arranged to educate staff in the changes and/or validate the new arrangements. A good scenario can be made flexible enough to be used for a range of exercises. Information from the exercise of individual 'slices' can be built into the scenario, making it progressively more realistic. This is a good way to approach a major exercise, which integrates a number of vertical and horizontal slices and exercises most, or all, of a response at once.
- C6.6. A major exercise, especially a live one, is likely to be the culmination of two or three years' work on a response plan. Planning for such an exercise would probably start at least a year in advance and would include many planning group meetings and a number of preparatory exercises to fill detail into the scenario. Following such an exercise there will almost certainly be aspects of the response plan which could be improved, or unexpected gaps in the plans which have to be filled in. These changes and additions will need to be exercised in order to be sure that they work and that everyone is familiar and comfortable with the changes. Thus the exercise cycle starts all over again.



**FIGURE 2: THE EXERCISE CYCLE**



## NORTHERN IRELAND CENTRAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS PROTOCOL

### Introduction

1. When a major emergency has occurred or is anticipated which is likely to have a serious impact either locally or regionally in Northern Ireland, central strategic co-ordination arrangements can be activated as required.
2. These strategic co-ordination arrangements are known as the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA).
3. The Executive, the First Minister and deputy First Minister or the Lead Department may request the activation of the NICCMA. It may also be activated by escalation of a local/ sub-regional response as set out in the protocol for the escalation of the multi-agency response.
4. Cross-departmental co-ordination and support will be provided by OFMDFM through the activation of NICCMA.

### Classification of Emergencies

5. An emergency is defined in the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment or the security of Northern Ireland or the UK as a whole (see Glossary at **Annex A** for fuller definition).
6. Emergencies cover a broad spectrum with varying impacts and consequences. An emergency can range from a purely local incident to one having an impact across NI, or indeed across the UK. These require different co-ordination arrangements, capable

of being applied flexibly as an emergency develops or changes in character. In NI, as elsewhere in the UK, emergencies are classified according to how their strategic co-ordination is discharged.

7. There are four broad types of emergency requiring crisis management in the NI context. These are:

- **Local level** – emergencies where the outcomes are confined to a relatively small area or number of people, where local or sub-regional organisations, or the sub-regional offices of regional organisations, deliver the response. Co-ordination of the response and recovery is facilitated by a local organisation, usually the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) or a district council, but may be another lead organisation such as a Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) Board or a government agency.
- **Level 1: Significant** – An emergency is relatively localised in one geographical area or sector, but is of sufficient severity to require strategic co-ordination. The Lead Department provides and/or manages the response, including co-ordination of all organisations within the sector and other departments, agencies and local responders involved. The responses to a cryptosporidium outbreak or a water pollution incident are examples of significant emergencies.
- **Level 2: Serious** – The extent or severity of an emergency is such that a large number of local, sub-regional and regional organisations are involved in delivering the response and strategic level co-ordination which is required. In these cases the Executive or the First Minister and deputy First Minister or the lead department (through its Minister, Permanent Secretary or civil contingencies lead official as appropriate) can ask for the NICCMA to be convened to facilitate strategic co-ordination. A Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak or very severe weather across NI are examples of serious emergencies.

- **Level 3: Catastrophic** – An emergency has, or threatens, either a catastrophic impact on a particular area of NI or a serious or catastrophic impact across the whole of NI and /or the rest of the UK. Strategic co-ordination is achieved through the NICCMA. This applies to the most severe emergencies such as an outbreak of Pandemic Influenza or to manage the consequences of a major terrorist attack causing extensive death, injuries or damage to the critical national infrastructure.

## Executive Response

8. The NI Executive may wish to be involved in the response to any of these levels of emergency, including the local level. Their role would vary depending on the level and type of emergency as described below.

- **Local Level:** These types of emergencies would be co-ordinated by a local level organisation such as PSNI or a district council. In such circumstances the Executive may choose to meet to consider requests for central assistance to support the local level response. This could also be done at official level. In these cases the response would clearly be led at local level rather than Executive level. An example of this would be localised flooding.
- **Level 1:** A Lead NI department would co-ordinate the response to this type of emergency. In such circumstances the Executive may meet to support the Lead Minister. In these cases the response would be led by the Lead Minister with clear Executive support. Examples of this would be a cryptosporidium outbreak or a water pollution incident.
- **Levels 2 and 3:** In these most serious types of emergency the Ministerially led Crisis Management Group (see paragraph 14) would lead, direct and co-ordinate the strategic response for NI, reporting to the Executive as appropriate. Examples of this type of emergency would be an outbreak of foot and mouth (Level 2), an outbreak of pandemic influenza or to manage the consequences of a major terrorist attack (Level 3).

## **Scope of the Protocol**

9. The full NICCMA have been designed to facilitate strategic co-ordination across a large number of local, sub-regional and regional organisations and therefore are normally required for Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies only.
10. Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies require direction, co-ordination and effective decision making at central government level. This is in addition to any actual / direct response, which would be co-ordinated in most cases by PSNI. Further information on the delivery and co-ordination of the direct response is available in guidance documents, including 'A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland'.
11. It is recognised that any Level 2 or Level 3 emergency affecting Northern Ireland may well have an impact on the rest of the United Kingdom and Ireland. The UK interface arrangements are set out below. Arrangements exist to share information on planning and response with government departments in Ireland, although these arrangements are outside the scope of this protocol.

## **NI Central Crisis Management Structure**

12. The NICCMA are discharged by the various groups of the central crisis management structure. A schematic of the central crisis management structure is at Annex A. Each group is staffed by suitably trained personnel from NI departments and other key organisations. Activation of the various groups depends on the specific circumstances at the time. The various components and their respective responsibilities are outlined below.

## **Crisis Management Group**

13. The Crisis Management Group (CMG) is the Ministerially led strategic co-ordination group and, as such, is responsible for setting the overarching strategy for the

NI Administration's response to the emergency. CMG, with the authority of the Executive to which it reports, has the power to direct the response and commit resources across the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

14. CMG will normally be chaired by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister acting jointly or, where appropriate, another Minister nominated jointly by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, such as the Minister for the Lead Department. Depending on the circumstances, Ministers may also wish to delegate chairmanship to the Head of the NI Civil Service, Permanent Secretaries or other officials as they consider appropriate.
15. Membership comprises the First Minister and the deputy First Minister, other Executive Ministers depending on the nature of the emergency and relevant departmental officials as required, including the Head of the NI Civil Service, NI Permanent Secretaries, and the Head of the Executive Information Service. Ministers may delegate membership to officials as they consider appropriate. Representatives of other organisations such as the NIO and PSNI may also be invited. Relevant district council representatives may also be invited to brief members. Whilst participating in CMG, members will have access to a small support team from their own departments and organisations.

### **Civil Contingencies Group (NI)**

16. The Civil Contingencies Group (NI), (CCG(NI)) discharges the strategic central co-ordination function during emergency situations when CMG has not been convened, but otherwise works in support of CMG to co-ordinate the response across the NI departments and other organisations such as the emergency services and district councils, in line with the strategic direction set by CMG.
17. CCG(NI) will normally be chaired by the Director of Corporate Services, OFMDFM. However, CCG(NI) can also be chaired by the Lead Department where it is appropriate to do so.

18. CCG(NI) is made up of representatives at senior management level from the NI departments, NIO, the emergency services, district councils and other key organisations. Whilst participating in CCG(NI), members will have access to a small support team from their own departments and organisations.

### **Scientific and Technical Advisory Group to NICCMA**

19. The Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG) is convened in response to emergencies involving hazards or threats that require specialist analysis and advice. The remit of the group is to give professional advice to CCG(NI) and CMG to facilitate decision making. STAG is made up of professional and technical experts relevant to the particular emergency scenario.

### **Central Operations Room**

20. The Central Operations Room (COR) controls the flow of information into and out of CMG and CCG(NI).

21. The COR function is discharged by Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) staff, augmented as necessary with staff from OFMDFM.

22. The **Executive Information Service** co-ordinates the delivery of public information and media response in NI through its membership of CMG and CCG(NI) and its own central and departmental arrangements.

### **Departmental Arrangements**

23. The central crisis management structure is underpinned by the individual **emergency management / response groups** in each of the NI departments (and associated bodies), the emergency services and district councils.

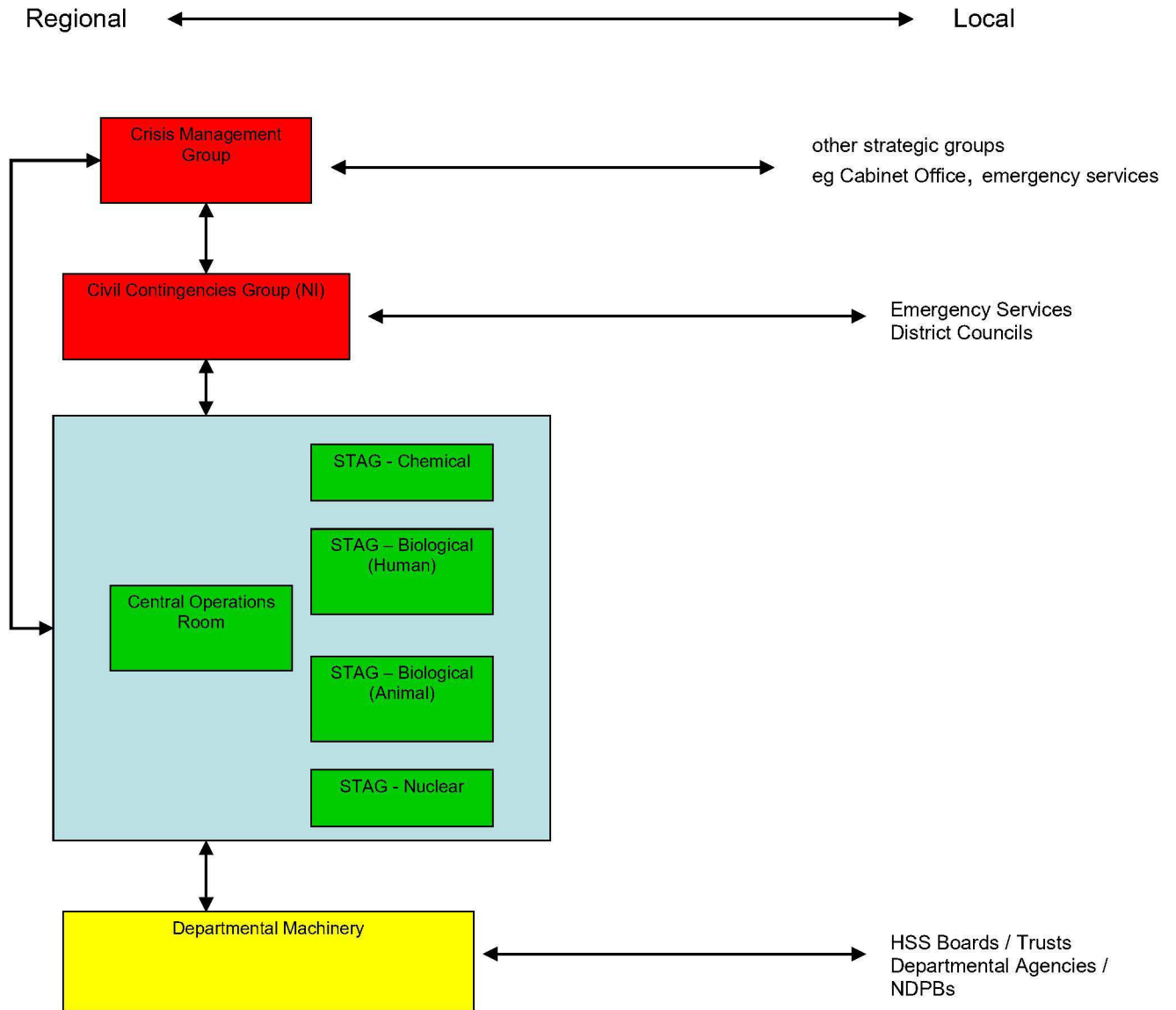
### **Other crisis management structures**

24. The components of the central crisis management structure do not operate in isolation but work closely with other strategic co-ordination machinery both within Northern Ireland and nationally. In Northern Ireland the key interfaces are with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the Police led Multi-Agency Gold.
25. To facilitate close working there are liaison arrangements between NIO and the various components of NICCMA.
26. In almost all Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies PSNI is responsible for the co-ordination of the direct response. Where this is the case CMG and the other components of the central crisis management structure operate to manage the consequences of the emergency and strategically manage the recovery process. This requires close liaison between both parties. To facilitate this an OFMDFM representative attends Police Gold (as part of the Government Liaison Team), and similarly a representative of the Chief Constable attends CMG (and CCG(NI) as appropriate).
27. In Level 3 emergencies in which PSNI, NIO and the NI departments are involved, representatives of Police Gold, NIO and CMG will liaise to ensure that they have a shared understanding of the issues and agree on the broad strategic direction of the overall response.

### **UK Interface Arrangements**

28. The NICCMA are an integral part of the UK arrangements. Therefore, NI representatives participate in UK co-ordination arrangements. The NI Central Crisis Management structure feeds directly into Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) in most emergencies. However, in the case of terrorist inspired incidents NIO takes the NI lead in dealing with COBR and the NI departments, individually or collectively as part of the central crisis management structure, provide input to NIO on the consequence management and recovery aspects.

### NI CENTRAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE





## APPENDIX A TO ANNEX D: LEAD ORGANISATIONS

### Strategic Lead Organisation designations

Type of Emergency	Northern Ireland strategic lead department / agency	Parent department where applicable
Default Position (Where the disaster is too wide ranging to be carried immediately by a single lead department or where the lead department is not clear from this pre-nomination list)	The Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy Minister will provide advice on lead allocation and, where appropriate, will make a recommendation to the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil	
Terrorism:  Conventional/siege/hostage.	Northern Ireland Office	
CBRN Terrorism	Northern Ireland Office	
Flooding (coastal or river).  Flooding – depending on the source of the flooding	Rivers Agency.  NI Water or Roads Service.	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.  Department of Regional Development
Marine (oil, chemical or gas) and Marine Salvage.  Pollution from vessels and offshore installations  Coastal Pollution  Salvage of shipping casualties	Maritime and Coastguard Agency.  Maritime and Coastguard Agency  NI Environment Agency NI Environment Agency  UK Secretary's of State Representative for Salvage and Intervention	Department of Environment Department of Environment

A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland

Type of Emergency	Northern Ireland strategic lead department / agency	Parent department where applicable
<p>CBRN – Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents arising from non-terrorist causes (Terrorist CBRN incident are dealt with under terrorism)</p>	<p>The appropriate lead Northern Ireland Department for the outcome of the event would lead on consequence management.</p>	
<p>Radiation Hazards arising outside NI</p> <p>As the result of accidents in GB or elsewhere</p> <p>Where hazards arise as a result of terrorist action</p>	<p>Foreign and Commonwealth Office will lead on relations with overseas governments, DEFRA will lead on GB consequences and the NI Environment Agency will lead on consequences in NI</p> <p>NIO and Home Office will lead on security and terrorist response issues</p>	<p>Department of Environment</p>
<p>Satellite Incidents.</p>	<p>UK – CCS is responsible for managing consequences once these become clear.</p>	
<p>Emergencies on offshore installations.</p>	<p>Health and Safety Executive.(GB)</p>	
<p>Disasters overseas (In which UK’s assistance is sought)</p>	<p>Department for International Development</p>	
<p>Search and Rescue:</p> <p>Civil shipping and coastal rescue.</p> <p>Military shipping and aircraft and missing civil aircraft on land when the location is not known (when the location is known the emergency is treated as a transport accident – see Severe Storms and Weather)</p>	<p>Maritime &amp; Coastguard Agency</p> <p>Ministry of Defence</p>	<p>UK Waters- Department for Transport</p>

Type of Emergency	Northern Ireland strategic lead department / agency	Parent department where applicable
<p>Severe Storms and Weather:</p> <p>If primary impact is on the transport infrastructure.</p> <p>If the primary impact is on the power system.</p> <p>If the primary outcome is flooding.</p>	<p>Department for Regional Development.</p> <p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.</p> <p>Rivers Agency</p> <p>NI Water or Roads Service, depending on the source of the flooding.</p>	<p>Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Department for Regional Development.</p>
<p>Transport Accidents (including those overseas involving UK registered ships and aircraft): Shipping and air transport.</p> <p>Land Transport.</p>	<p>Marine Accident Investigation Branch and Air Accident Investigation Branch.</p> <p>Department for Regional Development.</p>	<p>UK- Department for Transport</p>
<p>Disasters in Sports Grounds (whether sporting or non-sporting events).</p>	<p>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure.</p>	
<p>Major Explosions Arising From Landfill Gas.</p>	<p>Department of the Environment.</p>	
<p>Dam Failures.</p>	<p>NI Water</p>	<p>Department for Regional Development.</p>

A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland

Type of Emergency	Northern Ireland strategic lead department / agency	Parent department where applicable
<p>Earthquakes.</p> <p>Disused Mines (e.g. Carrickfergus salt mines)</p>	<p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment Geological Survey of NI would provide advice on geological aspects. Lead response would depend on the outcome of the earthquake</p> <p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment</p>	<p>.</p>
<p>Major structural failures in buildings (other than those caused by external impact, gas explosion, fire or industrial process)</p>	<p>Lead NI department would depend on the nature and outcome of the event.</p>	
<p>Serious Industrial Accidents: For Example If the main focus of attention relates to the operations of the HSE.</p> <p>Pollution arising from industrial Accident</p>	<p>Lead NI department would depend on the nature and outcome of the event. Health and Safety Executive, Northern Ireland</p> <p>NI Environment Agency</p>	<p>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment</p> <p>Department of Environment</p>
<p>Unexploded Wartime Ordnance.</p>	<p>Disposal - PSNI calling on MOD support</p>	
<p>Major Software Failures</p>	<p>Innovation Strategy &amp; Innovation Division</p>	<p>Department of Finance and Personnel.</p>
<p>Electronic Attack.</p>	<p>Department of Finance and Personnel will co-ordinate activity in their areas in support of the UK effort where there is a Northern Ireland dimension.</p>	

Type of Emergency	Northern Ireland strategic lead department / agency	Parent department where applicable
Disruption of Supply Chains.	Lead would depend on the sector(s) affected, eg.  Medical supplies – Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety  Energy Supplies– Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	
Animal Disease and Welfare	Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	
Food Contamination	The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland	
Drinking Water Contamination	NI Water	Department for Regional Development
Infectious Diseases	Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	

Other organisations likely to be involved in emergencies at tactical and operational level:-

- Police Service of Northern Ireland;
- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service;
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service;
- Armed Services;
- BT and other telecommunications providers;
- Executive Information Service (EIS) and Northern Ireland Office Information Service (NIOIS);
- district councils;
- voluntary organisations, eg Red Cross, St John Ambulance;
- utilities - electricity, gas, oil and water; and
- direct service providers - hospitals, schools, social services (including commercial providers of care and meals).

## ANNEX E

### SOURCES OF SPECIALIST OR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN EMERGENCIES

- E1. The response to a major emergency may require skills and equipment not normally used by public service organisations. It may also require more manpower and equipment than organisations have available. This is especially the case where direct labour forces have been replaced by contracting arrangements and where stockpiles of equipment and consumables have been run down.
- E2. In emergency situations it is probable that contract arrangements for supply of manpower and goods will not work efficiently, or that standard contracts cannot supply the necessary specialist skills and equipment.
- E3. Below are some organisations, both voluntary and commercial, which may be able to supply services or goods in emergency situations. Public service organisations which feel that they might need to call on such help should work with the organisations to agree plans and standards of response. Joint training and exercising should be carried out so that all parties understand the responsibilities, limitations and working methods of the others.
- E4. Questions of insurance and liability should be explored and resolved. Where appropriate, contracts, service level agreements or memoranda of understanding should be established. Some statutory organisations have found it advantageous to provide some funding to cover insurance for training, exercises and response for voluntary organisations which supply an essential service to them in an emergency. In other cases, statutory organisations hosting a major inter-agency exercise have taken out one-off insurance to cover all participants in the event. Where ad hoc volunteers are to be used as

part of an emergency response, insurance considerations will be particularly important.

## **WELFARE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT**

E5. The primary providers of emergency welfare services are the Health and Social Care Trusts in association with district councils, schools and other health service providers. Needs for additional support include assistance with running rest centres, provision of refreshments and meals, provision of blankets, clothing and toiletries, skilled counsellors, befrienders and transport services. Possible sources of help are:

- the voluntary ambulance services - eg St John Ambulance and the Knights of Malta;
- the British Red Cross;
- the Salvation Army;
- St Vincent de Paul;
- community organisations - eg the WI, Mothers' Union, Rotary clubs, Round Table, Lions, Business and Professional Women's Guild;
- school meals providers;
- charity shops;
- supermarkets;
- contract catering and fast food outlets - some GB emergency plans include provision of burgers from fast food outlets;
- camping equipment suppliers;
- Translink;
- coach hire companies;
- taxi companies;
- voluntary organisations with transport - especially transport adapted for disabled use; and
- military resources - manpower, accommodation and supplies.



## **MEDICAL SUPPORT**

- E6. Normal practice is for the primary response to an emergency to be provided by the full-time medical resources - the NIAS, hospitals, Health & Social Care Trusts and GPs. Voluntary services are then used to cover routine patient transportation and provide basic first aid services. First aiders are needed to deal with minor injuries where there are large numbers of casualties and should also be present in rest centres and other places where people congregate.
- E7. Because of the possible consequences of inadequately trained people giving medical treatment, all those providing emergency medical care, whether professional or volunteers should be trained and certified to an appropriate level for what they are expected to do. Careful management and supervision is necessary to ensure that patients get the best possible care. Organisations which can provide first aid and medical backup are:
- Voluntary ambulance societies - eg St John Ambulance and Knights of Malta;
  - British Red Cross;
  - First aid trained members of search and rescue organisations (see below); and
  - Military personnel.

## **SEARCH AND RESCUE**

- E8. Both inland and waterborne search and rescue require skills which are not widely available in the public services. A number of volunteer bodies have been formed to cover this area, and they work closely with the civilian services, especially the PSNI and HM Coastguard, and with military resources such as helicopters and boats. This work is often carried out in hazardous conditions, so preparation and training is vital

for safety reasons. Assistance with Search and Rescue is normally accessed through the PSNI or HM Coastguard. Help can be called on from;

- RNLI - for search and rescue at sea and on Lough Erne;
- Lough Neagh Rescue;
- Foyle Search and Rescue;
- mountain rescue teams - Mourne, Sperrins, Antrim;
- coastguard auxiliaries;
- Search and Rescue Dog Association;
- cave rescue team, Fermanagh;
- military resources;
- mine rescue teams from GB for specialist services;
- members of the public for searches, such as missing person searches, which require large numbers in relatively safe situations; and
- specialist NI FRS teams for confined space rescue and extrication.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

E9. Experience shows that in emergency situations communications facilities come under extreme pressure and are liable to failure. This may be because the infrastructure has been damaged by the cause of the emergency, because of the weight of traffic or because systems have not been maintained in an adequate manner (flat batteries, obsolete connections). Organisations which depend on their communications for command, control and reporting purposes will need support and backup. Low-tech solutions such as the use of runners and couriers may have to be considered. Communications may break down not because of hardware problems but because of

language difficulties. Specialist communication may be needed for hearing or speech impaired people or for non-English speakers.

Possible sources of assistance are:

- Radio Amateurs Emergency Network (RAYNET);
- military resources;
- telecommunication providers;
- telephone priority access and repair schemes;
- CB radio clubs;
- car/motorcycle clubs;
- courier services;
- taxi companies;
- clubs and societies for the deaf;
- special schools;
- Hospital, PSNI and Court lists of interpreters;
- Higher Education language departments; and
- voluntary agencies and social societies for ethnic groups.