# UK National Leadership for Risk Identification, Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery

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#### Introduction

Civil contingency activity in the United Kingdom is based on the principle of subsidiarity. Most emergencies in the UK are handled at the local level by the emergency services, local authorities<sup>1</sup> and other relevant organisations such as utility companies and transport operators<sup>2</sup>. However, because of scale or complexity, some emergencies need a degree of central government coordination or support, with the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive taking the lead where appropriate in accordance with devolution agreements.

The UK uses a 'Lead Government Department' (LGD) model to cover all phases of emergency planning, response, recovery and risk assessment. Designated LGDs are responsible for leading work to identify serious risks and ensuring that the right planning, response and recovery arrangements are in place. Permanent Secretaries are accountable to their Secretaries of State for departmental activity and Secretaries of State are accountable to Parliament for their department's actions and performance.

LGDs, with the support of other departments and bodies, are responsible for national-level:

- Risk anticipation: Maintaining awareness of the changing set of risks, threats and vulnerabilities including horizon-scanning
  for new and emerging risks within the areas of responsibility assigned to them, identifying specific risks to prepare for, and
  updating their risk assessment accordingly.
- **Risk assessment:** Assessing the potential scenarios, including the reasonable worst case scenarios (RWCS), should the risk materialise, and assessing the impact and likelihood of these scenarios.
- Prevention & Mitigation: Introducing measures which build resilience, preventing risks from occurring or reducing their severity.
- **Preparation:** Developing plans for responding to and recovering from an emergency and testing their effectiveness, e.g. through regular exercises.
- **Response:** Leading/coordinating the central response to an emergency. Response encompasses the decisions and actions taken to deal with the immediate effects of an emergency.
- Recovery: Leading/coordinating a centrally-led recovery process following an emergency, if needed. This might include long-term activities like the reconstruction of physical infrastructure or the restoration of emotional, social and physical well-being for affected communities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Category 1 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Category 2 responders under the CCA

As set out in the UK Government Resilience Framework (2022), clear ownership is essential to ensure that the UK is well prepared to anticipate, prepare for and respond to risks. This document sets out the types of risks which the UK faces and confirms which UK government department, devolved administration or other public body has been designated as the lead for each phase of the emergency management cycle.

#### **Designating a Lead Government Department**

The Cabinet Office is responsible for designating LGD status. Usually the LGD is the department with primary policy responsibility for the risk and expertise for the area impacted by the emergency scenario. For example, HM Treasury leads on financial services policy and is also the LGD for managing the risk of disruption to critical financial services. The LGD may change between different phases of an emergency as the impacts change and different competencies are required. For example, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is the lead department for responding to significant flood events but the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) leads on flood recovery.

The Lead Government Department does not take sole responsibility for a given risk. Any emergency that requires a central government response will require involvement from multiple departments, as well as other national and local bodies. The LGD is responsible for identifying those other departments, ensuring that there are clear roles and responsibilities, and coordinating work across all phases of emergency management. LGDs are also likely to need to work closely with other responsible stakeholders, such as local responders or private sector operators. LGDs will usually do this through their agencies or the sectors they represent, or with support from DLUHC. Where ownership sits in a department or Arm's-length Bodies (ALB) that has regulatory responsibilities for aspects of the risk cycle and for responders and other involved parties, the risk ownership role will not create conflict with other duties or impinge on regulatory independence.

#### The role of the Cabinet Office

The UK Resilience Framework (2022) established a new 'Head of Resilience' role within the Cabinet Office. The Head of Resilience provides leadership and coordination across the UK resilience system, in partnership with LGDs and devolved administrations, to set and drive the strategy on building resilience. This work is carried out in close collaboration with the cross-government 'COBR' crisis function, which leads the UK Government's response to acute emergencies and drives further professionalisation of emergency management in government.

In rare cases, an emergency may occur where it is unclear which department should take the overall lead. It is then the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to advise the Prime Minister on which is the most appropriate LGD. If this happens, the Cabinet Office will coordinate the central government response or recovery operations, leading where necessary until an LGD is confirmed. The LGD principle is consistent for all risks identified in the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA). For the highest impact risks, Cabinet Office will consider how it could support LGDs to manage the cascading impacts of such risks.

## Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive

Responsibility for managing certain emergencies and their impacts is devolved for all or some phases of emergency management. Where responsibility is devolved, this document sets out both the UK LGD which will lead in England, and confirms where devolved administrations will lead.

Where a matter is devolved (such as flood defence), the administration in that nation leads prevention, preparation, crisis response and recovery for these areas, with responsibilities assigned to the relevant devolved administration departments. Where a crisis in a devolved policy area spans across administrative borders, the relevant devolved administrations and the UK government will work together to respond and recover. Where a risk is a reserved matter, the UK LGD will work closely with the devolved administrations where appropriate. For example, managing the risk of disruption to the GB energy network would be led by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), but responsibility for some secondary impacts of this risk (for example, the impact of energy failure on schools) is devolved. A partnership approach between all parts of the UK is essential to ensure we can effectively respond to risks, wherever in the UK they occur.

#### How to use this document

This document sets out types of emergency, including risks such as 'transport accidents', and impacts such as 'disruption of telecommunications services', and sets out which UK government department, devolved administration or other public body takes the lead across different phases of an emergency.

Entries are grouped in broad categories of the emergencies for which UK departments, devolved administrations and other public bodies must prepare. These categories cover the risks in the current UK National Risk Register (NRR) but are drawn more broadly, given departments are also responsible for horizon-scanning for new and emerging risks.

This document can be read in partnership with the NRR, which is the external version of the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA), the UK Government's assessment of the most serious risks facing the United Kingdom. To read more about specific risk impacts or likelihoods please visit the NRR on GOV.UK.

Please note that a small number of risk types have been excluded from this document on the grounds of national security.

A glossary of organisational titles is provided at the end of this document.

## **Overview of responsibilities**

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
Hun	nan, Animal and Plant Health			
1	Infectious human diseases (natural outbreaks and accidental lab releases)	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
		For the release of a hazardous pathogen from a workplace: GB: HSE (DWP) on regulatory functions, including enforcement and guidance NI: NIE	For the release of a hazardous pathogen from a workplace: GB: Prevention – HSE (DWP) (lead on regulatory functions, including enforcement and guidance), response - DHSC NI: NIE	
2	Animal disease and welfare	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	UK: DEFRA (in discussion with the devolved administrations for specific EU and international issues) England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
3	Plant pests, including major outbreaks	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Significant recovery activity unlikely. Lead likely to remain with response LGD unless otherwise determined if wide-ranging consequences arise.
4	Food contamination (accidental and malicious)	England: Food Standards Agency Scotland: Food Standards Scotland Wales: Food Standards Agency Wales NI: Food Standards Agency NI	England: Food Standards Agency Scotland: Food Standards Scotland Wales: Food Standards Agency Wales NI: Food Standards Agency NI	Significant recovery activity unlikely. Lead likely to remain with response LGD unless otherwise determined if wide-ranging consequences arise.
Nat	ural and Environmental Hazard	ds		
5	Drought	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
6	Poor air quality	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA (if response is predominantly health service related - DHSC) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA (if recovery is predominantly health service related - DHSC) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
7	Fires	England: HO Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO; DLUHC (major fires in buildings) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
8	Volcanic eruptions resulting in disrupted air traffic	UK: Met Office (risk identification), DfT (risk assessment)	UK: DfT	UK: DfT

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
9	Severe storms and weather (excluding those mentioned separately)	UK: Met Office	Where cross-cutting impacts are anticipated, CO will coordinate from the outset. For impacts on health: England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE For impacts on aviation: UK: DfT For impacts on rail/ roads/ports: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE For impacts on energy supply GB: DESNZ NI: NIE For impacts on buildings: England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE For impacts on tullings: England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE For impacts on tullings: England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE For impacts on telecommunications UK: DSIT	Health: England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE Air: UK: DfT Rail/roads/ports: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE Energy Supply: GB: DESNZ NI: NIE Buildings: England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE Telecommunications: UK: DSIT

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
10	Severe space weather	UK: Met Office	For impacts on space based services: UK: DSIT For impacts on aviation: UK: DfT For impacts on the electricity network: GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE	For impacts on space based services: UK: DSIT For impacts on aviation: UK: DfT For impacts on the electricity network: GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE
11	Flooding, including coastal, fluvial and surface floods	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
12	Earthquakes	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
13	Pollution to ground, surface, coastal and marine waters	Marine and coastal waters: UK: DfT Ground and surface waters: England: DEFRA and EA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Marine and coastal waters: UK: DfT (MCA) Ground and surface waters: England: DEFRA and EA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Marine and coastal waters: UK: DfT (MCA) Ground and surface waters: DEFRA and EA (DWI if drinking water affected) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
Inte	rnational, including conflict a	nd instability and emergencies	s overseas	
14	Threats to UK sovereign territory	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO
15	Emergencies in Crown Dependencies	UK: МоJ	UK: MoJ	UK: МоJ
	The CDs are responsible for their domestic affairs. UK LGDs engage directly with CDs on matters for which those LGDs have lead policy responsibility.			
16	Emergencies Overseas, including in Overseas Territories	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO	Locally led, with support as necessary from HMG
Nati	ional Security and Terrorism (r	on-CBRN)		
17	Threats to UK Electoral Processes	UK: CO and DLUHC	UK: CO and DLUHC	UK: CO and DLUHC
18	Terrorism: Northern Ireland related	UK: Northern Ireland Office	UK: Northern Ireland Office	NI: Northern Ireland Executive
19	Terrorism: International attacks	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO	UK: FCDO

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
20	Terrorism: Attacks against government in GB	GB: CO and HO	GB: CO and HO	GB: CO and HO
21	Terrorism: Attacks on GB transport	GB: HO and DfT	GB: HO and DfT	GB: HO and DfT
22	Terrorism: All other domestic attacks	GB: HO	GB: HO	England: HO provides specialist support to victims. Other LGDs to be determined in light of circumstances. Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE

23	Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear release following a malicious attack	For attacks on the water supply: England water catchments: DEFRA Scotland water catchments: SG Wales water catchments: WG Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE	For attacks on the water supply: England water catchments: DEFRA Scotland water catchments: SG Wales water catchments: WG Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland NIE
		For all other attacks: UK: HO (except where paramilitary-related in NI where NIO leads)	For all other attacks: UK: HO (except where paramilitary-related in NI where NIO leads)	

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
24	Radiation Hazards originating from outside the UK:  a) Risk to British nationals overseas b) Impact in the UK	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE	a) UK: FCDO b) GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE	a) N/A b) England: DEFRA; Scotland: SG; Wales: WG; NI: NIE
25	Non-malicious release of dangerous substances, including serious industrial accidents (fixed site)  a) Chemical releases	<ul> <li>For serious industrial accidents, in collaboration with sector-specific LGDs/ SG/WG: GB: HSE (DWP); NI: HSENI.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>For serious industrial accidents, in collaboration with sector-specific LGDs/ SG/WG: GB HSE (DWP); NI: HSENI.</li> </ul>	England: i. Clean-up of the open environment (off-site only): DEFRA; MoD-led if defence-related
	<ul><li>b) Oil or gas releases</li><li>c) Release from Civil nuclear site</li><li>d) Release from Defence nuclear installations</li></ul>	<ul> <li>For Release from Civil nuclear site: GB: DESNZ; NI: NIE</li> <li>MoD for defence assets/estate.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>For Release from         Civil nuclear site: GB:         DESNZ; NI: NIE</li> <li>For defence nuclear: MoD</li> </ul>	ii. Where impact is primarily on sectors: DBT, DESNZ, or MoD or other LGD for critical sector impacted, as appropriate  Scotland: SG
				Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
26	Non-malicious release of dangerous substances (in transit)	GB: DfT <b>unless radiological</b> in which case DESNZ NI: NIE	GB: DfT <b>unless radiologica</b> l in which case DESNZ NI: NIE	England: i. Clean-up of the open environment: DEFRA
				ii. Where impact is primarily on sectors: DBT, DESNZ, MoD or other LGD for critical sector impacted, as appropriate
				Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

#### **Other Domestic Accidents and Societal Risks**

27	Transport accidents (including all UK registered ships and aircraft)	Land Transport England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE Air and Sea Transport UK: DfT	Land Transport England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE Air and Sea Transport UK: DfT	Land Transport England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE Air and Sea Transport UK: DfT
28	Dam failures	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
29	Major public order incidents, including significant civil unrest and disturbance	England and Wales: HO Scotland: SG NI: NIE	England and Wales: HO Scotland: SG NI: NIE	England: The LGD for recovery activity would be dependent on the scale and nature of the incident. Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
30	Reception and integration of British Nationals arriving from overseas following overseas emergency	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DLUHC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
31	Emergencies at major sporting, cultural and business events	England: DCMS Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DCMS Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: The LGD for recovery activity would be dependent on the scale and nature of the incident. Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
32	Major structural failures in buildings	England: DLUHC (excluding buildings in critical sectors where other LGDs are designated) Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE	England: DLUHC (excluding buildings in critical sectors where other LGDs are designated) Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE	England: DLUHC (excluding buildings in critical sectors where other LGDs are designated) Scotland: SG Wales: WG Northern Ireland: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
33	Industrial action	UK: DESNZ (fuel supply), DBT (postal services); HO (Border Force) England: DfT (transport); HO (fire and rescue); DfE (schools and higher education); DHSC (health, social care and ambulance service); CO (Civil Service); prison staff including for Wales (MoJ); Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	UK: DESNZ (fuel supply), DBT (postal services); HO (Border Force) England: DfT (transport); HO (fire and rescue); DfE (schools and higher education); DHSC (health, social care and ambulance service); CO (Civil Service); prison staff including for Wales (MoJ); Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	UK: DESNZ (fuel supply), DBT (postal services); HO (Border Force) England: DfT (transport); HO (fire and rescue); DfE (schools and higher education); DHSC (health, social care and ambulance service); CO (Civil Service); prison staff including for Wales (MoJ); Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

## Disruption to critical sectors, including due to cyber attack, major software failure, malicious attack and supply chain disruption

(Other departments are expected to support the LGD by preparing for, and leading a response to, any downstream impacts of disruption to their sectors. The LGD should support other departments where they own important response or resilience levers for the downstream sectors)

34	Disruption of space-based services	Malicious attack: UK: MoD and DSIT All other disruption: UK: DSIT	Malicious attack: UK: MoD and DSIT All other disruption: UK: DSIT	UK: DSIT
35	Disruption of telecommunication services	UK: DSIT	UK: DSIT	UK: DSIT

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
36	Disruption of broadcasting Services	UK: DCMS	UK: DCMS	UK: DCMS
37	Disruption of financial Services	UK: HMT	UK: HMT	UK: HMT
38	Disruption of electricity, gas and fuel services	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE	GB: DESNZ NI: NIE
39	Disruption of water supply	England water catchments: DEFRA Scotland water catchments: SG Wales water catchments: WG Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE	England water catchments: DEFRA Scotland water catchments: SG Wales water catchments: WG Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE	England water catchments: DEFRA Scotland water catchments: SG Wales water catchments: WG Northern Ireland water catchments: NIE
40	Disruption of food supply	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DEFRA Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
41	Disruption of chemical supply	England: DBT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DBT - prevention and coordinating a response where impacts are multi-sectoral.  Other departments to prepare for, and lead a response to, the downstream impacts of disruption to their sectors.	England: DBT where multi- sectoral; LGD for critical sector impacted if not multi-sectoral. Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
			Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	
42	Disruption of transport services	Land transport: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Land transport: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	Land transport: England: DfT Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
		Air and sea transport: UK: DfT (joint with HO for malicious attacks)	Air and sea transport: UK: DfT (joint with HO for malicious attacks)	Air and sea transport: UK: DfT (joint with HO for malicious attacks)

No	Type of Emergency	LGD for risk identification and risk assessment	LGD for prevention/ resilience, preparation and emergency response	LGD for recovery
43	Disruption of government services	All disruption to government not covered elsewhere would require CO to support a response. If the issue is devolved the relevant administration will be the LGD.	All disruption to government not covered elsewhere would require CO to support a response. If the issue is devolved the relevant administration will be the LGD.	All disruption to government not covered elsewhere would require CO to support a response. If the issue is devolved the relevant administration will be the LGD.
44	Disruption of emergency services	England: HO (fire and rescue, policing); DHSC (ambulance service); DfT (coastguard) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO (fire and rescue, policing where reserved); DHSC (ambulance service); DfT (coastguard) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: HO (fire and rescue, policing where reserved); DHSC (ambulance service); DfT (coastguard) Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
45	Disruption of health and social care services	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE	England: DHSC Scotland: SG Wales: WG NI: NIE
46	Disruption to armed forces and defence sector	UK: MoD	UK: MoD	MoD

### **Glossary of titles**

Cabinet Office

CO

DBT Department for Business and Trade

DCMS Department for Culture, Media & Sport

**DEFRA** Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

**DESNZ** Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

**DfE** Department for Education

**DfT** Department for Transport

**DHSC** Department of Health and Social Care

**DLUHC** Department for Levelling Up, Housing &

Communities

**DSIT** Department for Science, Innovation & Technology

**DWI** Drinking Water Inspectorate

**DWP** Department for Work & Pensions

**EA** Environment Agency

FCDO Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

**HMT** His Majesty's Treasury

**HO** Home Office

**HSE** Health and Safety Executive

**HSENI** Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland

**LGD** 'Lead Government Department'

**MCA** Maritime and Coastguard Agency

**MoD** Ministry of Defence

**MoJ** Ministry of Justice

**NIE** Northern Ireland Executive

**NIO** Northern Ireland Office (UK)

**SG** Scottish Government

**WG** Welsh Government

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