



CabinetOffice

**Annex 7 A: Communicating
with the public: News
Co-ordination Centre**

Revision to *Emergency Preparedness*

- 7A.1. The scale and nature of any emergency will dictate the level of national involvement in the handling of it, particularly on the communications side. If ministerial involvement becomes necessary, then the News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) will be set up in Whitehall by information staff within Cabinet Office. The NCC will function alongside the government department leading the response¹ and liaise closely with staff from the Central Office of Information News and Public Relations² at the scene of the emergency, if outside London.
- 7A.2. The NCC will help to co-ordinate the information activities of the various government departments and agencies involved, by pulling together briefing from the different expert bodies for ministers and ensuring that interview bids for ministers are handled appropriately. They will work closely with the national and international media and monitor the output of major broadcasters, in order to correct inaccuracies and spot subject areas where additional material would provide better balance in coverage. It can be up and running within 90 minutes and can operate 24 hours a day as required.
- 7A.3. The NCC will have responsibility both for meeting the needs of the news agenda and managing the delivery of public information and safety advice at a national level. It will be manned by staff from the various affected departments, to ensure effective co-ordination of activities. Where necessary, it may invoke standing protocols with the media to issue Public Safety Information either nationwide or in particular regions.

¹ <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/list-lead-government-departments-responsibilities> explains more about the role and responsibilities of the

² lead government department

More information about the Central Office of Information News and Public Relations can be found at www.coi.gov.uk

7A.4. Robust communications links will be established with those at the scene and in charge of operations to make sure that strategic and high-level political decisions are based on accurate, up-to-date information. The NCC, or the Assembly Press Office in Wales, may send someone from the team to the site of the incident as a contact point, who can keep those on site in touch with central, political activities and interests.

7A.5. The NCC will not be directly involved in operational decisions on site about media arrangements. However, the central operations team that manages the NCC has, in close co-operation with central government, the devolved administrations, local government, emergency services, utilities and other operators, produced detailed protocols. These cover many logistical aspects of dealing with the sort of massive influx of media organisations into an area which would be generated by a national-level catastrophe.