

# NSCWIP

Newsletter of the National Steering Committee for  
Warning and Informing the Public

Summer 2013

**PLEASE NOTE:** This newsletter reflects the views/  
discussions of members at the NSCWIP meeting.  
They do not necessarily reflect Government policy.

## CCS wants to hear your views

THE Civil Contingencies Secretariat is asking for help from LRF Warning and Informing Groups as part of their Warning and Informing workstream.

It is particularly keen to hear about cases of good practice on reaching transient populations, reaching those without English as a first language, assessing/testing public awareness of risks, using social media and strengthening relationships with local media.

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## Keeping you updated



### **Rosanna Briggs MSc**

Chair of NSCWIP & Deputy Head of Civil Protection and Emergency Management, Essex Fire & Rescue Service and Essex County Council

WELCOME to the new newsletter from NSCWIP.

Our committee meets twice a year and we will be sending details of some of the informative discussions and presentations we have, to LRF Warning and Informing Groups after each meeting for you to circulate.

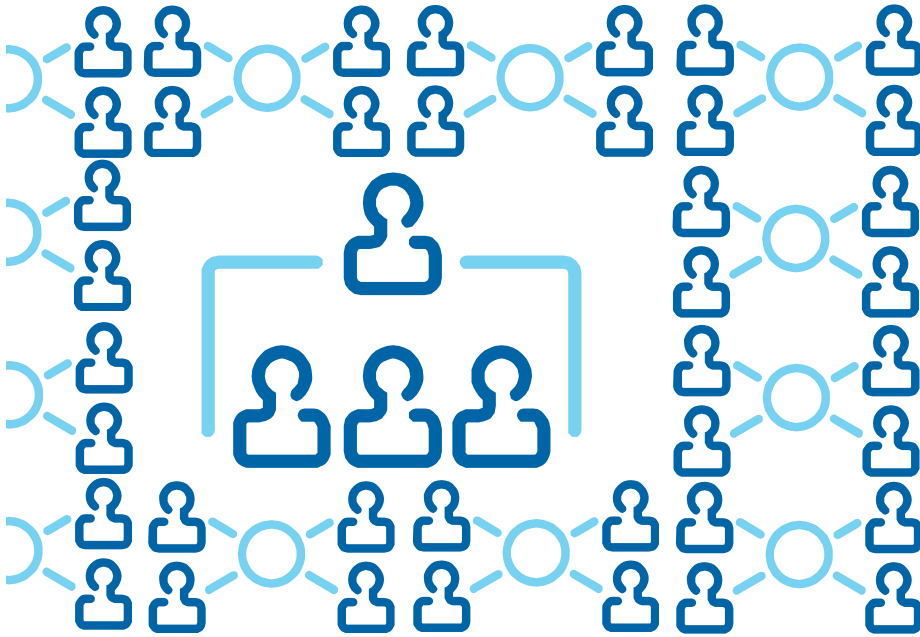
Find out more about NSCWIP's role on *page 6*.

## Social media during a crisis



NSCWIP has been following the progress of a major two year academic investigation into the dynamics of city evacuations, with a particular focus on the impact of social media.

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## Top Guidance

At a previous NSCWIP there was a presentation from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory on their guidance called *Smart Tips for Category 1 Responders using Social Media in Emergency Management*.

This is perhaps the best guidance available for the resilience community and is available from the DSTL.

The document is available at:

[https://whitehall-admin.production.alpha.gov.co.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/85946/Using-social-media-in-emergencies-smart-tips.pdf](https://whitehall-admin.production.alpha.gov.co.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85946/Using-social-media-in-emergencies-smart-tips.pdf)

# Evacuation - the impact of social media

NSCWIP has taken a keen interest in a project titled *City Evacuations: preparedness, warning, action and recovery*, led by Professor John Preston of the University of East London.

His team has given two presentations to NSCWIP on the project which was completed in March this year. The two year project involved researchers from the UEL and the Warwick, Imperial, Sheffield, Lancaster and Manchester Universities, and involved policy makers and practitioners.

It had a particular focus on the impact of social media. As they point out, "Social media and mobile communications have revolutionised emergency management and evacuation policy and this was foremost in our minds when conducting the project".

The complex findings are of vital importance to emergency planners. The project points out that there is an increasing cross-over between social media and traditional media, with media organisations increasingly reliant on 'User Generated Content' – what used to be called the 'citizen journalist', the public who supply the media with pictures and commentary, which is now instantaneous in most incidents today. This cross-over and the mix and match from where the public get their information is termed 'Transmedia'.

One of the case studies they examined was the Manx2 air crash at Cork Airport in 2011 in which six people died. Demonstrating the speed with which social media can accelerate information exchange, the project found that the first entry on social media came within *one minute* of the crash. More importantly they found that tweets about the air crash peaked within the first hour of the incident in the scramble for information – however, once the correct information was

being circulated, the number of tweets began to decrease. The lesson here is that emergency responders need to 'join the conversation' on the social networks as soon as possible with correct information, to avoid public confusion or alarm.

The project's main finding however is that emergency planners should be careful in the use of social media for incidents such as city evacuations.

During the project they created various models which demonstrated that if people "...are 'over-informed' it may result in congestion and jamming". They found that social media has "a selective demographic effect: it is less effective than old media as a mechanism for an initial warning." They concluded that "old media" – that is the broadcast media – is still the most effective way at this stage to warn and inform the public.

A copy of the report can be found at:

[www.cityevacuations.org/public-report.html](http://www.cityevacuations.org/public-report.html)

- At this stage, emergency responders should still rely on the traditional broadcast media as the quickest way to warn and inform the public



# CCS want your views, news and ideas

AT the April NSCWIP meeting, Dr Gary Preece from the Civil Contingencies Secretariat gave an update on the CCS's Warning and Informing Workstream.

Gary said that, following analysis of the 2012 National Capabilities Survey and other sources, there were four areas which CCS were considering to explore to help build Warning and Informing capability:

- Reaching transient populations, as well as those who do not have English as a first language
- Assessing and testing public awareness of risks
- Use of social media
- Relationships with the traditional local media

A wide ranging discussion around the four topics followed. Some NSCWIP members suggested that, in the past, much emphasis had been put on trying to reach non-English speaking communities through translations and leaflets etc., with some delegates reporting from their own experience that this had been expensive but not very effective.

They found that the children of these communities had good English and might be a route for communication for these families. It was also suggested there should be research into the websites these communities use for information, which emergency responders could then target.

On relationships with the local media, some NSCWIP members commented that the former Regional Media Emergency Forums had been very useful but they had disbanded following the removal of the regional tier in the restructuring of resilience into the sub-nation model. It was pointed out that much of the media was still organised on a regional basis.

One suggestion from NSCWIP was that neighbouring LRF Warning and Informing Groups could organise joint Media Emergency Forum meetings within the footprint of their regional media organisations.

On social media, NSCWIP members suggested things were improving amongst Category I and II responders, but it was patchy and there were still issues with individual organisations' IT policy, security issues and Firewalls.

Gary has asked for help from NSCWIP and LRF Warning and Informing Groups in obtaining case studies of good practice amongst LRFs on reaching transient populations, reaching those without English as a first language, assessing/testing public awareness of risks, using social media and strengthening relationships with local media. He is also interested in hearing ideas and examples for improving ways of communicating risk and any ideas on how new technologies could improve warning and informing.

The results of the NSCWIP discussion will feed into a new 2013/14 CCS Warning and Informing Strategy, which will guide CCS's activities over the coming year for warning and informing. **Anyone wishing to contribute on the above should contact CCS through the usual channels, marking it FAO Gary Preece.**

- CCS is looking for good practice case studies on reaching transient populations, reaching those without English as a first language, assessing/testing public awareness of risks, using social media and strengthening relationships with local media



# The Alert Message Template - a useful tool to have ready

THE Civil Contingencies Secretariat have recently produced and disseminated the 'Alert Message Templates', a document that was developed with the assistance of the Alerting Reference Group, members of NSCWIP and colleagues across Government.

Charlotte Lawrence from the CCS, updated NSCWIP on progress so far.

One issue highlighted in workshops with Category I and II responders, and with NSCWIP, was the need for responders to send out messages quickly after an incident - ideally within the first 15 minutes.

But this could be challenging as time was needed for drafting and sign off, and the fact that responders were understandably spending their time dealing with the actual emergency as a priority.

The main aim of the proposed Alert Message templates is to provide high level, action based messages which can be selected by responders, populated with incident specific information and sent to the public.

It is hoped that this will remove the need to draft and approve whole messages from scratch and ultimately speed up and sim-

plify the alerting process.

Use of the templates is not mandatory and they will not be appropriate for use in all situations.

But it will prove a useful additional tool for responders to consider as part of their wider Warning and Informing plans.

The templates have now been sent to all 42 LRF chairs and secretariats across England and Wales for onward circulation to their Warning and Informing groups, as well as to all Strategic Co-ordination Groups in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

They have responded positively, with mention in most correspondence received about incorporating the templates into current plans.

A useful bi-product of this work has been an updated list of the Warning and Informing leads throughout the UK.

Focus now will be on conducting a six month evaluation of the templates.

An evaluation log was sent out along with the templates for completion when they are used.

It is hoped that any feedback will lead to improvements in the future.

## Mobile Alerting trials get going

THE Civil Contingencies Secretariat have been working on mobile phone alerting systems that could significantly enhance current arrangements to alert the public.

In particular it will allow quick and targeted messaging of those within impacted areas, including those travellers passing through.

A meeting was held at the end of April with Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude and the Communications Minister Ed Vaizey, along with representatives from each of the four main UK network providers to discuss this work.

The meeting discussed how the Government can work with providers to deliver trials to test different approaches to mobile alerting (i.e. cell broadcasting and mass-SMS) as well as funding arrangements.

It also looked at any concerns from the providers around technical feasibility and future implications.

The trials will now get underway.

The chair of NSCWIP has sent a letter to the Ministers offering the Committees' support for the trials.



- When the public need to be alerted fast, the message template can save much needed time in getting statements ready



# Working with the business sector

NSCWIP has received a report from the Cross-Sector Safety and Security (CSSC) project outlining its progress.

The CSSC project was set up in 2011 to develop a Partnership between businesses and emergency responders to ensure businesses receive the information they need in an incident, when they need it, to help them stay safe and secure.

Although one of the key drivers for the project was the London 2012 Olympic Games, it was always considered to be a longer term project and since the Games, has continued to develop and expand.

The project is 'zero-budget' with police services and the private sector providing secondees (generally part time) to staff the project team. The aim of the project is "to provide and facilitate London and UK businesses to be safety and security aware by improving communication between the public and private sector on security matters, creating a legacy of improved communication and awareness".

A number of Industry Sector Leads (ISLs) were selected to represent key business Groupings (e.g. Travel, Banking, Retail, Energy, Hotels, Insurance) plus geographical Grouping (Business Improvement Districts) and business representative organisations (e.g. Federation of Small Businesses, Chambers of Commerce). The ISLs were partly chosen for their 'reach' across their sector and ability to cascade information to large and small businesses.

The process of messaging is based around a core 'Hub' for day to day operations. This is part of the project team's role, but during an incident, trained private sector volunteers would be drawn in, to boost resources.

The Hub acts as an intermediary, sending out messages from

emergency responders, and receiving any queries back from businesses which they then follow up with the relevant organisation.

This process for two-way communication is really what sets CSSC apart from previous one-way messaging systems used in the past. Communications are sent out via email, with an Email/text/phone based alerting system. Core to the communications system is the use of a bridge call system, whereby ISLs can dial in, receive a verbal briefing from relevant organisations and ask relevant questions.

The Metropolitan Police have been the main drivers of this project from the public sector side, and provide the majority of updates. Transport For London give transport related information, and the London Resilience Team provide a link into the wider London Resilience Partnership and provide information from these organisations. A CSSC team has recently been set up in Glasgow (with the assistance of private sector colleagues) to establish a similar network in advance of the Commonwealth Games.

- Further information: CSSC website - <http://www.vocal.co.uk/cssc/>

- Email - [CSSC.enquiries@imodus.co.uk](mailto:CSSC.enquiries@imodus.co.uk)

- Or contact Alison Ingleby at the London Resilience Team who can provide further Information and link to the project team - [alison.ingleby@london.gov.uk](mailto:alison.ingleby@london.gov.uk) or tel: 07920 534 375

# NSCWIP: here to help and improve our profession

NSCWIP is the UK's primary independent grouping that offers advice to the Cabinet Office on best practice for warning and informing the public during an emergency or major incident. It is made up of professionals, practitioners and academics with a wealth of experience, representing organisations and agencies which deal with community resilience at a national and local level.

The aim of NSCWIP is to encourage improvements in the UK's arrangements for warning the public of possible, imminent and actual threats to life, the environment or property, and to inform them of the appropriate action they can take.

NSCWIP provides advice and assists in the development of guidance to the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat either on an ad hoc basis, or formally through consultation.

For example, the development of the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme enabled NSCWIP to inform policy development as a member of the 'Task and Finish Group'. The Group considered evidence and made proposals for some minor changes to improve the 'communicating with the public' elements of the Act, its Regulations and supporting guidance.

Where it can, NSCWIP also assists the CCS in directly engaging with local resilience practitioners to discuss local issues at a national level. As such the committee and

## By Rosanna Briggs MSc

Chair of NSCWIP & Deputy Head of Civil Protection and Emergency Management, Essex Fire & Rescue Service and Essex County Council

I previously supported the delivery of workshops in Bristol, Manchester and London a while ago, with a further round of workshops held in 2012. All this helps to inform our profession.

NSCWIP has put much attention on the impact of social media on resilience. The committee has received presentations at its meetings on current research, and supported an over-subscribed joint CCS/DCLG RED workshop held in Birmingham. NSCWIP also held their own internal workshop in November 2012 to assist the work to progress the Civil Alerting agenda.

I have now been chair of the Committee for two years and am delighted that NSCWIP has grown in strength, due in part to the interest and dedication of its membership and the support from the authorities they work for.

Exciting and innovative methods are being employed across the country to engage our communities. Our aim for the Committee for 2013 will be to seek to improve its own communications and to provide regular updates through the website and newsletter on our work and progress.

## DAIRY DATES

**24 September:** Community Resilience: Children and Schools course at **Emergency Planning College**.

**25-26 September:** the 2013 **Emergency Services Show**, will take place at the NEC Birmingham. The conference of the **Emergency Planning Society** will take place alongside the event on 26 September at NEC.

**30 September-1 October:** Warning and Informing - Developing a Communications Strategy course at **Emergency Planning College**.

**November:** the Emergency Planning College is holding a one-day **Safeguarding Children's Conference** in conjunction with Save the Children Fund. David Mellor is leading on the development of the conference and the NSCWIP chair will be among the speakers. It is currently proposed to hold the conference in November 2013.

**December:** the next meeting of **NSCWIP** will take place in 3 December 2013.

## Community Resilience update

At the April NSCWIP meeting, Rebecca Bowers, the Community Resilience Manager at the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, outlined the proposed programme of work for her and her team on Community Resilience.

She said the team were looking at five specific areas, but added that these were yet to be confirmed as the way forward. The five areas are:

- Working through other Government Department and Voluntary Sector

programmes

- Supporting LRF's and Local
- Authorities to build on existing community networks to build resilience
- Effectively communicating messages about Community Resilience
- Pulling Community Resilience, Business Continuity and Recovery workstreams together
- Finding ways to measure and assess success

The **NSCWIP Newsletter** is produced by NSCWIP member **BOB WADE**.

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