

The UK Recovery Handbook for Chemical Incidents



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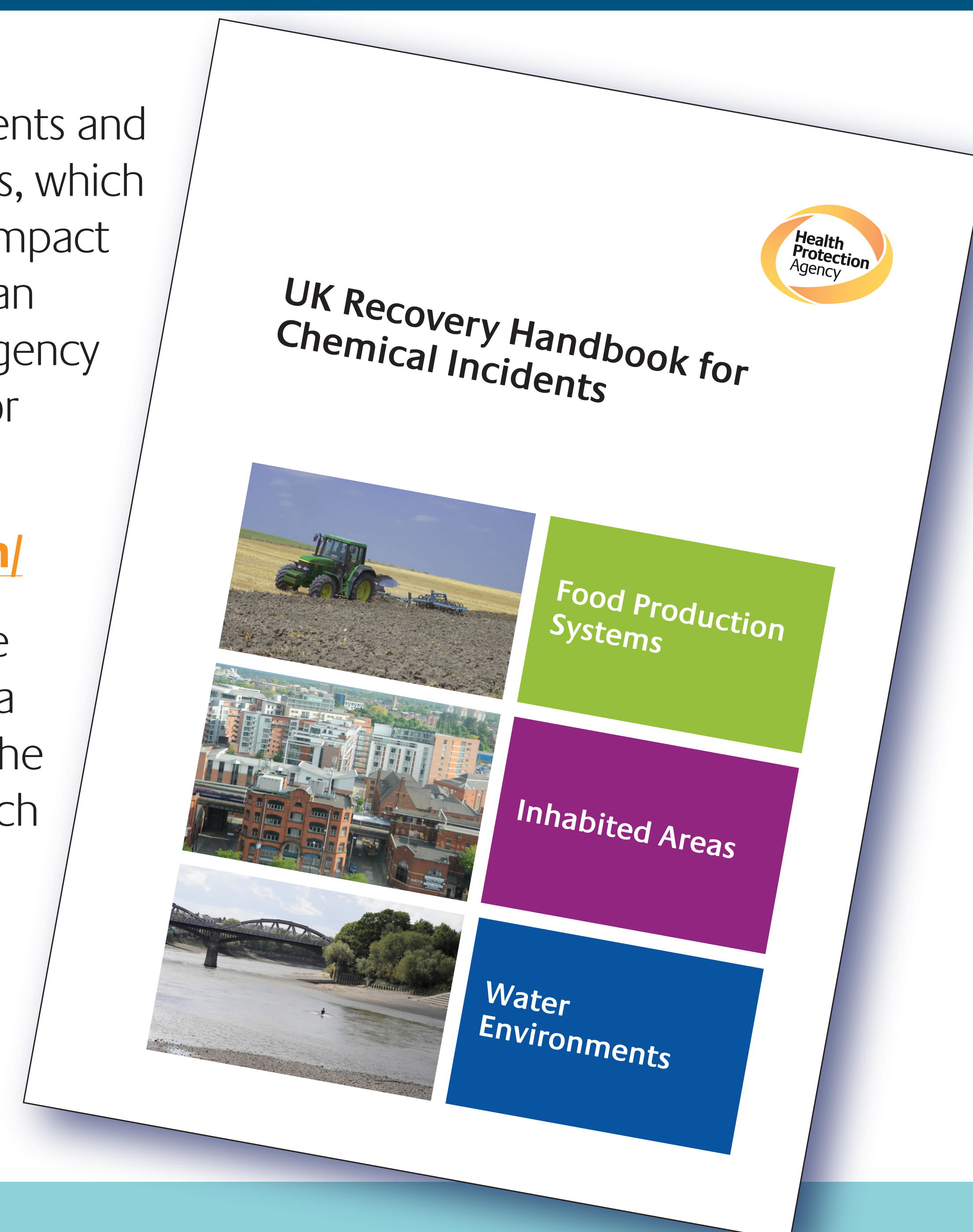
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The response to a major chemical incident would involve numerous government departments and agencies, public services and other bodies. Each of these will have its own emergency plans, which cover the detail of their specific areas of responsibility. Expert advice on the public health impact of a chemical release will be needed from the outset. The response to the acute phase of an incident is likely to be complex. The recovery process in the aftermath of a chemical emergency will be equally as complex. In order to facilitate this process, the UK Recovery Handbook for Chemical Incidents (UKRHCI) has been published and is available from the HPA's website:

www.hpa.org.uk/Publications/RemediationAndEnvironmentalDecontamination/



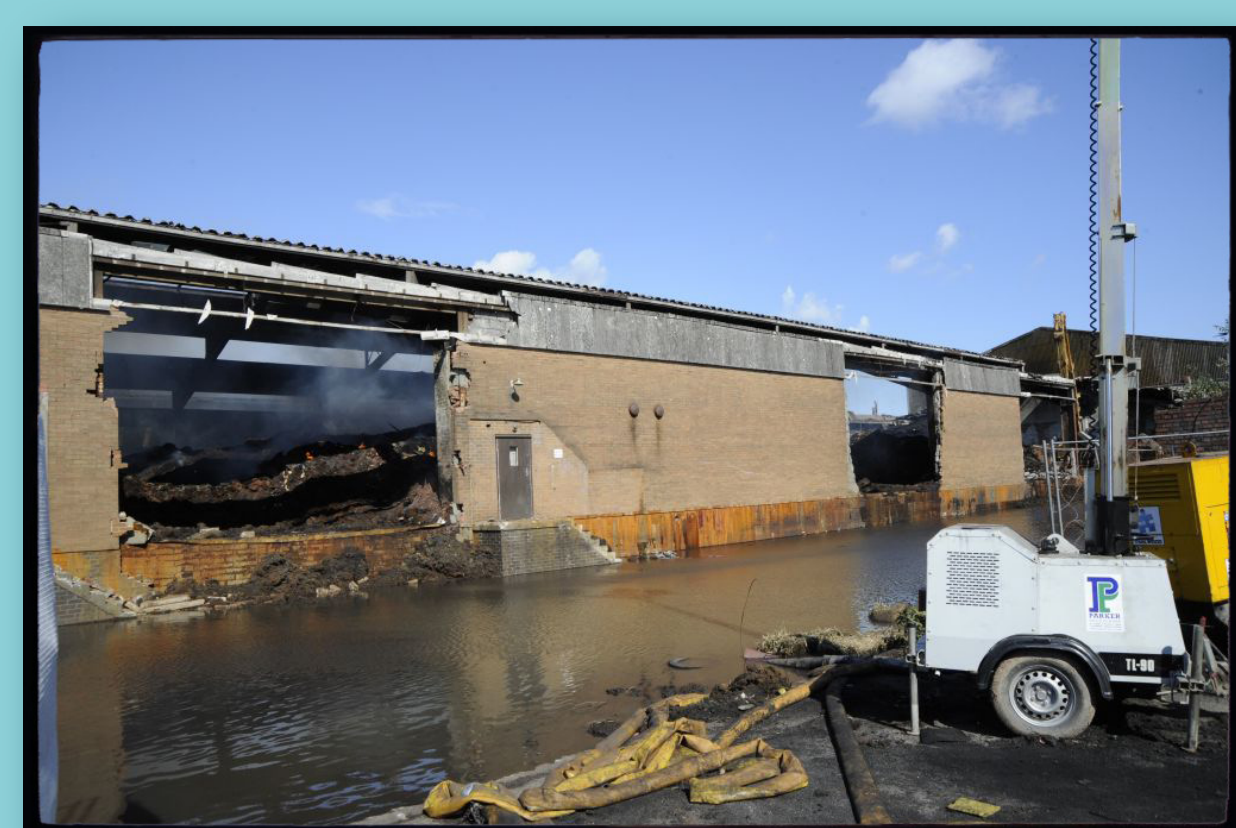
The UKRHCI is a user-friendly, guidance document to aid the decision-making process for developing and implementing a recovery strategy in the aftermath of a chemical incident. The handbook includes a number of decision frameworks for each environment, such as 'food production systems', 'inhabited areas' and 'water environments'. These assist the user in identifying and developing an effective recovery strategy with a compendium of practicable, evidence-based recovery options.



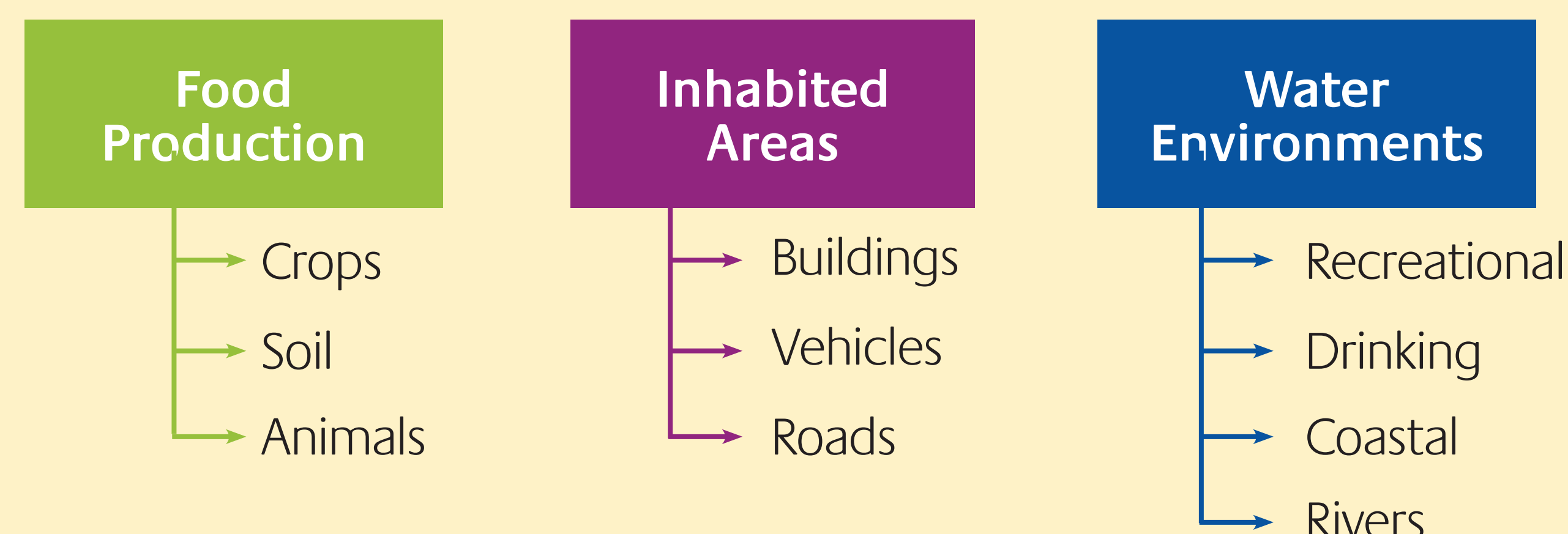
How does this handbook differ from other publications?



The handbook introduces the novel use of a physiochemical properties approach to ensure the handbook is applicable to scenarios involving a wide range of different chemicals (ranging from toxic industrial chemicals to chemical warfare agents). These properties include persistence, vapour pressure and water solubility, all of which would influence how a chemical would behave in the environment and, by extension, recovery methodology. The decision framework also takes into account the type of surface contaminated. Robust, impermeable surfaces such as metal are likely to be decontaminated more easily than sensitive, permeable surfaces such as those found on electronic equipment. Although much depends on the nature of the emergency or incident (e.g., its magnitude and the extent of chemical contamination), consideration of topics such as 'requirements for information' and 'outline arrangements', prior to the occurrence of an incident, would benefit the speed of recovery response and ensure a more successful outcome.



Structure of the UK Recovery Handbook for Chemical Incidents



Planning and preparation is key to responding effectively to a chemical incident and, whilst there are guidance documents available to help with planning in advance of an incident or in responding in the emergency phase, equivalent guidance in the recovery phase is limited. The UKRHCI collates the information required to recover from a chemical incident in a structured manner in one document.