

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM OF THE PLAN

The aim of the plan is to enable the Borough Council to discharge its responsibilities in the most efficient and effective manner in the event of an emergency which disrupts the normal provision of services or threatens the safety of the community, and to assist in providing a co-ordinated local authority response to a request for support from the statutory emergency services following a major incident.

1.2 SCOPE

This plan shall be invoked and some or all of the arrangements in the plan may be implemented:

- a) at the decision a member of the Corporate Management team or by their prior authority;
- b) following a direct request for assistance from the Emergency Services or Chair of the Local Resilience forum;
- c) in response to the County Council's invocation of the Emergency Community Assistance Plan (see para 1.5.)
- d) on receipt of a flood warning or advice that one is to be issued

Regard shall be had to sections 1.4.2, 1.6.2 and 1.6.3

1.3 EMERGENCY CONTACT

An emergency contact telephone number has been circulated to organisations who may need to request assistance from the Council in the event of emergencies. This number may be used by those organisations to request specific information on resources, etc., or as part of the alerting procedure for major emergencies as set out in the following paragraphs. The numbers are as follows:-

01670 535000	During office hours and (whilst staffed during an emergency)
07778 896717	(Environmental Services) Outside office hours
07850 814380	(Strategic Assets Management) Outside office hours

The duty officer is empowered and authorised to take any such actions as he/she deems appropriate in a situation requiring moderate or major levels of management and shall take steps to contact the Director or Assistant Directors of Emergency Operations. The duty officer in charge of each situation shall be the most senior duty officer but shall be expected to act on the advice of the officer most appropriate to the emergency.

1.4 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

1.4.1 Management of the Council's emergency response will vary according to the size and location of the incident and the services required, from a relatively minor local emergency to a major incident also affecting other Districts.

1.4.2 Certain senior officers, together with the Chief Executive, comprise the Emergency Management Group, which may be convened to direct operations depending on the severity of the emergency. The Group will be supported by an Emergency Control Centre Manager and staff who will monitor operations and provide emergency communications from the Emergency Control Centre. Designated officers are listed in Appendix 1.

NB The Emergency Management Group will liaise with the members on the Emergency Panel.

1.4.3 The management levels can be broadly defined as follows:-

<u>Size and Location</u>	<u>Services Involved</u>	<u>Management By</u>
Minor/local officers (confined to district)	Individual service(s) operating within district capabilities	<i>Unit Manager(s)/duty officers</i>
Moderate/local (confined to district)	Several services - may become over-committed and request assistance County and local organisations	Chief Executive and/or Emergency Management Group and support.
Major/local (of such severity local services cannot cope, or extends beyond District)	Integrated response by many service providers	District Chief Exec(s) + Management Group and County Emergency Management Group + Support.

1.5 COUNTY EMERGENCY COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PLAN

1.5.1 In addition to individual arrangements, the Borough and District Councils within Northumberland have agreed to co-operate with the County Council's emergency arrangements contained in the Emergency Community Assistance Plan, which covers response to, and management of, emergencies of varying severity. A copy of the Plan is held the Emergency Control Centre (ECC).

1.5.2 DEFINITION OF 'MAJOR COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE' REQUIREMENT

"A situation wherein it is considered that the community requires assistance beyond the normal day to day level, irrespective of whether the statutory emergency services declare a "major" incident".

1.5.3 There are also other emergency related plans as follows:-

- (a) Temporary Mortuary Plan
- (b) Radiation Emergency Response Plan
- (c) Draft Chemical Incident Plan
- (d) Transco Pipeline Plan
- (e) Contingency plan for coastal and river oil pollution incidents

(f) CMBC – Flood Plan

Copies are available at ECC – with other plans.

1.6 MAJOR INCIDENTS and EMERGENCIES

1.6.1 DEFINITION OF A MAJOR INCIDENT

“ A major Incident is any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, the NHS or the local authority for: -

- The rescue and transport of large numbers of casualties.
- The involvement either directly or indirectly of large numbers of people
- The handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated both from the public and the news media, usually the police.
- The large scale deployment of the combined resources of the emergency services.
- The mobilisation and organisation of the emergency services and supporting organisations – e.g. local authority – to cater for the threat of, death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people.”

ACPO Emergency Procedures Manual (2002)

This definition is recognised by all the agencies likely to be involved in a major incident within the Northumbria Police area. It should be noted, however, that in Health Service terms a major incident is one, which requires special arrangements because of the number and severity of **live** casualties.

1.6.2 DEFINITION OF AN EMERGENCY

1 Meaning of "emergency" under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Part 1

(1) In this Part "emergency" means-

- (a) an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom,
- (b) an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom, or
- (c) war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1)(a) an event or situation threatens damage to human welfare only if it involves, causes or may cause-

- (a) loss of human life,
- (b) human illness or injury,
- (c) homelessness,
- (d) damage to property,
- (e) disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel,
- (f) disruption of a system of communication,
- (g) disruption of facilities for transport, or
- (h) disruption of services relating to health.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1)(b) an event or situation threatens damage to the environment only if it involves, causes or may cause-

- (a) contamination of land, water or air with biological, chemical or radio-active matter, or
- (b) disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life.

Under section 2 the Council is required to;

(d) maintain plans for the purpose of ensuring that if an emergency occurs or is likely to occur the person or body is able to perform his or its functions so far as necessary or desirable for the purpose of-

- (i) preventing the emergency,
- (ii) reducing, controlling or mitigating its effects, or
- (iii) taking other action in connection with it,

(g) maintain arrangements to warn the public, and to provide information and advice to the public, if an emergency is likely to occur or has occurred.

1.6.3 Criteria to be used in deciding whether to invoke the plan

Whilst the management levels at 1.4.3 are a useful guide – invocation occurring at moderate level, the legal criteria are shown below as laid out in the Civil Contingencies act 2004.

(2) In relation to a person or body listed in Part 1 or 2 of Schedule 1 a duty in subsection (1) applies in relation to an emergency only if-

(a) the emergency would be likely seriously to obstruct the person or body in the performance of his or its functions, or

(b) it is likely that the person or body-

(i) would consider it necessary or desirable to take action to prevent the emergency, to reduce, control or mitigate its effects or otherwise in connection with it, and

(ii) would be unable to take that action without changing the deployment of resources or acquiring additional resources.

In deciding whether to invoke this plan the determining officer shall have regard to this section and section 1.4.3, the needs of the wider community and the concerns of partners.

1.6 3 DECLARATION OF A MAJOR INCIDENT

The declaration of a “Major Incident” is the responsibility of the emergency services at the scene. The criteria for declaring a major incident vary according to the statutory responsibilities and functions of each service, but broadly cover any emergency which requires implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services.

1.6.4 OPERATION CONTROL AND CO-ORDINATION

A three-tier command structure has been established within the Northumbria Police area. 'GOLD' Command will comprise Chief or senior officers of the Emergency Services, local authorities and other organisations involved; its main priority is to co-ordinate policy and action across all the services and provide a link to central government. 'SILVER' Command will normally operate from the Incident Control Post, established under police control near the scene and attended by liaison officers from the emergency and support services, to direct operations and implement GOLD decisions as appropriate. The 'BRONZE' or Forward Control is the on-site emergency services operation response control.

1.6.5 TRANSFER OF OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Police (or in some instances the Fire Services) are responsible for control and co-ordination during the operation and life-saving phase of a major incident, requiring only welfare and technical support from the local authority, whose liaison officer(s) may be required to attend the Incident Control Post (SILVER). Once immediate danger to life and property has passed, following joint consultation at GOLD command level, overall responsibility for co-ordination of recovery operations is usually handed over to the local authority. CMBC may well have had the ECC manned throughout to coordinate the council's response.

1.7 WARNING PHASES

The Emergency Services use a 3-phase system for categorising the mobilisation phases of major incidents: 'Stand by'; 'Implement'; 'Stand down'; each prefixed by 'Major Incident'. This system may also be used by the Police or the County Council for warning of lesser emergencies or requesting District Council support via the Emergency Contact number, to allow time for identifying and reviewing resources for a rapid response if required later, whilst avoiding premature mobilisation. Action envisaged during the three phases is as follows:-

Stand by: would be used as an early warning of a hazardous situation and/or that local authority support may be required. Details of the incident will be given and an ongoing contact number requested. Following this first contact and having assessed the situation, chief officers may wish to check on the availability of officers and resources pending actual mobilisation. Should the incident escalate to a point where specific local authority support is required, the District emergency contact will be notified to:-

Implement: and follow the alerting and activation procedures in the Plan. However, should the incident not develop beyond the capacity of the emergency services, the emergency contact will be notified to:-

Stand down: this phrase would also signify the conclusion of the emergency action following full implementation and/or handover of operations by the police to the local authority.

1.7.1 SEVERE WEATHER WARNING

The alerting procedure for severe weather warnings will be similar to that in para 1.7 above, but may include ongoing updates of probability following the 'Stand-by' alert.

1.7.2 FLOOD WARNING

The procedure for flooding incidents is dictated by the Environment Agency (EA) system of forecasting increasing probability and/or severity, as set out below, but notification will, as for other emergency incidents, be via the Emergency Contact officer (see Section 3) out of hours and by the corporate property unit in office hours.

The County Emergency Planning Team will liaise with the EA Incident Room and Northumbria Police to maintain an overview of the situation. Levels of warning are shown below. It should be noted that flood watch may occur for a number of days each year without flooding occurring but the transition to flood warning or severe flood warning may be abrupt and without notice.

EA WARNING STATE	EA ADVICE	BASIC CMBC ACTION
Flood Watch	Flooding is possible in the (XXX) area. Be aware, be prepared, watch out	Continuous or repeated assessment of rivers. ECC may be set up. ECC may be staffed CMBC State is STANDBY
Flood Warning	Flooding of homes, businesses and main roads is forecast in the (XXX) area. Act now!	ECC staffed Flood plan operational CMBC State is IMPLEMENT
Severe Flood Warning	Severe flooding is forecast in the (XXX) area. There is imminent danger to life and property. Act now!	AS FLOOD WARNING AND Action with County Council, Police, EA. Evacuation likely
All Clear	There are no flood warnings or flood watches currently in force in the (XXX) area	If not stood down do so CMBC State is STAND DOWN

1.7.3 CHEMICAL BIOLOGICAL OR RADIATION WARNING

In most circumstances of this nature the Council will be informed by the Police or other agency (such as the Director of Public health) and will provide assistance to the best of its ability. However it is possible that the Council will become aware of potential events before these bodies and will inform them immediately via the Environmental services Unit. The County is covered by an automatic alarm system for gamma radiation, which alerts Fire Control room, should an unforeseen event occur. In case of overseas emergency many hours warning would be received. Action to be taken is detailed in the Radiation Emergency Plan.

1.8 COMMUNICATIONS

- 1.8.1 During a major incident or other large-scale emergency, it is likely that the public service and cellular telephone network will become overloaded. There are procedures in place for reducing non-essential traffic, so that emergency and essential communications can be given priority. These procedures are known as Access Overload Control (ACCOLC) for cellular, and the Government Telephone Preference Scheme (TPS) for the public network. These schemes may be implemented by the police or by central government if the need arises.
- 1.8.2 Additionally, British Telecom operates a 24-hour Emergency Linkline facility for the provision of additional telephone facilities at short notice; the restricted number is held by the County Emergency Planning.
- 1.8.3 The District is connected to the national Civil Contingencies satellite phone network which provides a link to the other District Councils in the County, to the county Emergency Centre, and to other local authorities on a national basis. The facility can be used on an inter-authority basis at no charge.

1.9 EMERGENCY EXPENDITURE

- 1.9.1 Under section s138 of the Local Government Act 1972 local authorities are empowered, when an emergency involving “destruction of, or damage to, life or property occurs, is apprehended or is imminent”, to incur whatever expenditure they consider necessary. These powers, which can be used in the event of any major accident or natural disaster, include the power to make grants or loans to other persons or bodies, subject to conditions determined by the Council. This legislation is modified by s156 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which extends these powers to incur expenditure on contingency planning for such events.
- 1.9.2 It is not normal Central government practice to recompense local authorities for expenditure incurred in response to emergencies. However in exceptional circumstances special financial assistance may be given to local authorities who, as a consequence of a disaster, would otherwise incur an undue financial burden in providing relief and carrying out immediate works to safeguard life or property, or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience to affected communities. Such aid may be invoked by individual application to the Unit of the Environment, who may reimburse expenditure over a present per capita threshold. This is known as the Bellwin Scheme, and central government must be advised of the authority’s intention to apply as soon as it is possible to make a preliminary assessment of major expenditure.
- 1.9.3 It is essential that each unit making a service contribution to the emergency response and recovery maintains accurate records of all related financial transactions, for eventual collation by the Financial Services Unit. The establishment of a specific expenditure code for emergency use by all units shall be set up at the appropriate time.
- 1.9.4 An extract from the Councils Constitution is shown below
“R204
Exceptionally, circumstances may arise in which the Council’s responsibilities can not be met, or the Council’s interests are likely to be prejudiced, if goods or services are not ordered, yet no budgetary provision exists and no or insufficient virement can be identified. In such circumstances, notwithstanding the general provisions of these Financial Procedure Rules, otherwise unapproved expenditure may

be incurred in accordance with the following procedure:

- (i) The Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Executive Member(s) for the relevant service(s) shall constitute an emergency panel;
- (ii) The officer shall attempt to contact as many members of the emergency panel as possible;
- (iii) The emergency panel may authorise expenditure only in the circumstances covered by this Financial Regulation or where it has been separately empowered by the Council or the Executive Board to act;
- (iv) The approval of the majority of those contactable shall constitute sufficient approval for the purpose of this Financial Regulation; but every reasonable effort shall be made to contact each panel member;
- (v) In very exceptional circumstances only, such as a major civil emergency, where none of the Members identified above can be contacted and the situation is extremely urgent, the Chief Executive and the Director of Resources and Property jointly may approve emergency expenditure, the Director of Community and Customer Care and/or the Financial Services Manager being authorised to act in the absence of the Chief Executive and/or the Director of Resources and Property;
- (vi) In circumstances where the Chief Executive is not contactable and the Director of Resources and Property and/or the Director of Community and Customer Care may approve emergency expenditure as in (v) above jointly with any other chief officer who is contactable; and
- (vii) The circumstances of any use of these emergency powers shall be reported at the earliest practical opportunity to the Leader of the Council (or in the absence of the Leader, to the Deputy Leader), and to the leader (or in the absence of the leader, to the deputy leader) of each of the political groups of Members on the Council, and thereafter those circumstances shall be reported to the next practicable meeting of the Executive Board or of the Council.”

1.10 ROLE OF ELECTED MEMBERS

1.10.1 Elected Members will be kept informed by the Chief Executive as appropriate. The role of this group is to undertake policy decisions and authorise actions and expenditure (where necessary) through the Emergency Panel.

1.10.2 Members of Emergency Panel

The membership of the Emergency Panel shall be as laid out in the Council's Constitution, but for the avoidance of doubt is:-

Leader
Deputy Leader
Executive Member for Environment
Executive Member for Communities

An emergency panel shall consist of as many of the above members of the council as may meet or be party to discussions by telephone. A situation requiring the invocation of this plan will affect many if not all council business units, the panel shall inform other spokespersons of its decisions where reasonably practicable, and in any case within two working days.

1.11 INFORMATION AND THE MEDIA

Please also refer to the separate guidelines for handling media response.

- 1.11.1 The general public and media will require information in various forms following an emergency. In the event of a major incident or disaster all information provision and media arrangements are the responsibility of the police, and should be co-ordinated via the Police Press Officer to avoid any conflicting statements being made. At a later, or recovery stage the police may hand over responsibility for information and media co-ordination to the local authority or another organisation with primary involvement (see 1.6.4).
- 1.11.2 In the event of a local emergency, when the emergency services are in attendance at the scene, local authority officers and elected members should still ensure that any statements issued follow consultation between emergency and support services. Care must be taken to avoid any speculation when addressing the media as to the cause of the incident or apportioning of blame without access to specialist knowledge.
- 1.11.3 Information and advice to the public should be collated by the officer designated as Press/Public Relations Officer for onward transmission to the appropriate media. In some instances it may be necessary to set up an information and advice line to respond direct to public enquiries; again, care must be taken when issuing specific advice on action or countermeasures to ensure that it is derived from a specialist or official source.
- 1.11.4 It may be necessary, either independently or following a request by the police, to set up a media briefing facility near the scene of the incident or adjacent to the emergency co-ordination centre. In addition to the requirement for a large area for delivery of briefings by Officer and Members, media representatives will require access to telephone and fax facilities, refreshments and toilet arrangements. Detailed arrangements are at Appendix 6.

1.12 NEEDS OF DIVERSE COMMUNITIES AND MORE VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

In responding to an emergency Council Staff will have regard to the needs of diverse communities. Castle Morpeth staff receive Diversity Training and will utilise this training in as far as practicable during an emergency.

In an emergency there are members of our Community who are more vulnerable, this may be because of a physical or learning disability or because they are elderly or ill. In some cases English may not be their first language and interpreters both of spoken or sign language may be required.

Their needs will extend beyond communication and may include personal or medical care. Where these may not be met by the immediate responding Officer advice should be sought from the Emergency Control Centre.

1.13 INTEGRATION WITH THE COUNCILS BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

The Councils resources to respond to an emergency will vary depending on the nature of the emergency and the time that it occurs. However a general guide to the Councils capability to deploy resources without affecting its critical functions is contained within the Councils Business Continuity Plan. Details are at Appendix 9.

1.14 CONCERNS OF PARTNERS

This plan is a living document and has been developed over a number of years. At each revision partners have been asked for their comments. Council therefore believes that this plan meets the concerns of partners but will take any representations or comments into account.

1.15 TECHNOLOGY AND SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT

The Council uses up to date information and communication technology and this plan takes account its availability and practicality of use and allows for further developments as they occur.

1.16 TRAINING AND EXERCISES

- a) The Council will participate in one "Norland" multi-agency exercise every three years.
- b) The Council will conduct one in house desk-top or live exercise, per annum, in other years.
- c) One half day training for Emergency Control Centre Support Staff, on procedures, set-up and equipment
- d) One half day training for Duty Officers and Emergency Management Group on civil contingency developments, updating changes in plans, technology or incidents.
- e) One half day training every two years for Rest Centre Staff.

1.17 WARNING AND INFORMING

This covers the duty under the Civil Contingencies Act for warning of residents and visitors to the borough of Castle Morpeth. This shall be undertaken by the Councils website which can be updated immediately in an emergency situation and via the North East Information Line (NEIL) on 08456 004 004. NEIL is a telephone facility provided by BT which allows messages from any partner organisation to be put onto a 'voicebank' system, which can be accessed by members of the public. Northumbria Police will be responsible for putting all messages onto NEIL in accordance with the text provided by the partner organisations.

Any partner organisation may activate NEIL by contacting the duty supervisor at Northern Communications Centre (NCC) and providing a codeword which will be issued only to their Chief Officer/Chief Executive or equivalent. Use of this codeword will be taken as a confirmation that the user has the direct or delegated authority to activate NEIL on behalf of their organisation. CMBC therefore has access to NEIL via The Chief Executive