CabinetOffice

Government Response to the Public Consultation on the Revised Guidance on

Communicating with the Public under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Introduction

1. *Emergency Preparedness* is the statutory guidance relating to Part I of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and its supporting regulations. As part of the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme (CCAEP) the guidance is being updated to introduce greater clarity and to reflect new practices and arrangements. These changes are aimed at better supporting responders to fulfil their duties under the Act.

2. Chapter 7, Communicating with the Public, has been strengthened to encourage and support an increase in the sharing of information with the public. The changes provide more clarity about what responders must, should and can do, and promote the removal of the obstacles that restrict good communications and further endorse the sharing of good practice.

3. Although the duty to communicate with the public is in two parts, there are actually three stages to warning and informing which are 1) awareness raising (risk communication and education); 2) public warning or alerting at the time of an incident; and 3) informing and advising the public during and after an event. The revised chapter aims to makes the distinction between them clearer with a new format which sets out the why, what, who, how, when and to whom of the communication process.

4. It provides greater clarity around the legal requirement to maintain arrangements to warn; the role of the lead responder; and how to balance the need to provide information with the need to avert unnecessary alarm.

5. More case studies have been included to reflect current good practice and to share the experiences of others in the delivery of duties under the Act.

6. The consultation, which ran from Wednesday 6th July to Tuesday 27th September 2011, was announced on the CCS Gateway and made available on the Cabinet Office UK resilience website and the National Resilience Extranet website. Only 56 of the 86 respondents who responded to the consultation expressed an opinion on this chapter.

Table 1: Organisations that responded to the consultation by CCA category

CCA Category	Class	Number
Category 1 responders	Environment Agency	1
	Fire and Rescue Services	8
	Local Authority	20
	NHS	4
	Police Forces	2
Category 2 responders	Transport organisations	2
	Utilities	7
Voluntary Sector		2
Individual		1
Government Department		0

CCA Category	Class	Number
Other	Associations	3
	Regulators	0
	Local Resilience Forums	6

The detailed list of organisations is shown in Annex A.

Table 2: Responses to the Consultation

No.	Question	Content % (Number)	No % (Number)	No opinion/Don't Know % (Number)
1	Do you consider the amended guidance to be helpful to Category 1 responders in meeting the Act's requirement to communicate with the public?	82.1 (46)	5.4 (3)	12.5 (7)
2	Does the new format help to set out the communication process?	86.8 (46)	1.9 (1)	11.3 (6)
3	Do you think that the guidance adequately addresses the three stages of warning and informing: (a)awareness/education, (b)public warning, and (c)informing and giving advice to the public?	81.8 (45)	7.3 (4)	10.9 (6)
4	Does the amended guidance meet its aim of clarifying what responders must, should, and are able to do to improve communication with the public?	78.2 (43)	9.1 (5)	12.8 (7)
5	Are there aspects which need further clarity or would benefit from a case study?	43.6 (24)	36.4 (20)	20.0 (11)

Summary

- Over 80% of respondents supported the changes to the guidance, and found the new format helpful.
- The inclusion of case studies, including lessons learned, was also seen as a positive move and a good way of sharing best practice.
- The use of social media was also seen as a new and emerging area capable of delivering many benefits during emergencies.

Detailed Responses

Q - Do you consider the amended guidance to be helpful to Category 1 responders in meeting the Act's requirement to communicate with the public?

- 82% of respondents agreed that the amended guidance was much clearer, and many felt that the inclusion of best practice case studies, with contact details, was very helpful.
- One comment suggested greater clarity in the use of specific terms. The text has been amended to rectify this.
- Respondents expressed concern about incidents where Category 2 responders or site owners initiate communication with the public before engaging Category 1 responders. The guidance has been amended to address this.
- Some respondents suggested that communicating with the public should involve greater openness about the work of the Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), including the publication of minutes etc. Different LRFs operate different policies on openness and disclosure, and this may be a real concern in some areas of the country. This not directly relevant to this chapter or the Act, but is in line with the Government's policy on openness and transparency.
- One responder suggested that the guidance in relation to testing public acceptance on messaging during exercises should be more prescriptive. However this is not a requirement of the Act or regulations and it cannot be mandated through the statutory guidance.

Q - Does the new format help to set out the communication process?

- 87% of respondents agreed that the new format was helpful without being too prescriptive; had clear process maps, and some very good case studies. One respondent felt that more comprehensive chapter summaries would be helpful.
- One respondent commented that the communication process for Category 2 responders remained unclear, particularly in the proposal for Category 1 and 2 responders and site owners to develop joint arrangements. Protocols have been developed as a possible way of taking this forward.

Q - Do you think that the guidance adequately addresses the three stages of warning and informing: (a) awareness/education, (b) public warning, and (c) informing and giving advice to the public?

- 82% of respondents answered positively. However, one felt that the sections would benefit from clearer definition; while another commented on the challenges of raising awareness of the community risk register, and a third on

the promotion of community resilience, given that the latter two issues are not statutory duties.

- There was a suggestion that the red/amber colours in the table in para 7.37 be reversed. However, this was rejected as 'red' was used to highlight the section which indicated a threat to life.

Q - Does the amended guidance meet its aim of clarifying what responders must, should, and are able to do to improve communication with the public?

- 78% of respondents were supportive of the amended guidance.
- Further clarity around what 'must' be done would be helpful; as would further definition of 'must' and 'should'.

Q - Are there aspects which need further clarity or would benefit from a case study?

- 43% of respondents answered in the affirmative, with 36% feeling that nothing further should be added.
- A number of respondents indicated their general support for additional case studies, and lessons learned, to be included.
- Specific case study requests included data sharing between agencies; Category 1 responders communicating on behalf of Category 2 responders with cross border implications; effective communication between lead responder and other Category 1 responders and 2 responders; use of social media, particularly during emergencies; and use of modern technology to facilitate, manage and control communications in a structured manner. In support of these, and other consultation requests, the National Resilience Extranet (NRE) will host a best practice section where case studies covering a range of subjects will be available.

Q - Is there anything further you would like to see in Chapter 7?

- There were a number of requests for further focus on the use, benefits and growing role of social media, and additional text was added to accommodate this. There is also potential for case studies to be developed and this will be taken forward by CCS.
- Enhanced text on how to test the public's acceptance, acknowledgement and action on warning and informing messages was added following a request for further guidance.

List of Respondents

London Borough of Hillingdon
Southern Water Services Ltd
London Borough of Barnet
North Yorkshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit. Also on behalf of:
NYCC Health and Adult Services and City of York Council EPU
London Fire Brigade
West Yorkshire Resilience Forum
Lancashire County Council
United Utilities
Water UK
Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd
Metropolitan Police Service
Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS)
Anglian Water Services Ltd
NHS Sussex (Sussex PCT Cluster)
City of London Police
Oxfordshire County Council
Birmingham City Council
ATOC Ltd. (Association of Train Operating Companies)
Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service
International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)
County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum
Private individual
Bradford Council
Cheshire local resilience forum
Bristol Water plc
Plymouth City Council
Sussex Resilience Forum
Cornwall Council
Hertfordshire County Council
Emergency Planning Shared Service Rotherham and Sheffield
Worcestershire County Council
Heathrow Travel Care
Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
Great Ormond Street Hospital
Bedfordshire LRF
Northumbrian Water Limited
Continuity Forum
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
Thurrock Council
Health Protection Agency
Surrey County Council
NHS Sussex
North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service

Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU)
East Staffordshire Borough Council
Highways Agency
Suffolk Resilience Forum
Humber Emergency Planning Service (North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, Hull City Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council)
South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum
Southampton City Council Emergency Planning Unit
West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
National Grid
Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit and LRF
Emergency Planning Society - West Midlands Branch
Environment Agency