

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

POLICY SECTION



(1) EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Definition of an Emergency

1.1 The terms 'disaster', 'emergency', 'major incident' and 'critical Incident' describes similar events. In line with government guidelines and for the purposes of emergency services integration, Reading Borough Council will use the following definitions (adapted from the Civil Contingencies Act 2004):

An "Emergency" is defined broadly to include events and situations which threaten serious damage:

- a) to human welfare in the United Kingdom, a region or a part
- b) the environment of the United Kingdom, a region or a part
- or
- c) War or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

For the purpose of subsection 1.1 a) an event or situation threatens damage to human welfare only if it involves, causes or may cause:

- Loss of human life,
- Human illness or injury,
- Homelessness,
- Damage to property,
- Disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel,
- Disruption of a system of communication,
- Disruption of facilities for transport, or
- Disruption of services relating to health.

For the purpose of subsection 1.1 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 radioactive matter, or
- b) Disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life.

An example of an emergency would be relatively geographically widespread incident such as severe weather or flooding.

A “Major Incident” is less severe than an “Emergency” and is defined as:

Any incident that involves a disruption to life, arising with little or no warning, causing or threatening, death or injury to numbers of people in excess of those which can be dealt with by the public services operating under normal conditions and requiring the special mobilisation and organisation of those services for:

- the initial treatment, rescue and transport of a large number 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 to the police;
- the mobilisation and organisation of the combined resources of the emergency services AND supporting organisations such as Local Authorities and Voluntary Aid Societies, to cater for the threat of death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people.

An example of a major incident might be localised flooding, an aircraft crash or large fire

A “Critical Incident” is defined as:

Any incident where the unique circumstances of the incident and/or the effectiveness of the Councils response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the public

An example of a critical incident might be a local high profile murder case or racially motivated crime, which receives significant publicity.

Aim

1.2 It is the aim of Reading Borough Council to ensure that it (the local authority) carries out proactive, continual development of an integrated, flexible emergency management capability enabling the local authority to deal effectively with an emergency, major incident or critical incident, whether foreseen or unforeseen.

1.3 The following extract from Cabinet Office guidelines is included to clarify the role of the local authority during an emergency:

“Local authorities play a critical role in civil protection. They have a wide range of functions that are likely to be called upon in support of the emergency services during an emergency (e.g. Housing & Community Care) and crucially exercise a community leadership role....As the emphasis moves from response to recovery, the local authority will take the lead in facilitating the rehabilitation of the community and the restoration of the environment.”

Objectives

1.4 The objectives of this emergency management policy are:

- a) To save life
- b) To prevent escalation of an emergency
- c) To relieve suffering
- d) To safeguard the environment
- e) To protect property
- f) To continue to maintain services at an appropriate level
- g) To inform the public
- h) To promote self help and recovery
- i) To restore normality as soon as possible
- j) To evaluate the response and identify lessons to be learned
- k) To facilitate criminal investigations or other inquiries

Implementation

1.5 The following actions are required to implement the policy:

- a) Emergency planning and the development of suitable procedures and plans
- b) Provision and maintenance of resources and facilities
- c) Identification and provision of training, exercising and auditing

Emergency Plan Approval

1.6 The Emergency Plan needs to be “owned” corporately within RBC and hence requires an approval process. All issues of this plan will be reviewed and approved by the RBC Corporate Management Team (CMT).

Plan Distribution and Storage

1.7 A copy of the Plan has been given to key officers and will be stored in a secure area. A distribution list is held within the Plan and each hard copy is uniquely numbered for control purposes. Appropriate parts of the Plan (in line with data protection and freedom of information guidance) will be displayed on the Borough’s website for the public.

Plan Review

1.9 The Plan will be revised as detailed by Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Guidance when:

- a) A new risk assessment indicates the plan is out of date or a new risk identified.
- b) Lessons learnt from experience or exercise indicates the plan is out of date.
- c) A restructure (organisational or changes to other responders) or other changes to the organisation e.g. technical, indicates the plan is out of date.

- d) Changes in key personnel occur
- 1.10 Minor amendments such as contact details will be dealt with immediately and will not require CMT approval or a change in the plan version number, although they will be documented in the amendments record page
- 1.11 A full plan review will be held a minimum of every 2 years, in line with Civil Contingencies Act, Cabinet Office guidance, and the plan will need to be given a new version number at this stage.

(2) EMERGENCY PLANNING

Aim

2.1 To comply with the Civil contingencies Act 2004

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 delivers a single framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. The Act divides local responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each.

Those in **Category 1** are those organisations *at the core of the response* to most emergencies (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies). Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties. They are required to:

- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
- Put in place emergency plans;
- Put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements;
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only).

2.2 To identify the procedures and organisation necessary to ensure the provision, mobilisation and co-ordination of Reading Borough Council services and resources when dealing with an emergency, major incident or critical incident.

Considerations

2.3 The following essential elements need to be considered:

- a) **Preparedness.** To ensure that Reading Borough Council is prepared to provide an integrated, flexible and sustained response to minimise the impact of any incident in the surrounding community, environment and industries.
- b) **Integration.** To ensure that Reading Borough Council is prepared to act in direct support of the emergency services at all functional levels.

- c) **Co-ordination.** To manage the involvement of voluntary organisations, media related issues and to co-ordinate cross-boundaries support with neighbouring authorities as agreed in the Berkshire Memorandum of Understanding.

Emergency Planning Officer

2.4 Reading Borough Council will prepare and maintain an overarching emergency plan (this plan) and task specific plans in line with the outcomes of risk assessment, as per the Civil Contingencies Act duty to do so. The Emergency Planning Officer is responsible for the development of that overarching plan (This plan) on behalf of the Managing Director by producing and updating suitable procedures.

The Emergency Plan Objectives

2.5 The Emergency Plan has the following objectives:

- a) To ensure a combined response to any emergency situation
- b) To be flexible enough to cater for all situations
- c) To identify and describe response activation and escalation procedures
- d) To identify roles and responsibilities
- e) To identify functions and resources
- f) To be current and feasible
- g) To satisfy legal obligations
- h) To take into account key areas of concern detailed within the Local Resilience Forum Community Risk Register and ensure an appropriate response

(3) EMERGENCY RESOURCES

Aim

- 3.1 To enable emergency responders access to vital equipment, enabling an effective and sustained response in the safest manner possible given the circumstances. Reading Borough Council will identify and/or provide the locations, quantities and quality of resources, (other than emergency services equipment), required to reduce the impact of an emergency or major incident, as far as is reasonably practicable.

Personnel

- 3.2 An Emergency Management Structure will be established. This will include staff at the strategic, tactical and operational levels, including the Managing Director, Senior Management and Staff from each of the Directorates within Reading Borough Council.
- 3.3 An Emergency Response Team - Duty Officer (Operational) will be established and a call-out rota will be implemented to ensure a 24 hour readiness.
- 3.4 A 24 hour Borough phone line and 24 hour staff to answer it will be established so as to be able to accept and respond to emergency calls 24 hour a day.

Facilities

- 3.5 Reading Borough Council will identify, provide and maintain suitable emergency response facilities including a fully equipped Emergency Operations Centre.

Equipment

- 3.6 Reading Borough Council will identify and provide specialist emergency management equipment relevant to its roles and responsibilities including communications equipment and frequency allocation ensuring accurate and timely passage of information between the integrated response groups.

Volunteers

- 3.7 Reading Borough Council will utilise the services of voluntary groups during emergencies as required. Service provision will be established and efforts co-ordinated to ensure the effective, timely and correct use of volunteer support groups and to ensure their safety in response to an emergency. These voluntary groups must be aware of their roles and agree to accept direction from Reading Borough Council and the emergency services before, during and after an emergency.

Database

- 3.8 The Emergency Planning Officer will establish and maintain a resource database detailing useful authority assets. This database will contain facilities, resources, and useful companies/organisations

(4) EMERGENCY TRAINING AND EXERCISING

Aim

4.1 To ensure that all Reading Borough Council staff involved in Emergency Response are suitably trained.

All Reading Borough Council staff identified as essential during an emergency will be required to undertake training as identified by directorate heads or the Emergency Planning Officer. This is to ensure that any member of Reading Borough Council staff performing an essential emergency function is aware of their roles and responsibilities and practices those functions at regular intervals, it also provides the staff with the relevant skills and experience required to provide a safe and effective emergency response and management function, it also allows for demonstration of competence for audit purposes in line with Civil Contingencies Act requirements.

Objectives

4.2 Training will be co-ordinated through the Emergency Planning Officer and has the following objectives:

- a. To identify key roles
- b. To identify staff with the correct person skills to fill these roles
- c. To conduct training needs analysis to ensure competency
- d. To establish required training programmes to ensure and maintain competency
- e. To enable joint practice between all responding services, directorates and organisations (i.e. multi-agency training)
- f. To establish on going needs assessments
- g. To complement training identified and recognised by the Berkshire Local Authority Emergency Planning Group and Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum within the agreed Training strategy

Task Orientated Training

4.3 Tasks and training will be organised to satisfy the specific needs of all functions, individual components and joint requirements.

Progressive Training

4.4 Training is to be progressive and will consist of the following:

- a) Presentations (learning)
- b) Table top exercises (practice)
- c) Exercises (testing)
- d) Actual Emergencies and Major incidents (testing)

Exercise Requirements (as per Civil Contingencies Act)

- 4.5 *“The Regulations require a plan to include provision for the carrying out of exercises (Regulation 25a) and the training of staff or other persons...Exercises should ensure that the emergency plans are effective (Regulation 25a)”*
- 4.6 The specific role of exercising within Reading Borough Council is:
- a) To practice a combined response by all relevant organisations
 - b) To confirm the procedures are suitable and cater for current requirements
 - c) To illustrate Reading Borough Council’s commitments to emergency planning
 - d) To establish a quality control system by testing individual competence

Directive

- 4.7 Establishing quality assurance and an audit trail should be considered essential to the overall response capability of Reading Borough Council. Therefore an annual directive for training and exercising will be produced. The directive will include a programme of paper driven exercises (mobilisation of people) and live exercises (mobilisation of people and resources).

Programme Delivery

- 4.8 In order to ensure the programme is organised to increase and maintain individual competencies, regular exposure to training and exercising will be a co-ordination function of the Emergency Planning Officer.