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BUILDING A SAFE, JUST
AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

Recovery:

An Emergency Management Guide

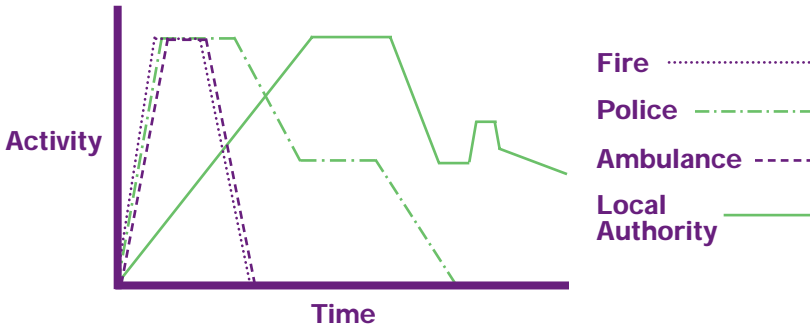
Definition

A guide to handling the recovery phase of a major incident

Recovery The process of restoring and rebuilding the community in the aftermath of an incident

Introduction

After the emergency services have left the scene of a major incident the local authority will take on the lead role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the community. The transition is likely to be formalised through the multi-agency strategic co-ordination group, often known as 'gold', and may occur within hours, days, or even weeks, of the incident.



The graph shows the activity of the police, fire and ambulance services, and the local authority in a 'typical' major incident. Whereas fire and ambulance services have high activity over a short period of time, police involvement will be more protracted, particularly where a crime has been committed.

There will come a time when the immediate response is at an end and the police will hand over the chair of the strategic co-ordination group to the local authority. This point, indicated on the graph where the police and local authority lines cross, marks the start of a new phase of the incident, although preparation for the recovery phase should begin much earlier. This period is unpredictable; can be labour intensive; and may stretch local authorities to extraordinary levels.

Consideration of recovery should be part of day to day emergency management. The aim is to reach a point where additional demands on services have been reduced to the level at which they were before the incident occurred, often described as 'a return to normality'. However the incident, and its effects, are likely to create

a new 'normality', raising serious issues for the local authority. This booklet addresses the main challenges confronting a local authority and identifies five key aspects of recovery:

- Rebuilding the community**
- Managing the financial implications**
- Managing resources**
- Responding to community welfare needs**
- Developing strategic issues**

An annex to this guide describes additional considerations for a local authority facing recovery from a terrorist incident, involving the release of chemical or biological material.

1. Rebuilding the Community

The physical reconstruction and restoration of amenities and normal services need to be managed effectively with due consideration given to the wishes of the community. Local authorities may be under some pressure to restore any services interrupted as a result of an incident. The public will accept and make allowances for a period of disruption whilst the response is on-going. However, expectations will rise as time progresses, and there will be pressure to restore services to demonstrate that the Authority is coping, enhancing public confidence.

1.1 Community Involvement

Local authorities should engage fully with the community and elected members at all levels in any restoration measure. However, the benefit of a perceived good response can be undermined by poor recovery management.

Consider:

- ◆ Consultation on major building projects.
- ◆ Liaison with representative and special interest groups.
- ◆ Developing a public information strategy.
- ◆ Opportunities for sponsorship by local companies.
- ◆ Opportunities to improve amenities.
- ◆ Developing policy on memorials.

In the aftermath of the Frederick West case the City Council consulted with the relatives of the Cromwell Street victims, the local residents and the wider community on the demolition of the house and the future uses of the site.

Graham Garbutt, Chief Executive, Gloucester City Council

1.2 Physical Reconstruction

Immediate attention will have been given to the safety and integrity of any structures affected by an incident. Organisations, including local authority planning departments, will need to be proactive and

flexible with landowners and building proprietors in securing their co-operation in reconstruction.

Consider:

- ◆ The appearance of the affected area may be the public's only measure of Council activity.
- ◆ Public health issues may delay reconstruction.
- ◆ Damage may offer an opportunity to improve facilities or create new ones.
- ◆ Fear of a repeat incident may require preventative initiatives.
- ◆ Reconstruction may be little more than a clearing-up operation.

“Long-term tasks included talking to residents, thanking them for their co-operation in suffering inconveniences removal of flowers at the site, cleaning roads and footpaths and reinstating grassed areas damaged by vehicles and equipment involved at the accident scene.”

Howard Farrand, Director of Environmental Services, Coventry City Council. (Coventry air crash)

1.3 Voluntary Organisations

The voluntary sector is a major resource that can be drawn upon, whether the organisation is local or nationally based. Volunteers may live within the area, have good local knowledge, and may have been directly involved in the incident or the response to it.

Consider:

- ◆ Health and Safety and insurance implications.
- ◆ The need for effective co-ordination.
- ◆ Involving volunteers in a consultation process.
- ◆ Faith communities for extra help.

1.4 VIP Visits

VIP visits are an inevitable part of a serious incident. Whilst often seen as inconvenient, they can present opportunities for raising awareness, reinforcing messages of thanks, and speeding up some aspects of recovery. Such visits will normally take place during the response phase but local MPs and other dignitaries may return to assess progress and will need regular updates.

Consider:

- ◆ Redeployment of essential resources.
- ◆ Involvement of Civic Leaders.
- ◆ Opportunity for positive media messages.
- ◆ Security implications.

“Any VIP visiting the scene of an incident must be fully briefed about any statement they intend to make, as one badly judged comment can result in long term wrangles. The promise of a public inquiry or financial compensation, where no legal precedent exists, can create expectations, which when not satisfied result in a backlash which colours attitudes to the response regardless of how well it went.”

Gavin Macho, EPM, Cardiff and the Vale EP Unit. (the Cadoxton incident)

1.5 Memorials and Anniversaries

The nature and severity of the incident will determine not only the levels of media interest but the community reaction. The Council may be a natural focus for establishing memorial or other remembrance services and should continue to take this on whilst the demand remains.

Consider:

- ◆ Introducing books of record of condolence.
- ◆ Establishing a condolence website.

- ◆ Consultation on memorial design.
- ◆ Additional complexities where there have been fatalities.
- ◆ The impact of anniversaries.
- ◆ Public Inquiry or litigation will provide reminders and media attention.

“Today a simple memorial stands in the grounds of Flixborough Church, recalling the names of the 20 who died on that summer’s afternoon 20 years ago. It stands near the spot where the first memorial was unveiled in 1984, a bronze study of mallards landing on a pond. Much to the shame of society, that memorial was stolen within six months of its dedication. But memorials are more than mere metal and stone. Few people will ever forget that Saturday afternoon, June 1, 1974.”

Scunthorpe Evening Telegraph June 1994

2. Managing the Financial Implications

Financial aspects of major incidents may be complex and open to interpretation. Two main processes need to be considered: expenditure whilst delivering services and reimbursement of costs afterwards. The role of the Finance Officer is vital, given that failure to manage the former effectively will diminish the likelihood of the latter.

2.1 Expenditure

The local authority will, in the public interest, be under severe pressure to be seen to be taking action following a disaster. Whilst this is honourable, there is a need to recognise the limits of any duties and moral obligations in the context of the wider financial picture. Extraordinary expenditure will distort existing budgets, often beyond the point of recovery. This is not to say that such action should not be taken, merely that the fullest facts need to be appreciated prior to commitment of resources.

Consider:

- ◆ Establishing systems for emergency expenditure
- ◆ Maintaining comprehensive and accurate financial records.
- ◆ Liaising with the insurance industry, particularly loss adjusters
- ◆ Avoiding undertaking tasks where another organisation should take responsibility.

“Manchester City Council incurred estimated additional expenditure of £1.4 Million resulting from the Provisional IRA bomb attack in June 1996. Subsequent income loss was estimated at £2.059 Million.”

Niall McGuire, Treasurer's Department, Manchester City Council

2.2 Reimbursement

The local authority will, in most cases, need to make claims for reimbursement from a variety of sources within relatively short

time scales. Assuming that an appropriate expenditure control regime is in place this should present few problems. Lack of control may leave the local authority facing higher costs.

Consider:

- ◆ An application for activation of the Bellwin Scheme.
- ◆ Other grants from Central Government and/or the European Union.
- ◆ Pursuing organisations responsible for causing damage and/or pollution.
- ◆ Encouraging those with insurance to make appropriate claims.
- ◆ The use of money raised by public appeal.
- ◆ The impact on future budgets should there be a shortfall or delay in reimbursement.

Any incident for which assistance is sought must involve conditions which are clearly exceptional by local standards, and the damage to the local authority infrastructure or communities must be exceptional in relation to normal experience. Similarly, any application for assistance must demonstrate that an undue financial burden would otherwise fall on the local authority.

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions.

2.3 Public appeals and donations

In many disasters the public are often only able to help by contributing to organised appeals or spontaneous ad hoc collections. In either case, particularly where Civic Leadership has been given, financial probity is essential. Early planning is needed to deal with several complex issues that arise from the management of appeals.

Consider:

- ◆ Establishing a Local Authority led appeal.
- ◆ Activating the British Red Cross Appeal Scheme as an alternative.

- ◆ Specific identification of the appeal's purpose.
- ◆ Limitations placed on the use of funds by those who have made donations.
- ◆ The security implications of handling large sums of money.
- ◆ The co-ordination of donated services with the statutory response.

“The public appeal following a large number of deaths and injuries in a fire started a few hours after the event when a member of the public handed in two buckets full of money collected in local pubs. The absence of a strategy for dealing with donations led to delays in making payments to those in need, and criticism of the local authority in its handling of the fund.”

Apocryphal Story from Bradford Fire, 1985.

3. Managing Resources

Any emergency lasting for more than a couple of days is likely to impact heavily on the resources, both human and material, of a local authority. The multi agency Strategic Co-ordination Group need to give early consideration to the conflicting demands of the immediate emergency response, the longer recovery period, and the maintenance of normal services.

3.1 Staffing

Some staff may become involved in the immediate response to an emergency. A strategy will be needed to ensure that staff will be available to deal with both the recovery phase and the maintenance of essential business. Staff may find themselves working in unusual areas and under stressful circumstances.

Consider:

- ◆ Covering the workload of diverted staff.
- ◆ Strategies for briefing and debriefing staff.
- ◆ Health and Safety issues.
- ◆ Keeping all staff informed of the Council activity.
- ◆ Support networks for staff through internal helplines and newsletters.
- ◆ Occupational Health issues.
- ◆ Implications for staff not involved.

“Staff who are not directly involved in responding to the incident must not be made to feel worthless. Those members of staff who remain in their offices are supporting those teams out in the field, and are probably picking up additional work in the process. They are as critical to the organisation’s response as those involved at the ‘coalface’. All staff have a vital role to play in an emergency.”

Marion Gibson, Leicestershire County Council

3.2 Media

During the recovery phase media attention will concentrate on local authority activity and there will be a demand for access to senior officers and Elected Members. Journalists often need help identifying local stories, particularly during periods of lull where they are searching for complementary leads.

Consider:

- ◆ The media can be a powerful ally.
- ◆ Passing information to the public through local or national media.
- ◆ Monitoring the letters' page and community response in local newspapers.
- ◆ Making use of the internet.
- ◆ Facilities and support offered by COI.

“Put a definitive script of what’s happening on the Internet. Make the website known via the Press Association and Reuters. Press Officers should ensure media in the affected communities are in the ‘electronic loop’, for example, if you’re e mailing journalists, do a quick engine search and include papers, TV and radio in the areas concerned. The Central Office of Information’s regional offices may be able to help.”

Supt Tony Thompson, (BTP) (Ladbroke Grove Rail Crash)

3.3 Elected Members

Many elected members are involved with community organisations, school governing bodies and local charities and, as such, can be a useful resource in providing support within the community and in giving specialist advice about the affected area.

Consider:

- ◆ Role as focus for community consultation.

- ◆ Role in assisting with the media.
- ◆ Role during VIP visits.
- ◆ Liaising with other elected representatives (MPs/AMs/MEPs).

“Elected members know more about their areas than anyone else and were a useful source of local knowledge and great help channelling information to and from the public. They were also of great help dealing with other elected representatives, including MPs, MEPs and Cabinet Ministers and other VIPs.”

Helen Froud, Corporate Director, Worcestershire County Council

3.4 Co-ordinate Offers of Material Help

It is likely that many offers of help will arrive from the general public, businesses, charities, voluntary agencies and others. Some will be of practical assistance, others goods for those directly affected.

Consider:

- ◆ Procedures to register and co-ordinate offers of help.
- ◆ Forming a panel to assess needs and the distribution of donated help.
- ◆ Identifying storage areas.
- ◆ A disposal mechanism for unused donations.
- ◆ Mutual Aid arrangements.

“Numerous offers of help also came in..... They varied from offers of holidays to the families most affected to offers of every type of tree and shrub, benches, the demolition of the school gymnasium, which was taken up, and the more esoteric offers such as a concert by Rod Stewart. I employed two people, one an experienced Director, full time throughout the first year just to deal with these issues.”

Keith Yates, Chief Executive, Stirling Council. The Impact of Dunblane

3.5 Recovery Liaison Group

The Local Authority will lead the recovery process after the emergency services have left the scene. To ensure there is no duplication of effort, agencies such as the utilities, private companies (such as building firms etc) and voluntary organisations need to be brought together to discuss priorities for action.

Consider:

- ◆ Establishing an authority-led, multi-agency Recovery Liaison Group.
- ◆ Encouraging community representation.
- ◆ The Authority may have its own Recovery Group.
- ◆ The need to identify priorities.

“ The Regional Council’s effort was but one part of the wider response from many organisations and individuals, (involving international agencies, central government, the public services, armed forces, the private sector, voluntary organisations and again the Community at large.) Little could have been achieved by the Council or each of these bodies alone and the success of the overall response is undeniably due to the mutual support, trust and understanding on the part of all those involved.”

Neil McIntosh, Chief Executive, Dumfries and Galloway RC (Lockerbie)

4. Responding to Community Welfare Needs

Support to those affected by an incident is a crucial part of the recovery process. The ripple effect of a disaster could well require a long-term commitment by the authority. Some support will be of a very practical nature, and may have a significant impact on an authority's ability to meet its service delivery requirements.

Social Services will not be the only area providing welfare support. Other service areas and external agencies may offer additional resources, and this needs to be co-ordinated. Provision of welfare support to the community is distinct and separate to the support given to local authority staff.

4.1 Welfare Support to the Community

The management of the welfare response will require a significant diversion of staff resources from normal duties. Increased support and activity may be required during public inquiries and anniversaries.

Consider:

- ◆ Establishing a public helpline.
- ◆ Setting up a database of offers of support.
- ◆ Opening 'Drop in Centres' to provide a focus for communities.
- ◆ The co-ordination of voluntary organisation activity.
- ◆ Using leaflets/newsletters to distribute information.

4.2 Personal Support for Individuals

People react differently to a crisis and no single professional group holds the key to the recovery of those affected. Any support should be co-ordinated, managed sympathetically and not forced on individuals.

Consider:

- ◆ Sharing the role with voluntary agencies.

- ◆ Consultation with, and use of, the community.
- ◆ Linking with the Police Family Liaison organisation.

“An important element in co-ordinating the response was tracking those children and families who required help and identifying the type of support needed. All the agencies were given record forms to complete and return to the LEA’s Children’s Services in the event that they picked up a referral as a result of the St Luke’s incident”.

Head of Children’s Services Wolverhampton Council

4.3 Voluntary Organisations

Any Local Authority or group of authorities, however well resourced, may find it impractical to take on full responsibility for the welfare response to a disaster. There is a wide range of welfare orientated voluntary organisations that can assist with this specialist area.

Consider:

- ◆ Ensuring clarity of roles, responsibilities and expectation.
- ◆ Use of experienced and trained personnel.
- ◆ Co-ordinating effort through Voluntary Emergency Committees.
- ◆ Long term cost implications.

4.4 Alternative Accommodation

Alternative accommodation may be inappropriate for long-term occupation. Ideally families should be returned home as soon as possible.

Consider:

- ◆ Using neighbouring authorities, housing associations or private landlords.

- ◆ Sensitivity to location, type and standard of temporary housing.
- ◆ Disruption to other services.

The long-term aspects of rehabilitation are now being tackled - District Councils are striving to re-house evacuated families while Social Services deals with the problems brought about by the disaster. It will be many months before some of the evacuated families return to normality and many of the infrastructure problems will take a long time to put right.

Strathclyde Flood 1994.

5. Developing Strategic Issues

A multi-agency co-ordination group, often referred to as 'gold', will have been established to manage the overall response to a major incident, and may continue once recovery is underway. In addition the authority should establish its own internal group of senior staff, from all Departments involved, to consider strategic issues and ensure co-ordination.

5.1 Recovery co-ordination group

There are many key issues that the co-ordination group will need to progress

Consider:

- ◆ Strategies for delivering normal services
- ◆ Reallocation of senior staff responsibilities
- ◆ Establishing specialist sub-groups for long term recovery
- ◆ Long term pressures on housing
- ◆ Implications of, and solutions to, any lack of resources
- ◆ Implementing mutual aid arrangements
- ◆ Comprehensive liaison
- ◆ Focus for decisions on appeals, memorials and anniversaries
- ◆ Assistance to local business

5.2 Media Handling

Initially the Police will co-ordinate all information passed to the media but, as the incident develops, Authority staff or Members will be expected to be available. It is essential to develop a coherent media strategy and senior staff or Elected Members can play a significant role in this area. National media focus is likely to decline but local interest will remain.

Consider:

- ◆ Maintaining a consistent media message.
- ◆ Activating press handling procedures and information flows.
- ◆ Timing of briefings.

- ◆ Use of the Internet.
- ◆ Media handling for positive stories.
- ◆ Providing staff with updates as regularly as the media.

The fact that we had a well-honed media plan helped us to project a positive image of the organisations involved. We were also able to feed the desire for information and give regular updates on the Borough's activity.

Carl Wellham, Head of PR Reading Borough Council (Ladbroke Grove)

5.3 Economic Impact

Commercial and industrial concerns are crucial to the dynamics of the local economy. Disruption may have a detrimental effect and business may look to the Authority for support. Senior staff should be the focus for co-ordinating appropriate activity.

Consider:

- ◆ Assessing economic impact of the incident.
- ◆ A strategy for maintaining business confidence.
- ◆ Environmental damage may impact on tourist potential.
- ◆ Gathering views through trade associations and business fora.
- ◆ The pressures from business to return to 'normality'.

Business is rightly recognised as a key part of any local area. However, an emergency planner offers these words of warning: "Don't let the power and pressure of big business deflect you unnecessarily from your main priorities in responding to the incident."

Norman Davey, EPM Manchester City Council

5.4 Review of Performance

The nature and severity of the incident will dictate the type and number of requests for Authority contributions to debriefings and reports. A review of the Authority's response will contribute to future preparedness and the development of work programmes.

Consider:

- ◆ Preparing an incident report.
- ◆ Different types of performance Review.
- ◆ Assessing existing arrangements.
- ◆ Introducing changes and improvements.
- ◆ Evaluating victims experience.

Continual Review is an essential part of improving emergency arrangements. The process should assess the strength and validity of strategic decisions, ensure objectives and priorities are met, and monitor the effectiveness and equity of response for the community.

Cliff Snelling, CEPO Northamptonshire CC

5.5 Litigation

Analysis of a major incident is now typically accompanied by legal considerations. Often these will be questions of financial reimbursement or insurance disputes but there may also be litigation directly against the Authority. Legal issues may continue for many years and some high profile incidents from the 1980's are still ongoing. There is an increasing tendency for Public Enquiries to be called.

Consider:

- ◆ Audit trails.
- ◆ Comprehensive records of decisions, actions and expenditure.
- ◆ Long term resource implications of Public Inquiries.
- ◆ Prolonged litigation may capture media attention.
- ◆ Internal investigations.

Annex

DELIBERATE RELEASE OF CHEMICAL OR BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL

In the event of a successful terrorist attack using chemical or biological material, the recovery role of the local authority is going to be of paramount importance. It is unlikely however, that plans could be prepared in advance since the threat is currently so low and those plans would be likely to remain unused in most - hopefully all - areas. Much of this guidance in this document is relevant to recovery phases following a range of disasters no matter what the cause.

The Home Office has issued guidance specifically dealing with an actual or threatened release of chemical or biological material and part of that guidance deals with the recovery. It proposes that in the early stage of the incident, the local authority should consider setting up a special planning group for remediation, reoccupation (if evacuation has taken place) and recovery.

Whilst many incidents result in memorial services of some kind, both contemporaneous and on anniversaries, a terrorist incident often increases the levels of emotion and needs particularly sensitive handling. The deliberate release of chemical or biological material adds a further level of emotion. It may also significantly increase the amount subscribed to any appeal launched and the amount of media/public interest in the handling of the incident.

Contamination of the environment, and possibly equipment, will need to be addressed during the early stages of an incident although remedial measures may last long into the recovery phase. Long term environmental monitoring and sampling may be required. The cost of remediation may mean that decisions will have to be made on whether the work should be undertaken or whether an area should be closed to the public for a long period and people permanently re-housed elsewhere.

The short and medium term treatment of casualties and their families will be a matter for health providers but the local authority

will need to be ready to provide other support through their social services network. Decontamination may have taken place and those involved may have suffered loss as a result (damage, cost of cleaning etc). Business recovery and the restoration of public confidence will depend upon accurate and understandable information being provided on the clear up operation.

Suggested Further Reading

Clwyd County Council / Colwyn Borough Council / Welsh Office
Responding to community disaster: learning to work in partnership with people
Clwyd County Council 1993

Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council
Lockerbie: A local authority response to the disaster
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council 1989

Newburn T
Disaster and after: Social work in the aftermath of disaster
Jessica Kingsley 1993 (ISBN 1853021709)

Newburn T
Making a difference? Social work after Hillsborough

British Red Cross
Disaster appeal scheme
British Red Cross 1999

Suddards RW
Administration of appeal funds
Sweet and Maxwell 1991 (ISBN 0421416602)

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Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
Worcestershire County Council