

Civil Protection News



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Welcome to the second edition of Civil Protection News

Bruce Mann
Director of Civil Contingencies, Cabinet Office



Welcome to the second edition of Civil Protection News, our quarterly newsletter for all civil protection practitioners.

The primary purpose of Civil Protection News is to tell you what information you can expect from central government; help you to address key issues; support the sharing of good practice amongst practitioners; and be open about what we are doing to support you in your duties under the Civil Contingencies Act.

Probably the most noteworthy event since the last edition from our perspective has been Exercise Winter Willow, where the response to a human influenza pandemic was tested. The exercise examined the UK's ability to manage the effects of an influenza pandemic by playing out the decision-making process at national, regional and local levels, when there are widespread cases across the country. More on Winter Willow on page 5.

We hope that the newsletter will be useful to you, providing the latest news on key issues and current risks, and giving details of useful guidance, events and contacts. We also want as much content as possible to come from you as practitioners – you're the experts, and we want to encourage the necessary sharing of good practice that will ensure that every practitioner is as good as the very best.

The value of Civil Protection News is dependent on your feedback. So please let us know what you think – is it useful? What else would you like to see included? Would you like to contribute an article yourself?

You can email us at:
cpnews@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

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The View

Civil Protection News has regular interviews with some of the key players in emergency preparedness and response. In this edition...



Laurence Dettman
Chief Port Health Inspector,
Hull & Goole Port Health
Authority

The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) defines Port Health Authorities (PHAs) as Category 1 Responders but what are PHAs and how do they fit into the framework and achieve compliance with the Act?

What are Port Health Authorities?

PHAs were originally set up in the late 19th century to combat disease and pestilence arriving at our seaports from around the world. In those days, the task was immense but the brief was fairly simple – use effective inspection and quarantine to prevent infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics killing thousands of our population. A welcome spin-off was a vast improvement of the average seafarer's lot aboard ship as appalling conditions were gradually rectified. The World Health Organization continues to coordinate this aspect of our work through the International Health Regulations.

Obviously things have changed dramatically, especially over the 40 years of my experience as an Environmental Health Officer within the port health field. Today we are involved in the whole spectrum of environmental health work in the port setting, including at airports, and we are involved in imported food control, pollution control, food hygiene, ship sanitation, infectious disease control and lots more, including enforcement of the new smoke-free legislation from July this year. Hull also has an EU Border Inspection Post to allow the import of 3rd country animal products into Europe.

Although some of the diseases may have changed, smallpox having been eradicated worldwide and anthrax being for many years a thing of the past in UK terms, the current threats in the form of re-emerging "old" diseases such as TB, anthrax, smallpox, foot &

mouth disease, rabies etc. remain of great international concern. The emerging "new" diseases such as SARS, pandemic influenza, ebola, MRSA, are presenting the world with new challenges perhaps the equal of those of yesteryear. Certainly the rapid growth in worldwide air travel has largely negated the value of traditional quarantine measures which served the world so well, but effective surveillance at the ports remains crucial. The PHAs and their specialist officers, in partnership with other agencies and Responders are as keen as ever to deliver a quality service. Acts of terrorism and possible deliberate release of bio/chemical agents, not to mention the effects of global warming and pollution will continue to focus the minds of us all.

How do PHAs fit into the framework and achieve compliance with the Act?

It was duly recognised by Cabinet Office that our wide-range of specialist duties and our environmental health expertise puts us at the forefront of emergency planning and preparedness. Thus we were included within the Act as Category 1 Responders.

"...it soon became obvious that this Act would not be just another piece of legislation..."

Having been invited to the Bill stage discussions at Cabinet Office, together with other colleagues and members of the Association of Port Health Authorities (APHA), it soon became obvious that this Act would not be just "another piece of legislation" and that there would be a need for us to meet demands and demonstrate our compliance. It also was abundantly clear that there would be no direct additional funding for PHAs.



Humber estuary - busiest in UK

It is also fair to say that the national picture was somewhat “patchy” in that the local and regional support available to PHAs ranged from excellent to non-existent. Here I must register my gratitude for the extensive liaison and support that I have received locally from our well-established emergency planning community, now metamorphosed and integrated into the wider context of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). They have been invaluable in providing an effective mechanism for our compliance with the Act and thus channelling our expertise for the greater good.

The UK Resilience website together with our local LRF website are invaluable resources for practitioners and the public. A new APHA website is currently under construction and will be a useful source of information and link to the national resilience website.

“The UK Resilience website together with our local LRF website are invaluable resources for practitioners and the public.”

Whilst I am reasonably comfortable with our collective local achievements so far, as an APHA representative I am acutely aware that in other areas PHAs have not been so fortunate and have struggled to “gain entry” and representation at the pre-LRF stages. I trust that post-LRF the situation is now clearer and that all UK PHAs will be included as equal partners alongside other Category 1 Responders.

As with my own Authority, UK PHAs are generally small organisations with ever-dwindling resources, financed primarily by local Council Tax payers. The sharing of resources and joint partnership working is seen as the only way forward. I would therefore encourage LRF representatives to seek out PHAs and include them in the appropriate groups and sub-groups and local training exercises etc.

APHA is providing officer CCA training in February and is currently looking at producing a Best Practice Guide to aid CCA compliance and consistency throughout the UK. We also have plans to initiate a series of inter-PHA peer reviews which could include focussed audits of CCA requirements/compliance at our sea and airport PHAs. Guess who has been asked to lead with this? ■

If readers would like any further information on the work of PHAs and our involvement with the CCA please see our website at www.hullandgoolepha.gov.uk or give me a call on 01482 324776 .

MSC Napoli Incident

Simon Parker

County Emergency Planning Officer (EPO), Dorset County Council

At the end of the first day that the MSC Napoli was beached in Lyme Bay (Saturday 20th January 2007), a multi-agency update meeting was held by the Secretary of State’s Representative, Robin Middleton, at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) offices at Weymouth.

The brief was that the Napoli was now settled on a sand bank about a kilometre off the beach and the situation was stable, despite the obvious concerns of the chance of her splitting in two and spilling the contents of her cargo and fuel oils into the sea.

The meeting finished at about 8 o’clock on that Saturday evening and the assembled throng sighed a happy release from what had been a very intense and stressful day. Some of us were looking forward to going home and leaving the ‘maritime people’ to carry out their work.

As we left the briefing room, ‘*She’s going over!*’ was heard being shouted down the corridor, and within seconds the day changed and for the next four weeks our work and home lives weren’t to be the same.



A severely listing MSC Napoli off the Dorset Coast

At lunchtime on Friday 19th January, we had been informed that the Napoli was in trouble in very stormy weather off the French coast. She was under tow to UK waters and probably to Portland Port in Dorset as a safe haven. That did not raise too much concern for us in Dorset, although updates were being sent out by the Emergency Planning Service to keep relevant people informed of any implications.

However, at about 7 o’clock on Saturday morning we were informed that the Napoli obviously had deteriorated en route across the Channel and a dramatic decision had been made to bring her into Lyme Bay and beach her!

This suddenly changed the whole issue for Dorset and Devon and the first multi-agency meeting was called together mid-

morning at the MCA offices to consider all the 'what ifs' and what we would need to do.

By midday the Napoli had been beached on a small sandbank about a kilometre off the coast (although from the shore it looked a lot closer).



A number of the 2,300 containers on the Napoli were washed ashore. 'Public order issues' ensued...

It was not a 'standard' incident. What started as a maritime at sea response, became an on-land incident that would normally involve local authorities as lead agencies. However, the well reported 'public order' issues were significant enough to cause Devon police to take a robust response. They took the lead in Devon and eventually headed up the Strategic/Gold level response for the on-land issues.

"The Dorset response was coordinated locally with a 'silver response group' established to take care of the issues affecting the Dorset coast line."

The Dorset response was coordinated locally with a Silver response group established to take care of the issues affecting the Dorset coastline. It was agreed that Dorset Silver response would be led by the local authorities. In my capacity as County Emergency Planning Officer, I chaired this group and provided the coordinating arrangements.

Communication and liaison routes were established, with the emergency planning officers from Dorset Emergency Planning Service (EPS) linking directly into the MCA Salvage Control Unit and Marine Response Centre in Weymouth. An Environment Group had already been convened to consider the environmental and possible health impacts and coordination was established between all of these back to the Dorset County Emergency Centre, which had been opened to work as the focus for the Dorset Silver response.

Other EPOs from the team went to Devon to liaise directly with the Devon Silver team and provided reports on the activity at sea and the impact on the shore.

At this time, we were considering how we were going to clear all the containers and cargo from the beaches, as this would be the 'normal' local authority role. Events were changing rapidly and trying to obtain quality information in an ever changing environment was the biggest challenge.

"Events were changing rapidly and trying to obtain quality information in an ever changing environment was the biggest challenge."

Thankfully, the ship owner agreed to undertake the whole of the clear up operation, not only at sea, but also on shore. This was an unexpected and almost unprecedented response. They did not wish to leave a legacy on our shore line!

Suddenly, the worries and concerns about how to clear up this mess diminished. The situation improved further when on the Monday morning the ship owner announced that they would employ a contractor to undertake the whole clear up operation and this would be in place shortly. Rather cynically, we had thought this would be weeks or months away and we would have to arrange clean-up ourselves as leaving the beaches in those conditions was not an option. However, to our amazement, the contractor turned up on the Monday afternoon and attended the evening briefing meeting. They then positioned their resources to start the massive task!

The role of the Dorset Silver group became one of support to the contractor in providing spotting information for debris. This was achieved by deploying Dorset County Council Countryside Rangers along the beach to identify items. The work was supported by the Dorset Police helicopter which carried out regular over flights for us and videoed the whole beach scene. This footage was used by our Geographical Information Systems team.

The GIS team plotted all the information geographically and disseminated the results. The contractor used this data to deploy his work-force to precise locations to clear up the cargo waste. A rapid deployment team was also put in place by the contractor to respond very quickly to goods that we identified as hazardous, which warranted quicker removal or security.

Public advice was essential in trying to give the correct warning and informing information and the Dorset communicators group quickly established protocols and methods to achieve multi agency joined up information. This group was lead by the Dorset County Council Communications team and provided the hub for the outward facing information. This also involved providing a method to allow the public to call in on a 'Spotters Hotline' to report sightings on the beaches as well as providing web-based information on what to do.

“Public advice was essential in trying to give the correct warning and informing information”

A contingency plan was quickly developed by the Dorset Silver group to enable a rapid response to any possible deteriorating situation of multiple loss of containers from the deck of the ship. Dorset had been fortunate in not having the same volume of containers that had instantly appeared on Devon’s beaches with the associated ‘scavengers’ issues. We were determined not to let this happen in Dorset if we were faced with a similar problem and our contingency plan revolved around pre-emption. Roads, paths and beaches would have been closed with all the necessary administration for this being put in place. Fortunately, we never had to put this into operation.



The owner was to undertake the clear up operation

There had been concerns as to the overall command and control arrangements for the incident because of the unusual nature of the circumstances and questions abounded on who had overall command. Agreement was sought for the on-land response and Devon Police became the Strategic/Gold lead for this with direct links to the MCA and with the respective Dorset and Devon Silver groups reporting in to regular meetings at their headquarters in Exeter. This provided the degree of coordination that focused the response for the various agencies that were now involved and provided the necessary reporting structure.

The Silver group for Dorset was stood down on the 1st March, but obviously the ship is still there and there is still debris washing up on our shores. This is spreading further east as the days go by and is now impacting on shores as far as West Sussex. At the time of writing, the Silver group arrangements were re-established to deal with a range of pharmaceutical products coming ashore, which was sufficient to raise concern.

Many lessons were learnt both good and bad. One thing that has been obvious is that our previous experience of working together through the Local Resilience Forum, combined with knowledge developed through ‘emergency planning activities’, enabled a close and supportive response to be undertaken by multiple agencies in a crisis.....without a plan! ■

Exercise Winter Willow

Liz Morgan-Lewis

Head of Strategic Communications Planning, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Health Protection Agency

Exercise Winter Willow was the largest exercise of its kind to be held since the end of the Cold War.

The exercise was conceived, designed and delivered by the Health Protection Agency. Winter Willow was planned to ensure that Ministers and officials were familiar with the policy and response issues that would arise at UK alert levels 2 - 4 of a pandemic at World Health Organisation Phase 6. The exercise also familiarised key players throughout the UK with the level of interaction between different tiers of government in such circumstances, at national, regional and local levels.



Holborn Emergency Operations Centre during Exercise Winter Willow

It fully tested the UK’s ability to manage the effects of an influenza pandemic by playing out the decision-making process at national, regional and local levels, when the scenario described widespread cases across the country. The exercise took place in two stages: on 30 January 2007 when play was limited to Ministerial and senior policy official meetings and at national level on 19-20 February, prefaced on 16 February and followed on 21 February, by Regional Civil Contingencies Committee meetings across the UK. The exercise evaluated the response of the NHS, local authorities and government departments to pandemic influenza and provided an excellent opportunity to evaluate the planning presumptions, policy and operational procedures across government and the NHS.

“...it is always necessary to test our responses and improve them where required”

Chief Medical Officer for England, Sir Liam Donaldson, said of the exercise:

"When a 'flu pandemic hits the country the top priority for the Government is to protect the public. The World Health Organization has said that the UK is at the forefront of preparations internationally, but it is always necessary to test our responses and improve them where required. This exercise is another part of the continual testing, refining, and developing of our plans."

24 central government departments and agencies, including 13 government ministers, were involved in the first part of the exercise on 30 January and two meetings of the Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC) were held – one at senior official level (CCC(O)) and one at ministerial level.

The second part of the exercise engaged a similar number of ministers and a further four meetings in COBR. Two of CCC(O) and two of CCC.

At regional level, all nine Regional Civil Contingencies Committees in England and Emergency Coordination Centres in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were convened. All ten Strategic Health Authorities in England with their equivalents in the Devolved Administrations played in the second part of the exercise.

"All ten Strategic Health Authorities in England with their equivalents in the Devolved Administrations played in the second part of the exercise."

At local level, 51 Strategic Coordination Groups took part across the whole of the UK and ten collective Health Communities (Primary Care, Acute Trusts and Social Services) in England with their equivalents in the Devolved Administrations.



Representatives of several sectors in the Critical National Infrastructure were involved in the planning and played in Winter Willow II. The total number of people involved in the exercise at its peak probably exceeded 5,000.

The planning process began in August 2006 following Exercise Shared Goal, held on 14-15 June. A Core Planning Team comprising Department of Health, Health Protection Agency and Cabinet Office officials steered the process and a National Planning Team was formed with representatives from all Government Departments and Devolved Administrations.



Winter Willow exercise control meeting

As part of Exercise Winter Willow, a new Pandemic Media Group was established to assist with long term planning for an influenza pandemic. A number of key journalists were invited to take part in three mock press conferences during the exercise, involving the Secretary of State for Health and the Chief Medical Officer. It is planned that this group will work alongside officials in the long term, helping officials to work more collaboratively with journalists to find the best way of communicating challenging policy issues to the public. Additionally the media was invited to cover aspects of the running of the exercise on a 'pooled' filming basis and reporting restrictions were lifted on 20 February to enable journalists to publish and broadcast information about it.

The lessons identified in the exercise are currently being drawn together and a report is being prepared. It is anticipated that this will be available by early summer. The findings of Exercise Winter Willow will be fed into the Government's overall pandemic influenza preparedness plan. ■

Internet resilience in the event of an influenza pandemic

Dr Adele-Louise Carter
British Computer Society

In our age, where many businesses rely on technology, what do you do when the services we depend on are put under extreme pressure? Here Dr Adele-Louise Carter of the British Computer Society summarises what would happen to the internet in the event of an influenza pandemic.

It's generally accepted that the internet provides a resilient communications medium in normal operation. Even when extreme events occur, such as the 9/11 attacks in the USA, the internet remained available. As such it has become a key feature of business continuity planning and enables staff to work from outside the office in response to emergencies affecting their business.

Working from home

As part of normal working life many of us work from home. This usually means one or perhaps two days per week, whilst for the rest of the time we are working at our offices or at customer locations.

The internet itself isn't the only technology that enables this change in working culture; the rapid and widespread adoption of the mobile phone enables the user to stay in voice contact as well. It's these in combinations that have transformed working practices.



Recent experiences in the UK highlight two sides to these technologies. The attacks on London of 7 and 21 July 2005 led to a demand for information. The internet was deemed a prime source of up-to-

date news, with the BBC being seen as the source of choice.

The BBC's news site suffered particular stress due to demand and some other sites removed graphics to speed up responses. Some organisations found management unable to access news through the internet as large numbers of their staff swamped corporate networks.

"The attacks on London of 7 and 21 July 2005 led to a demand for information. The internet was deemed a prime source of up-to-date news..."

The supporting mobile phone network did suffer some localised disruption in London, due to the huge peaks in demand and the need to give priority to key responders. Nevertheless, most people were able to receive a sustained service for both internet and voice services.

It's therefore apparent that the internet and the complementary voice networks offer a resilient service for most eventualities. How then, does this relate to pandemic influenza? The UK has four alert states for pandemic influenza which complement the six described by the World Health Organization.

During Alert Level 1 businesses would need to change little, until it became clear there was a pandemic. Only then would we see an increase in the level of traffic as people sought information from official sources.

By levels 3 and 4, companies will need to change as fewer staff come into work. Schools may shut down, to reduce the spread of the disease, which will have an effect on businesses. Some people may simply not want to come into the office for risk of catching the disease.

Impact of pandemic influenza on the internet

The government will clearly use the media to communicate advice but pressure on the NHS will be intense. It plans to refer people to NHS Direct for advice, either online or by telephone. This implies that the website itself will need to be robust to support huge demand. The telephone service should be investigated, given that call agents themselves will be affected too, driving more users online.

A further implication is that the government advice will be deemed inadequate and people will search on the internet for alternative information. One can anticipate that the web rumour mill will work overtime and conspiracy theorists will have a field day, all of which will lead to an uplift in web traffic.

Broadband has expanded across the UK. However, this is based on ADSL which is a contended service with different ratios of subscribers according to the contract

with the Internet Service Provider. Typically, businesses are guaranteed lower contention ratios than home users.

Whereas on a normal day there may be three people in your street working from home, in a pandemic it may be everyone. Children could also be doing their academic work online. At this point, it becomes less clear if the service received would be practical for work – slow networks could affect productivity.

Cheap, capped services may run well beyond their cap and be automatically disconnected, unless provision is made to prevent this. Some observers are suggesting that home access to the internet in a pandemic would revert to the speeds of dial-up services of 10 years ago.

The implications for organisations who have thin client solutions, such as those based on CITRIX, may find home working more practical than those who expect large volumes of traffic. There could be pressure to remove unnecessary traffic such as advertising. However, many internet firms rely on advertising revenues so this may not work.

Information security and health & safety

Many organisations have systems to enable their staff to work from home, but this is usually limited. In the event of a flu pandemic all staff may need to be able to access the company's network. Being able to do this is something that IT departments need to look at.

There are further issues to consider. Do workers have everything they need to work for extended periods away from their desks? Then there's the matter of data security and health and safety.

HR functions will need to be enhanced with additional systems to cope with abnormal circumstances: key staff operating from home and higher rates of sickness and death.

Throughout this discussion, the essential premise has been that the internet remains essentially a resilient service but with some glitches. However, there's an added dimension in that the service could itself be impacted. The internet consists of things that occasionally go wrong, just like anything else. Normally these are fixed quickly; in a pandemic this may not happen.

Whilst it's reasonable to assume that the technical infrastructure is resilient, it's clear that this is a wider systems issue including business implications, government policy responses, economic factors and other related technologies such as mobile telephony.

Therefore the resilience of the internet's technical infrastructure is not really the point, it's the resilience of the overall system that's key and this is far more difficult to quantify. ■

Emergency Planning Beacons

Reniera Graham

Consultant, Improvement and Development Agency

The Beacon Scheme identifies excellence and innovation in local government. The scheme exists to share good practice so that authorities and their partners can learn from each other and deliver high quality services to all.

From 20 March 2007, a pool of Emergency Planning Beacon Authorities have been working to share their good practice across the sector. With particular strengths in leadership, vision and strategy, partnership working, equalities and diversities and community and customer engagement, these Beacon authorities have something to share with everyone. Celebrated at an 'Oscar'-style award ceremony and supported by the Cabinet Office and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Emergency planning Beacons started their year off in style!

For the first time, Beacons were not told before the award ceremony whether or not they had been successful and in true 'Oscar' style, the envelope was opened on the night! With Ministers attending to award to the successful Beacons, it was an exciting evening and a great way to celebrate the achievement of the Beacons.

The Emergency Planning Beacons will be working closely with the Emergency Planning College, the Emergency Planning Society, Business Continuity Institute, Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum, Local Government Association, Association of Chief Police Officers and many others to promote their work and share their messages. The Beacons will be taking the platform at a range of events and learning and improvement activities from 20 March onwards.

Cabinet Office Minister Ed Milliband awarded Beacon Status to:

- Essex County Council
- Gloucestershire County Council (jointly with Cheltenham, Forest of Dean, Gloucester City, Cotswold, Stroud and Tewkesbury)
- Nottinghamshire County Council (jointly with Newark and Sherwood District Council)
- East Riding of Yorkshire (jointly with Kingston Upon Hull and North Lincolnshire)
- Hartlepool Borough Council (jointly with Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesborough, Cleveland Police and Cleveland Fire)
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

For more information on the Beacon Scheme, please visit www.idea.gov.uk/beacons. ■

Going for GOLD

Keith Strickland

Assistant Director – Gold Standard, Emergency Planning College



Project Gold Standard

As the name implies, the Gold Standard is designed primarily to exercise the senior leadership of responding organisations coming together to make collective decisions within the Strategic Co-ordination (or Gold) Group.

The Gold Standard is a mixture of people, technologies and procedures brought together to work as a complete system that fits around the senior decision-making team.

The Gold Standard product will provide the multi-agency civil command team training and validation necessary to promote the effective management of the consequences of major emergencies and disasters. Without this investment in collective training and exercise activity, there is a significant risk that the effectiveness of any response may be degraded because key leaders and supporting staff have been unable to exercise together in realistic, pressurised but safe environments.

The Project Gold Standard initiative has been designed to encompass the requirements of all organisations with a role to play in UK resilience. Such roles may be direct or indirect, voluntarily assumed or in response to duties specified in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). Specifically, it will include:

- Local Authorities
- Emergency Services
- The NHS
- Regional co-ordinating committees
- Government Departments and Agencies
- Devolved Administrations and Central Government Crisis Management Teams
- The Voluntary Sector

The Gold Standard will also provide for the requirements of the private sector, including companies and organisations with duties to discharge as mandated by civil protection legislation and those that have products and operations requiring close attention to incident, emergency and business continuity management.

What does the Gold Standard look like?

A key aspect of the system is its ability to operate alongside users in their own command and control facilities, using their own equipment, plans, data, procedures and processes. This will allow users to simultaneously gain both individual and collective training benefit, together with a validation of their own operating arrangements. What makes the Gold Standard system unique is its ability to populate scenarios taken from users' risk registers to run realistic event simulations using the geography, resources and plans that exist within their own responder communities. These scenarios include:

- **Fire & explosion** - involving gas and LPG – landing, storage, processing, transmission, and transport;
- **Toxic or radioactive or chemical release** - includes all circumstances above plus malicious release;
- **Transportation incidents** - involving ships, ferries, passenger liners, trains, aircraft, and road vehicles with associated fires, explosions, toxic releases etc;
- **Weather related events** - storms, winds, rain, flooding, snow, cold and heat-waves;
- **Human disease** - pandemic influenza, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), food contamination, novo virus etc;
- **Animal disease** - epidemic foot and mouth disease (FMD), avian influenza etc;
- **Disruption of essential supplies and services** - logistical and technical disruption of essential supplies and services (oil, gas, electricity, water, food, telecommunications including data transmission, transfer and payment);
- **Environmental impact** - any or all of the above may affect the environment and the remediation of such damage is an important component of the recovery phase of operations.

To achieve its stated purpose, the system includes capabilities that provide: digital mapping imagery from 1:5,000 to 1:50,000 scale; hazard modelling tools to calculate effects in real time; technology interfaces for existing communication suites; the ability to adjust scenario timelines forward or back; decision measurement and consequence mapping; data capture for objective critique of outcomes; and comprehensive take-home packs to players to inform their post event internal debriefs and plan reviews.

The system will also give emphasis to the collective aspects of media handling - a critical weakness in the lessons identified from recent real events. Regular use of the system will encourage the development of effective personal relationships and foster trust within the senior decision-making team.

System Status

Following an extensive product definition and system requirement phase, the procurement process for Project Gold Standard kicked-off in April last year with an industry day held at the Emergency Planning College. Offers of interest were then received from potential bidders for the support contract. Interested companies were required to complete a pre-qualification Questionnaire and from those responses a reduced field of potential bidders were invited to tender.

A critical element of the assessment of bids involved a system demonstration. This required the bidders to show how their product would run using real data. For the purposes of the demonstration they were required to construct two exercise events occurring within the West Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum area (widespread flooding and a major Road Traffic Accident involving toxic chemical release).

A user group drawn from experienced practitioners acted as the exercise audience for the purpose of the demonstration. This approach enabled the assessment panel to obtain a crucial user perspective of the effectiveness of the products offered. At the conclusion of the demonstrations, the assessment panel had identified several exciting and innovative products that met the system specification. The success of the demonstration phase was due largely to the invaluable assistance provided by the West Yorkshire Civil Protection community who provided the necessary information and data to enable realistic scenarios to be designed and run by the bidders.

The assessment of the individual bids is now complete. From a strong field of competitors, Agusta Westland has been chosen as the preferred bidder to deliver the Gold Standard system. The first live exercise is scheduled to take place in June 2007 and it will be available for delivery at any location across the UK thereafter. ■

For further information or to make a booking visit www.epcollege.gov.uk or call 01347 825000

Data protection and data sharing – handling with confidence

Peter Diplock

Capabilities Team, Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office

One of the lessons identified in the Government's report on the response to the 7 July 2005 attacks concerned data sharing among emergency responders.¹ The report identified a problem of misinterpretation and over-zealous application of the Data Protection Act 1998 in emergency planning and response, and found that this hampered the connection of survivors to some support services. Subsequent reports from across the country have indicated that the London experience is not unique. Similar problems were faced in the handling of personal data in the response to the Asian Tsunami in 2004 and were also identified in the Victoria Climbié Inquiry of 2003 and the Richard Inquiry of 2004.

As a result, during autumn 2006, a wide range of public bodies worked with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat to produce Data Protection and Sharing – Guidance for Emergency Planners and Responders.² The aim of the guidance has been to cut through the popular myth and misconception surrounding the Data Protection Act (and other supporting legislation such as the Human Rights Act), and offer emergency planners, Category 1&2 responders, and others, a clear way of approaching and understanding issues of data sharing. Although the focus of the guidance is on data sharing immediately before, during and after emergency situations, the underlying principles apply to all situations.

The main features of the guidance are a one-page summary of key principles on the sharing of personal data in an emergency context; an explanation of the conditions that need to be met before sharing can lawfully take place; and a series of scenarios to help debunk some of the myths surrounding the Data Protection and Human Rights legislation. The ultimate aim of the guidance is to encourage those involved in emergency planning and response to shift their default position to one of sharing data rather than withholding it.

The guidance has been supported by a range of public sector organisations, including the Department of Health, the Health Protection Agency, Home Office, Local Government Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers. Key support has also come from the Department of Constitutional Affairs, who have the lead government responsibility for the Data Protection Act, and from the Information Commissioners Office, the independent regulator for the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act and the Human Rights Act. As Richard Thomas, the Information

¹ <http://security.homeoffice.gov.uk/news-publications/publication-search/general/lessons-learned?view=Standard&pubID=402328>

² <http://www.ukresilience.info/upload/assets/www.ukresilience.info/dataprotection.pdf>

Commissioner has previously said, part of his mission is to simplify and demystify the Data Protection Act as far as possible.³ Too many organisations, both in the public and private sector, err on the side of caution in sharing data, as they seek to avoid the risk of somehow being in breach of the rules – in his opinion, a common sense approach to each case is hugely important. Data protection legislation is not a barrier to appropriate information sharing. Under the Act, personal information can be used with confidence that individuals' privacy rights are respected. This is entirely compatible with the role and duties of emergency planners and responders.

The Data Protection Act 1998 simply provides the framework within which personal data sharing always takes place, whether in emergency situations or "peacetime" normal business. The important precursors to sharing information rest with the "Data Protection Principles". Chapter 2 of the guidance describes these principles, and, once understood, this framework is transparent and relatively straightforward to apply. Since its enactment however, the Data Protection Act has been cited frequently as a reason for not sharing personal data in a number of situations. In his report, Sir Michael Bichard said that too little had been done to educate public servants about the Data Protection Act and to reassure them about its impact.⁴

The guidance also signposts sources of information on wider data protection issues from the DCA, ICO and others, including new training modules being developed with the Emergency Planning College, forming part of the Introduction to Civil Protection and Chief Executives training courses and seminars specifically on data sharing.⁵

Though the guidance is focussed on the emergency context, it is consistent with, and contributes to, the Government's wider vision for information sharing in terms of improving society through the effective sharing of information. Government is working hard to improve its collective approach to information sharing to provide joined-up government and better services for the public.

The Government's Information Sharing Vision, announced in September, highlights how we can and must share information to help improve people's lives.⁶ Forthcoming guidance from both Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) and Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) will provide clarity on the legal powers of public bodies to share information. Other work will take forward the role of private companies in information sharing with the public sector. The future guidance from the DCA and the CLG will reflect and be consistent with these information sharing principles. ■

³ <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2425085.html>

⁴ <http://www.bichardinquiry.org.uk/report/>

⁵ <http://www.epcollege.gov.uk/training/courses>

⁶ <http://www.foi.gov.uk/sharing/information-sharing.pdf>

New Team Leader of Civil Contingencies Act & Local Response Capability Team in CCS



Andy Fraser of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat

Dan Greaves has recently left the Cabinet Office to take up a post in the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), where he is now Deputy Head of the Preventing Extremism Unit. Over the last three years, Dan and his team have worked hard to ensure central government, and in particular the Cabinet Office, has supported the effective implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act across the country.

Dan is replaced by Andy Fraser, who took up post as Head of Local Response Capability & Civil Contingencies Act Team on 5 February.

Andy's former post was at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), where, most recently, he was leading a joint Defra/Environment Agency initiative to streamline pollution control regimes, which included a review of the local authority role in the associated planning process. In previous roles, he has worked on climate change policy and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, with the latter work focusing on development of a multi-agency approach for assessing environmental performance in farming.

Andy says "I am looking forward to meeting and working with colleagues across the emergency planning community. My immediate priorities will be to finalise current work to identify and disseminate good practice in relation to the newer duties in the Civil Contingencies Act (communicating with the public, promoting

business continuity, business continuity management and risk assessment), before turning my attention to updating *Emergency Response and Recovery* to reflect lessons emerging from recent emergencies and exercises.

Looking further ahead, the team will be looking to work with the emergency planning community to review the implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act two years on and assess what more could be done to enhance and maintain local resilience. Given what Dan's achieved over the last couple of years, and the fact that he's held in such high esteem, it's clear that I've got a tough act to follow!"

"Looking further ahead, the team will be looking to work with the emergency planning community to review the implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act two years on and assess what more could be done to enhance and maintain local resilience."

Andy and the team would be particularly interested to hear about examples of good practice directly from Civil Protection News readers (please email these to ccact@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk). ■

Resilient Telecommunications

As many of you will be aware, CCS is undertaking a project to review existing arrangements for communications between emergency responders and to develop a strategy setting out how resilience could be improved. Detail of how the project is progressing, including a draft strategy, is available at:

http://www.ukresilience.info/preparedness/resilient_telecommunications.aspx

The regular Local Response Gateway Bulletins are available at:

http://www.ukresilience.info/latest/newsletter_updates.aspx#bulletins ■

Civil Protection Diary

Future events

28th-29th March 2007

Business Continuity Conference 2007
ExCel, London
www.businesscontinuityexpo.co.uk

7th April 2007

British Bankers' Association's 4th Annual Security Conference
Pinners Hall, Old Broad Street, London
www.bba.org.uk

25th-26th April 2007

BAPCO 2007 Conference and Exhibition - 'Tomorrow's World: Managing Expectations'
Business Design Centre, Islington, London
<http://www.bapco.co.uk/index.cfm?c=1>

21st May 2007

The Guardian Civil Contingencies Forum:
'Don't panic: Looking beyond the Act to prepare for the future'
The Academy, Holiday Inn Bloomsbury, London
<http://society.guardian.co.uk/civilcontingencies>

18th-19th June 2007

Emergency Planning Society Conference
Torquay
www.the-eps.org
