

Chapter 7 Communicating with the Public

Revision to *Emergency Preparedness*

Chapter 7 (Communicating with the Public) of *Emergency Preparedness, Revised Version*

- **Summary**

Category 1 responders' duties to communicate with the public under the Act are based on the belief that a well-informed public is better able to respond to an emergency and to minimise the impact of the emergency on the community ([paragraphs 7.6](#)).

- The Act includes public awareness and warning and informing as two distinct legal duties for Category 1 responders - advising the public of risks before an emergency and warning and keeping it informed in the event of an emergency ([paragraphs 7.1](#)).
- Arrangements for warning and informing the public complement emergency planning arrangements ([paragraphs 7.26](#)).
- Category 1 responders need both to plan their communications and to test their communications arrangements to ensure they are effective ([paragraphs 7.28](#)).
- In the same way that Category 1 responders must ensure that their emergency plans are appropriate for the scale and type of risks involved, communications arrangements should be appropriate for the message and the targeted audience ([paragraphs 7.32](#)).

WHAT THE ACT AND THE REGULATIONS REQUIRE

- 7.1. There are two aspects of the duty in relation to communicating with the public. The first is that the public be made aware of the risks of emergencies and how Category 1 responders are prepared to deal with them if they occur. The second is that arrangements are made to warn the public and that the public be provided with information and advice as necessary if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.

Arrange for the publication of assessments and plans

- 7.2. The duties to assess risks and to prepare plans (covered in Chapter 4) are followed by a further duty on Category 1 responders to arrange for the publication of all or part of risk assessments and plans they have made, where publication is necessary or desirable to prevent, reduce, control, mitigate or take other action in connection with an emergency.¹
- 7.3. Arranging for publication means that the Category 1 responders do not necessarily have to publish these documents themselves but they must arrange for them to be published.
- 7.4. The duty is not necessarily to arrange to publish the whole of a risk assessment or a complete plan but only those parts which it is necessary or desirable to publish where this will add value in raising public awareness and would assist in dealing with an emergency.
- 7.5. Category 1 responders meet these requirements by publishing a Community Risk Register (CRR), which provides an agreed assessment of the risks affecting a local area and an agreed position on the planning and resourcing priorities required to prepare for those risks.

¹ s. 2(1)(f)

- 7.6. The more information the public has access to, and the better educated they therefore become before an event, the more open they are likely to be to the warnings and advice they are given at the time of an emergency. A well informed public is better able to respond to an emergency and this will minimize the impact of an emergency on the community. Responses to a number of emergencies over recent years have highlighted the need to encourage individuals and communities (including businesses) to be better prepared and more self reliant during emergencies. This allows the authorities to focus on those areas and people in greatest need.
- 7.7. The duty to make the public aware of the risks of emergencies does not extend to a requirement to assist individuals/organisations in developing community resilience or to promote community resilience. However, responders should recognise the benefits of engaging with the community and promoting individual and community resilience.

Avoid alarming the public unnecessarily

- 7.8. At the same time, when publishing assessments and plans, the Regulations require Category 1 responders to have regard to the need not to alarm the public unnecessarily.²
- 7.9. There is a similar duty to avoid alarming the public unnecessarily when making arrangements to warn, inform and advise them.³

Sensitive information

- 7.10. Where risk assessments or plans contain sensitive information,⁴ then only edited or summary versions of all or part of the document should be published.

² regulation 27

³ regulation 30

⁴ See regulation 45 and the discussion in Chapter 3

Joint discharge of functions and other forms of collaborative working

- 7.11. The duty to arrange for the publication of all or part of assessments and plans falls on all Category 1 responders but the Regulations permit them to collaborate with others in delivering the duty. It should be noted that voluntary sector and community groups may help responders to fulfil this duty but cannot discharge it on their behalf. Private sector organisations should also be encouraged to provide necessary advice and information where relevant (see also [paragraph 7.25](#)).
- 7.12. There are several options for Category 1 responders in deciding how best to discharge their responsibility. They may decide to undertake the task:
- o on their own;
 - o collaboratively, by agreeing with partners to act under the leadership of a lead responder;⁵
 - o jointly, by making arrangements with another Category 1 responder;⁶ or
 - o by delegating the task to another Category 1 responder.⁷
- 7.13. They may also support collaborative arrangements with the use of protocols.⁸

Maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public

- 7.14. Category 1 responders are required to maintain arrangements to warn the public if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred. In addition to warning, they must also have arrangements to provide information and advice to the public if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.⁹

⁵ regulations 9-11

⁶ regulation 8(a)

⁷ regulation 8(b)

⁸ regulation 7

⁹ s.2(1)(g)

7.15. The Act places a duty on Category 1 responders to maintain arrangements to warn. This reserves decisions about when, how, what and to whom warnings should be issued, to the local Category 1 responders themselves (see [Figure 7.1](#)). Plans, processes and protocols can be co-ordinated through the relevant warning and informing groups within the Local Resilience Forums. At the same time, there is a clear expectation that the arrangements to warn will be utilised where an emergency has occurred, making it necessary for responders to take action collectively to ensure a consistent message

Identification of Category 1 responder with lead responsibility

7.16. Confusion would be caused, if more than one Category 1 responder were to plan to warn the public about the same risk at the same time and to the same extent. To avoid duplication, the Regulations effectively support flexibility by requiring those Category 1 responders whose functions are affected by an emergency to co-operate for the purpose of identifying which organisation will take lead responsibility for maintaining arrangements to warn in regard to that particular emergency.¹⁰

7.17. If agreement cannot be reached, each of them must maintain these arrangements separately, but should be mindful of the potential consequences of conflicting information. (Further guidance can be found later under “Who” – lead responder [paragraph 7.94](#))

7.18. The Regulations envisage two ways in which a lead responder for warning, informing and advising the public may be chosen:

- o by identification before an emergency;¹¹ or
- o by adopting a procedure to be followed at the time of emergency.¹²

¹⁰ regulation 32

¹¹ regulation 32(3)(a)

¹² regulation 32(3)(b)

7.19. In addition, a procedure may be adopted by which the role of lead responder may be changed from one Category 1 responder to another during the course of an emergency, including the recovery period.¹³ Co-operation to identify the lead responder for warning, informing and advising the public must identify which of these procedures has been chosen in relation to the particular emergency and include hand over protocols.

7.20. Arrangements must ensure that at the time of an emergency, the Category 1 responder which has accepted the lead responsibility for warning, informing and advising the public:

- o is able to contact the other Category 1 responders whose functions are exercisable in relation to that emergency;¹⁴
- o informs those Category 1 responders of the actions it is taking;¹⁵ and
- o is able to collaborate with those Category 1 responders in warning, informing and advising the public.¹⁶

7.21. The Regulations clearly envisage that the Category 1 responder with lead responsibility for warning, informing and advising the public will collaborate with its partners in fulfilling its role. There is no question of the lead responder assuming sole responsibility for carrying out the task. The Regulations place a reciprocal responsibility on those Category 1 responders which are not the lead responder, but which also have a duty to warn, inform and advise the public in relation to a particular emergency. They must maintain arrangements to:

- o consult with the lead responder in relation to that emergency on a regular basis;¹⁷ and

¹³ regulation 32(3)(c)

¹⁴ regulation 33(2)(a)

¹⁵ regulation 33(2)(b)

¹⁶ regulation 33(2)(c)

¹⁷ regulation 34(a)

- o inform the lead responder of the actions they are taking, and proposing to take, in relation to warning, informing and advising the public.¹⁸

7.22. The critical element in the effective delivery of information to the public will be the partnership established between the responder bodies involved and the sharing of information between them to ensure consistency.

Joint discharge of functions

7.23. Category 1 responders may also decide to deliver their responsibility to maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public by:

- o making arrangements to operate jointly with another Category 1 responder;¹⁹
- o delegating the task to another Category 1 responder.²⁰

These collaborative arrangements, including the identification of a lead Category 1 responder for warning and informing, may be supported with the use of protocols.²¹

Category 2 responders and other bodies

7.24. Category 1 responders are not the sole responder bodies likely to be involved in arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public. The Regulations recognise that some Category 2 responders, such as utilities, have a duty under their own regulatory frameworks to provide warning, information and advice in certain circumstances when their services are interrupted. Similarly, the Meteorological

¹⁸ regulation 34(b)

¹⁹ regulation 8(a)

²⁰ regulation 8(b)

²¹ regulation 7

Office, the Food Standards Agency and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which are not covered by the Act, also provide a warning service for a number of events including, for example, severe weather emergencies. Accordingly, the Regulations require that Category 1 responders in performing their duty to warn, inform and advise:

- o should have regard to these arrangements;²² and
- o need not duplicate them unnecessarily.²³

7.25. It is important that responders consider how the CCA duty to communicate with the public interfaces with the duties contained in other site specific legislation such as the Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1999 (COMAH) (as amended 2005 and 2008) and the Radiation Emergency Preparedness and Public Information Regulations 2001 (REPIR). Where possible, Category 1 and 2 responders as well as site operators should develop joint arrangements for communicating with the public. Further guidance on “The Fit with Other Legislation” can be found in [Chapter 19](#).

Have regard to emergency plans

7.26. Warning, informing and advising the public is not a stand-alone duty. The Regulations require that a Category 1 responder in carrying out its duties in this respect must have regard to its emergency plans.²⁴ As with any other part of planning for the response to an emergency, the communications strategy - either direct with the public, or via the media - should be fully integrated into the responder’s emergency plans. Equally, in maintaining its emergency plans, it must have regard to its warning and informing duties.

²² regulation 35(1)(a)

²³ regulation 35(1)(b)

²⁴ regulation 28

Generic and specific arrangements

- 7.27. In regard to emergency planning, the Regulations distinguish between generic and specific plans. Similarly, in relation to the duty to have arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public, the Regulations recognise that these may be generic or specific.²⁵ Which arrangements are chosen, will depend on the type of emergency being planned for and the particular circumstances in a locality.

Training and exercises

- 7.28. Emergency plans must include arrangements for the provision of training and carrying out of exercises.²⁶ Similarly, the Regulations in regard to warning and informing the public also require arrangements to include provision for training and exercises.²⁷ It is recommended that exercises include warning and informing messages that test the public acceptance, acknowledgement and action on the messages. Simple, regular community engagement activities can assist in developing public awareness.

How the Act and Regulations apply in Northern Ireland

- 7.29. Regulations 32 to 34 do not apply to Category 1 organisations in relation to the delivery of their functions in Northern Ireland. In addition, the application to the transferred functions of the Police Service of Northern Ireland would be in accordance with arrangements set out in Chapter 12.

²⁵ regulation 29

²⁶ regulation 25

²⁷ regulation 31

Box 7.1: Further advice and information

Also included in this chapter are further advice and case studies about communicating with the public that are not supported directly by the Act, but responders may find them useful in fulfilling their duties under the Act. These sections of text are distinguished by inclusion in a text box like this one.

For more civil protection and resilience case studies go to National Resilience Extranet Case Studies Library

GSE: <https://www.resilience-extranet.gse.gov.uk/casestudies> or

Internet: <https://www.resilience-extranet.gov.uk/casestudies>

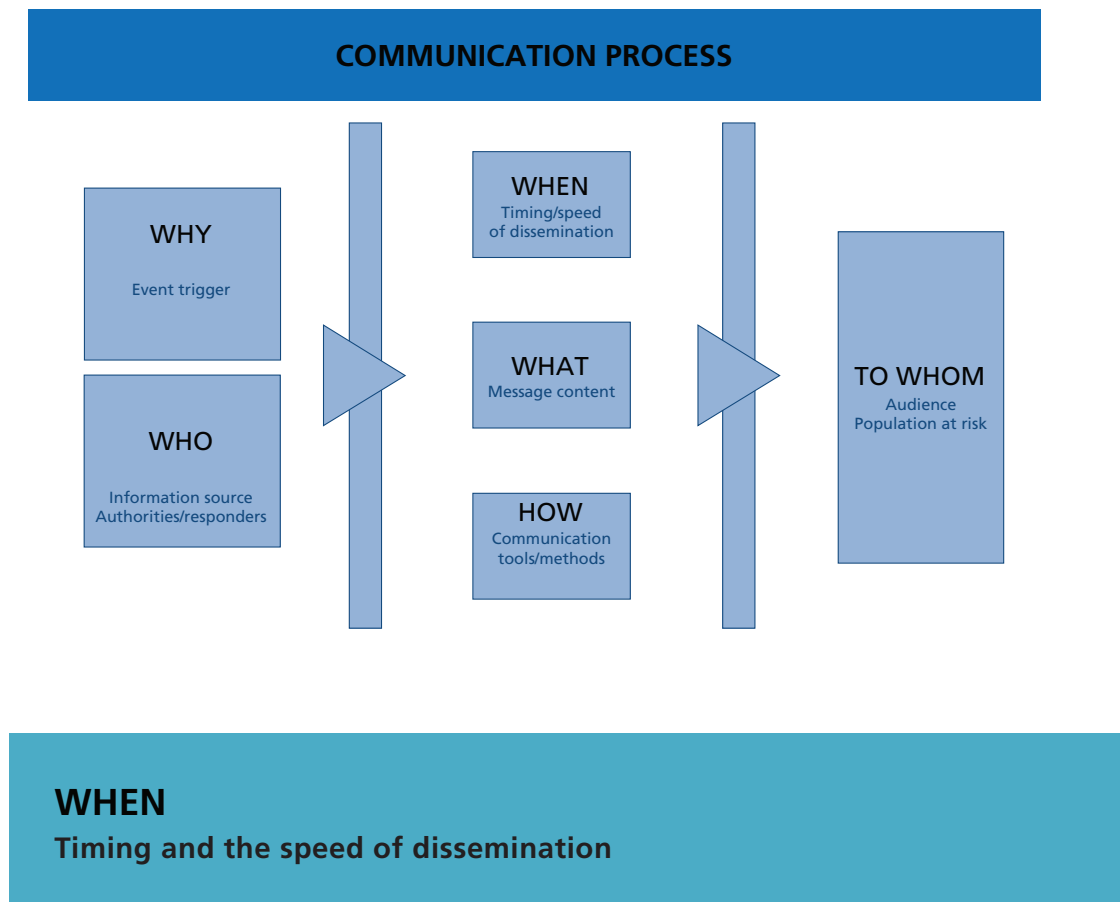
HOW THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT AND THE REGULATIONS MAY BE CARRIED OUT

- 7.30. The previous section has described the nature of the legislation and what it permits and requires Category 1 responders to do. This section outlines how the duties described may best be carried out. It describes good practice.
- 7.31. Communicating with the public is an integral part of preparing for and responding to incidents and cannot be done in isolation. The timely provision of relevant information and appropriate warnings and advice is a crucial part of the effort to promote and foster resilient communities. Responders need to consider how to warn and inform in conjunction with other aspects of the CCA, such as co-operation, information sharing, risk assessment, the role of the voluntary sector and other relevant legislation. These are set out elsewhere in *Emergency Preparedness*.

- 7.32. At every stage of the process, the key to effective communication with the public is getting the message right for the right audience. Co-ordination between Category 1 responders is vital and every effort should be made to engage with Category 2 responders and the voluntary sector. Even when specific information has to be given by one body in a very specialist field, the others involved in the response should be aware of what is being issued, when and to whom. Arrangements to ensure that such co-ordination can take place effectively should be included in the planning process and assist in the smooth handover of responsibility if it is necessary.
- 7.33. Advance preparation is essential and developing an outline communication strategy to deal with incidents is vital. When an incident/emergency occurs, this rolling strategy can be quickly developed to ensure a comprehensive and co-ordinated strategic communications approach is taken. This strategy however should continue to evolve over the duration of the incident to ensure that the most effective and appropriate action continues to be taken. Where possible, there should be a range of communications specialists involved in developing the strategy so that all communication disciplines, from free to paid media, e-media to direct mail, are considered.
- 7.34. For the most part, public information should cover the interests of a number of different Category 1 responders involved in handling the emergency. All those with an interest need to contribute to the development of the information. Apparent conflicts of interest need to be resolved quickly. The stages in the decision-making process should be logged to provide a record which can be examined after the event to identify lessons for the future. Suitable systems should be devised as part of the planning process.
- 7.35. Responders should be encouraged to set out a strategy for communicating with the public before, during and after a crisis. The key principles are set out under the following themes – when, what, how, who and to whom (see [Fig 7.1](#)) and are described under each heading in this Chapter:

7.36. Annex 7D provides responders with details of The Ten Step Cycle, which aims to assist responders to meet the duty to communicate by setting out a step by step process to work through. It is seen as a continuous cycle and the process can be adapted to suit local needs and aid the planning process.

Figure 7.1



Public communications timeline: what responders’ plans need to achieve

7.37. Although the duty is in two parts, there are three recognised stages to communicating with the public. There is a clear link between them and it is not always easy to separate them.

<u>Public awareness</u> Risk communication and education	<u>Public warning/alerting</u> At the time of an emergency or when one is likely to occur	<u>Informing and advising the public</u> Immediate and long term post emergency
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Public awareness: developing understanding and preparedness before an emergency

- 7.38. The more information the public have prior to an incident, the better prepared they are likely to be and the better able to respond appropriately to warnings and advice during an emergency. Past events and commissioned research have shown the population in the UK not to be particularly risk aware and to expect responders/government to deal with emergencies as they occur, rather than preparing themselves to respond. Responders have a duty to make the public aware of the risks so that they can be encouraged to be more self-rescue orientated.
- 7.39. Raising the awareness of children can help provide the long term solution to changing behaviour. Children absorb information and influence family behaviour; they can also influence the wider community.

Case Study

Since 2005, Essex County Council (ECC) Emergency Planning Service has engaged with school children to deliver awareness training in many aspects of emergency planning through a “what if” project. The strategy was designed to engage not only children but their guardians, and to encourage the wider community to share the learning. ECC have sourced a variety of funding opportunities to enable them to develop packages suitable for many age groups as follows:

- An all hazards “What if” calendar
- Online interactive decision game on flooding
- Online reading books (4 in total)
- Online board game
- Online puzzles
- DVD
- Additionally, reading books have been produced in hardback
- Under development is an iphone App on the “what if” game.

A variety of activities has been designed and delivered to a whole range of age groups from 6 to 15 years old. These have been interactive and have taken place either in the class room or in role play in external venues. Many of the above products are available online at www.whatif-guidance.org

Risk communication / risk perception

- 7.40. Effective warnings typically begin with risk communication and pre-incident public awareness campaigns that explain how individuals may receive emergency information, and actions the public can take to prepare for emergencies. Preparedness efforts also strengthen the credibility of, and compliance with, warnings and alerts.
- 7.41. Understanding how people perceive and view risk is important as it can help responders tailor their communications appropriately and align messages with public perception. Perceptions are likely to vary widely across different cultures and groups. Perceptions will also be informed by a number of factors such as familiarity, control, vulnerability, timing, trust in authorities and social responsibility. How individuals perceive risks, both likelihood and impact, will influence their behaviour. High levels of risk perception are associated with higher levels of intended compliance and the tendency to act appropriately to warning information. However, there is comprehensive guidance available on how best to communicate about risks to the public without causing disproportionate concern, and Category 1 responders should be familiar with this.

Public warning / alerting at the time of an emergency or when one is likely to occur

- 7.42. An alert or warning needs to reach as many people as possible and as quickly as possible. Key communications objectives in an emergency response are to deliver accurate, clear and timely information and advice to the public so they feel confident, safe and well informed. Arrangements should be sufficiently flexible and extendable to address any escalation of events. Responders should alert the members of a community whose immediate safety is at risk by all appropriate means, and be mindful of using a variety of available channels and existing community resilience networks to reach community groups and vulnerable people.

Recent examples of research that considered risk perception include:

- o **Plymouth University** “factors influencing risk perception, information spread and reliability”. The research sought to improve understanding of the psychological and behavioural reactions that the UK public might display following a CBRN related incident. It considered the need to design clear, comprehensible messages that meet the public’s information needs and whether these messages altered behavioural intentions. There was a need to use emergency communications to correct erroneous beliefs. The research developed evidence based guidelines for design of emergency communication based on literature review and research.

- o **Kings’ College London** noted that the management of incidents involving CBRN risk is often complicated when members of the public adopt unexpected behaviours or display levels of fear that seem disproportionate to the level of threat that is involved. One of the key messages from this research was that the drive to maintain family contact is strong. Therefore emergency planners need to facilitate communication following an incident – prioritise information / advice about schools and reassure parents that schools have emergency plans. Preparation goes up at times of threat so remind the public of what preparations would be most effective.

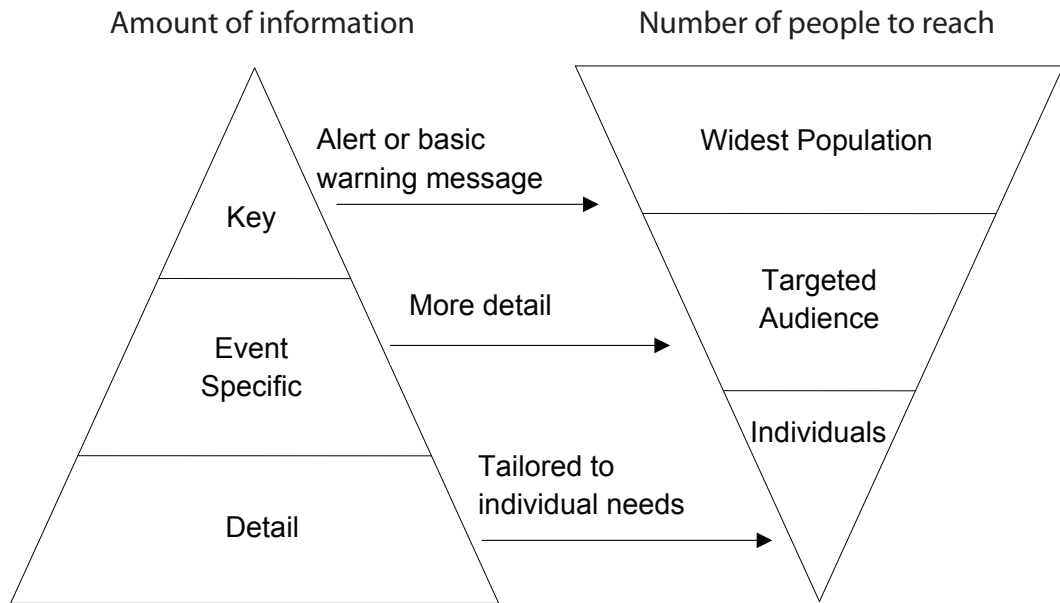
- o **Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) Crisis Messaging Study** - this study considered proximity and social context. Accurate understanding of perception of local risks requires appreciation of social context as well as objective risk assessments. Perception of man-made risks is higher than natural hazards.

- o **European funded research** – communicating with the public about CBRN threats: state of the art. Carried out by King's College London, Dialogik and Health Protection Agency.
<http://www.pirateproject.eu/workshop.html>

Speed

- 7.43. Responders should issue an early warning or alert of an incident as quickly as possible to help to save and/or protect lives. The initial alert may be hampered by the possible lack of information; therefore the warning/alert will be restricted to a very basic message or sound such as a siren or evacuation notification. As the incident unfolds, more detail can be given in warning messages.

Figure 7.2



Informing and advising

- 7.44. Responders need to provide relevant and timely information about the nature of the unfolding event and this should continue throughout the event. The demand for more and more information will increase, and the advice given will become more specific. Information should include an explanation of the immediate actions being taken by responders to minimise the risk to human or animal health and welfare, the environment or property; actions being taken by responders to assist the recovery phase, as well as the actions the public themselves can take to minimise the impact of the emergency and details of how further information can be obtained.

- 7.45. It is also important for responders to communicate the end of the emergency and the return to normal arrangements. Good communication should be maintained in the recovery phase as people will require ongoing advice and information.

Case Study:

Lancaster University studied the long term effects of the floods in 2007 by reviewing the daily logs of residents in Hull affected by the floods. Further information relating to the hull diarists can be found at: [Hull Flood Project](#)

WHAT

What the public needs to know / message content

Awareness

- 7.46. At national level, more information has been put in the public domain. The National Risk Register (<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register>) explains how the government regularly assesses the natural hazards and manmade threats that could affect the UK. It explains the likelihood of a risk occurring and possible effects of an emergency if it happens.
- 7.47. Generic advice to the public on how to prepare for emergencies is available as part of the Community Resilience Programme launched in March 2011. This programme aims to encourage individuals and communities to become more aware of the risks they face and think about what actions they could take

to reduce the impacts of emergencies and to make their community more resilient. More information about the Community Resilience Programme can be found at : www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/communityresilience. From time to time, government also undertakes national campaigns through TV and press advertising.

- 7.48. The DirectGov website has information for the general public on what to do to prepare for emergencies and, in the event of an emergency occurring, it can carry key messages and signpost the public to different relevant sites for further information. This can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies.
- 7.49. The key central advice in the event of an incident is summarised by the phrase “Go in, Stay in, Tune in”. This is targeted at those who are not involved in the incident, but are close by or believe themselves to be in danger. There will be occasions when this message is not applicable, and responders should be ready to give instruction on the best course of action to take in the circumstances.

Box 7.2: Public information produced by central government and national bodies

The Government produces general advice to the public through a number of sources. This covers a variety of types of emergency, including terrorist-related emergencies:

- o <http://www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies>
- o <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience>
- o <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw/Counterterrorism/>
- o <http://www.mi5.gov.uk>
- o travel advice on <http://www.fco.gov.uk>
- o business continuity advice on <http://www.londonprepared.gov.uk>

- o severe weather warnings from the Meteorological Office on <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>
- o flood warnings and advice from the Environment Agency on <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>

7.50. Once Category 1 responders have identified the emergencies that will trigger their public communication duties through the risk assessment process (Chapter 4), they should consider what information is already in the public domain. This will help them determine what additional information from the risk assessments and plans they have made they should publish to meet the requirements of their duties.²⁸

7.51. The generic material is likely to be supported by the Community Risk Register (CRR) and Category 1 responders' generic planning arrangements. Specific plans, prepared in relation to specific risks and also supported by the CRR, are likely to include a requirement for much more detailed advice to the public on what may happen.

Awareness-raising: what the public should do in an emergency

7.52. The Act requires information to be published about the risks and plans. Under the Act, plans describe the actions the Category 1 responders themselves will take in the event of an emergency. However, in practice, Category 1 responders may also want to attach to their plans details of possible useful actions that the public could do to help themselves. These may include obtaining in advance useful protective or preventive materials or other items to ensure community resilience in an emergency. It makes

²⁸s. 2(1)(f)

sense for public awareness messages to include what the public should do in the face of the risk of emergency, to complement the actions that the Category 1 responders themselves propose to take. More information and advice is available through the Community Resilience Programme at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/communityresilience.

- 7.53. Many local authorities and other bodies have websites and literature which provide either generic advice on emergencies, or detailed advice specific to their own areas of responsibility.
- 7.54. Each decision will clearly have to be based on a balance of assessment. Two types of publication may be found to be necessary
- o generic advice referring to the risks of emergencies in the locality; and
 - o specific advice linked to particular risks and plans.

The information should be designed to encourage members of the public to be prepared for the risks that they are most likely to face.

Case Study

At the annual Great Yorkshire Show in Harrogate, North Yorkshire, a range of emergency planning professionals from North, West and South Yorkshire Local Authorities, the emergency services and various other Category 1 and 2 responders contribute to an awareness stand. Branded 'R U Prepared?' the stand promotes community resilience, personal awareness and preparedness to all those who visit. A range of activities and promotions draw people to the stand where they are offered help and advice on how they can become more resilient and prepare themselves for emergencies. More information can be found at the North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum Website: www.emergencynorthyorks.gov.uk

Box 7.3: Examples of locally produced or topical Information

- o Environment Agency local flood material:
<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/default.aspx>
- o Birmingham Resilience
<http://www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk/news/resilience-goes-digital/>
- o Lincolnshire Community Risk Register
<http://www.lincolnshireprepared.co.uk/>
- o Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum "Are you ready?" booklet
<http://www.thamesvalleylrf.org.uk/>
- o Local authority material, for example Surrey Alert information:
<http://www.surreyalert.info>
- o Emergency Planning Unit websites Control of Major Accident Hazards:
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/comahind.htm>
- o Nuclear calendars: public information calendars provided by the nuclear industry:
<http://www.niauk.org>
- o Maritime and Coastguard Agency, 'Safety on the Sea' series:
<http://www.mcga.gov.uk>
- o Emergency services outreach work in schools and youth groups
Crucial Crew scheme aimed at children to warn them of risks:
<http://www.crucial-crew.org>
- o First aid material from
- o British Red Cross - <http://www.redcross.org.uk>
- o St John Ambulance - <http://www.sja.org.uk>
- o St Andrew's First Aid - <http://www.firstaid.org.uk>

How much to publish

- 7.55. The objective of this duty under the Act needs to be kept in mind. At all stages of the decision-making process, Category 1 responders should ask themselves whether the material published will enhance the public's response in an emergency. In this regard, the mere fact of publication may have a beneficial effect on public confidence. Research suggests that people look to the authorities to 'do something', and that they will be relieved and reassured to see that plans are in place.

Unnecessary alarm

- 7.56. Any inclination towards full disclosure may be tempered by the requirement to "have regard to the need to avoid alarming the public unnecessarily".²⁹ Responders should consider the benefits of reducing the classification of sensitive information through various means to improve public understanding of risks and to establish some of the good practice highlighted in this chapter.
- 7.57. Information relating to events, particularly terrorist events, where the consequences would include mass fatalities and casualties could be unsettling and upsetting. However, there is a clear need to strike a balance between not causing public alarm and providing necessary information to enable people to understand the threat and respond in an appropriate manner in the event of an incident occurring. There is no evidence to suggest the public panics when receiving information. They want to feel they have all the relevant facts so that they can take informed decisions. Communication needs to be handled sensitively. Responders should use clear terminology, providing factual information which avoids sensationalism or emotive language. The content should not be overly negative or graphic, and should be as brief as possible to avoid confusing or overwhelming readers.

²⁹ regulations 27, 30

Relevant research includes:

Sussex University Social Psychology

Sussex psychologist Dr John Drury has published the first social-psychological study of crowd reactions among survivors of the London bombings on 7 July 2005.

One of the key findings in the research was that – “there was no ‘mass panic’ and little selfishness, despite the fact that people felt in danger of death, saw little hope of escape and were mostly among strangers.”

Research has found evidence that, in emergencies, rather than panic, some people have a delayed reaction to alarm signals and warning signs.

To counter this, researchers have suggested that traditional alarms could be replaced by more advanced mass communication tools, such as public-address systems and LED screens, to inform the evacuating crowd of the seriousness and location of danger.

www.sussex.ac.uk/affiliates/panic/index.html

NATO guidelines on psychosocial care for people affected by disasters and major incidents. www.healthplanning.co.uk/nato/

Case Study: Reservoir risk – raising awareness of risk without causing alarm

A study into the likely reaction of the public to information on reservoir flood risk was undertaken by the Environment Agency in 2009. The study examined the views of those who had experienced the effects of the potential failure of the Ulley reservoir in 2007, plus others living near reservoirs in the rest of the country. There was a relatively low awareness

of the risk from reservoirs, but once the issue was raised, people expressed a strong desire for further information on the risk.

When asked about how awareness of the risk could be raised, people suggested that the tone and language used should be factual, informative and calm and the focus should be on the safety of the reservoirs, not the risk. It should also be made clear that awareness was being raised in the wider area or for all sites of a particular risk, rather than indicating that a particular reservoir posed an imminent risk. People suggested that they would be less alarmed about the risk if they were told about the emergency planning arrangements in place *"If you at least know that there's a plan in force and what might happen, that's less scary."*

Further information on raising awareness of reservoir risks can be found at [Reservoir flood preparedness](#).

Public warning / alerting

What information is needed and when

- 7.58. Immediately when an emergency occurs, and during the first hour, the public needs:
- o basic details of the incident - what, where, when (and who, why and how, if possible);
 - o to know the implications for health and welfare;
 - o advice and guidance (e.g. stay indoors, symptoms, preparing for evacuation); and
 - o reassurance (if necessary).

The public wants to know:

- o practical implications such as the effect on traffic, power supplies, telephones, water supplies, etc;
- o a helpline number; and
- o what is being done to resolve the situation.

Broadcasters will require:

- o well thought out and joined-up arrangements between the emergency services, local authority and other organisations, capable of providing agreed information at speed;
- o an immediate telephone contact; and
- o a media rendezvous point at the scene.

7.59. Responders need to take into account what the public wants to know not simply what the authorities need to say. Understanding how emergency communication will be perceived and acted upon by the public will help to achieve greater success in compliance. Responders also need to consider how technical information can be communicated in a way that the public will understand.

7.60. Responders need to consider the potential for disparity between local and national messages. Ensuring consistency and clarity of messaging in the context of potentially differing approaches and experiences is key to successful UK-wide response to emergencies. Responders should explain why national messages might differ from local messages and ensure that local media are aware of the importance of local information.

Examples such as:

- o Severe weather – school closures are for local determination and the decision taken by individual school authorities.
- o Pandemic flu – where the disease was widespread in some geographical areas but almost non-existent in others.

7.61. There will often be a number of routes through which messages are disseminated, and to avoid inconsistent or conflicting messaging, they should be synchronised and checked to ensure that the data is correct. A common information picture should be shared at all levels. The News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) will help to co-ordinate the information activities at a national level – see Annex 7A for further information on the NCC.

7.62. Category 1 responders should not release, (without consultation), information or advice which covers the areas of responsibility of partner organisations. The damage done to public confidence by the release of inconsistent or contradictory messages can be hard to repair. Similarly, great damage can be done by speculation about causes or future developments when facts are not known.

Informing and advising

7.63. It is important to maintain a flow of information and provide the public with practical information in the mid and longer term following a major incident, and signpost individuals to sources of additional support. It is essential to recognise that some communication outlets may not be available for the long term distribution of essential information to the public and alternative methods should be established.

- 7.64. Local authorities co-ordinate the provisions of welfare support to the community and take on a key role in the recovery phase of emergencies. Local authorities have their own websites which can provide people with information on services available. Other mechanisms include individual and public meetings; one stop shops; use of media and mailing; as well as using existing voluntary/community networks.

Case Study:

Evidence from reviews of the experience of UK nationals affected by the Indian Ocean Tsunami and the government lessons learned from 7 July 2005 London bombings highlighted the need for ongoing advice and information

- o long term effects of a CT crisis are profoundly negative - ongoing communication with those affected by the emergency is required
- o survivors attempt to establish support networks
- o emphasis should be on two-way communications between government and public: building trust and demonstrating transparency

The Humanitarian Assistance Unit in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport developed a series of aftercare webpages. These pages provide the public with practical information in the mid and longer term following a major incident, and signpost individuals to sources of additional support.

www.direct.gov.uk/helpafterincident

HOW

How to publish

Pre-event information

- 7.65. The simplest and most cost-effective solution may be to make all or part of the relevant documents available in downloadable web format. For those who do not have internet access, paper copies can be made available on request and in the reference sections of public libraries.
- 7.66. Available information should be identified clearly in the responder Freedom of Information Publication Scheme.³⁰

Working with the Freedom of Information Act

- There may well be significant public interest in plans when information first becomes available, and some may want to see the detail. Where only summary or edited versions have been published, this may lead to requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to have access to all the information in the document. Those preparing published versions should be familiar with the terms of the legislation so that they can handle subsequent Freedom of Information requests quickly and accurately.

³⁰ The Freedom of Information Act requires each public authority to adopt and maintain a publication scheme setting out details of information it will routinely make available, how the information can be obtained and whether there is any charge for it. A publication scheme is therefore both a public commitment to make certain information available and a guide to how that information can be obtained. All publication schemes have to be approved by the Information Commissioner and should be reviewed by authorities periodically to ensure they are accurate and up to date. More information can be found at <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>

- In particular, the publication of generic plans may well encourage people to ask for further information to be made available under the Freedom of Information Act about plans for particular institutions in the area (schools, hospitals, old people's homes, prisons, animal shelters, zoos, museums, airports, ferry terminals, etc). Responder bodies may find that they will need to address these specific aspects in the planning process.

Case Study:

Plymouth University carried out the validation of the Ministry of Defence's *What to do in a Nuclear Emergency* public information booklet. Focus groups from the local community were used to identify potential improvements to the booklet. Working together Plymouth City Council, Cornwall Council and MOD Devonport revised the information booklet based on the research results.

This case study also illustrates the value of qualified expert communicators validating information that will go to the public.

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/communityandliving/emergencies/regulatedhazardoussites/devonportdockyard.htm>

Design and distribution

- 7.67. All material produced should look interesting and attractive enough for people to want to read it, otherwise it may be a waste of resources.
- 7.68. It is a good idea to seek professional design and editing assistance. If professional support is not available, advice on good practice is available online and in published manuals.
- 7.69. Once a product is available, the public will need to know about it. Unless it is going to be mailed directly to householders, people will need to be told how to get copies. This may be achieved by the conventional range of publicity methods.
- 7.70. Avoiding duplication of effort is important. Good communication between responder bodies should include development of joint programmes for the production of general information material.
- 7.71. It is good professional practice to evaluate the effectiveness of every information campaign. If this is done, evaluation should include research which shows how well any specialist versions have met the needs of vulnerable members of the community.

Reaching vulnerable persons and those who have difficulty understanding the message

Case Study:

Help the Aged (now called Age UK) produces a range of free advice leaflets for older people covering financial matters, housing, home safety and health. The Environment Agency Age UK to produce a guide for older people entitled "Flooding: be prepared". www.environment-agency.gov.uk and www.helptheaged.org.uk.

- 7.72. The needs of vulnerable people will be evident in some areas, which have, for example, a high proportion of elderly residents who may welcome the option of a large print version of a document, or where there may be significant numbers who speak a minority ethnic language. Where vulnerable members of the community are in the care of an institution such as a school or old people's home, the most effective delivery of information will be through the management. Where vulnerable members of the community are not cared for within an institution, local responders should consider going through interest groups or voluntary sector organisations to disseminate messages. It may be that the most effective communications route is a single leaflet expressed in very simple language (or more than one language) backed up with pictures and symbols, which includes a request that the reader should share the information with family, friends and neighbours who are not able to read the information themselves. Research shows that it can be particularly effective to communicate with children, who then act as a conduit for the message to reach other family members. It should include a link to Directgov emergency pages which have useful prompts/questions to encourage people to be prepared. The Red Cross has produced a family of products and resources to inform and prepare organisations, communities and individuals to work together, at www.informedprepared.eu.

- 7.73. Vulnerable groups will be a changing entity depending on the event (e.g. hard of hearing, elderly, transient population, etc) and might change during the event. Responders need to use a variety of different communication methods to help to capture these vulnerable groups. Responders should consider issues such as language and methods of communicating: mobile phones may not be used by some people, radios and televisions may not be on late at night, etc.
- 7.74. Vulnerable people who live in residential homes or sheltered accommodation or attend day centres etc. are relatively easy to identify and therefore it will be easier to put arrangements in place to warn during an emergency because the establishment will be known to local authorities and other responders.
- 7.75. Vulnerable people living in the community are more difficult to contact. General advice to the public to adopt a 'good neighbour' approach to help those less able to help themselves is always advisable; but specific efforts will sometimes be needed by the public authorities to deliver alerts to those vulnerable people who are known to them. Local community groups preparing for emergencies or local emergency groups (such as neighbourhood policing – Safer Community Teams) may be a useful way to identify and get information to vulnerable people.
- 7.76. The Category 1 responder with lead responsibility for communicating with the public will need to be assured that these vulnerable people can be contacted. Arrangements will need to address how information and assistance can be managed by local authorities and health authorities who are in regular contact with the vulnerable individuals.

- 7.77. People who have difficulty understanding the message because they use a different language may require pre-prepared print or broadcast messages in their own language.

Review and renewal

- 7.78. The provision of public information should be an ongoing process. Any information that is produced should be in a reasonably durable format, whether paper or electronic, and should be available over time. It should be regularly reviewed and renewed whenever necessary in the light of changing circumstances. LRFs might want to agree a schedule for review.
- 7.79. This will mean that published material will need to be looked at afresh every time the CRR or an individual risk assessment or plan changes. Only new information which is “necessary or desirable” for prevention or mitigation of an emergency will require a new version to be produced.

Case Study: National Severe Weather Warning Service – a root and branch review

The Met Office National Severe Weather Warning Service (NSWWS) was introduced in 1988. While the method of communication and display of warnings on the web had changed significantly during this time, the fundamentals of the service, that is the warning parameters and criteria, had not. During 2009/10 a review was initiated by the Public Weather Service Customer Group (PWSCG) (for more about this group see <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/about-us/what/pws/pwscg/about>) to consider whether the NSWWS was meeting the needs of the public and the responder communities in the UK.

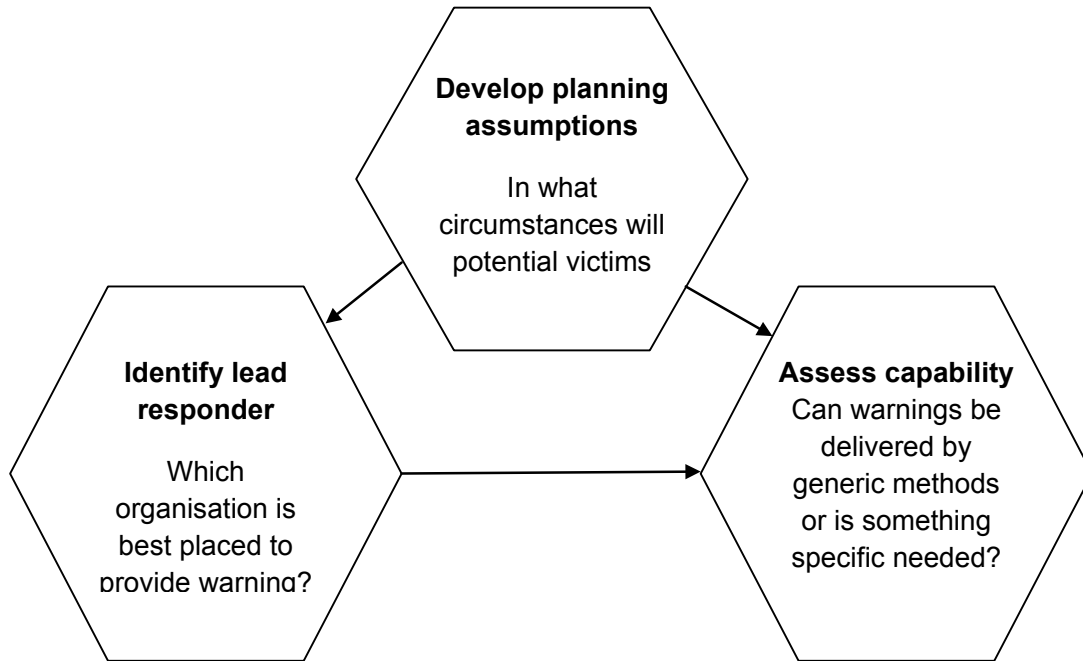
A wide-ranging consultation process was undertaken, including a series of workshops with the UK emergency responder community and, in an effort to ensure broad public consultation, a series of extended public discussion groups were conducted around the UK, at which all life stage and socio-economic groups were represented, which offered some qualitative research. Met Office Open Days were also used as opportunities to conduct some additional consultation on weather warnings, in addition to the regular feedback received from the public about Met Office services in general.

The main findings of the consultation process were used to redesign the service, including changes to the language used and graphical presentation of the information and all warnings are now impact based. Further information on the new service can be found at <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/guide/warnings.html>.

HOW

Communication tools/methods warning, informing and advising the public - communications during and after an emergency

- 7.80. The methods available to deliver urgent information to members of the public are extremely varied. A mix of techniques should be utilised to maximise the chance of receipt, comprehension & effective response from the public. Some depend on the availability of power supplies or phone lines. Some may require careful consideration of the risks to human life and health, in case, at the time of an emergency, staff or members of the public are exposed to hazardous substances while they are warning or being warned. Arrangements for complementary and co-ordinated public warnings, advice and media facilities should be carefully managed between the various bodies. This will enhance public safety and information will be delivered more effectively.

7.80. **Figure 7.3 Process for developing effective warning procedures**

7.81. The process of reaching agreement on the warning process is shown schematically in Figure 7.3.

Generic and Specific Warnings

7.82. Some systems are defined as 'generic' arrangements,³¹ in that they can be called into play in a range of scenarios. Others have only limited use, or are capable of delivering only a closely targeted message.

Warning during a malicious incident

7.83. The police will lead in any malicious incident, including terrorist attacks, and have primary responsibility for providing effective and timely information to the public. Communication strategies will be developed for specific scenarios. There will be a need to balance rapid dissemination of warnings whilst ensuring accuracy. It is recognised there may be little specific information during the initial stage of an incident and confirmation of detailed facts will take longer.

³¹ regulation 29

- 7.84. When developing the warning in response to a malicious incident, the potential for any planned secondary attack should be considered in determining an evacuation route for the public. The means of delivering the message to the public also needs to be considered to ensure public safety and to avoid further potential damage. Additionally, responders should be aware of the different arrangements for media relations for such an event, as it will most likely be nationally led, with local delivery. Where credible and specific threats to national security are identified in advance, information is handled at a national level and public warnings issued by the police and/or Home Secretary. Any threat connected with international terrorism will be a national – even international – issue and information about it will be co-ordinated centrally regardless of what part of the country is under threat.

Existing publication and warning regimes

- 7.85. Some organisations excluded from the Act because they have existing statutorily defined emergency procedures, also have an important role in generating public awareness about emergencies and issuing warnings when necessary. The management of emergencies on nuclear and major industrial sites, including communicating with the public, is already regulated. Site operators have well-established procedures for communicating with the public in the vicinity of their sites. The CCA legal framework does not override existing ones. It will be important to ensure that plans made by Category 1 responders do not duplicate existing arrangements. Category 1 responders may choose to cover in their communications planning the potential for an emergency to spread beyond the scope of individual site plans produced under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations, Radiation (Emergency Preparation and Public Information) Regulations or pipeline regimes, but this is not an explicit requirement of the Act.

- 7.86. Consistency of message is important in an emergency situation and Category 1 responders should have regard to the early advice and information relayed to the public by Category 2 responders and site owners/operators. Category 1 responders should seek to enhance this communication.

Examples of joint working:

Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council warning and informing services have developed joint arrangements for communicating with the public. The Informer Emergency Notification System covers CCA, REPPiR, MACR and COMAH. <http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/warnandinform>

Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit has developed communication links with industry (COMAH Establishments, Nuclear Power Station, etc). Details can be found at: www.clevelandemergencyplanning.info

- 7.87. Category 1 responders should consider the options available in detail as part of the planning process to ensure that they have an adequate range of methods at their disposal. No single system will be the solution to all situations or achieve a wholly resilient alerting capability. A variety of methods will always be necessary to capture the largest proportion of the target audience. Different information sources appeal to different demographic groups. An individual who receives multiple but consistent messages is likely to respond favourably. Overlapping methods help to ensure a higher level of successful access to the targeted population.
- 7.88. Alerting systems also need to be resilient. Much can be achieved through trusted stakeholders and low-technology solutions. Indeed, these may be the most resilient to disruption to telecommunications and power. Using trusted stakeholders (such as building managers to communicate with their tenants) allows the public to receive messages from a known (and possibly more trusted) source.

- 7.89. The need for back-up staff and equipment, and the risk of warning arrangements being disrupted by the emergency itself, should all be considered in business continuity management plans.

Types of warning method

Possible public warning methods	Capability
o Mobilising officers to go round on foot and knock on doors	generic
o From car or helicopter, by loudhailer or other amplified means	generic
o National and local media (TV, radio, online)	generic or specific
o Social Media generic or specific	generic or specific
o Electronic/variable message boards, e.g. at the roadside or on motorways generic or specific	generic or specific
o Variable message signs (some authorities have protocols in place to utilise these in emergencies)	specific
o Direct radio broadcasts to shipping (in maritime incidents)	generic or specific
o PA announcements in public buildings, shopping centres, sports venues, transport systems	generic or
o Automated telephone/fax/e-mail/text messages to subscribers	specific
o Site sirens	specific

Case Study: Swine flu

During the H1N1 outbreak in 2009/10, public information and advice was extensive and difficult to miss. The “sneezing man” image and “catch it, bin it, kill it” slogan produced a clear “brand” which was recognisable throughout the pandemic. UK wide media campaigns ran on television, on radio and in print. Posters were displayed in a wide range of settings by the NHS, businesses and the voluntary sector. Information and advice were accessible on a range of government websites. An information leaflet was delivered to every home in the UK. Advice could be seen online, on bus shelters, billboards and shopping trolleys. NHS Direct provided advice, as did the special Flu Information Line and the National Pandemic Flu Service in England. Similar information was available in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales by phone.

Helplines and public inquiry points

- 7.90. The information delivery methods discussed so far have been based upon the Category 1 responders’ decision about what information needs to be provided. However the public are likely to have all sorts of queries and perhaps offers, to direct towards the responder bodies. Responders should plan how to make best use of helplines and public inquiry points (which may be telephone, e-mail or SMS based, or multimedia) in any emergency. These can either provide a limited amount of recorded information, or connect with a call centre where people answer individual questions.
- 7.91. Helplines may already be in place for other purposes. Plans can be developed to take them over and provide their staff with relevant briefing or suitable recorded messages. Facilities run by other operators or companies in the area may also be co-opted into the public information effort as a result of protocols put in place in advance.

- 7.92. Setting up a dedicated call centre from scratch is a significant undertaking, but may be achieved quite quickly if suitable call-off contracts have been put in place as part of the planning process. The Police Casualty Bureau and the Consulate Crisis Group of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office regularly operate effective call centres. Responders might also consider working with voluntary sector organisations, for example, through the British Red Cross to provide this function as they may have the capability. However, it is essential to ensure that the people working at the call centres are competent, fully briefed and provided with a core brief. It is important to consider the capacity of the system, and Category 1 responders should take advice from network providers to avoid the risk of overloading the telephone system.
- 7.93. Such inquiry points are not a panacea. There will always be a significant proportion of dissatisfied callers, whatever the method used - callers for whom the recorded message is inadequate or unsuitable, or who cannot get answers to their particular questions, or who simply cannot get through because the lines are too busy. Planning should address the management of callers expectations, to limit irritation and disappointment, by establishing procedures to make it clear what information is available and how busy the lines are.

Box 7.5: The Role of the Casualty Bureau

When emergencies occur, it is a police function to consider setting up a casualty bureau. Where one is set up, planning arrangements should ensure that the contact number is publicised as widely as possible, as soon as possible. Information about a casualty bureau should make it clear that this is a way for the police to collect information about people who may have been injured or killed - it does not release information about possible casualties.

The fact that the casualty bureau does not provide information directly over the phone places an onus on Category 1 responders (for example local authorities), as part of integrated emergency management, to plan to set up a public information line. This may be achieved through the use of the British Red Cross co-ordinated support line, provided through its Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Chief Police Officers, or through the use of the voluntary sector delivered facility referred to in [paragraph 7.91](#). Such support lines do not provide information about casualties, of course, but they may be able to provide callers with a range of practical and emotional support, including the provision of travel and accommodation advice to relatives and friends who may wish to come to the area. Planning to provide public information lines will help ease the burden on the casualty bureau.

Planning should also include special arrangements in the local area to provide face-to-face information and support to those bereaved relatives who come to be close to the scene of the emergency. The police are likely to provide Family Liaison Officers who will take on all or part of this role. But special attention needs to be paid to relatives and friends trying to get information at receiving hospitals for the incident; and to those who may be taken to, or congregate at, the emergency mortuary. Rest and reception centres set up by the local authority with the support of voluntary organisations may also require regularly updated access to information and advice.

WHO - LEAD RESPONDER

Authorities / Responders

Identifying a lead responder

- 7.94. It is preferable, in relation to particular types of emergency, if a lead responder for warning, informing and advising the public is identified and agreed beforehand by the Category 1 responders. Annex 7B provides an indicative list of which Category 1 responders are likely to lead in a range of examples. (The list is advisory only). Step 3 of the 10 Step Cycle (Annex 7D) offers further guidance on identifying a lead responder.

Case Study: North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum Media and Communications Plan

The NYLRF Media, Warning and Informing group has produced a Communications and Media Plan which included a specific appendix on identifying the lead responder. The group approached this by classifying the types of risk and looking at the risk register and agreeing to focus on high and very high risks rather than the register as a whole. All parties then agreed who would generally lead on communications and/or media during that type of emergency.

The communications plan itself was very short and its focus was on the 11 appendices which had specific details and actions as well as detailing the needs of the media during an incident.

To look at the NYLRF plan or the lead responder sheet please visit www.emergencynorthyorks.gov.uk and contact the emergency planning unit emergency@northyorks.gov.uk for a username and password.

- 7.95. In many instances, the lead Category 1 responder for warning and informing the public will be the organisation which leads on the response to an emergency. In a number of instances, this role is likely to be filled by the police, but it should not be assumed that this will always be the case. The lead responder for the recovery phase will normally be the Local Authority. It is essential the public continue to receive appropriate information during the recovery phase.
- 7.96. A wide area emergency such as flooding is a good example of how responders all have to play their part. It is clear that the role of lead Category 1 responder for warning, informing and advising, is likely to fall in England to the Environment Agency, in this instance, but that does not absolve non-lead responders from playing their part. When a potential flood impinges on the functions of another Category 1 body, then it too has a duty to warn, for example, where it is likely that the flood will require a response from the local authority or the police, e.g. because the flood will impact on the delivery of education or the welfare of clients on a social services care list or, in the case of the police, because lives and property will be at risk. The Agency is also responsible for warning other responders, who must make decisions on, for example, evacuation, in the same way it does the public. In similar wide area examples, such as health emergencies, the lead Category 1 responder with responsibility for warning and informing will be a health organisation, but it will also require assistance from other Category 1 responders. Different bodies may undertake the lead Category 1 response role in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 7.97. Where identification of the Category 1 organisation taking the lead responder role for warning, informing and advising cannot be done in advance, the Regulations permit a procedure to be established for identifying at the time of an event who should be the lead responder. However, choosing this option may cause unwanted delay and confusion. A possible example where Category 1 responders might want to delay identifying a lead responder could be a severe weather emergency. Even so, in Annex

7D, it is suggested that the police should be identified in advance for the lead role in this type of wide area emergency, where the likely impact is on road traffic. They, of course, would expect to be supported by a range of other Category 1 responders.

- 7.98. Procedures may also be adopted for changing the lead responder with responsibility for warning, informing and advising during the course of an emergency. On land, the police, and in maritime emergencies, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency are likely to co-ordinate warning and information strategies in the early stages of many emergencies. In the later stages, the lead in distributing information and advice about longer-term issues, for example, connected to health or the environment, may be handed over to the relevant expert organisation.

Use of Protocols

- 7.99. Category 1 responders are likely to want to support these arrangements with protocols.³² (A checklist of possible protocols appears at Annex 7C). These may be negotiated directly or through the LRF.
- 7.100. Protocols should be recorded formally and in some detail, so that they can be implemented immediately in the event of an emergency. They should describe the process which will be used to identify stages in the emergency when the lead communicator responsibility ought to be changed during the handover from response to recovery, and the point at which normal operating practices should be resumed and reviewed.

³² regulation 7

Role of the lead responder

7.101. The planning arrangements of the lead responder for warning, informing and advising the public are likely to include:

- o Procedures and a capability for:
 - contacting other relevant responder organisations and informing them of action being undertaken or proposed;
 - delivering urgent emergency warnings, or ensuring they are delivered;
 - co-ordinating all communications activity at the time of an emergency, so that public information is consistent, timely and without unnecessary duplication;
 - delivering information and advice in relation to its functional areas of responsibility;
 - assisting other participating responder organisations to deliver information and provide advice in relation to their functional responsibilities.
- o Provision of:
 - a media facility;
 - a lead spokesperson to work with the media;
 - facilities for staff from different responder organisations to work together on a public information service.
- o Procedures for:
 - handing over the role to another lead Category 1 responder as determined by the course of events.

Who delivers?

- 7.102. How information and advice are delivered can greatly affect how they are received. Category 1 responders should give careful thought to this ahead of any emergency, and should identify individuals who may act as official spokespeople and undertake media interviews. These individuals should receive suitable training.
- 7.103. If the figure is already recognised as a trustworthy and authoritative person, the message will be delivered all the more effectively. This might be because they already have a good public profile in the area or are in uniform (research shows that the public have great confidence in spokespeople from the emergency services).
- 7.104. In addition to those who will be taking a frontline media role, it is important that other staff who may come into direct contact with the public (receptionists, security and switchboard staff, for example) are provided with at least a basic level of information and can handle inquiries confidently.

WHOM
Audience / Population at risk

- 7.105. Category 1 responders are, required in the Act to make local arrangements for delivering information and advice about an emergency to the public with the purpose of mitigating the effects and aiding recovery. They should plan to be able to meet the needs of many different audiences. These can be grouped as follows :

Warning the public in emergencies: audience types

Casualties, and others affected by the emergency

Group A: Survivors - those in the immediate vicinity and directly affected, possibly as wounded casualties.

Group B: Those close by who may need to take action to avoid further harm.

Local people, friends and relatives

Group C: Those in the area who may be disrupted by the consequences of the emergency and the clear-up process.

Group D: Those who are not affected directly but know or are related to those who might be.

The wider audience

Group E: Those who are not affected but are concerned or alarmed about wider implications, or simply interested.

Group F: The news media.

Survivors (Group A) and others affected by the emergency (Group B)

- 7.106. The needs of these two groups are the main focus of attention in the initial response to an incident and beyond.
- 7.107. Providing information to Group A is, in effect, an extension of the warning phase. Those at the scene are under direct instruction from the emergency services. Those in charge of operations are best placed to decide what advice or instructions are required, by whom and how quickly.

- 7.108. Group B urgently need to know what they need to do immediately - this may be a message to stay indoors and shut windows, to evacuate, to follow decontamination instructions, or to report somewhere for medical checks. Planning should address these issues. Group B may also need (and certainly will want) to know why the advice is being given.
- 7.109. Responders should take into account different response behaviours and tailor their messages appropriately. The majority of people need leadership and direction; some need to be controlled. Messages should focus on encouraging positive actions. Group behaviour can manifest itself positively (helping others) or negatively (endangering others), but the majority of individuals are likely to need some level of support.
- 7.110. In the earliest moments following an incident, vital operational decisions are often made by the first police officers, emergency workers or even members of the public at the scene. Pre-planning should ensure that decisions about the nature and timing of advice to the public have a prominent place among the urgent matters to be dealt with. If official information is not quickly communicated to the public, there is a greater risk of inaccurate information from informal sources (such as SMS text or social networking messages) becoming widely spread and accepted.
- 7.111. Responders are unlikely to be able to rely solely on the media to reach the Group B audience. Planning should recognise that targeting will need to be more precise than can be achieved by broadcasters. Procedures should include some form of audit trail of who has or has not been contacted. The media may be used to provide basic safety messages.

Local people (Group C), friends and relatives (Group D)

- 7.112. Local media can be particularly helpful in addressing Group C, providing general information about the emergency, information on how the public can help and advice on disruption in the area, e.g. traffic bulletins. It is important for communications planning to ensure that Group C, in particular, can get access to regular progress updates.
- 7.113. Category 1 responders should work closely with the media, especially local radio, ahead of time to prepare useful standard material. The text of announcements should, where possible, be agreed with broadcasters in advance to avoid unnecessary questions of editorial control under pressure.
- 7.114. Group D will usually be alerted to an emergency through the national media. The most likely first response is to phone the people they know in the area, either to find out if they are safe or to get more information.
- 7.115. There is evidence from past disasters that the emotional impact of watching the unfolding of events which may be affecting a close relative or friend can be very significant. Where people at a distance can be reasonably sure that a relative or friend is caught up in the incident they will be desperate for information. The Police Casualty Bureau will be a prime information tool. Communications planning must address this reality.

The wider audience (Groups E and F)

- 7.116. Group E are effectively 'the public at large'. Their principal source of information is news broadcasts and whatever they can find on websites.

- 7.117. The media (Group F) are the sixth audience for the information provided by Category 1 responders. They can influence both the short-term handling and the long-term impact of an emergency.
- 7.118. The news media (broadcasting, print and text services) remain the primary means of communication with the public. The public's picture of a crisis is largely shaped by the media. The need for information in a crisis is huge, and mass media are nearly always first and have the greatest impact. A false or inaccurate picture will be difficult to adjust later. Consequently, communication with the media has to work from the start and information from Category 1 responders should be as accurate and complete as possible.

Working with the media

- 7.119. While Category 1 responders have little control over the output on news channels, it is important that plans are in place to agree what the main public messages will be, to provide the media with as much relevant material as possible and to ensure it is accurate, consistent and regularly updated.
- 7.120. As part of a general information strategy, in advance of an emergency, the media can help to raise public awareness of the issues and provide information about what to do if one occurs.
- 7.121. More importantly, in the wake of an emergency, the media can deliver specific advice and information to large numbers of affected people more quickly and effectively than any other means of delivery. This can take any form, from short, simple messages repeated across all formats, to explanatory interviews and extensive background material on websites. The written press can deliver complex information and advice which people need to retain over a number of days or

weeks. The media have ways of quickly reaching many different audiences with specific needs - the deaf, the blind, and those who do not speak English, for example. Radio, in particular, is the most resilient form of mass communication, available even if power and phone lines are down, via battery or wind-up portable radios and car radios.

- 7.122. At the same time as providing useful advice and information to the public, the media are likely to operate in reporting mode. They may well produce round-the-clock rolling news coverage if the emergency is serious enough. It is important that Category 1 responders should have plans to play their part in providing authoritative information and spokespeople for interview, to ensure that the public gets a fair picture of how they are handling the situation, and to counter any inaccurate information, such as from informal sources like social networking websites. The needs of foreign broadcasters who work to different time zones/scales should also be considered.
- 7.123. Planning should recognise that the media will seize upon any inconsistencies in presentation or message, either between responders at the local level, or between local and national responses. It is vital that Category 1 responders are equipped to liaise effectively with each other and with regional and UK bodies, otherwise the operation may appear chaotic.
- 7.124. If the media do not get the information they want from Category 1 responders, they are likely to go elsewhere for footage and commentary. This may lead to a loss of messaging control for Category 1 responders, and put them in a position of having to defend themselves against unfounded criticism or inaccurate analysis. Category 1 responders should be aware that the handling of the emergency, as well as the emergency itself, will all be part of the story. No matter how positive relations are with the media ahead of an event, responders must expect to be criticised if events seem to be going badly. They should plan accordingly.

- 7.125. All Category 1 responders should be familiar with the media organisations and outlets in their own area and should develop good relations with them. Discussion with the media ahead of an event helps ensure that all parties can operate more effectively on the day, by preparing useful standard background material in advance, planning practical arrangements and building trust and confidence on all sides. This can be achieved through geographically based multi-forum groups (such as media emergency forums), which bring together the media and emergency planning communications specialists. In many areas, particularly those where there are long-standing known hazards, such as nuclear power stations or extensive industrial complexes, there are also local groupings with members from Category 1 and 2 responders, other organisations not covered by the Act, as well as the media. These are quite often chaired by local police representatives.
- 7.126. The BBC's local radio service is recognised as an emergency broadcaster for the UK and its editors can be contacted for advice and to agree contact details and processes in the event of an emergency. Planning before a crisis is key and the importance of a good pre-existing relationship between those in the media and those involved in emergency planning and work during a crisis cannot be overestimated. Editors contact details can be found via the BBC's '*Connecting in a Crisis*' framework³³.
- 7.127. The media landscape is continuing to develop. Some of the biggest growth has been in online news services. The media, particularly the broadcast media, can expect huge demand for their online service.
- 7.128. Mobile phones with cameras and other similar devices mean that the public are able to publish their own content. Within seconds of a disaster, pictures can be broadcast around the world, sometimes before the emergency services have had a chance to respond.

³³ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15250977>

- 7.129. The broadcast media are much more audience focused and their questions will reflect audience concerns. They are also aware that big emergencies attract big audiences and responders need to be prepared to deal with such large numbers.

Media planning – some essential elements

Pre-event:

- liaising with other Category 1 and 2 responders and other organisations not captured by the Act and media/public relations teams;
- identifying potential sites for media centres in the area
- providing media training for potential spokespeople;
- providing suitable communications equipment for press office staff to work away from the office;
- making arrangements for mutual aid to be provided to neighbouring areas; and
- providing for liaison with the appropriate press offices.

On the day:

- establishing a Media Liaison Point at or near the scene of an emergency;
- establishing a Media Liaison Centre close to the Strategic Co-ordinating Group/overall incident commander; and
- liaising with other responder bodies regarding VIP and ministerial visits to the scene.

Social media

- 7.130. Recent years have seen an exponential growth in the use of social media by society and, as such, it is an area that emergency responders cannot ignore; whilst having little control over it. The COI guidance Engaging through Social Media http://www.coi.gov.uk/documents/Engaging_through_social_media.pdf outlines the advantages and issues for consideration across a range of day-to-day government roles.
- 7.131. The communications landscape has significantly shifted with the advent and development of social media. It has a role to play in preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies. It provides emergency responders with the capability to engage in two-way communication with the public in real-time, potentially sending messages 'virally' and, in doing so, creating a number of believable spokespersons. Analysis of social media can also aid situational awareness and better understanding of the working context.
- 7.132. The benefits that social media can provide are clear. However, there are risks to its usage and these should be evaluated before deployment:
- o As an 'opt-in' service, it can be difficult to attract users in advance of events, ensuring they receive messages encouraging preparedness.
 - o Messages can be altered and spoofed once transmitted which may cause the integrity of the message to be compromised.
 - o Responders will want to be aware of activity on social media sites and engage where possible to counter erroneous messages. Providing links through to official websites may help to alleviate this to some extent.

- 7.133. LRFs may also wish to consider the benefits of agreeing a multi-agency social media protocol to ensure usage is consistent with both individual, and multi-organisational policy.

Examples of use of social media:

West Yorkshire Police used social media during demonstrations by the English Defence League and United Against Fascism in Bradford City Centre over the August Bank Holiday 2010. They monitored online forums and other social media to gather intelligence and identify potential partners and problems. The Police used channels such as Twitter and YouTube to update the media and spread key messages. An online forum was established through Huddle (www.huddle.com) to share materials and flag potential issues; a Daily Information Update for key partners was produced.

The use and misuse of social media was again demonstrated during the public disorder in England during the summer 2011.

- No 10 Downing Street offers a host of social media channels including Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. @number10gov
- The Highlands and Islands Strategic Co-ordinating Group (HISCG) have a Twitter page <http://twitter.com/NorthernPolice> and <http://twitter.com/handiprepared>.
- <http://blog.scrapewiki.com/2010/10/21/wheres-safe-creating-a-tool-to-guide-people-in-an-emergency/>
- Birmingham Resilience Team has a website which contains managed feeds: Vimeo, Flickr, Facebook and Twitter.
- www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk

The digital/social media world continues to grow and shift and so it is difficult to accurately reflect current best practice in published guidance. Updated case studies will be posted on the National Resilience Extranet.

Exercise and review

- 7.134. It is important to exercise arrangements for communicating with the public. Public communications and media planning can be effectively tested in tabletop or full-scale exercises. These should be conducted regularly.
- 7.135. Both the media and the public can take part in exercises. This can help to make them more realistic and will increase the challenge for participants. It will also help to promote community resilience messages.
- 7.136. It will often be beneficial to involve some media as players in the exercise. News organisations with a role in reporting emergencies benefit from rehearsing their arrangements too. Where the exercise scenario involves security issues, it may not be possible to achieve full media involvement. However, it should, in most cases, be possible to agree effective rules that allow the media to participate without running news stories about the event. Media contacts, especially out of hours contacts, should be updated at least twice a year.
- 7.137. Category 1 responders have always been sensitive to appearing to be underprepared, but with positive relations with the media established in 'normal' conditions, it should be possible to demonstrate how problems are being identified and remedied ahead of a real event.

- 7.138. In tandem with these arrangements, Category 1 responders should also consider the role of exercises in building public confidence. Research shows that providing the public, through the media, with information about exercises that are taking place and showing pictures of what they may expect to happen can be extremely reassuring.
- 7.139. When developing exercises, responders should consider inviting local media to cover the story as observers. The ground rules should be agreed in advance, with assistance from the appropriate media groups/forums as necessary.