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10th November 2006

Dear Colleague,

PROVIDING WELFARE SUPPORT TO STRANDED MOTORISTS

This letter is addressed to key Government Departments, Regional Resilience Teams, local responders and other key stakeholders in England. Its purpose is to inform you of a programme of work being undertaken by the Highways Agency to establish procedures for providing basic and essential welfare support to people, pets and livestock who become unavoidably stranded for extended periods on Agency managed roads.

Background

Many circumstances, in particular severe weather and traffic incidents, can result in motorists, passengers, pets and livestock becoming stranded on the highways for extended periods of time. Where this could pose a threat to life or unacceptable discomfort or suffering, we may need to provide basic welfare support at the scene or in extreme circumstances, evacuate people and animals from vehicles and provide welfare support elsewhere.

To date we are aware of instances where basic welfare (snack bars & bottled water) has been provided to our customers and our own Traffic Officers now carry a small quantity of foil survival capes in their vehicles. However with no clear policy guidance framework, any current welfare provision is largely spontaneous and ad hoc, usually as the result of a co-operative but unplanned multi-agency effort.

Advice taken from Government legal advisors has established that neither Local Authorities, Police or the Highways Agency has any legal obligation or 'duty' to provide welfare support during an incident on the highways. We do, however, possess the necessary 'powers' in statute and common law should we choose to use them. It is therefore important to clarify our roles and

responsibilities and take steps to ensure the appropriate capabilities are in place to deliver effective welfare support.

Roles and responsibilities

Following discussions between the Highways Agency, Department for Transport, Cabinet Office and a range of local responder organizations including ACPO and LGA, the following framework of roles and responsibilities were agreed:

1. On roads managed by the Highways Agency, the Agency should be responsible for providing basic and essential welfare, including all associated costs.
2. Should extreme circumstances make it necessary, the Highways Agency, with support from other agencies, should be responsible for evacuating and transporting people to Local Authority rest centres, including all associated costs.
3. Local Authorities should be responsible for providing appropriate rest centres and emergency welfare support to people evacuated from vehicles on Highways Agency roads, including all associated costs.

Developing the capability

Having accepted responsibility for providing welfare support on motorways and trunk roads, the Agency is currently exploring service options and developing a 24/7 capability alongside national policy guidance.

The next key step will be to convene a multi-agency steering group to assist with the development and establishment of both the service itself and national policy guidance. Representatives for the steering group will be invited from organisations including: HA, LGA, ACPO, CFOA, ASA, DEFRA, CCS, Devolved Administrations (Wales and Scotland) and a Regional Resilience Team. We will endeavour to keep the community briefed and updated as the programme progresses over the next 12 months.

Interim arrangements

In the meantime we encourage our local partners to continue with existing arrangements. Working alongside other agencies, we need to make sure these arrangements are placed on the best possible footing whilst awaiting the delivery of formal long-term arrangements and policy guidance.

Russ Paine
Highways Agency
Network Resilience

Local Response Gateway: preparing together