

A councillor's guide to civil emergencies



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Foreword

Recent flooding events in the north of England have once again highlighted the important role of councils in responding to and recovering from civil emergencies. In the case of these forecastable weather related emergencies, thanks to good planning and some advanced warning, councils and their local resilience forum (LRF) partners were able to take some pre-planned actions, such as erecting flood barriers, distributing sand bags and warning the public. This undoubtedly went some way to reducing the overall impact of these devastating floods.

But not all emergencies can be foreseen in this way. How many would have anticipated the fatal air accident on the Shoreham by-pass in summer 2015 and the impact it would have, or, despite the ever present risk of terrorism, the 2005 bombings in London or indeed the atrocities in Paris and Brussels?

As councillors we need to ask ourselves and our officers, 'how well prepared are we to face the unexpected?'

If we are properly prepared, we should be able to cope with whatever might be thrown at us. Councils that work closely within the framework of their LRF to identify and update risks and plan for emergencies will have taken a big step towards ensuring they are ready, but this can't just be left to the experts.

As councillors and community leaders we have an important part to play not just through being involved in responding to and recovering from an emergency, but also through being engaged in the essential planning and preparation needed to ensure resilience and readiness. We have a responsibility to ensure that those charged with supporting our community in the event of an emergency won't get caught out. If the worst happens, we, as elected representatives, are fundamental to ensuring the backing of the public for whatever needs to be done to return to normal. By asking the right questions and ensuring the interests of our constituents are properly represented, we can make a significant contribution to ensuring the overall resilience of our communities.

I welcome the publication of this guide and commend it to you. I hope you will find it useful and encourage you to question how well prepared you personally and your councils are should disaster strike. The questions at the back the guide provide a good starting point for senior elected leaders and portfolio holders, and colleagues sitting on scrutiny committees, to examine the overall preparedness of their council and partners.

My key message would be, please don't leave it to the last minute or until it really is too late.

Councillor Simon Blackburn

Chair, LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board

Introduction

A **civil emergency** is defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as:

“an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK”.

Civil emergencies take many forms and advance planning and preparation is vital. Because of the increasing frequency of severe weather related events, flooding, snow, etc and the overall emphasis on climate change, there is a risk of too much focus on preparing for extreme weather with insufficient thought being applied to preparing for other emergencies such as:

- a major explosion and fire (eg Buncefield 2005)
- major disruption to the transport infrastructure (eg the Shoreham air crash 2015)
- a nuclear related incident (eg Windscale fire 1957; Fukushima, Japan 2011; Chernobyl, Ukraine 1986; Three Mile Island, USA 1979)
- a significant chemical accident (eg Bhopal, India 1984; Flixborough 1974)
- terrorism (eg London bombings 2005; Paris 2015)
- health related (eg Flu pandemic 2009).

Plans developed by a local resilience forum (LRF) will be based on a risk assessment, but while risk must be assessed and plans made accordingly, it would be imprudent to rule anything out completely.



Grade II listed Elland Bridge, Calder Valley, which was seriously damaged by flood water in 2015's Storm Eva

The principles for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a civil emergency are much the same whatever the emergency. With civil protection arrangements needing to be fully integrated across all responders; the first principle is anticipation and assessment of risk and the last, effective response and recovery arrangements. This is otherwise known as integrated emergency management; a holistic approach to preventing and managing emergencies.

The following six activities are fundamental to this approach:

Integrated emergency management	Emergency preparedness	Emergency recovery and response
Anticipation	✓	
Assessment	✓	
Prevention	✓	
Preparation	✓	
Response		✓
Recovery management		✓

The bottom line is that if a council and its partners can get the broad principles right they will be in a good position to cope with whatever might come their way.



Case studies

Storm Eva Leeds City Council

On 26 and 27 December 2015 Storm Eva caused unprecedented flooding in Leeds. 519 businesses and 1,732 residential properties as well as bridges and council buildings damaged by the floods.

Leeds City Council's emergency control centre was activated and the local authority worked with emergency services, the Environment Agency (EA), Yorkshire Water and the army as part of the response. This included clean up, road signage, community engagement, communications (ie updating the website, handling hundreds of media enquiries), responding to enquiries via a flood email address and telephone helpline and deployment of sand bags to key sites.

The local authority along with community groups and volunteers used press and social media to engage more than a thousand volunteers to work on the clean up across the city, supported by over 100 council officers. Councillors met with those affected, galvanising volunteers and helping with the clean up. Greg Clarke, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, HRH Duke of York and Flood Minister for Yorkshire, Robert Goodwill MP all visited Leeds to raise awareness locally and nationally of the impact of the flood.

The West Yorkshire Resilience Forum, which is jointly chaired by the police, fire service and the council, met to ensure there is an effective framework for partnership working to deal with the recovery issues. Leeds City Council is playing a key role in this and has established an officer group to support the recovery arrangements set out in the Leeds Strategic Recovery Plan.

Shoreham Bypass air crash Adur District Council

On 22 August 2015, a vintage jet aircraft crashed onto vehicles on the A27 during a display at the Shoreham Airshow, killing 11 people and injuring 16 others.

The aircraft broke into four parts on impact, destroying several cars. Fuel escaping from the fuel tanks ignited in a large fireball and plume of smoke immediately following the impact.

Following the crash, the A27 was closed in both directions, stranding those attending the airshow. People were initially able to leave the site only on foot, as the main access from the car parks to the A27 was closed.

Initially the role of Adur and Worthing Councils was to support the emergency services and West Sussex County Council as the tier one and two responders whilst keeping council services running as normal. Council officers also established a stand-alone website for a virtual book of condolence and together with West Sussex County Council opened a charitable fund to support victims of the accident, to be administered by the Sussex Community Foundation, a registered charity.

Storm Eva Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

On Boxing Day 2015 Storm Eva reached Calderdale, causing flooding across 20 miles of the Calder Valley. Some 2,000 homes and 1,000 businesses flooded and large areas were without power for several days.

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and implemented emergency plans in partnership with the emergency services, Environment Agency, Canal and River Trust, Yorkshire Water, Northern Powergrid and local community groups.

Within hours local volunteers, with council support, had set up hubs in Todmorden, Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd, Sowerby Bridge and Elland, which quickly became the heart of each community, providing food, warmth, advice and support to the devastated communities.

Calderdale has local flood groups, with dedicated flood wardens and community based flood stores, which allowed the clean-up to get underway as soon as the floodwater had gone.

The council coordinated the collection and removal of tonnes of waste and debris from across the valley and provided skips for residents and businesses. The highways team inspected the street lights, traffic lights and over 100 bridges in the flood affected areas, including 85 underwater inspections. Grants were allocated to residents and businesses to contribute to the cost of the clean-up and to help make properties more resilient against future flooding.

The scale of the flooding and the subsequent damage to the highways network meant the council's priority quickly became focused on raising sufficient funding from regional organisations and central government to support the recovery.

The extent of the damage to infrastructure means that the repair work is still on-going, but most businesses have now re-opened and residents are returning home as life begins to return to normal across the Calder Valley.



**Burnham Area Rescue Boat,
Somerset 2014**

Councils' legal obligations and their role in civil resilience

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is the legal framework that sets out the roles and responsibilities of emergency responders in England and Wales. The Act provides a basic framework defining what tasks should be performed and how cooperation should be conducted.

It defines two levels of responder:

- Category 1 – These are organisations which are likely to be at the core of the response to most emergencies. As such, they are subject to the full range of civil protection duties in the Act. All principal councils are Category 1 responders along with the emergency services, health services, and the Environment Agency.
- Category 2 – These are cooperating responders, who are less likely to be involved in the heart of multi-agency planning work, but will be heavily involved in preparing for incidents affecting their sectors. The Act requires them to cooperate and share information with other Category 1 and 2 responders.

All Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties in the Act, which are outlined in **Appendix 1** to this guide.

The type of emergencies to which a local authority would have a duty to respond will be set out in the local community risk register.

Local resilience forums (LRFs)

In England and Wales, LRFs, which are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives of Category 1 and 2 responders plus the military, are responsible for identifying and planning for the civil resilience risks for the local police force area.

Local authorities should have a key role in the LRF, including being involved in the development of the community risk register and contributing to local multi-agency response planning. They should also participate regularly in local multi-agency training and exercises, which are a good way to provide assurance on local level preparedness.

Councillors can support this work and also ensure that LRFs are aware of the particular issues in their communities.

Lead local flood authorities (LLFAs)

LLFAs are county councils and unitary authorities, which have duties (outlined at **Appendix 2**) under the Flood Water Management Act 2010. The Act aims to provide better, more sustainable management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses, help safeguard community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges, and protect water supplies to the consumer.

Providing emotional and practical support to the public in a civil emergency

In addition to what they are required to do under the Civil Contingencies Act, councils also need to bear in mind the following when responding to and recovering from a civil emergency:

- Under the Local Government Act 2000, councils are responsible for ensuring the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their community. This means that in the event of a civil emergency, as well as taking a leadership role in recovering from the emergency, they have a responsibility to coordinate the provision of welfare support and lead the establishment of key humanitarian assistance facilities.

“Leeds, along with several other areas, witnessed the devastating impact of Storm Eva on local businesses and residents. There is no doubt local government proved to be best placed to react to the crisis. The multi-agency response of council officers, public services and emergency services was exceptional, but it was the hundreds of volunteers who gave up their time to do anything they could to help that was particularly striking. That greatly speeded up the clean-up process especially and helped the areas worst affected to begin to recover and get back on their feet as quickly as possible.”

Councillor Judith Blake
Leader, Leeds City Council

- Under the homelessness legislation councils have a duty to secure suitable accommodation for people until a settled home becomes available. This means that in the event of an emergency, they have a responsibility for providing temporary shelter in the first instance and subsequently temporary accommodation in an extended emergency. Councils, registered social landlords and housing trusts have a duty to cooperate in providing assistance on request, where a housing authority asks for help with meeting its homelessness function.

What can councils do to provide practical and emotional support?

Experience from councils that have had to face the challenges of a civil emergency has shown that keeping communications teams part of the strategic decision-making process and the close involvement of the voluntary sector, were key to enabling them to provide practical and emotional support whilst also fulfilling their statutory duties and are therefore worth considering:

- Effective use of communications:
 - agree the key messages with your communications team before you engage in any communications (eg face to face, social media, local and national press) and ensure that you and other responders clearly and consistently repeat these and any further updates in all future communications
 - ensure that the front page of the council website clearly directs residents and press to up to date information regarding the emergency with clear signposts of where to go for further information if needed and relevant contact details for any other organisations
 - use a variety of channels to communicate the key messages to as wide an audience as possible based on your knowledge of what works best

for your residents. Social media is a good way of communicating with lots of people at the same time, but consider that harder to reach residents such as the elderly may need more direct contact such as public meetings, councillors and officers in key locations to relay information and leaflet/ newsletter drops

- ensure that regular updates are disseminated to all staff via intranet/ line managers and that front line staff are briefed to deliver key messages to residents.
- Setting up a dedicated resource centre/one stop shop with other service providers, particularly the voluntary sector and dedicated case workers.
- Providing access to telephones, computers and help with correspondence.
- Establishing a sub group to coordinate voluntary sector activities.
- Establishing an aftercare group as a sub group of the recovery coordination group (see **Appendix 3**) to provide emotional support to victims, including responders. While this group might be initiated by the council, it could be constituted almost entirely by the voluntary sector who could take over full responsibility for it in due course. Amongst other things it could:
 - establish community support groups for people who want to talk about the incident
 - establish community self-help groups supported by the council and other agencies such as the Environment Agency
 - plan social events to bring displaced communities together.
 - provide a care and counselling service.
- Making arrangements for the receipt and distribution of donations of cash, clothing, furniture, etc. This role could be undertaken by the voluntary sector.

“The flooding we experienced on Boxing Day 2015 was unprecedented. We were badly hit by floods in 2012. At the time these were also described as unprecedented, but it is clear that what was previously a once in 100 years event, or even once in every 50 years, is now happening with much greater frequency. Many homes and small businesses have been flooded several times over the past few years and I know that it has been a struggle.

Council staff, communities and volunteers supported each other during the clean-up operation and established community hubs in the five towns affected by floods. The council dealt with dangerous, flood damaged structures, cleared tonnes of debris and silt and provided assistance packages to householders and local businesses.”

Councillor Tim Swift
Leader, Calderdale Council

Management and coordination of civil emergencies

Emergencies involve a large number of agencies, which need to cooperate and support each other. Procedures and capabilities need to be well integrated for response and recovery work to be effective.

There is a generic national framework for managing emergency response and recovery that is applicable irrespective of the size, nature or cause of an emergency, but remains flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of particular circumstances. This framework identifies the various tiers of single-agency and multi-agency management in emergency response and recovery, and defines the relationships between them. It provides a common framework within which individual agencies can develop their own response and recovery plans and procedures.

Levels of coordination

There are three levels of multi-agency coordination:

- **strategic** – often referred to as Gold
- **tactical** – often referred to as Silver
- **operational** – often referred to as Bronze.

The roles, responsibilities and management of each level is outlined at **Appendix 3** to the guide.

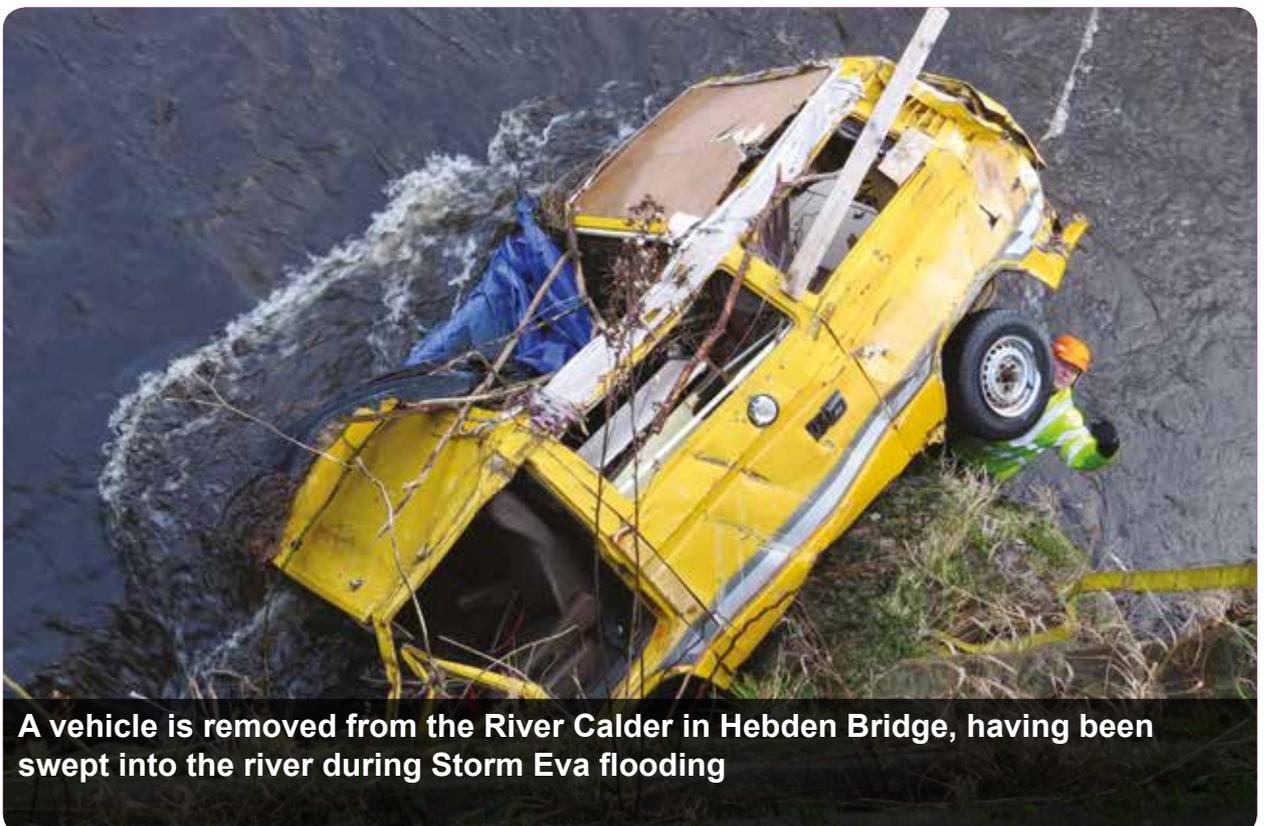
Funding the response and recovery to civil emergencies

Response – The Government operates a scheme of emergency financial assistance to help local authorities to cover costs they incur as a result of work related only to the response phase of emergencies. It is known as the Bellwin Scheme and may be activated by ministers in any case where an emergency involving destruction of, or danger to life or property occurs, and, as a result, one or more councils incur expenditure on, or in connection with, the taking of immediate action to safeguard life or property, or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience, in their area or among inhabitants. It is important to note that the Bellwin scheme doesn't cover precautionary actions or the recovery from an emergency, is subject to an expenditure threshold, which is published annually, and only applies in England. In Wales it is known as the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme and is administered by the Welsh Government.

Recovery – Councils are expected to make arrangements to bear the costs of recovery in all but the most exceptional circumstances. The Government is clear that it is up to councils to assess their own risk and put in place the right mix of insurance, self-insurance, and reserves. In the event of an exceptional emergency however, individual departments, eg Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Department for Education (DfE), Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Department for Transport (DfT) will consider providing financial support for various aspects of the recovery effort. It should be noted that departments will not pay out for recovery costs that are insurable – with the exception of damage to roads. There will be no automatic entitlement to financial assistance even if arrangements are activated. Councils will have to demonstrate need against criteria laid down by the department running a particular scheme. Also the Government will not normally pay out against costs relating to areas where there is already an established government spending programme, or where existing programme spend can be re-prioritised.

“In the longer term, it’s vital to plan on a much larger, more comprehensive scale, if we are to minimise future flooding and strengthen the resilience of our communities. We are now working with our partners to consider how we manage our uplands; whether we need to extend our flood alleviation schemes; how we can ‘flood proof’ homes and businesses and ensure that essential infrastructure such as electrical sub stations are sited away from potential flood spots, so that our communities can bounce back more quickly once the water recedes.”

Councillor Tim Swift
Leader, Calderdale Council



A vehicle is removed from the River Calder in Hebden Bridge, having been swept into the river during Storm Eva flooding

Role of leaders and portfolio holders in civil emergencies

As senior politicians, the leader and fellow portfolio holders are the public face of the council and as such have an important role in both ensuring community resilience and responding to a civic emergency. While it is not the role of a councillor to get involved in the delivery of resilience or the strategic, tactical or operational coordination and delivery of response or recovery, they have an important role in providing a political lead on the way in which decisions are made.

Political leadership

As senior political leaders your central role will be:

- involvement in making key policy decisions and possibly having to consider recommendations from either the strategic coordination group or the recovery coordination group (see **Appendix 3**) on strategic choices
- possibly making representation to government for additional resources and financial assistance
- promoting joint working with parish, city and district authorities
- liaising with other elected representatives (MPs, MEPs, other local authority representatives, etc)
- representing your community in the strategic community recovery committee where relevant
- ensuring recovery issues are mainstreamed into normal functions
- minimising reputational risk to the authority and defending decisions
- ensuring lessons are identified and addressed, (for example, by updating recovery plans), and shared with others who may find them useful.

Media and communications

When an emergency happens residents often look to local and national media channels for the latest information which is why your communications team play a crucial part in emergency planning, response and recovery, and must be involved in emergency planning at a strategic level.

When many parts of the country flooded in the winter of 2014, council communications teams were at the forefront, sharing information between Members, officers, councils, their partners and the press through community events, traditional print communications and social media. It is therefore essential that your communications team are effectively supported to carry out their role and there are examples where the LGA has been able to help with this through communications advice such media responses and digital media support.

Maintaining good relations with the media will be more important than ever during and after an emergency. You will need to agree key messages with your communications team and working closely with them to be ready to:

- support the communication effort and assist with getting messages to the community, for example by giving interviews to the local and national press, holding public meetings where necessary and engaging with residents on social media, taking care to be consistent with the key information agreed with the communications team
- assist with VIP visits, ensuring that they are sensitive to the needs of the community
- support and assist those affected in how they engage with media interest.

“One of the most important learnings from the tragic events at the Shoreham Air Show was the need to ensure that communications were regular and consistent – whether between Members and officers, the council and its partners, or the council and the media. If clear, concise and accurate information hadn’t been available when it was needed, the potential for causing additional distress in the community could have been enormous.

It was imperative that our messages were aligned with and interview candidates were aware of what was being said by other agencies, so that we could put on a united front during the response phase. We had to balance the needs of our local community with the desire for information from national agencies (who didn’t understand local nuance) so that lines of communication and action remained clear.

I was initially taken aback by the media appetite for information – we received requests for interviews from across the country within hours of the tragedy unfolding, and these kept coming throughout the days and weeks that followed. It was incredibly important to have agreed a number of Members, who could field media interview requests, in advance with our Communications Team – this ensured that there was clarity and consistency for our community in who they were receiving messages from.”

Councillor Neil Parkin
Leader, Adur District Council

Preparing for emergencies

Councils should hold a set of fully developed, tested and up-to-date plans covering a range of different scenarios based on locally identified risk to enable them to play a full and effective part in the response to an emergency.

Ensuring corporate resilience

As with any issue, assurance that the council is ready in all respects to deal with an emergency can be sought simply by asking senior officers a series of questions and ensuring you get comprehensive and substantial answers backed up by relevant documentation where appropriate. Some suggested questions are at **Appendix 4** to the guide.

In seeking assurance that the council has done all it can to prevent or reduce the impact of an unplanned event, and can continue to deliver services and support vulnerable members of the community, it is also important to seek reassurance that the council’s own **business continuity plans** are sufficiently robust to enable it to continue to operate after disaster has struck. In this respect, it is worth noting that since 2008, there have been at least two major fires that have completely gutted council offices; Melton District Council in 2008 and South Oxfordshire District Council in 2015. Luckily both councils had business continuity plans that enabled them to continue to provide services with only minimal disruption. Would your council be able to do the same?

As senior political leaders, you can:

- discuss with the chief executive and senior officers the main risks to your communities so you can promote and support key actions, which will increase resilience
- work with your communications team to ensure you are familiar with both the internal and external communications channels and processes in an emergency and your role within this

- support the work of your LRF in planning for emergencies and helping them to be aware of the particular needs of discrete groups and issues within communities
- through your role as a community leader, promote awareness and understanding among the general public of the roles and responsibilities of the wide range of agencies that can be involved in managing risk and responding to an emergency so that communities are reassured and have a better idea of who to turn to in the event of concerns arising or emergencies occurring
- seek assurance that the council not only has developed in conjunction with partners on the LRF sufficient plans, but also tests those plans and trains personnel by participating in regular exercises
- encourage all councillors to participate in training and exercises so they are prepared to respond to an emergency and get involved in recovery from it
- understand the functions, ways of working, priorities and constraints of other organisations and in particular, if possible and appropriate, build personal relationships with key personnel, which will facilitate effective working during a crisis
- explore with your chief executive and senior officers whether contracts with suppliers include clear provisions requiring comprehensive plans for continuing service provision in the event of a civil emergency and for assisting with the response to and recovery from an emergency as appropriate and required; for example:
 - care providers should be expected to have across-the-board arrangements for continuity of care in the event of an emergency, including provisions to evacuate care homes and how these provisions would work
 - street cleaning and waste collection contracts should include provision for vehicles and equipment to be used in support of response to and recovery from an emergency
- help raise awareness amongst the communities you serve about the risks posed by climate change and other issues.

“It was clear that previous training initiatives were helping our staff deal with a difficult situation ‘on the ground’, supporting the first and second tier response agencies while keeping our own services running as normal. Regular training, even on desktop exercises, is very important in helping staff and councillors think about the issues they may have to face and, should the worst happen, vital to give them the skills they need to make critical decisions.”

**Councillor Neil Parkin
Leader, Adur District Council**

In preparing for an emergency, it is important for councils to consider and plan for the roles of officers and councillors during both response and recovery. Experience has shown that where their respective roles have not been clearly established prior to an emergency, or where agreed roles are exceeded or disregarded, the coherence of the council’s position is undermined.

Ensuring personal resilience

Resilience is not just about assets and services, personal resilience is important too. Unless everyone has thought through and is clear about their role both during a crisis and during the recovery phase, there is a risk that when disaster strikes, they will be on the back foot from the beginning. Participation in training and the exercising of plans will help with this.

Responding to an emergency

Response

Responding to an emergency is a multi-agency activity, during which a council is responsible for:

- providing immediate shelter and welfare for survivors not requiring medical support and their families and friends via evacuation, rest, humanitarian and other centres to meet their immediate to short term needs
- providing medium to longer-term welfare support of survivors (eg social services support and financial assistance which may be generated from appeal funds and also provide help-lines which should answer the public's questions as a one stop shop)(see advice on pages 4-6 on the provision of emotional and welfare support)
- communicate relevant updates to public for information and reassurance
- providing investigating and enforcement officers under the provision of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 as requested by Defra
- facilitating the inspection of dangerous structures to ensure that they are safe for emergency personnel to enter
- cleaning up of pollution and facilitating the remediation and reoccupation of sites or areas affected by an emergency
- liaising with the coroner's office to provide emergency mortuary capacity in the event that existing mortuary provision is exceeded
- coordinating the activities of the various voluntary sector agencies involved, and spontaneous volunteers
- providing public health advice and support
- may provide catering facilities, toilets and rest rooms for use by all agencies in one place, for the welfare of emergency response personnel in the event of a protracted emergency; this will depend on the circumstances and available premises.

Senior political leaders will have two main roles during the response phase:

- A corporate role:
 - Ensuring that the council continues to deliver services and provide support to the most vulnerable in the community and to those driven out of their homes.
 - In conjunction with the council's communications team, being a public face for the council in interactions with the media and the wider community; it will be particularly important to take care to avoid issuing contradictory or unconfirmed information to the media and the public. Do this by clearly and consistently repeating the key messages agreed with the communications team in all of your communications, even in social media and face to face interactions with residents.
 - In conjunction with the council's media team keep onsite and remote staff informed by ensuring internal communications are updated in line with external communications.
 - Ensuring that the council is fully and effectively cooperating with all relevant partners, not least the voluntary sector and making best use of all the support offered by the wider general public.
 - A role as a ward councillor, which is outlined in the next section.

“The role of social media was vital in such a time of crisis as it helped us greatly not only get up-to-the-minute updates on problem areas affected, but also to monitor all of the key agencies and to work together to help circulate all essential information to try and keep people informed and safe. It also enabled us to make sure that we could correct any rumours or misinformation, so that everyone could see the factual position coming from official sources.”

Tom Riordan
Chief Executive, Leeds City Council

Recovering from an emergency

Recovery

Recovery is defined as the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency. Ideally it should begin from the moment the emergency begins and will initially run alongside the response phase. It is more than simply the replacement of what has been destroyed and the rehabilitation of those affected. It is a complex social and developmental process rather than just a remedial process.

It will be multi-faceted and long running involving many more agencies and participants than the response phase. It will certainly be more costly in terms of resources, and it will undoubtedly be subject to close scrutiny from the community and the media. Having begun at the earliest opportunity it should continue until the disruption has been rectified, demands on services have returned to normal levels, and the needs of those affected (directly and indirectly) have been met. It could last months or even years and will normally be led by the council, usually with the chief executive or appropriate strategic director taking the chair of the recovery coordination group.

During recovery councils will also have a large part to play in addressing community needs via drop-in centres and organising anniversaries and memorials as part of the recovery effort.

Senior political leaders will want to be assured that:

- resources and agencies are being effectively deployed and cooperating coherently and well together
- council services and operations return to normal at the earliest opportunity
- communities that have been disrupted by the emergency, and in particular the vulnerable members of the community, receive the long term local support they need once the emergency is no longer

national news and central government has shifted its attention elsewhere

- the community are being kept well informed of plans and progress
- local voluntary sector organisations and the community are fully involved in the recovery process
- a recovery strategy has been developed, supported by a concise, balanced, affordable recovery action plan that can be quickly implemented, involves all agencies, and fits the needs of the emergency
- an impact assessment has been started early with councillors playing a central role in identifying problems and vulnerabilities in their community, which may require priority attention, and feeding those problems and vulnerabilities back to the relevant recovery group; the impact assessment is likely to develop over time from a pretty rough and ready assessment, probably covering the more immediate needs of people, to a more refined assessment of longer-term humanitarian needs and economic development
- lessons learnt from the emergency are being compiled, widely shared and acted upon; follow up actions might include revision of plans, further training, strengthening of liaison with other agencies, etc
- thorough debriefs are being planned and carried out to capture issues identified, recommendations to be implemented, and planning assumptions to be reviewed
- that the community (including businesses) is involved at all stages of recovery; elected members can play a key role in this, chairing public (and business) debrief meetings; they can also be useful for door-knocking rounds, bringing back issues that the community has identified, and providing a trusted point of contact for those with concerns
- information and media management of the recovery process is coordinated by the communications team

- frequent internal communications keep all onsite and remote staff updated with key messages
- effective protocols for political involvement and liaison (parish, district/county/unitary and parliamentary) are established.



The wider role of councillors in a civil emergency

Resilience

In planning and preparing for civil emergencies all councillors can play a key role by:

- promoting and encouraging the preparation of community plans
- using their local knowledge to identify local groups and partners who may be able to play a role in recovery
- promoting self-resilience within the community and managing residents' expectations
- actively engaging with community members involved in community resilience work more widely
- ensuring they are familiar with the communications team emergency plans and processes
- scrutinising emergency plans and holding officers to account for the thorough preparation and updating of the plans in conjunction with partners on the Local Resilience Forum (See **Appendix 5** for some suggested questions).

Councillors should wherever possible contribute to the planning process, undertake training and participate in exercises to ensure that they are familiar with what will be expected in an emergency.

Response

During the response to an emergency, councillors, whose wards have been impacted by the emergency have a key role in:

- providing community leadership in their own wards
- being there to identify the needs of individuals and the wider community and feeding them into to the appropriate part of response organisation via officers representing the council
- signposting members of the public towards the right agency to get the support they need
- communicating information to the public and media as required by the communications team
- supporting and assisting those affected in how they engage with the media.

Recovery

As community representatives and figureheads in their local community, councillors for the affected community have an important role to play in assisting with the recovery process. Although they have a limited role in the operational response phase, the role of councillors is vital to rebuilding, restoring, rehabilitating and reassuring the communities affected and speaking on their behalf.

Roles in which ward councillors can play a part include:

- Listening to the community – as a councillor and local figurehead, you have a key role as the voice of the community and can therefore:
 - be the eyes and ears ‘on the ground’ by providing a focus for and listening to community concerns
 - gather the views and concerns of the

community, and feed them into the recovery process, through the recovery coordinating group's (RCG) community recovery committee

- provide support and reassurance to the local community, by listening or visiting those affected and acting as a community champion and supporter.
- Using local knowledge – as a member of the community, councillors have unique access to the thoughts, opinions and information relating to their local community. As such, they can play a part in using:
 - local awareness of the thoughts and feelings of the community to identify problems and vulnerabilities the community may have and which may require priority attention and feeding them back to the relevant recovery sub-group
 - local knowledge to provide information on local resources, skills and personalities to the relevant recovery sub-group, in particular local community groups which can also be an important source of help and specialist advice. Working closely with community groups, councillors will also be valuable in knowing how and who is active within a community.
- Providing support to those working on recovery through:
 - providing encouragement and support to recovery teams working within the community
 - working with the communications team to communicate key messages, from the RCG and its sub-groups, to local and national press and to disseminate credible advice and information back to the community, keeping community members involved, including potentially assisting in debrief sessions with the community and managing community expectations along with the wider council
 - actively engaging with community members involved in the recovery efforts.

- Political leadership:
 - scrutiny – getting buy-in and closure at political level, including sign off for funding
 - presenting the case for your community to the strategic community recovery committee where relevant.



Emergency response on A27 following the Shoreham air crash, 2015

Appendices

Appendix 1

Councils' responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

All principal councils (metropolitan districts, shire counties, shire districts and shire unitaries) are Category 1 or 'core' responders under the Act. As such, they are, alongside the emergency services, some health bodies and the Environment Agency, subject to the full set of civil protection duties in the Act and are required to:

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

As a Category 1 responder, a council must perform its duties under the Act where:

- the emergency would be likely to seriously obstruct its ability to perform its functions
- it 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.

Local responders work to a common national framework, but make their own decisions in the light of local circumstances and priorities about what planning arrangements are appropriate in their areas to deliver their duties under the Act.

Appendix 2

County and unitary councils' duties under the Flood Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA)

Under the FWMA, lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) (all county and unitary councils) are required to:

- prepare and maintain a strategy for local flood risk management in their areas, coordinating views and activity with other local bodies and communities through public consultation and scrutiny, and delivery planning
- maintain a register of assets – these are physical features that have a significant effect on flooding in their area
- investigate significant local flooding incidents and publish the results of such investigations
- establish approval bodies for the design, building and operation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)
- issue consents for altering, removing or replacing certain structures or features on ordinary watercourses
- play a lead role in emergency planning and recovery after a flood event.

LLFAs also have a new duty to determine which risk management authorities have relevant powers to investigate flood incidents to help understand how they happened, and whether those authorities have or intend to exercise their powers.

LLFAs and the Environment Agency will need to work closely together to ensure that the plans they are making both locally and nationally link up. An essential part of managing local flood risk will be taking account of new development in any plans or strategies.

If a flood happens, all councils as 'Category 1 responders' must have plans in place not only to respond to flooding emergencies, but also to control or reduce the impact of a flooding emergency.

By working in partnership with communities, LLFAs can raise awareness of flood and coastal erosion risks. Local flood action groups (and other organisations that represent those living and working in areas at risk of flooding) will be useful and trusted channels for sharing up-to-date information, guidance and support direct with the community.

LLFAs should encourage local communities to participate in local flood risk management. Depending on local circumstances, this could include developing and sharing good practice in risk management, training community volunteers so that they can raise awareness of flood risk in their community, and helping the community to prepare flood action plans. LLFAs must also consult local communities about its local flood risk management strategy.

Appendix 3

Levels of coordination

The generic national framework for managing emergency response and recovery identifies three tiers of multi-agency management and defines the relationship between them. The three levels are:

Strategic

Sometimes colloquially referred to as Gold, its purpose is to:

- consider the emergency in its wider context
- determine longer-term and wider impacts and risks with strategic implications
- define and communicate the overarching strategy and objectives for the emergency response
- establish the framework, policy and parameters for lower level tiers
- monitor the context, risks, impacts and progress towards defined objectives.

A multi-agency **strategic coordination group** (SCG) will be established where an emergency:

- has an especially significant impact
- has substantial resource implications
- involves a large number of organisations
- is expected to last for an extended duration.

An SCG does not have the collective authority to issue commands or executive orders to individual responder agencies. Each organisation will exercise control of its own operations in the normal way. Because of the nature of this group and the need for a council representative to be empowered to make executive decisions, councils will usually be represented by either the chief executive or appropriate strategic director.

The group will be chaired by an appropriate agency depending on the nature of the emergency. The police are particularly likely to chair the group if there is an immediate threat to human life, unless for example it is a major fire, when the chief fire officer would be the likely chair.

For emergencies with significant recovery implications, it would be normal to establish a **recovery coordinating group** (RCG) to take on the role of the SCG once the response phase of the emergency is over. In most cases it would be chaired by the local council chief executive or a strategic director.

Tactical

Sometimes colloquially referred to as Silver, the **tactical coordination group** (TCG) will be formed from senior operational officers from relevant agencies. A council will usually be represented at the assistant director/head of service level. The group's role is to jointly conduct the overall multi-agency management of the incident:

- determine priorities for allocating available resources
- plan and coordinate how and when tasks will be undertaken
- obtain additional resources if required
- assess significant risks and use this to inform tasking of operational commanders
- ensure the health and safety of the public and personnel.

Operational

Sometimes colloquially referred to as Bronze, this is the level at which the management of the immediate hands-on work is undertaken at the site(s) of the emergency. While individual agencies retain command authority over their own resources and personnel deployed at the scene, each agency must liaise and coordinate with all other agencies involved, ensuring a coherent and integrated effort. It's the role of the operational commanders to implement the tactical commander's plan within their functional area of responsibility.

Appendix 4

Possible questions for leaders/portfolio holders to ask/check on

How engaged is the council in the LRF?

Are there sufficient officers at each level appropriately trained to participate in multi-agency coordinating groups?

Are all senior staff aware of what the council roles and responsibilities are in local resilience forum multi-agency emergency plans and is the council ready to deliver them?

Have arrangements been made to enable close working with other councils within the LRF in the event of an emergency (eg information sharing, shared communications plan, joint spokespeople, etc)?

Does the LRF have an up-to-date risk register and does it fully reflect risks faced by the council and incorporate climate change risks? Is it sufficiently detailed and comprehensive, written in plain English and understandable to the general public? Is it readily available to the public?

Are there sufficient plans for preventing emergencies; and reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies in both the response and recovery phases?

Do the emergency plans fully reflect the identified risks?

Do plans clearly identify vulnerable groups or businesses that are at particular risk?

When were business continuity plans last checked, updated and tested?

Is there a flood risk management strategy in place with adequate systems and resources to implement it?

Is there sufficient up-to-date information on the website to enable residents to contact the council in an emergency during a normal working day and out of hours and does the website make clear to residents what they can expect from the council in a local civil emergency?

When was the website last updated? Is it fully up-to-date and does it fully reflect current arrangements and points of contact?

Does the council have arrangements to generate the resource to respond to calls from residents about short or no notice emergencies out of working hours, particularly during the holidays, eg over Christmas and the New Year?

Are senior members of staff suitably trained in the implementation of the LRF's emergency plans and ready to respond in the event of an emergency?

Are emergency contact numbers for all key personnel, including councillors, available and up-to-date?

Are councillors aware of their role in responding to an emergency and have they had a recent up-to-date communications brief on emergencies to enable them to fulfil their community leadership role and be well informed for any media contact?

Are up-to-date and fit for purpose emergency and business continuity plans in place and are they coherent with local resilience forum plans?

Have lessons learnt from previous emergencies across the country been identified and plans modified accordingly?

Appendix 5

Possible questions for scrutiny committees to consider

How well is the council cooperating with other key organisations like the Environment Agency and the emergency services?

Have risks to council buildings and facilities (eg schools, leisure centres, libraries, residential care homes, day centres, etc) been properly identified and are mitigations and fall back plans in place?

Is the council conducting active horizon scanning for new risks and working with the LRF to regularly update the risk register?

Is the risk register sufficiently detailed and comprehensive, written in plain English and easily understandable by the general public?

Is the council aware of the impact emergencies could have on local businesses and the local economy and does it have plans to mitigate the impact?

Does the council have the wherewithal to be able to give advice to the commercial and voluntary sectors in the event of an emergency?

Do plans include measures for preventing emergencies and for mitigating the impact of emergencies when they arise?

Do plans reflect lessons learnt from previous emergencies across the country?

Have climate risks and opportunities been built into local growth plans?

Has training been provided to councillors and has training offered been taken up?

What assurance is there that the council has developed and practiced appropriate emergency and business continuity plans and are they coherent with the local resilience forum plans?

When were the council's business continuity plans last tested and how frequently are such tests planned to be carried out?

When was the last time the council participated in an exercise and when is the next exercise planned?

When were response arrangements last reviewed to ensure that newly elected members and staff are fully briefed?

What arrangements does the council have for scaling up the staff resource to not only support the response, but also maintain the delivery of front line services?

Which officers have been appropriately trained to participate in coordination groups and is this sufficient to ensure that the council can participate fully in responding to and recovering from emergencies?

Useful references

Local authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies: A good practice guide

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/368617/Oct_2014_LA_preparedness_for_emergencies_guide.Final.pdf

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

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others>

Emergency preparedness

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-preparedness>

Emergency Response and Recovery: Non statutory guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253488/Emergency_Response_and_Recovery_5th_edition_October_2013.pdf

LGA Guide for communicating during extreme weather

http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/L15-506+Extreme+Weather+Communications+Guidance_02.pdf/8e4f3c03-dea8-4d8c-b83b-1412990625e3

LGA Councillor briefing pack – Resilient communities: Ensuring your community is resilient to the impacts of extreme weather

http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/6869714/L15-77+CL+Resilient+c_WEB.PDF/a0abfcae-a4db-42ce-abae-55c82d1d7bea

Flood risk management: information for flood risk management authorities, asset owners and local authorities

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-management-information-for-flood-risk-management-authorities-asset-owners-and-local-authorities>

Managing flood risk: roles and responsibilities

http://www.local.gov.uk/local-flood-risk-management/-/journal_content/56/10180/3572186/ARTICLE

Flood investigation report: section 19. Flood and water management act (2010) Upper Calder Valley - 22 June 2012 flood incident

www.calderdale.gov.uk/environment/flooding/flood-investigation-06-12.pdf

Storm Eva - recovery plan

<http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s141257/EB%20Storm%20Eva%20Recovery%20Cover%20Report%20120116.pdf>



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