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[Cabinet Office](#)

Guidance

# The Roles of Lead Government Departments, Devolved Administrations and Other Public Bodies (HTML)

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# Introduction

Civil contingency activity in the United Kingdom is based on the principle of subsidiarity. Most emergencies in the UK are handled at the local level by the emergency services, local authorities<sup>[footnote 1]</sup> and other relevant organisations such as utility companies and transport operators<sup>[footnote 2]</sup>. However, because of scale or complexity, some emergencies need a degree of central government coordination or support, with the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive taking the lead where appropriate in accordance with devolution agreements.

The UK uses a 'Lead Government Department' (LGD) model to cover all phases of emergency planning, response, recovery and risk assessment. Designated LGDs are responsible for leading work to identify serious risks and ensuring that the right planning, response and recovery arrangements are in place. Permanent Secretaries are accountable to their Secretaries of State for departmental activity and Secretaries of State are accountable to Parliament for their department's actions and performance.

LGDs, with the support of other departments and bodies, are responsible for national-level:

- Risk anticipation: Maintaining awareness of the changing set of risks, threats and vulnerabilities including horizon-scanning for new and emerging risks within the areas of responsibility assigned to them, identifying specific risks to prepare for, and updating their risk assessment accordingly.
- Risk assessment: Assessing the potential scenarios, including the reasonable worst case scenarios (RWCS), should the risk materialise, and assessing the impact and likelihood of these scenarios.
- Prevention & Mitigation: Introducing measures which build resilience, preventing risks from occurring or reducing their severity.
- Preparation: Developing plans for responding to and recovering from an emergency and testing their effectiveness, e.g. through regular exercises.
- Response: Leading/coordinating the central response to an emergency. Response encompasses the decisions and actions taken to deal with the immediate effects of an emergency.
- Recovery: Leading/coordinating a centrally-led recovery process following an emergency, if needed. This might include long-term activities like the reconstruction of physical infrastructure or the restoration of emotional, social and physical well-being for affected communities.

As set out in the UK Government Resilience Framework (2022), clear ownership is essential to ensure that the UK is well prepared to anticipate, prepare for and respond to risks. This document sets out the types of risks which the UK faces and confirms which UK government department, devolved administration or other public body has been designated as the lead for each phase of the emergency management cycle.



# Designating a Lead Government Department

The Cabinet Office is responsible for designating LGD status. Usually the LGD is the department with primary policy responsibility for the risk and expertise for the area impacted by the emergency scenario. For example, HM Treasury leads on financial services policy and is also the LGD for managing the risk of disruption to critical financial services. The LGD may change between different phases of an emergency as the impacts change and different competencies are required. For example, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is the lead department for responding to significant flood events but the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) leads on flood recovery.

The Lead Government Department does not take sole responsibility for a given risk. Any emergency that requires a central government response will require involvement from multiple departments, as well as other national and local bodies. The LGD is responsible for identifying those other departments, ensuring that there are clear roles and responsibilities, and coordinating work across all phases of emergency management. LGDs are also likely to need to work closely with other responsible stakeholders, such as local responders or private sector operators. LGDs will usually do this through their agencies or the sectors they represent, or with support from DLUHC. Where ownership sits in a department or Arm's-length Bodies (ALB) that has regulatory responsibilities for aspects of the risk cycle and for responders and other involved parties, the risk ownership role will not create conflict with other duties or impinge on regulatory independence.

## The role of the Cabinet Office

The UK Resilience Framework (2022) established a new 'Head of Resilience' role within the Cabinet Office. The Head of Resilience provides leadership and coordination across the UK resilience system, in partnership with LGDs and devolved administrations, to set and drive the strategy on building resilience. This work is carried out in close collaboration with the cross-government 'COBR' crisis function, which leads the UK Government's response to acute emergencies and drives further professionalisation of emergency management in government.

In rare cases, an emergency may occur where it is unclear which department should take the overall lead. It is then the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to advise the Prime Minister on which is the most appropriate LGD. If this happens, the Cabinet Office will coordinate the central government response, leading where necessary until an LGD is confirmed. The LGD principle is

consistent for all risks identified in the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA). For the highest impact risks, Cabinet Office will consider how it could support LGDs to manage the cascading impacts of such risks.

For the highest impact risks identified in the NSRA the Cabinet Office will work closely with LGDs as they coordinate work across the responsible stakeholders. This is in recognition of the scale and severity of risks that would have system-wide impacts, meaning that significant cross-government activity and broader coordination is required.

## Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive

Responsibility for managing certain emergencies and their impacts is devolved for all or some phases of emergency management. Where responsibility is devolved, this document sets out both the UK LGD which will lead in England, and confirms where devolved administrations will lead.

Where a matter is devolved (such as flood defence), the administration in that nation leads prevention, preparation, crisis response and recovery for these areas, with responsibilities assigned to the relevant devolved administration. Where a crisis in a devolved policy area spans across administrative borders, the relevant devolved administrations and the UK government will work together to respond and recover. Where a risk is a reserved matter, the UK LGD will work closely with the devolved administrations where appropriate. For example, managing the risk of disruption to the GB energy network would be led by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), but responsibility for some secondary impacts of this risk (for example, the impact of energy failure on schools) is devolved. A partnership approach between all parts of the UK is essential to ensure we can effectively respond to risks, wherever in the UK they occur.

## How to use this document

This document sets out types of emergency, including risks such as 'transport accidents', and impacts such as 'disruption of telecommunications services', and sets out which UK government department, devolved Administration or other public body takes the lead across different phases of an emergency.

Entries are grouped in broad categories of the emergencies for which UK departments, devolved administrations and other public bodies must prepare. These categories cover the risks in the current UK National Risk Register

(NRR) but are drawn more broadly, given departments are also responsible for horizon-scanning for new and emerging risks.

This document can be read in partnership with the NRR, which is the external version of the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA), the UK Government's assessment of the most serious risks facing the United Kingdom. To read more about specific risk impacts or likelihoods please visit the NRR on GOV.UK.

Please note that a small number of risk types have been excluded from this document on the grounds of national security. A glossary of organisational titles is provided at the end of this document.

## Overview of responsibilities

### Human, Animal and Plant Health

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
1	Infectious human diseases (natural outbreaks and accidental lab releases)	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  For the release of a hazardous pathogen from a workplace: GB: HSE (DWP) on regulatory functions, including enforcement	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  For the release of a hazardous pathogen from a workplace: GB: Prevention – HSE (DWP) (lead on regulatory functions, including enforcement and guidance), response - DHSC NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
		and guidance NI: NIE		
2	Animal disease and welfare	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	UK: DEFRA (in discussion with the devolved administrations for specific EU and international issues) England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
3	Plant pests, including major outbreaks	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Significant recovery activity unlikely. Lead likely to remain with response LGD unless otherwise determined if wide-ranging consequences arise.
4	Food contamination (accidental and malicious)	England: Food Standards Agency Scotland: Food Standards Scotland Wales: Food Standards Agency NI: Food Standards Agency	England: Food Standards Agency Scotland: Food Standards Scotland Wales: Food Standards Agency NI: Food Standards Agency	Significant recovery activity unlikely. Lead likely to remain with response LGD unless otherwise determined if wide-ranging consequences arise.



## Natural and Environmental Hazards

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recover
5	Drought	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
6	Poor air quality	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA (if response is predominantly health service related - DHSC) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA recovery is predominantly he service related - DHSC) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
7	Fires	England: HO Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO; DLUHC (major fir in buildings) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
8	Volcanic eruptions resulting in disrupted air traffic	UK: Met Office (risk identification), DfT (risk assessment)	UK: DfT	UK: DfT
9	Severe storms and weather (excluding those mentioned separately)	UK: Met Office	Where cross-cutting impacts are anticipated, CO will coordinate from the outset.  For impacts on health:  England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Health: England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Air: UK: DfT  Rail/roads/ports:  England: DfT



No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recover
			<p>For impacts on aviation:</p> <p>UK: DfT</p> <p>For impacts on rail/roads/ports:</p> <p>England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE</p> <p>For impacts on energy supply</p> <p>GB: DESNZ NI: NIE</p> <p>For impacts on buildings:</p> <p>England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE</p> <p>For impacts on telecommunications</p> <p>UK: DSIT</p>	<p>Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE</p> <p>Energy Supply:</p> <p>GB: DESNZ NI: NIE</p> <p>Buildings:</p> <p>England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE</p> <p>Telecommunications</p> <p>UK: DSIT</p>
10	Severe space weather	UK: Met Office	<p>For impacts on space based services: UK: DSIT</p> <p>For impacts on aviation:</p> <p>UK: DfT</p> <p>For impacts on the electricity network:</p>	<p>For impacts on space based services:</p> <p>UK: DSIT</p> <p>For impacts on aviation:</p> <p>UK: DfT</p>

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recover
			GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE	For impacts on th electricity networkl  GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE
11	Flooding, including coastal, fluvial and surface floods	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
12	Earthquakes	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
13	Pollution to ground, surface, coastal and marine waters	Marine and coastal waters:  UK: DfT  Ground and surface waters: England: DEFRA and EA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Marine and coastal waters:  UK: DfT (MCA)  Ground and surface waters:  England: DEFRA and EA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Marine and coast waters:  UK: DfT (MCA)  Ground and surfa waters:  DEFRA and EA (DWI if drinking water affected) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

## International, including conflict and instability and emergencies overseas

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
14	Threats to UK sovereign territory	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO
15	Emergencies in Crown Dependencies  The CD's are responsible for their domestic affairs. UK LGDs engage directly with CD's on matters for which those LGDs have lead policy responsibility.	UK: MoJ	UK: MoJ	UK: MoJ
16	Emergencies Overseas, including in Overseas Territories	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO	Locally led, with support as necessary from HMG

## National Security and Terrorism (non-CBRN)

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
17	Threats to UK Electoral Processes	UK: CO and DLUHC	UK: CO and DLUHC	UK: CO and DLUHC

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
18	Terrorism: Northern Ireland related	UK: Northern Ireland Office	UK: Northern Ireland Office	NI: Northern Ireland Executive
19	Terrorism: International attacks	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO
20	Terrorism: Attacks against government in GB	GB: CO and HO	GB: CO and HO	GB: CO and HO
21	Terrorism: Attacks on GB transport	GB: HO and DfT	GB: HO and DfT	GB: HO and DfT
22	Terrorism: All other domestic attacks	GB: HO	GB: HO	England: HO provides specialist support to victims. Other LGDs to be determined in light of circumstances. Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE

## Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Attacks, Accidents and Systems Failures



No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
23	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear release following a malicious attack	<p>For attacks on the water supply:            England water catchments: DEFRA            Scotland water catchments: SG            Wales water catchments: WG            Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE</p> <p>For all other attacks:            UK: HO (except where paramilitary-related in NI where NIO leads)</p>	<p>For attacks on the water supply:            England water catchments: DEFRA            Scotland water catchments: SG            Wales water catchments: WG            Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE</p> <p>For all other attacks:            UK: HO (except where paramilitary-related in NI where NIO leads)</p>	<p>England: DEFRA            Scotland: SG            Wales: WG            Northern Ireland NIE</p>
24	<p>Radiation Hazards originating from outside the UK:</p> <p>a) Risk to British nationals overseas            b) Impact in the UK</p>	<p>GB: DESNZ            NI: NIE</p>	<p>a) UK: FCDO            b) GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE</p>	<p>a) N/A            b) England: DEFRA;            Scotland: SG;            Wales: WG;            NI: NIE</p>
25	<p>Non-malicious release of dangerous substances,</p>	<p>- For serious industrial accidents, in collaboration with sector-</p>	<p>- For serious industrial accidents, in collaboration with sector-specific LGDs/SG/WG: GB HSE</p>	<p>England:            i. Clean-up of the open environment (off-site only):</p>

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
	including serious industrial accidents (fixed site) a) Chemical releases b) Oil or gas releases c) Release from Civil nuclear site d) Release from Defence nuclear installations	specific LGDs/SG/WG: GB: HSE (DWP); NI: HSENI. - For Release from Civil nuclear site: GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE - MoD for defence assets/estate.	(DWP); NI: HSENI. - For Release from Civil nuclear site: GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE - For defence nuclear: MoD	DEFRA; MoD-led if defence-related) ii. Where impact is primarily on sectors: DBT, DESNZ, or MoD or other LGD for critical sector impacted, as appropriate  Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
26	Non-malicious release of dangerous substances (in transit)	GB: DfT unless radiological in which case DESNZ NI: NIE	GB: DfT unless radiological in which case DESNZ NI: NIE	England: i. Clean-up of the open environment: DEFRA ii. Where impact is primarily on sectors: DBT, DESNZ, MoD or other LGD for critical sector impacted, as appropriate  Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

## Other Domestic Accidents and Societal Risks

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
27	Transport accidents (including all UK registered ships and aircraft)	Land Transport England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Land Transport England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Air and Sea Transport UK: DfT	Land Transport England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Air and Sea Transport UK: DfT
28	Dam failures	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DELUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
29	Major public order incidents, including significant civil unrest and disturbance	England and Wales: HO Scotland: SG NI: NIE	Major public order incidents, including significant civil unrest and disturbance	England and Wales: HO Scotland: SG NI: NIE

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
30	Reception and integration of British Nationals arriving from overseas following overseas emergency	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
31	Emergencies at major sporting, cultural and business events	England: DCMS Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Emergencies at major sporting, cultural and business events	England: DCMS Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Er Th for rec ac wc de on sc na the inc Sc SC W W NI
32	Major structural failures in buildings	England: DLUHC (excluding building in critical sectors where other LGDs are designated) Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE	England: DLUHC (excluding building in critical sectors where other LGDs are designated) Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE	England: DLUHC (excluding building in critical sectors where other LGDs are designated) Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern



No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
				Ireland: NIE
33	Industrial action	UK: DESNZ (fuel supply), DBT (postal services); HO (Border Force) England: DfT (transport); HO (fire and rescue); DfE (schools and higher education); DHSC (health, social care and ambulance service); CO (Civil Service); prison staff including for Wales (MoJ); Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	UK: DESNZ (fuel supply), DBT (postal services); HO (Border Force) England: DfT (transport); HO (fire and rescue); DfE (schools and higher education); DHSC (health, social care and ambulance service); CO (Civil Service); prison staff including for Wales (MoJ); Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	UK: DESNZ (fuel supply), DBT (postal services); HO (Border Force) England: DfT (transport); HO (fire and rescue); DfE (schools and higher education); DHSC (health, social care and ambulance service); CO (Civil Service); prison staff including for Wales (MoJ); Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

Disruption to critical sectors, including due to cyber attack, major software failure, malicious attack and supply chain disruption

(Other departments are expected to support the LGD by preparing for, and leading a response to, any downstream impacts of disruption to their sectors. The LGD should support other departments where they own important response or resilience levers for the downstream sectors)

<b>No</b>	<b>Type of emergency</b>	<b>LGD for risk identification and risk assessment</b>	<b>LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response</b>	<b>LGD for recovery</b>
34	Disruption of space-based services	Malicious attack: UK: MoD and DSIT  All other disruption: UK: DSIT	Malicious attack: UK: MoD and DSIT  All other disruption: UK: DSIT	UK: DSIT
35	Disruption of telecommunication services	UK: DSIT	UK: DSIT	UK: DSIT
36	Disruption of broadcasting Services	UK: DCMS	UK: DCMS	UK: DCMS
37	Disruption of financial Services	UK: HMT	UK: HMT	UK: HMT
38	Disruption of electricity, gas and fuel services	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE
39	Disruption of water supply	England water catchments: DEFRA S water catchments: SG W water catchments: WG NI water catchments: NIE	England water catchments: DEFRA S water catchments: SG W water catchments: WG NI water catchments: NIE	England water catchments: DEFRA S water catchments: SG W water catchments: WG NI water catchments: NIE

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
40	Disruption of food supply	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
41	Disruption of chemical supply	England: DBT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DBT - prevention and coordinating a response where impacts are multi-sectoral.  Other departments to prepare for, and lead a response to, the downstream impacts of disruption to their sectors. Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DBT - prevention and coordinating a response where impacts are multi-sectoral. Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
42	Disruption of transport services	Land transport: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Air and sea transport: UK: DfT (joint with HO for malicious attacks)	Land transport: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Air and sea transport: UK: DfT (joint with HO for malicious attacks)	Land transport: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE  Air and sea transport: UK: DfT (joint with HO for malicious attacks)
43	Disruption of government services	All disruption to government not covered elsewhere would require CO to support	All disruption to government not covered elsewhere would require CO to support a response. If the issue is devolved	All disruption to government not covered elsewhere would require CO to support

No	Type of emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
		a response. If the issue is devolved the relevant administrations will be the LGD.	the relevant administrations will be the LGD.	a response to the issue if devolved the relevant administration will be the LGD.
44	Disruption of emergency services	England: HO (fire and rescue, policing); DHSC (ambulance service); DfT (coastguard) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO (fire and rescue, policing where reserved); DHSC (ambulance service); DfT (coastguard) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO (fire and rescue, policing where reserved); DHSC (ambulance service); DfT (coastguard) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
45	Disruption of health and social care services	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
46	Disruption to armed forces and	UK: MoD	UK: MoD	UK: MoD

## Glossary of titles

### Acronym Department

CO Cabinet Office

DBT Department for Business and Trade



## Acronym Department

DCMS	Department for Culture, Media & Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
DfE	Department for Education
DfT	Department for Transport
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
DSIT	Department for Science, Innovation & Technology
DWI	Drinking Water Inspectorate
DWP	Department for Work & Pensions
EA	Environment Agency
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
HMT	His Majesty's Treasury
HO	Home Office
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
HSENI	Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland
LGD	'Lead Government Department'
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NIE	Northern Ireland Executive
NIO	Northern Ireland Office (UK)
SG	Scottish Government

**Acronym Department**

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WG	Welsh Government
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1. Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA)

2. Category 2 responders under the CCA

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