

Background and Context

Nuclear exercises form part of a national exercise programme for the nuclear industry. Traditionally, exercises focus on the initial operational phase and conclude when “site leak” is controlled. Lancashire County Council, the statutory body for preparing “off-site” plans in Lancashire, ran the above exercises with a view to identifying models and processes that could be utilised at a strategic multi-agency level for the recovery phase.

How the Topic was Handled

Both Exercises began with traditional “operational phase” exercise days, followed a few months later with “recovery” exercise days.

In order to ensure that the Recovery Exercises were able to take place within exercise time constraints, a number of injects were inputted into the “operational phase” of the Exercises. This allowed for the formation of the Strategic Co-ordinating Recovery Group and sub-groups, which had been pre-determined by Exercise Management.

The Recovery Exercises were held in real time. At the commencement of the exercises, briefing was presented and, during the exercises, injects were introduced.

Organisations involved included:

- Lancashire County Council (various Directorates) and appropriate District Councils
- Government Decontamination Service
- Government Office for the North West
- Environment Agency
- Radiation Monitoring in Lancashire
- Food Standard Agency
- Health Protection Agency Radiological Protection Division (HPA RPD)
- North Lancashire Primary Care Trust
- Untied Utilities
- SVS (now Animal Health)
- Lancashire Police
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue
- North West Ambulance Service
- DTI
- Industry (British Energy and Springfield Fuels Ltd)

The organisations worked at the Lancashire County Council Emergency Planning Centre, Red Rose Hub, utilising (as part of the Exercise) conference facilities which would be activated in the event of the need to manage recovery from a major incident.

The participating organisations were, as part of the exercise process, divided into a Strategic Co-ordinating Recovery Group and various Working Groups/Advisory Cells. They worked through a number of injects

designed to identify key issues at the start of Day 1 of the recovery and the “recovery model”.

The costs of running the Recovery Exercise were absorbed by Lancashire County Council. There was no process to measure “real” cost incurred. This was an issue which should have been addressed.

Although these exercises were based on a nuclear scenario, it was felt that the model used during the exercises would be beneficial to other scenarios.

Lessons Identified

From the two exercises, the following key lessons can be identified:

- The need for a recovery strategy to be identified should be an early item in the “operational” phase. However it is critical that the recovery group, whilst the operational phase is running, work within the Strategic Co-ordinating Group and do not make unilateral decisions outside of this framework. The term, “working as a ‘shadow’ group” is useful.
- The need for clear handover from “operational” to “recovery” is critical. This is especially so when the cause of the emergency is industrial and the source is controlled, eg. nuclear, gas, etc. From the industry perspective, this is often taken to mean end or reduction of the “emergency” phase. Emergency services take a longer view, eg. cordons may still be in place, emergency advice to public is still current, premises may need checking before re-occupation, etc. These and other consequences of the operational phase need scaling down or adjusting before a formal handover. Commonality of language is important.
- Recovery is not simply a question of “cleaning up” (remediation). There are wider issues. Industries (or other agencies responsible for managing the “cause” of the emergency), in particular, need to understand the need to restore public confidence (and that of the business community, including agricultural). This is especially so in relation to residents in the vicinity of industrial sites.
- Resource implications; although the exercises only covered Day 1 of the recovery, it was clear that resources in terms of staff, admin support, communications, office space, etc. would be a critical issue. Over days and weeks, this could have consequent impact on other aspects of service delivery.
- Non-emergency organisations need to programme for extended periods of duty, especially in the early days of the recovery phase; this could include covering through 24 hour working, eg. help lines, humanitarian assistance centres, etc.
- The basic framework of a Strategic Co-ordinating Recovery Group with a framework of supporting working groups/advisory groups, appropriate to the incident, was supported from the exercise debrief.

Contacts for Further Information

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Additional Documents

The Exercise de-briefs for the above Exercises have been lodged with the [Emergency Planning College](#) Library. Further details can be obtained from Bernard Kershaw, County Emergency Planning Officer, Lancashire (details as above).