



# Emergency Preparedness For Elected Members



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

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

The role of Elected Members in an emergency is an important factor. Many people in the community rely on the skills, resources and knowledge of their local Elected Members. Elected Members' awareness of civil protection and emergency preparedness arrangements will contribute to the successful outcomes of an emergency incident and ultimately, the return to normality.

**The aim of this booklet is to provide Elected Members with an understanding of the Civil Contingencies Act and Carmarthenshire County Council's emergency response arrangements.**

**Carmarthenshire County Council acknowledge the work of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council in the development of this leaflet.**

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## **Civil Contingencies Act**

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

### **The Act is divided into two parts:**

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

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

### **“What is an “Emergency”?”**

#### **The Act defines Emergency as:**

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare;
  - an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment;
- or**
- war, or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

#### **Category 1 & 2 Responders**

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

#### **Category 1 Responders:**

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

#### **Emergency Services**

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

#### **Local Authorities**

- All Principal Local Authorities
- Port Health Authorities

#### **Health Bodies**

- Local Health Boards
- Hospital Trusts
- National Public Health Service Wales

#### **Government Agencies**

- Environment Agency

## **Duties of Category 1 Responders**

Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties and are required to:

- assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
- put in place emergency plans;
- put in place business continuity management arrangements;
- make information available to the public about arrangements to warn, inform and advise them in the event of an emergency.
- share information with other local responders to enhance control and co-ordination;
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
- provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only).

Although not a duty we have to have regard to voluntary agencies.

## **Category 2 Responders:**

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

They are:

### **Utilities**

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

### **Transport**

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

### **Government Agencies**

- Health and Safety Executive

## **Duties of Category 2 Responders**

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

Category 1 and 2 responders are also expected to come together to form “Local Resilience Forums” (based on police force areas) which help coordination and co-operation between responders at the local level. Carmarthenshire County Council is a partner in the Dyfed Powys Local Resilience Forum.

# What has Carmarthenshire County Council done to meet the duties of the Civil Contingencies Act?

## **Risk Assessment**

Working with other local authorities and the other Category 1 and 2 responders, a Community Risk Register covering Dyfed Powys has been produced and is available on the Dyfed Powys Police Web Site. Work is in progress to look in more detail at the risks directly affecting Carmarthenshire.

## **Emergency Planning**

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

## **Business Continuity**

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

## **Arrangements to Warn and Inform the Public**

Information has been placed on the Council web site giving a wide range of information to the public about civil contingencies and emergency preparedness.



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

## **Information Sharing and Co-operation with Other Local Responders**

This is achieved via the Dyfed Powys Local Resilience Forum and its sub groups. Council officers are also members of joint local authority groups at various levels to ensure that plans are co-ordinated so as to maximise the protection for our Communities.

## **Provision of Advice and Assistance to Businesses and Voluntary Organisations**

This duty came into force in May 2006 and is continually being developed to reflect current needs. A leaflet has been produced which is available on the Councils web site. A document has also been issued to local authorities by the Cabinet Office.

# What is an Emergency?

## **What kinds of incidents happen in Carmarthenshire and surrounding areas?**

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 gives the statutory definition of an emergency – see page 4 of this booklet.

Incidents that have occurred in recent years are small and localised: gas leaks, transport accidents, fires, weather related problems such as flooding and chemical spillages are just a few examples. Most of these incidents are usually resolved within a few hours; occasionally they may be protracted and could take a few days to resolve. Very few incidents develop into “major events” which involve the full scale implementation of the emergency plan and related procedures. However, even small incidents can result in an intensive response from the Council, particularly in situations that involve the evacuation of people from their homes.

## **What can the Council do to assist in an Emergency?**

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

- road closures and diversions
- plant and equipment
- reception (rest) centres
- maps and building plans
- building and safety inspections
- environmental health
- clearance of debris and restoration of highways
- psychological support
- help lines
- appeal fund arrangements
- information to the public
- provision of temporary mortuary facilities
- media liaison officers

Most of the items listed above are done as part of a normal Council response, in the later stages of an incident the local authority will often assume the command and control of the incident and will lead in the recovery and restoration to normality.

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

The Emergency Planning Duty Officer will (normally) be the first point of call for the notification of an emergency incident. This officer will notify appropriate Council Staff and will call out, or place on standby other officers from the council as required.

## **The Duty EPO is responsible for:**

- early co-ordination of the emergency response
- liaison with the Emergency Services Incident Officers
- alerting and calling out other Council offices as required
- alerting and calling out other agencies and organisations as required
- briefing senior offices as required
- making an assessment of the support the local authority can provide both at the scene and elsewhere
- on-scene liaison and access management for voluntary organisations and local authority resources.

# Emergency Accommodation and Reception (Rest) Centres

In the majority of incidents most people who are evacuated will make their own accommodation arrangements, by going to stay with friends or family. But, there may be a small number of people who for whatever reason are unable to do this. In this situation the Council will provide them with temporary accommodation. In some situations the Council will open emergency reception centres. In the Council's emergency plan a number of Council owned buildings have been identified as potential reception centres. These centres will be staffed and managed by officers from the Council with support from the voluntary organisations.

## **Co-ordination and Management of Incidents**

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

## **Local Authority Emergency Control**

Any significant incident will be reported via the management structure to the Corporate Management Team. If necessary they will appoint a senior manager (probably) a Service Director to lead the response at a tactical level.

## **Who Pays for the Emergency?**

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

# The Role of the Elected Member

## Four Phases of Emergency Response

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

### 1. Impact;

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

### 2. Consolidation;

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

### 3. Recovery;

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

### 4. Restoration;

of normality addresses social and economic impact and seeks opportunities to strengthen the future of the affected community. The role of Carmarthenshire County Council and Elected Members will change according to the phase of the emergency.

## Phase 1: Impact

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

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

## Contacting Elected Members in the Event of an Incident in their Ward

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

## Phase 2: Consolidation

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

# The Role of the Elected Member *(continued)*

## **Elected Members may wish to assist at this stage by:**

- supporting and providing reassurance to the affected community;
- regular member briefings;
- helping out at Rest Centres (if established);
- giving interviews to the local media in relation to the response to the emergency and in accordance with the Council's Media Policy.

Cabinet Members will be involved in making key policy decisions. At this stage Elected Members may visit the vicinity of the incident and speak to residents, providing them with information on the actions taken by the Council and advise on how they can restore normality to their community. If the incident is of such magnitude as to attract regional or national interest, Elected Members may become involved in meeting and greeting VIPs and briefing visitors on the progress being made.

## **Phase 3: Recovery**

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

## **Elected Members may be involved by:**

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

## **Phase 4: Restoration of Normality**

The strategic co-ordination of the incident has been handed over completely to the Council. Elected Members have a lead role to play in this final phase of an incident. Dependent upon the scale, members could become involved in the following activities:

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

## **Post Incident Issues**

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

These can include:

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

## **Talking to the Media**

Media relations in an emergency incident are crucial and can often be an important factor in determining how well (or otherwise) the Council and Emergency Services are dealing with the situation. Elected Members may be approached to give media statements and interviews.

The public's response and co-operation with the emergency services is affected by the information and comments issued to the media during an emergency. To ensure a consistent and accurate approach it is important that Elected Members are fully briefed by the Council's Press Officer. Any Council communication with the media will be in accordance with the agreed procedures, and in the early stages, in consultation with the police and fire services. Elected Members should refrain from speaking to the media direct, unless guided to do so by the Council's Press Officer, as this could have a detrimental effect on the community and overall emergency response.

**Further Information can be obtained from:**

**Carmarthenshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit  
Tel: 01267 224398**

## **Useful Web Sites**

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

- [www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk](http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk)
- [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)
- [www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk](http://www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk)
- [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)
- [www.walesresilience.gov.uk](http://www.walesresilience.gov.uk)

