

Civil Protection & Emergency Preparedness for Elected Members

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Foreword

The Government treats the issue of Emergency Planning and Civil Protection very seriously.

Following the flooding, fuel crisis and foot and mouth outbreaks the government realised that existing legislation did not provide an adequate framework for modern civil protection. The changing risk landscape with new threats such as terrorism including Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) contamination and critical infrastructure failure. It was for these reasons that the government developed a single framework for civil protection – The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 with the overall aim of building the resilience in the UK against disruptive events.

To comply with duties and responsibilities imposed by the Act Stockport Council undertook a review of its emergency planning procedures and arrangements and has made significant changes to both planning and emergency response.

The role of Elected Members in an emergency is an important factor. Many people in the community rely on the skills, resources and knowledge of their local Elected Members. Elected Members' awareness of civil protection and emergency preparedness arrangements will contribute to the successful outcomes of an emergency incident and ultimately, the return to normality. (This booklet provides members with an understanding of the Act and Stockport Council's emergency response arrangements).

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Civil Contingencies Act

Following the fuel crisis, the severe flooding in 2000 and the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in 2001 a review of emergency planning arrangements was announced. This resulted in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and accompanying guidance.

The Act is divided into two parts:

Part 1 concentrates on arrangements for civil protection and focuses on the statutory roles and responsibilities of local responders.

Part 2 focuses on emergency powers giving a legislative framework to deal with the effects of the most serious emergencies.

What is an “Emergency”?

The Act defines Emergency as:

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare;
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment; or



- war, or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

Category 1 & 2 Responders

The Act divides responders into two categories depending on the extent of their involvement in civil protection work and places a set of duties on each.

Category 1 Responders

These are the organisations at the core of an emergency response.

Emergency Services

- Police
- British Transport Police
- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Ambulance Services
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Local Authorities

- All principal local authorities (including metropolitan districts)
- Port Health Authorities

Health Bodies

- Primary Care Trusts
- Acute Trusts
- Foundation Hospitals
- Health Protection Agency

Government Agencies

- Environment Agency



Duties of Category 1 Responders

Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties 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;
- make information available to the public about arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- share information with other local responders to enhance control and co-ordination;
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
- provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only).

Category 2 Responders

These are the “co-operating bodies” who are less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work but will be heavily involved in incidents that affect their sector. They are:

Utilities

- Electricity distributors and transmitters
- Gas distributors
- Water and sewerage undertakers
- Telephone service providers (fixed and mobile)



Transport

- Network Rail
- Train Operating Companies (passenger and freight)
- Airport Operators
- Highways Agency

Health Bodies

- Strategic Health Authority

Government Agencies

- Health and Safety Executive
- Duties of Category 2 Responders

Category 2 responders have a duty to co-operate and share relevant information.

Category 1 and 2 responders are also expected to come together to form “Local Resilience Forums” (based on police force areas) which help co-ordination and co-operation between responders at the local level. Stockport is a partner in the Greater Manchester Local Resilience Forum. This forum is also mirrored at a borough level through the Stockport Resilience Forum.

What has Stockport Council done to meet the duties of the Civil Contingencies Act?

Risk Assessment

Working with the other local authorities in Greater Manchester and the other Category 1 and 2 responders, a Community Risk Register covering Greater Manchester has been produced and can be

The image shows a screenshot of the GMResilience website. At the top right, there is a logo for 'GMResilience' with the tagline 'Greater Manchester agencies working in partnership'. Below the logo is a map of Greater Manchester. The main content area is divided into three sections: 'Site Navigation' with a list of links like Home, Latest News, and Cooperation & Information Sharing; 'GREATER MANCHESTER CONTRIBUTION' which describes the forum's role and lists participating local authorities; and 'GREATER MANCHESTER RESILIENCE' which lists the 10 local authorities involved in the forum. At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'GMeP'.

viewed at www.stockport.gov.uk/emergencyplanning

Work is in progress to look in more detail at the risks directly affecting Stockport.

Emergency Planning

In order to comply with the Act the Stockport Emergency Plan has been revised and is available on the Stockport Council web site.

Other functional and specific plans are continually being revised in order to comply with the Act and developed in co-operation with our multi-agency partners. Familiarisation with all of the plans is essential. Training and exercising takes place at regional and local levels. Multi-agency and cross-boundary exercises ensure that those with a duty to respond to incidents are fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of each partner agency.

Business Continuity

The Council has a duty to continue to deliver all of its essential services during an emergency. To help prepare for this, and because it is good business practice, the Council has prepared a business continuity plan.

Arrangements to warn and inform the Public

Information has been placed on the Stockport Council web site and local publications (including The Review) giving a wide range of information to the public about civil contingencies and emergency preparedness.



In the event of an emergency the Marketing and Communications Unit will work with its multi-agency partners to give information to the public using the Council's web site, and through the use of local broadcast media and through the local press. Depending on the circumstances, local authority staff may attend at the perimeter of the scene and assist in directions to the public to shelter and advice. Local notices and posters may also be displayed.

Information sharing and co-operation with other local responders

The Stockport Resilience Forum is chaired and administered by Stockport Council and good partnership relationships continue to be developed with local responders, including health, fire and police services.

Members of the Stockport Resilience Forum participate in and deliver multi-agency tabletop exercises and emergency preparedness training events. Good liaison and working arrangements have also been developed with the relevant voluntary organisations.

Provision of advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations

This duty came into force in May 2006 and is continually being developed to reflect current needs.

A leaflet has been produced by the local authority Greater Manchester Business Continuity Group which offers guidance to business and voluntary organisations on producing business continuity plans.

A document has also been issued to local authorities by the Cabinet Office, which is also available on the Council web site.

What is an Emergency? What kind of incidents happen in Stockport?

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 gives the statutory definition of an emergency – see page 6 of this booklet.

Incidents that have occurred in Stockport in recent years are small and localised: gas leaks; transport accidents; fires; *acetylene cylinder incidents and chemical spillages are a few examples. Most of these incidents are usually resolved within a few hours; occasionally they may be protracted and could take a few days to resolve. Very few incidents develop into “major incidents” which involve the full scale implementation of the emergency plan and related procedures.

However, even small incidents can result in an intensive response from the Council, particularly in situations that involve the evacuation of people from their homes.

What can the Council do to assist in an emergency?

In the immediate aftermath of a major incident the Council will assist the emergency responders and ensure that resources are made available including:

- road closures and diversions
- plant and equipment
- reception (rest) centres
- maps and building plans
- building safety inspections
- emergency lighting
- environmental health services

**Acetylene Cylinder Incidents - Fire Brigade Regulations require a 200 metre evacuation zone for a minimum 24 hour period.*

- clearance of debris and restoration of highways
- psychological support
- interpretation services
- help lines
- appeal fund arrangements
- information to the public
- provision of temporary mortuaries facilities
- media liaison services

In the later stages of an incident the local authority will often assume the command and control of the incident and will lead in the recovery and restoration to normality.

What arrangements does the Council have in place to respond to an emergency?

During Office Hours

During office hours the Emergency Planning Duty Officer will be the first point of call for the notification of an emergency incident. This officer will notify the Assistant Chief Executive (Communications) and will call out, or place on standby other officers from the council as required.

Out of Office Hours

Stockport Council operate a formal Emergency Planning 24 hour on-call response.

Duty Emergency Planning Officer

The Emergency Planning Officer is responsible for:

- early co-ordination of the emergency response;
- activation and liaison with the Forward Incident Officer;
- alerting and calling out other Council officers as required;
- alerting and calling out other agencies and organisations as required;
- liaising with Emergency Responders.

Forward Incident Officer

The Forward Incident Officer attends the scene of the incident and will:

- liaise with the Police Incident Officer and/or the other emergency services at the scene;
- make an assessment of the support the local authority can provide both at the scene and elsewhere;
- on-scene liaison and access management for voluntary organisations and local authority resources;
- supply information from the incident scene (see page 19);
- advise the relevant manager on the need for help and resources from the local authority and the voluntary organisations;
- co-ordinate the use of other Stockport Council personnel and resources at the scene of the incident.

Emergency Accommodation and Reception (Rest) Centres

In the majority of incidents most people who are evacuated will make their own accommodation arrangements, by going to stay with friends or family.



But, there may be a small number of people who for whatever reason are unable to do this. In this situation the Council will provide them with temporary accommodation.

In some situations the Council will open emergency reception centres. In the Council's emergency plan a number of

community centres, Council-owned buildings and schools have been identified as potential reception centres.

These centres will be staffed and managed by officers from the Council with support from the voluntary organisations including Red Cross, St John Ambulance, Women's Royal Voluntary Society (WRVS) and Salvation Army.

Co-ordination and management of incidents

Most of the incidents experienced in Stockport are small scale. During office hours emergency incidents are managed by officers at their normal place of work. Out of office hours, incidents are managed by the Duty Emergency Planning Officer working from home.

Local Authority Emergency Control Centre (ECC)

An essential part of the management of a major incident is the Emergency Control Centre (ECC) located at Enterprise House.

This facility has dedicated telephone lines, computers and other facilities to enable the Council to co-ordinate and manage its response to an emergency.

The ECC provides a focal point for all directorates within the Council and for external agencies including emergency responders. Should Enterprise House be unavailable for any reason alternative arrangements have been made with Houldsworth Mill.

Who pays for the emergency?

The Council has a responsibility to deal with emergencies. Depending on the scale and nature of the emergency the government may make grants available in respect of some expenses.



Four Phases of Emergency Response

In the response to an emergency incident there are four main phases:

Impact is the immediate pre-planned response to an unplanned incident, reflecting the urgency to put response measures in place straight away.

Consolidation is the period after the initial response where continuing and further needs are identified and supported.

Recovery addresses issues relating to re-establishing local business and the community.

Restoration of Normality addresses social and economic impact and seeks opportunities to strengthen the future of the borough.

The role of Stockport Council and Elected Members will change according to the phase of the emergency.

Phase I Impact

For the emergency responders, this is a crucial time regarding the protection of people, property and the environment. The role played by the local authority is a supporting one, liaising with the emergency services, providing resources and other facilities as required.

Elected Members may become aware that an incident has happened in their ward but, it is requested that if possible they do not try to contact 24 Hour Control or any of the Emergency Response Team during the impact phase. Communications can be very difficult at this time with telephone lines handling potentially thousands of calls. As soon as possible the Assistant Chief Executive (Communications), will brief the Leader of the Council and provide continuous updates on the emergency response. For Health & Safety reasons, Elected Members are asked not to go to the scene or attempt to cross police cordons.

Contacting Elected Members in the event of an incident in their ward

Reliable information in the early stages can be difficult to obtain and it is often better for the Assistant Chief Executive (Communications) to have a clear overview of the situation before contacting members directly.

Phase II Consolidation

The Council will still be involved in supporting the emergency responders in addition to fulfilling its primary duty to care for the community and may also be involved in welfare arrangements. These can include providing emergency accommodation in Reception (Rest) Centres.

Elected Members may wish to assist at this stage by:

- supporting and providing reassurance to the affected community;
- regular member briefings;
- helping out at Rest Centres (if established);
- giving interviews to the local media in relation to the response to the emergency, but see Media Relations on page 26.

Executive Members will be involved in making key policy decisions.

At this stage Elected Members may visit the vicinity of the incident and speak to residents, providing them with information on the actions taken by the Council and advise on how they can restore normality to their community.

If the incident is of such magnitude as to attract regional or national interest, Elected Members may become involved in meeting and greeting VIPs and briefing visitors on the progress being made.

Phase III Recovery

In the recovery phase, command and control starts to transfer from the emergency responders to the Council. At this stage in the incident, Elected Members have a key role to play.

Elected Members may be involved by:

- becoming community supporters and champions;
- providing the political lead;
- maintaining good relationships with the media and the public;
- providing representation to government for additional resources and financial assistance;
- continuity of day-to-day Council business.

Phase IV Restoration of Normality

The strategic co-ordination of the incident has been handed over completely to the Council.

Elected Members have a lead role to play in this final phase of an incident. Dependent upon the scale, members could become involved in the following activities:

- approving regeneration issues;
- considering the need for longer term accommodation;
- meeting MP's and MEP's to lobby for financial aid;
- involvement in the management of any appeal funds and memorials;
- repair and reconstruction of the affected community;
- ensuring that the lessons learnt are applied to the emergency plans and procedures.

Post-incident issues

Elected Members also need to be aware of other issues that may arise in the aftermath of an emergency incident.

These can include:

- civil litigation
- criminal proceedings
- public inquiries
- loss of income for the Council
- anniversaries
- insurance and claims to the Government
- long term effects on the community
- business regeneration

Talking to the Media

Media relations in an emergency incident are crucial and can often be an important factor in determining how well (or otherwise) the Council and Emergency Services are dealing with the situation.

Elected Members may be approached to give media statements and interviews.

The public's response and co-operation with emergency services is affected by the information and comments issued to the media during an emergency.

To ensure a consistent and accurate approach it is important that Elected Members are fully briefed by the Council's Press Officer. Any Council communication with the media will be in accordance with the agreed procedures, and in the early stages, in consultation with the police and fire services.

Further Information can be obtained from:

The Civil Resilience Unit

Tel: 0161 474 5599

Useful Web Sites

The following web sites can also provide more information about civil protection and emergency preparedness:

www.stockport.gov.uk/emergencyplanning

www.stockport.gov.uk/businesscontinuity

www.greatermanchesterresilience.org.uk

www.ukresilience.info

www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk

www.lga.gov.uk