



PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Chapter Four: Considerations for individuals, families and communities

4.1 As described in the preceding chapters, incidents can have widespread and long term consequences. The risks to life and property can be significantly reduced by preparing for these consequences. This chapter provides some basic considerations for individuals, families and communities on how they might prepare.

General Advice on Preparing for Emergencies

4.2 The Government has previously published advice on preparing for emergencies. A booklet was distributed to households in 2004 and further general advice is available on the *Preparing for Emergencies* website²⁶.

4.3 The website encourages people to prepare for an emergency by taking time to find out:




- Where and how to turn off water, gas and electricity supplies in your home.
- The emergency procedures for your children at school.
- The emergency procedures at your workplace.
- How your family will stay in contact in the event of an emergency.
- If any elderly or vulnerable neighbours might need your help.
- How to tune in to your local radio station.

4.4 If you find yourself in the middle of an emergency, your common sense and instincts will

usually help you to determine what to do. However, it is important to:

- Make sure 999 has been called if people are injured or if there is a threat to life.
- Not put yourself or others in danger.
- Follow the advice of the emergency services.
- Try to remain calm and think before acting, and try to reassure others.
- Check for injuries – remembering to help yourself before attempting to help others.

4.5 If you are not involved in the incident, but are close by or believe you may be in danger, in most cases the advice is:

-  **GO IN** Go inside a safe building
-  **STAY IN** Stay inside until you are advised to do otherwise
-  **TUNE IN** Tune in to local radio or TV for more information

4.6 There are, of course, particular occasions when you should not 'go in' to a building and in all cases you should follow the advice of the emergency services in the area.

Specific Considerations

4.7 As with the considerations for organisations outlined in the previous chapter, there are various measures individuals and communities can take to help them prepare and respond to specific impacts

²⁶ www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk

which may arise from different types of emergencies. Some of these measures are shown below:

Loss of Mains Electricity or Gas

4.8 Power cuts can affect household appliances, lighting, and other electronic equipment. Prolonged loss of electricity can also result in loss of mains water, sewerage and mobile communications. Nationally, schools and offices may close temporarily unless they can find alternative power sources or may have to alter their hours to accommodate rota cuts. You may want to think about the following points to minimise disruption:

- If you have children, you may wish to discuss back-up arrangements for childcare with neighbours/friends in the event of schools being closed.
- Storing key contact details separately from your mobile phone.
- Creating a core stock of essential supplies. This could include bottled water, a battery powered radio, torch, tinned food and alternative heating sources.

Fuel Shortages

4.9 There are several ways in which drivers can use less fuel. They may wish to consider:

- Using alternative methods of transport.
- Alternating driving with others whose children attend the same school or activities as your children.
- Offering to share a ride with another colleague living nearby or a neighbour working close to you when commuting to and from work.

- Planning ahead to try and avoid travelling at peak times when congestion is likely. Sitting in traffic will reduce the vehicle's fuel economy.
- Trying to avoid allowing your car to idle. No matter how efficient the motor vehicle, idling consumes fuel. One minute of idling uses up more fuel than restarting your engine.
- Considering ways of using your car's electrics less. Car electrics impose an extra load on the engine, making it work harder and burn more fuel. Air conditioning can increase fuel consumption considerably.
- A poorly tuned engine can also increase fuel consumption. By properly maintaining your car and by following the recommended maintenance schedule in your owner's manual, you can maximise fuel efficiency.

Disruption to Telecommunications

4.10 It is important to consider how you might cope if your land line and mobile phone were out of action. You could prepare for this happening by taking the following steps:

- Work out how your friends and family can stay in contact in the event of any disruption.
- Consider developing default arrangements (e.g. for meeting people or collecting children from school) which people can follow if you are unable to contact them.

Disruption to IT

4.11 Simple measures can help prevent data loss or corruption on your computer (e.g. using up-to-date anti-virus software or a firewall). Similarly, some

basic steps can be taken to reduce the impact of losing access to data:

- Consider making back-up copies of important electronic files and storing them in a safe place.
- Think about creating paper versions of the important documents stored on your computer.

Disruption to Mains Water Supplies

4.12 There are several measures that can be taken to prepare for disruption to mains water supplies. These include:

- Ensuring you have some bottled water in your home.
- Making arrangements to use friends' or relatives' facilities if you can't use your own.
- Considering how to use water more sparingly (e.g. by taking showers rather than baths).

Transport Disruption

4.13 The following considerations may help you prepare for disruption to transport:

- Putting in place back-up/alternative arrangements for getting to work and for other essential journeys (e.g. taking the children to school).
- Putting in place arrangements so that you can work from home if required.
- If driving, working out alternative routes to get to your destination before you set off on your journey.
- Listening to the local radio, switching on the television or searching the internet for travel advice before you set off.

Human Diseases

4.14 People can adopt simple and basic hygiene measures to protect themselves against disease and to reduce the risk of spreading viruses. Measures may include:

- Staying at home when ill provided there is no need to go to hospital or visit a doctor. You may wish to contact NHS Direct or NHS 24 for further advice on what to do.
- Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully.
- Washing hands frequently with soap and warm water to reduce the spread of the virus from the hands to the face, or to other people, particularly after blowing the nose or disposing of tissues or coming in from outside.
- Regularly cleaning frequently touched hard surfaces, such as kitchen worktops and door handles.

4.15 In the event of a pandemic, the Government will provide clear and considered messages to the public to advise them on other required action.

Denial of Access or Damage to Property

4.16 Considering the following points may help you prepare for possible loss of access or damage to your property:

- Do you have copies of important documentation stored at another location?

- Do you know anyone who is particularly vulnerable in your local community and would you be able to help them if they were denied access to their accommodation?
- Have you thought about how you might be able to move valuable items to a higher floor/different location where they would not be damaged?
- Have you considered where you might move your car to avoid it being damaged?
- If you needed to leave the house, do you know where you would go and how you would get there? Do you have friends/family who could provide you with accommodation? What provision could you make for the family pets? What would you need to take with you if you had to be evacuated from your home?
- Preparing a list of useful numbers (e.g. the emergency services and your insurance company).
- Preparing an emergency kit. This could include personal documents, insurance policy, emergency contact numbers, a torch, a battery or wind-up radio, mobile phone, rubber gloves, waterproof clothing, first aid kit and blankets.
- Making a list of other items that may be vital to you in the event of an emergency. These may include family medication or items for your children (e.g. milk, baby food, sterilised bottles and spoons, nappies and wipes).

4.17 Specific information on how to prepare for flooding is available on the Environment Agency's website²⁷. It includes guidance on creating a personalised flood plan and explains how you can register your home (or business) on Floodline Warnings Direct to have telephone warnings sent to your mobile phone or home address.

Further Information:

Information on how to prepare for and respond to emergencies is available on the following websites.

General Advice:

www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk

Specific Advice across the UK:

Road Traffic

www.highways.gov.uk
www.trafficscotland.org
www.roadsni.gov.uk

Rail

www.nationalrail.co.uk
www.translink.co.uk

Fuel & Gas

www.berr.gov.uk
www.detini.gov.uk

Electricity

www.berr.gov.uk
www.detini.gov.uk

Water Supply

www.defra.gov.uk
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
www.sepa.org.uk
www.drdni.gov.uk

Human Diseases

www.dh.gov.uk
www.scot.nhs.uk
www.nhs.uk
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk
www.hscni.net

²⁷ www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Animal Diseases

www.defra.gov.uk
www.dardni.gov.uk

Telecommunications and IT

www.cpni.gov.uk

Severe Weather

www.metoffice.gov.uk

Flooding

www.environment-agency.gov.uk
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview
www.riversagency.cymru.gov.uk

Fire

www.communities.gov.uk/fire/

Useful telephone numbers:

Floodline (England and Wales)

0845 988 1188

Highways Agency – 24 hours traffic

08700 660 115

Highways Agency Information Line

08457 50 40 30

Traffic Scotland

0800 028 1414

Travel Watch (Northern Ireland)

0845 712 3321

National Rail Enquiries

08457 48 49 50

Translink (Northern Ireland)

028 9066 6630

Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Travel Advice

0870 606 0290

NHS Direct (England & Wales)

0845 46 47

NHS 24 (Scotland)

08454 24 24 24