

Background and Context

The purpose of this exercise was to progress planning for the recovery phase for a nuclear incident.

An exercise planning group had been meeting to debate and agree a structure to the recovery process based on previous exercises and experiences in the past. Another major issue was the acceptance by the community of the recovery strategy proposed by "the experts". This needs to be achieved by consultation and the emphasis of the planning team and this exercise aimed to look at the most effective and acceptable means of achieving this.

Aims of the Exercise

To explore:

- The operation of the Recovery Working Group for a nuclear incident under the new proposed structure.
- The process of consultation with community representatives about the proposed recovery strategy.

Objectives of the Exercise

- a. Agreement on the structure for a Recovery Working Group for a nuclear incident.
- b. To explore best practice for communication and presentation of a proposed recovery strategy.
- c. Determine the membership for the various groups within the structure.
- d. Preparation of guidelines for the groups within the structure.
- e. To test agency and inter agency working within and outwith the Recovery Working Group.
- f. To test the application of resources and guidance currently available.
- g. To contribute to the new Recovery Chapters in NEPLG Guidance.
- h. To consider the facilities and resources necessary for the Recovery Working Group to operate.
- i. Identification of any monitoring issues, resources, etc.
- j. Introduction of a new range of agencies to the recovery process.
- k. To test the interface and communications between the local, regional and national levels of Central Government.
- l. To explore how the Environment Agency would fulfil the Government Technical Adviser (GTA) role during recovery.

How the Topic was Handled

The exercise was set 6 days after a major incident at the Sellafield site. In order to achieve significant effects for the purposes of the exercise, the incident was not realistic and deposition figures were exaggerated. Sellafield Ltd produced technical information which included a deposition map, which had been circulated in advance to the technical agencies to

consider the implications and to identify the key issues for the Recovery Working Group to address.

The situation as it stood on the day of the exercise (6 days after the incident) was given at a briefing at the commencement of the exercise for the benefit of the non-technical agencies. This identified the key issues for each specialist advisory group to address in the proposed recovery strategy.

Participating organisations were:

- Allerdale Borough Council
- British Nuclear Group Sellafield Limited
- British Red Cross
- Business Link
- Churches Together
- Copeland Borough Council
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria Strategic Partnership
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Environment Agency
- Fire and Rescue Service
- Food Standards Agency
- Government Decontamination Service
- Government News Network
- Government Office for the North West Regional Resilience Team
- Health Protection Agency Radiological Protection Board [formerly NRPB]
- Health Protection Agency Local and Regional Services
- MOD 42 (NW) Brigade
- North West Development Agency (NWDA)
- Police
- Samaritans
- State Veterinary Service
- United Utilities
- West Cumbria Local Strategic Partnership
- West Cumbria Primary Care Trust
- West Lakes Renaissance
- WRVS

It was based at the Emergency Control Centre at Summergrove (Sellafield's off-site emergency control centre)

The Recovery Working Group sub groups (Specialist Advisory Groups) met with the specific aim of formulating a recovery strategy and then presented it to a group of community representatives, including elected members.

It was a full day exercise with Sellafield providing the venue and facilities. Each agency bore their own costs.

Participating Government agencies are listed above and played in sub groups as listed in the [Recovery Guidance document](#).

Lessons Identified

General

Extracts from the Exercise report:

"Much more can, and arguably should, be done by way of planning ahead, eg. explaining wide area food bans."

"Need to start to inform local people as early as possible and involve people trusted by the community. Only if they can make informed choices will they be prepared to consider returning to the affected area. Pre-planning and testing of plans in discussion with local people would pay dividends. Could assess how to monitor how much of the information issued has actually reached individuals and families, thus identifying any gaps and who should address them."

"We feel that there is a need to ensure that the right community representatives are involved at every stage; therefore we propose that three tiers of Community involvement are considered all linking different community groups at different stages of the process."

"With regard to the Recovery Working Group, we feel it is essential that the membership include a representative from the local community. It is vital that before decisions are taken that the community view is heard and visa versa."

"Hopefully our comments will help the further planning process providing observations about both the exercise on the day and the proposed model and approach."

"More exercises are needed to develop processes and flexibility of response to what could be one of many very different scenarios."

"Experience of inter-agency working increased understanding and knowledge of others' roles. Important to establish working relationships that will benefit any response to a major incident."

"The exercise has again raised the issues of public communication."

"Additional communications expertise needed."

"Need to become effective in role, or as a group very quickly, because there was a need to interact with other groups at an early stage."

"Learnt that I hope an incident doesn't occur."

"Confirms the need for United Utilities (UU) to be represented by our Communications Team and our presence on the Management Team, Remediation and Communications Specialist Advisory Groups."

"UU and the EA are to explore milk disposal issues specific to Cumbria."

Logistics issues need to be considered in detail."

"The clear and pressing need for more pre-planning and pre-consultation with respect to the development of a set of recovery strategies (see above). The off-site plan should be greatly expanded to include these. There is a clear need for strong and decisive leadership from the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) in particular and training should be undertaken on a regular basis by those who will have chairmanship of this group in their job description."

Additional Groups

It was felt that the following additional groups should be added to the response / recovery structure for a nuclear incident:

1. Pre-Incident Planning (the 'what if' group)

Involvement would be from a wide range of community groups. The remit would include preparing the local community for a 'what if' scenario and informing them of any relevant facts they need to know, including the phases of emergency planning, acute, recovery, etc. Better understanding of the terminology and the approach used would help to avoid misunderstandings later. Initially, this could involve organisations such as the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), the Community Empowerment Network (CEN), the Older Peoples Homes and Youth Councils. A way of getting out now a positive message "We are able to deal with this incident. This is how we plan to communicate with you and is this the right way?" All of the tiers have to be about two way communication and forums to break down barriers of fear or lack of understanding, etc.

2. Immediate Recovery Response Group

The second is the immediate recovery response, the group that can make that immediate decision if needed. They must have an early involvement in the options and decisions that need to be made and should be active members of the specialist advisory groups. They need a deep understanding of what has happened and the impact of the incident and the ability to communicate that to the wider community. The role of the Community Representative Group needs to be clarified - is it about consultation or the recovery groups simply telling the group of their planned approach? Greater involvement in the initial discussions of the working group is more likely to lead to agreement in the proposed strategy. Involvement at the discussion stage would also add to the body of information available to the working group and ensure that the recovery strategy answered and dealt with all concerns, not just those that our officers are aware of. Community representatives should include the Copeland Borough Council (CBC) Leader or Substitute, Allerdale Borough Council (ABC) Leader or substitute, Chair of LSP, Chair of West Cumbria Site Stakeholder Group, Chair of CEN, Leader or substitute of Cumbria County Council, Representative from Cumbria Association of Local Councils.

3. Strategic Response Group

The third is the strategic response - a group set up to look at wider strategic and more long term implications impacting on environment,

economic and social areas. An example of this from Tuesday's event would be strategic discussion about potential re-branding of Copeland as an area focussed on tourism. Their remit will be to ensure the involvement of the wider community, lobby where necessary and have the ability to influence regional and governmental departments. Membership should include local authorities, Cumbria Strategic Partnership (CSP), LSP, Cumbria Vision, West Lakes Renaissance, Rural Regeneration, NWDA, Government Office for the North West, Chamber of Commerce, and others who it was felt were necessary, such as the Cumbria Tourism Board.

Contacts for Further Information

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Additional Documents

- [Exercise Instructions](#)
- [Exercise Report](#)
- [Sellafield Recovery Guidance](#)
- [Recovery Guidance for Cumbria](#) document produced as a result of work done by the Recovery Planning Group for a Sellafield incident, recovery exercises held in the County and elsewhere, other recovery documentation and the learning from foot and mouth and flooding in Cumbria.