

UK emergency planning – the integrated approach

Background

The Home Office is responsible for local civil protection in England and Wales, whilst Scotland and Northern Ireland make their own arrangements. The Home Secretary is, however, ultimately answerable for civil protection throughout the UK.

The lead response to a major incident is normally taken by the police. Government departments take a central role during a civil emergency according to their day-to-day responsibilities. So the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, for example, gives the central response to a coastal chemical spill. The Home Office is in the lead on wind storms and the uncontrolled return to earth of satellites (during which times it may play an operational role, described below.) It also shapes the general approach to civil protection by providing guidance on and promotion of risk assessment, prevention, preparedness and response at the national, local and international levels.

Legal framework

Emergency planning in England and Wales developed to take advantage of the infrastructure built over many years by central and local government during the Cold War. The Civil Defence Act 1948 requires that central government has in place arrangements to deal with the protection of the population in event of a hostile attack by a foreign power.

Regulations made in 1953 under Section 3 of that Act provide for the payment of grant to county level local authorities as a contribution towards their expenses for Civil Defence functions¹. This led to the setting up of dedicated emergency planning units in those local councils throughout England and Wales. Each local authority has such a unit staffed with between one and ten emergency planning officers.

The Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986 allows local authorities to use civil defence resources to avert, alleviate or eradicate the effects of any disaster whatever its cause, hostile attack or not. Following two reviews in the early 1990s, the Home Office decided to scale down the preparations for war in the light of a diminished threat and to encourage local authorities to adopt the strategy of Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) which is outlined in this article.

By Sarah Paul, Head of the Home Office, Emergency Planning Division

Civil protection in England and Wales has now developed into a broad function, providing safety and security for the public across the full spectrum of disasters. The Emergency Planning Division works today to enhance the quality of national civil protection at the central, local and international levels.

The central, local and international interface

The Division is part of the Home Office Fire and Emergency Planning Directorate, and is composed of eight groups, each of which feeds into the overall UK picture.

The Central and Local Government Group amongst other things, pays grant to local authority emergency planning units which it monitors, assessing work methods and disseminating best practice. There was recent wide consultation on National Standards for civil protection through workshops across Britain and an internet bulletin board. The results of this consultation should be announced early in 1999 with the aim of standardising the quality of civil protection.

Their introduction should help develop the profile of the function within local authorities. A review, currently underway, of the distribution of Home Office funding will seek to introduce a more equitable system of allocation, which should be in place by 2000–2001.

The Central and Local Government section maintains the Division's Emergency Operations Suite in readiness to fulfil the Home Office's operational role as lead department in the event of severe storms and satellite incidents². The department also has major responsibilities in the event of international crisis and war.

The group's head is the Principal Warning Officer (PWO) for the UK. In wartime he or she would activate attack warning broadcasts to the public. To assist in this, 30 volunteers, known as Home Office Warning Liaison Officers, work closely with the Royal Air Force and in the event of war would have a key role in transmitting up-to-date information back to the PWO.

The Telecommunications Group manages the Emergency Communications Network

(ECN), a resilient telephone system that links central government, local authorities, police and fire services during a civil emergency. The network is protected from the possible effects of electro-magnetic pulse which can compromise communications and other electronic equipment. The group is also developing a telephone preference scheme for essential users when the public network is overloaded. It advises the NATO Civil Communications Planning Committee, the Home Office and other government departments on telecoms in an emergency.

The Research Group carries out a wide mix of work including research on the technical aspects of a national attack warning system and assessment of the economic consequences of disasters. A member of the Research Group recently chaired the NATO Group of Experts and the National Steering Committee on Warning and Informing the public. Its current projects include the development of hazard models, and a sophisticated computer based hazard and consequence modelling environment for hazard scenario assessment.

The International and Home Defence Group deals with the cross-national-boundary dimension of civil protection. The Chernobyl incident in 1986 heightened awareness that the effect of disasters can travel far beyond an incident site. And lessons learned from incidents such as the Montreal ice-storms and the Auckland power cut in New Zealand are informing work on preparedness for any infrastructure failures resulting from the Millennium Bug.

The group works closely with NATO, the United Nations and the European Commission, harmonising UK crisis management arrangements with international treaty obligations, planning and playing exercises and providing civil advice and support to military home defence planners.

The Finance and Business Group provides the Division with strategic and

Notes

1. In 1998 the Home Office paid £13m (approx. A\$33.54m) in Civil Defence Grants to the 178 local authorities that have a statutory responsibility

2. Details of how the UK delegates responsibilities across government departments see the Home Office publication *Dealing with Disaster* (see footnote 4).

financial advice and draws together contributions to the Directorate Plan, which sets the strategic framework for the Division.

It manages the contract for storage and maintenance of the Emergency Fire Service Stockpile, known affectionately in the UK as the Green Goddesses. These fire appliances are mobilised across the country during major incidents. They are also deployed for Army use during industrial action by firefighters.

The Home Office Emergency Planning College is a venue with expert speakers and course directors offering training on all subjects of relevance to emergency managers, journalists, senior executives, paramedics etc. from the UK and abroad. The College library is the European designated centre for emergency planning documentation.

Many professional bodies recognise the courses as contributing towards their Continuing Professional Development (CDP) requirement. The College is a 'moveable feast', providing distance learning and roadshows for those who can't attend in-house seminars and workshops.

The Central Government Preparedness Group is responsible for policy on central government emergency planning, ensuring readiness to manage civil contingencies and operational duties as required. This includes managing projects aimed at minimising the potential impact of the Millennium Bug on public safety. It encourages the exchange of information and experiences on these matters among the civil protection community.

Local and central authorities are being encouraged to take Y2K considerations into account in future exercises. Such work complements a range of activity across government³. The Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) approach advocated by the Division and described below demands that emergency arrangements are able to cope with any eventuality, making them ideally suited to handle an unknown quantity such as consequences of the Millennium Bug problem.

Principles of the integrated approach

General guidance is produced in the form of *Dealing with Disaster*, an internet and 'paper' document which is updated to build on lessons learned from exercises and major incidents. This covers everything from command and control to the combined response at major incidents. It is something of an emergency manager's 'bible', so all responders to a major emergency in the UK work from the same protocol⁴.

Co-ordinated arrangements naturally lie at the heart of emergency planning and local authorities are expected to produce them, based on the risks in their communities. The Home Office develops and promotes the principles of Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) to encourage local emergency planners to involve all organisations that may respond during an emergency. Consultation is vital, and this 'inter-agency' work involves the police, the fire and ambulance services, healthcare providers, the utilities, managers of large dangerous sites in the area (such as nuclear plants or chemical plants), other local authority officers such as surveyors, social workers and so on.

Through IEM, emergency planners are encouraged to facilitate these arrangements rather than just write them. And whilst no-one would deny the significance of the arrangement itself, it is the planning process which provides the chance to involve and inform all those who might be required to respond to a disaster. Responders are more likely to remember and understand the logic and detail of plans to which they have contributed.

Integrated Emergency Management covers five areas:

- risk assessment
- prevention
- preparedness
- response
- recovery.

Arrangements should be non-specific and flexible on all the above levels, making them fit to deal with any disaster. The Home Office encourages their regular exercising and provides guidance over the internet⁵, through its magazine *Civil Protection*⁶ (which goes to 20,000 emergency planners worldwide) and through a guide to planners, the latest of which will be published in the New Year.

The exercise guide gives a checklist for exercise designers to follow, making sure that health and safety threats are envisaged and all goals achieved.

The Division participates in major local authority exercises, giving government input and showing how emergency planning units would liaise with central government during a civil emergency. This also tests the Emergency Operations Suite and keeps the Division up-to-speed in its operational role.

Contact with local authority contingency planners is two way and involves consultation and liaison with bodies representing the profession, such as the Local Government Association, Emergency Planning Society (EPS) and individual emergency planners. In preparation for the intro-

duction of National Standards an internet bulletin board allowed them to contribute. To the same end, Home Office workshops took place throughout the UK.

A Millennium Bug internet bulletin board currently encourages interested parties to share information on their contingency work in this area⁷. And workshops organised by the EPS across the UK are helping to determine the best way forward.

The Y2K challenge

The Millennium Bug threat is being taken extremely seriously in the UK. All government departments are looking at it in terms of both compliance and contingency planning. The Government is providing free training for companies through a specially set-up company, Action 2000⁸, which has also launched a massive national publicity campaign to raise awareness of the problems, particularly amongst small to medium businesses.

Action 2000 has a remit to ensure there is no material disruption to essential public services as we go through the millennium date change. It is working with the Home Office Emergency Planning Division and the Emergency Planning Society to encourage local authority emergency planning units to bring together the key utilities, emergency service providers and businesses in their areas to assess what risks to safety systems may be posed by non-compliance or poor business continuity planning. Such inter-agency work relies on honesty and openness, which is why the Government has asked organisations across the country to sign a Pledge to avoid litigious action where possible, so suppliers can admit their shortcomings, address them or make contingency plans.

Conclusion

Local authority emergency planning units will be executing the good practice supplied by the Home Office Emergency

Notes

3. Issue 45 of the Home Office magazine *Civil Protection* details this activity. To obtain a copy refer to footnote 6.

4. You can download *Dealing with Disaster* at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/epd> or order a copy from Brodie Publishing, 110-114 Duke Street, Liverpool L15 4G, Tel: 0151 707 2323, Fax: 0151 707 2424, E-mail: brodie.publishing@virgin.net

5. You can download the advice *Why Exercise Your Response to Disaster* at www.homeoffice.gov.uk/epd

6. To obtain a copy of *Civil Protection* or go on the mailing list contact Civil Protection, Room 658, The Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT or e-mail: civilprot@btinternet.com

7. The Millennium Bulletin Board: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/epd>

8. Action 2000's website is <http://www.open.gov.uk/bug2000.htm>

Planning Division and the Government, particularly when preparing for the mass celebrations and possible IT failures in the Year 2000. That's why we're consulting them, and other interested parties, on their experiences and expertise in the field.

This mirrors the Integrated Emergency Management approach, so the Home Office doesn't impose good practice on the planning community, but builds it in part-

nership with its 'external stakeholders'. The introduction of National Standards in 1999 will further cement this relationship, when UK emergency planners, at the central and local levels, implement the standardised aims they have conceived together.

Sarah Paul is Head of the Home Office Emergency Planning Division, which has responsibility for civil protection in England and Wales. Her main tasks are to devise policy on civil contingency planning including emergency communications, research, war emergency legislation, civil

defence grant, guidance and support to local authorities, police service and voluntary organisations with an emergency planning role.

She transferred to the Home Office in 1989 following work in the Cabinet Office as an occupational psychologist. As a Home Office administrator she has worked in civil defence, police current expenditure on establishment, assessment of senior officers in the operational services (police, fire and prison). She has also served in one of the Home Office agencies, the Prison Service Directorate of Healthcare, from which she took up her current post in 1996.

The 1999–2000 Australian Disaster Research Grants

The Program

The Australian Disaster Research Grants program provides limited financial support for researchers to go to a disaster site in Australia to gather valuable data that might otherwise be lost.

Research is to be undertaken in the immediate post-impact period (within a few days or weeks after the event) and should include short qualitative and quantitative field investigations of disasters.

Eligibility

The program is open to Australian academics, scholars and practitioners in any area of emergency management. The applicant will need to demonstrate the ability to undertake the type of research intended and to draw conclusions for application to similar events or to other types of disasters.

Type of research

No restrictions are placed on the type of research that might be undertaken. Natural and technological disasters are included and areas of investigation can include either scientific, social or management areas.

While it is expected that physical scientists will specify the type of hazard to be investigated, social scientists might select a topic area that could be studied regardless of disaster type or location.

Funding

The total annual funding for the total program is limited to \$25,000 and the maximum for a grant is \$5000. It is expected, however, that the average individual grants will be about half that level.

The funds can be used to meet travel, accommodation and modest data collection costs. Salaries, overheads, data analysis costs and incidentals are not covered.

Applications

Application forms must include the following information:

- the research problem to be studied
- background research on the identified problem
- the research design to be followed
- the plan to move to the field and access the data needed
- the theoretical and/or applied benefits anticipated
- a tentative budget based on team size, time in the field and data collection costs
- contact details.

A curriculum vitae is to be attached to the proposal. Additionally, a letter from your institute or organisation supporting your bid to undertake the research is required.

Selection criteria

Selection will be undertaken by EMA from the most meritorious applications submitted against the following criteria:

- the requirement that the data be collected in the immediate post-impact period
- the potential value of the research to enhance emergency management capabilities
- the need to focus on major risks having an impact on public safety
- the research investigates management in a multi-agency environment
- the practicability of the method proposed for collection of data, particularly during the on-site investigation
- demonstrated research ability and qualifications of personnel involved in the project.

Report requirements

You are required to submit a one-page progress report to EMA within three weeks of the commencement of the field work is required.

Your final report is to be of five pages or more and is required within four months of the commencement of field work. This report is to describe the research area, methods used, conclusions and their theoretical or applied significance and, if appropriate, is to include recommendations.

Additionally you are required to supply a three-page summary of the research undertaken in a form suitable for publication in the Australian Journal of Emergency Management.

The final report is required in hard copy (12 copies) and on disk (Microsoft Word or Word-Perfect). On receipt of the research report, EMA will provide a copy to the affected state or territory for consideration (eg, sub justice aspects). The report will subsequently be distributed by EMA to state and territory emergency management committees and will be placed on the EMA homepage on the World Wide Web.

Site access

If you have been selected for this program, when an event occurs which you consider appropriate to your area of study, you will be required to advise EMA:

- why the event is suitable for the research proposal which you previously submitted
- what on-site investigation you required (if different from the original proposal)

- when the on-site investigations should commence
- a budget estimate.

A condition of the program is that satisfactory arrangements are made for the research to be conducted. These will be undertaken by EMA staff who will contact the relevant state or territory emergency management committee to:

- advise details of the proposed research and on-site investigation
- seek agreement for the conduct of the on-site investigation; and
- confirm operational and administrative arrangements to apply including:
 - to whom you report and where
 - limitations applying to your movement while in the vicinity of the event
 - arrangements for seeking approval to vary the agreed on-site investigation
 - limitations on the type of material you can collect at the site (e.g. photographs).

EMA will advise you of any such conditions and, on receipt of your written assurance that these will be met, will authorise funds to facilitate the on-site investigation.

Notwithstanding arrangements made, there may be operational circumstances which require the research to be terminated or varied without notice.

It is your responsibility to make all travel and accommodation arrangements. You must advise both EMA and the relevant state or territory authority of all travel and accommodation details.

Program timings

Your application is required by the Director of the Australian Emergency Management Institute by April 30, 1999. Those applications, which are approved in principle, will remain current for the immediately-following financial year.

Submission

The address for applications is:

Director
Australian Emergency Management Institute
Mt Macedon Rd
Mt Macedon
Victoria, 3441

Application forms can also be obtained from the EMA web site at www.ema.gov.au/ausgrants.htm

Enquires should be directed to:

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