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# NORTHERN IRELAND RISK ASSESSMENT

2009

**CIVIL CONTINGENCIES POLICY BRANCH  
DECEMBER 2009**

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### **CLASSIFICATION AND HANDLING**

This risk assessment contains, and is derived from, information which has been provided in confidence by third parties and carries a 'Restricted' designation. As such it should be stored and handled in accordance with Northern Ireland Civil Service guidance on security of classified material. This means, for example, that it should be stored in a securely locked container (eg filing cabinet, lockable cupboard) when not in use, should not be transmitted over the public telecommunications system, (eg not faxed or e-mailed outside a secure network), and should be copied only to staff with a business need for the information which it contains.

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This risk assessment was carried out by the Northern Ireland Risk Assessment Sub-group of the Civil Contingencies Group (NI). Civil Contingencies Policy Branch acknowledges with thanks the contribution of the members of the Sub-group and the other risk owners to this document.

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**CONTENTS**

	Page
Northern Ireland risk matrix	5
Risk Assessment summary	6
Commentary on the Risk Assessment	20

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Risk Assessment Summary and Matrix for Northern Ireland 2009

NI Regional Risk Matrix

December 2009

IMPACT	Catastrophic (5)			H23		
	Significant (4)	H10				
	Moderate (3)	H1, H4, H7, H9, H11, HR9, H16, H44	HR11	HR12, H24		
	Minor (2)	H15, HR8, H42, HR15	HR14, H45	H12, H18, HR16, HR3, H43	H17, HR1, H40	H14, H46
	Insignificant (1)	HR5	H48, HR13	HR17, H39	H33, HR4	
	Negligible (1)	Rare (2)	Unlikely (3)	Possible (4)	Probable (5)	
	Likelihood					

**VERY HIGH** – these are classed as primary or critical risks requiring immediate attention. They may have a high likelihood of occurrence but their potential consequences are such that they must be treated as a high priority. This may mean that strategies should be developed to reduce or eliminate the risks but also that mitigation in the form of (multi agency) planning, exercising and training for these hazards should be put into place and the risk monitored on a regular frequency. Consideration should be given to planning being specific to the risk rather than generic.

**HIGH** – these risks are classed as significant. They may have a high or low likelihood of occurrence, but their potential consequences are sufficiently serious to warrant appropriate consideration after those risks classed as very high. Consideration should be given to the development of strategies to reduce or eliminate the risks, but also mitigation in the form of at least (multi agency) generic planning, exercising and training should be put in place and the risk monitored on a regular frequency.

**MEDIUM** – these risks are less significant, but may cause upset and inconvenience in the short term. These risks should be monitored to ensure that they are being appropriately managed and consideration given to their being

**LOW** – these risks are both unlikely to occur and not significant in their impact. They should be managed using normal or generic planning arrangements and require minimal monitoring and control unless subsequent risk assessments show a substantial change prompting a move to another risk category.

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Risk Assessment Summary and Matrix for Northern Ireland 2009

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**Risk Assessment Summary 2009**

Risk Ref	Hazard Sub category	Outcome description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk rating	Controls in place	Lead (for Risk Assessment)
<b>Industrial Accidents and Environmental Pollution</b>							
<h1>Irrelevant &amp; Sensitive</h1>							

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**Risk Assessment Summary and Matrix for Northern Ireland 2009**

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**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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**Risk Assessment Summary and Matrix for Northern Ireland 2009**

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**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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**Severe Weather**

**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

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Irrelevant & Sensitive							
<b>Human Health</b>							
H23	Influenza type disease (pandemic)	Each Pandemic is different and the nature of the virus and its impacts cannot be known in advance. Previous pandemics have led to different outcomes. Based on understanding of previous pandemics, a pandemic is likely to occur in one or more waves, possibly weeks or months apart. Each wave may last around 15 weeks. Up to half of the population could be affected. High number of cases and consultations could overwhelm health and other critical services and adversely affect business and the economy. The advice is ‘business as usual wherever practicable’ and ‘stay at home and phone the ‘flu line if you feel unwell’. All ages may be affected, but until the virus emerges we cannot know which groups will be most at risk.	4	5	Very High	Stockpiling/ medical countermeasures / planning and testing of plans  Northern Ireland interagency planning groups for both health and non-health sectors  NI involvement in UK and international Pandemic Influenza planning fora.  Individual organisations are preparing business continuity and response plans for an Influenza Pandemic  Liaison has taken place with suppliers of essential food and fuel supplies on continuity of service.	DHSSPS
H24	Emerging infectious diseases	Based on a SARs outbreak resulting in up to 100 fatalities and 2000 casualties. All fatalities and casualties could be within one region.	3	3	High	Infection control measures in place in hospitals in this country and have issued advice for health care professionals on the management of SARS	DHSSPS
<b>Animal Health</b>							

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**Risk Assessment Summary and Matrix for Northern Ireland 2009**

Risk Ref	Hazard Sub category	Outcome description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk rating	Controls in place	Lead (for Risk Assessment)	
H25	Non-zoonotic notifiable animal diseases (e.g. Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Classical Swine Fever, Blue Tongue and Newcastle disease of birds).	2030 infected premises and about 6 million animals culled; £3.1 billion losses to the agriculture and food chain industry. Loss of disease free status resulting in foreign import bans on UK products from susceptible animals. Disruption to rural communities, local economies, tourism and the environment. This scenario is of a much greater scale than that seen in the outbreak in 2007.	Not applicable to Northern Ireland (see HR13).					
H26	Zoonotic notifiable animal diseases (e.g. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), rabies and West Nile Virus).	Potential human health threat (203 deaths worldwide since December 2003). 30 million poultry culled. Loss of disease free status resulting in foreign import bans on UK products from susceptible animals. Disruption to rural communities, local economies, tourism and the environment.	Not applicable to Northern Ireland (see HR14).					
HR13	Non-zoonotic notifiable animal diseases (e.g. Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Classical Swine Fever, Blue Tongue and Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA))	Slaughter of up to 100,000 affected and exposed livestock plus the possibility of a significant number of animals culled for welfare reasons	2	1	Low	European and national legislation, contingency plans, portal controls and livestock movement controls	DARD	
HR14	Zoonotic notifiable animal diseases (e.g. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), rabies, West Nile Virus and Newcastle Disease).	Culling of up to 1,500,000 poultry (HPAI), plus the possibility of wildlife being affected (Rabies). For West Nile Virus spread by viable vectors in NI the slaughter of 20-1000 horses is a possibility. The whole population of a particular type of livestock within a region could be culled.	2	2	Medium	European and national legislation, contingency plans, portal controls and livestock movement controls	DARD	

**Industrial Action**

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Risk Ref	Hazard Sub category	Outcome description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk rating	Controls in place	Lead (for Risk Assessment)
<b>International Events</b>							
<h1>Irrelevant &amp; Sensitive</h1>							
<b>Industrial Technical Failure</b>							
<h1>Irrelevant &amp; Sensitive</h1>							

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**Irrelevant & Sensitive**

**NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL CONTINGENCIES RISK ASSESSMENT 2009****Background**

1. Over the past months an inter-agency Sub-group has carried out an assessment of the risk in Northern Ireland of emergencies arising from natural or accidental sources. This is the second such formal cross-cutting civil contingencies risk assessment to be undertaken at Northern Ireland level and it builds on the assessment carried out in 2007.
2. The process of risk assessment is a well-established means of identifying and managing risk across a wide range of disciplines. It is important that organisations in Northern Ireland have a shared and current understanding of civil contingencies risks and that there is a coherent strategy for addressing those risks. Accordingly, the Risk Assessment Sub-group of the Civil Contingencies Group (NI) was tasked with updating the Northern Ireland civil contingencies risk assessment which it had undertaken in 2007.
3. The NI Risk Assessment Sub-group is a multi-agency forum with membership drawn from key NI departments and agencies, the emergency services and district councils. In carrying out the risk assessment, member organisations act individually to complete assessments within their own specialist areas and corporately within the Sub-group to complete cross-cutting assessments and to moderate all assessments against a common framework.

**Northern Ireland risk assessment – methodology**

4. An integrated strategy for civil contingencies risk assessment has been introduced across the UK, using a standard methodology, based on international good practice. This is being deployed at UK, regional/Devolved Administration and local levels. The advantage of such an integrated system is that it offers an insight into how risk varies geographically across the UK and between different levels of government.

5. The civil contingencies risk assessment carried out for Northern Ireland addresses hazards, that is to say natural and accidental events. The starting point for the assessment is regional risk assessment guidance developed as part of the national risk assessment strategy. This guidance provides a standard list of hazards (what might happen) and associated outcomes (how bad it would be) which is based on that used for the National Risk Assessment. The guidance also includes assessment scales to be used and a template for individual assessments.
6. The scope of the Northern Ireland risk assessment is not constrained by the national list of hazards and outcomes. As part of the initial scoping process for both the 2007 assessment and the current one the Risk Assessment Sub-group amended the standard list to exclude some national hazards which are not relevant to Northern Ireland, to modify some which are relevant but would have different outcomes in Northern Ireland, and to include some hazards which are particular to Northern Ireland. Hazards in the NI assessment which are the same as national ones are given a number prefaced by 'H', and the modified or additional hazards are denoted by a number prefaced by 'HR'.
7. Each of the hazards identified by the Sub-group was assessed for likelihood and six different aspects of impact by the organisation with the most appropriate expertise. Because the impact of an incident can extend well beyond the original cause some impact assessments were made through collaboration, either bilaterally between two organisations or within the sub-group. A critical element of the methodology was that once all the individual assessments were complete the Sub-group, acting corporately, undertook a moderation exercise to ensure that subjective variation between assessments was minimised.
8. Because of the use of this standard methodology the process allows relative risk in relation to Hazards to be expressed across functional and spatial boundaries. While the Northern Ireland risk assessment primarily addresses risk across functional boundaries at Northern Ireland level, it also provides the basis for more localised risk assessments by individual organisations or groups of organisations.

9. The risks assessed at NI level were those which would give rise to significant disruption across Northern Ireland or which would affect critical Northern Ireland infrastructure and which would require a response at Northern Ireland strategic level (Official or Ministerial). There are many more events which would be considered by the public and the media to constitute emergencies but which have a lower impact and/or a more localised focus. These could be included in single-agency risk assessments or cross-cutting assessments made by two or more organisations working together.
10. The NI risk assessment takes account of but does not replace risk assessments for which there is a statutory requirement, for example under health and safety legislation.

### **Northern Ireland risk assessment – findings**

11. Following the completion of assessments and moderation by the Risk Assessment Sub-group the assessment for each hazard has been placed on a matrix of likelihood against impact. To help in the analysis of risk the matrix has been divided to identify four categories – ‘very high’, ‘high’, ‘medium’ and ‘low’. A copy of the matrix and a summary of the assessments is at the front of this document. As would be expected, many of the risks cluster in the ‘medium’ category, which includes hazards with high likelihood but moderate impact and those with relatively low likelihood but very serious impact.
12. The most significant hazards identified by the assessment process are:

#### Very High

- Pandemic Influenza.

#### High

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- Emerging infectious diseases.

Medium

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- Outbreak of animal diseases which could affect humans, such as Avian Influenza, Rabies and West Nile Virus.

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**Risk Management in Northern Ireland.**

13. Risk assessment is not an end in itself but a tool for focusing on and setting priorities for risk management and emergency preparedness.
14. For all risks it is important that organisations have generic civil contingencies planning arrangements in place which would enable them to manage risk and respond flexibly to any emergency event which requires their participation, either individually or in co-operation with others. Such generic arrangements would include organisational risk assessment, major incident plans and major emergency response plans.

15. Where appropriate, generic risk management and preparedness should be supplemented by specific actions in relation to particular hazards. It is generally accepted that most effort should go into managing the 'very high' and 'high' level risks. These are the risks which, largely, benefit from being addressed in a strategic cross-cutting manner.
16. Some of the 'medium' risks also benefit from cross-cutting planning at NI or local levels, because of the diversity and/or severity of their potential impacts. Other risks should not be ignored but should be addressed by organisations which have a policy lead, a significant response commitment and/or would be impacted upon by an emergency arising from that risk.
17. Risk management can involve actions to reduce either the likelihood or impact of the emergency, for example by addressing weaknesses in infrastructure, introducing additional safety measures or relocating dangerous activities away from centres of population or sensitive environments. However, it will not always be possible to remove risk completely, and some hazards, such as those associated with severe weather, are inherently resistant to risk reduction measures. Risk management therefore also includes preparedness for emergency response, both generic (general emergency response procedures) and specific (responses tailored to identified risks).
18. The hazards which rate highest in the Northern Ireland risk assessment are already being managed in a number of ways, which are set out in Annex A.

### **Responding to the Northern Ireland Risk Assessment**

19. Under the terms of the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework it is the responsibility of all NI departments to ensure that they have effective civil contingencies arrangements in place and that they promote preparedness in their sectors.
20. Risk assessment is one aspect of this responsibility. It sets the scene for actions to prepare and respond. All NI departments and other associated

organisations should therefore examine the risk assessment to identify those hazards which are relevant to them and ensure that they have the correct strategic direction, management processes and resources in place to enable them to address those risks, both individually and as part of multi-agency planning at Northern Ireland and local levels. **The civil contingencies risk assessment should therefore be one of the sources used in developing departmental/organisational priorities, producing business plans and allocating budgets.** Where necessary, additional steps should be taken to manage relevant risks and any associated business risks noted in organisational risk registers.

21. Organisations should also consider whether any of the regional risks identified should give rise to more localised assessments for geographical areas which may be particularly vulnerable (for example to flooding hazards) and should take steps to undertake such assessments, either individually or in partnership with other organisations involved in preparedness and response.

#### **Public information**

22. The civil contingencies risk assessment is intended to help NI organisations to manage their business so as to provide effective protection to people and the environment. It will be for departments and other organisations to share the outcome of the risk assessment in an appropriate way within their sectors, taking account of any sensitivities, including information of commercial value.
23. As the risk assessment contains information which would be of use to anyone who wishes to cause disruption, it is not a public document. **Organisations receiving requests for information contained in the risk assessment should discuss their response with CCPB.**
24. Although the assessment itself is not for publication, organisations should consider making information relating to risk available to the public when such information is helpful in assisting the community to understand local risks and to be prepared for them. An example would be the information which the Rivers

Agency publishes in its Strategic Flood Map for Rivers and Sea. There are also statutory requirements in some cases to communicate risk information, for example in the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000. In issuing information relating to risk organisations should consult with other organisations which contributed to the assessment to agree a common approach to the publication of information.

## **Conclusion**

25. The NI Civil Contingencies Risk Assessment has identified a range of risks which require to be managed. For the highest risks, cross-cutting actions are already underway to understand and manage the risks by reducing the likelihood and/or impact and/or by preparing for response. For other risks organisations should engage in generic planning which would enable them to respond to events or should undertake appropriate specific risk management and planning. The measures to achieve risk management and appropriate levels of preparedness should be included in the business plans of organisations and should be resourced and managed in a proportionate manner.

**CURRENT RISK MANAGEMENT FOR SIGNIFICANT RISKS**

The arrangements in place for managing the most significant risks in the NI Civil Contingencies Risk Assessment are summarised below.

**(i) Pandemic Influenza and emerging infectious diseases**

This is the highest-rated hazard on the assessment, as it is at UK level and pandemic influenza planning has been underway at a strategic cross-cutting level in Northern Ireland for some years. The 2009 Swine Flu pandemic has seen appropriate parts of this pandemic influenza planning implemented. Lessons will be learned from this experience which will need to be incorporated into the generic pandemic influenza planning over the coming months.

The occurrence of a pandemic this year does not mean that there could not be another, possibly more serious, pandemic in the near future. The swine flu virus may yet undergo a mutation or reassortment which makes it more severe, and the risk still remains from avian influenza (H5N1). Generic pandemic influenza planning will therefore continue over the coming year.

Pandemic Influenza planning in Northern Ireland will continue to focus on measures to reduce the impact of the Pandemic, for example through use of vaccines, anti-viral medicines and social distancing measures and preparedness to maintain essential public and private sector services during a Pandemic, including health and social care services, utilities, education, and effective government.

Much of the planning undertaken for Pandemic Influenza could be adapted to respond to other emerging infectious diseases, as would existing specific plans for a SARS outbreak.

**(ii) Animal disease outbreaks**

There is extensive national and international regulation of the movement of animals to reduce the risk of the spread of infectious diseases such as rabies. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) enforces these regulations and in Northern Ireland. DARD also has extensive plans for the response to an animal disease outbreak, which include liaison with other responder organisations.

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