

## **CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ACT 2004: SPOTLIGHT ON BUSINESS CONTINUITY & PLANNING FOR A 'FLU PANDEMIC**

*(Article by Bruce Mann, Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, for "Emergency Services Times".)*

**Business continuity management (BCM) is a key plank of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The legislation requires front-line responders to put in place systematic arrangements internally and to promote business continuity in their communities.**

Internal BCM: "helping yourselves to help others"

The Act requires all Category 1 responders (e.g. police, fire and rescue, ambulance and local authorities) to put in place plans to ensure that they can continue to exercise critical functions in the event of an emergency so far as is reasonably practicable. For Category 1 responders to help others in the event of an emergency, they first need to be able to keep their own crisis response capabilities going. However, Category 1 responders also need to be able to deliver critical aspects of their day-to-day functions (e.g. law enforcement, attending minor accidents or fires, care of vulnerable people) to acceptable levels if the impact of an emergency on the community is to be kept to a minimum.

Category 1 responders are therefore required to put in place plans with clear invocation procedures, to put in place a programme of exercises to ensure they are effective and to put in place training to support those who have a role in the event of a disruption. But BCM is not "just another plan". It entails a significant programme of work to identify and protect critical functions across an authority, and a concerted effort to ensure that a business continuity culture is embedded across the organisation. Authorities also need to look beyond internal structures and processes to the resilience of their supply chain. This can involve detailed work with suppliers and those organisations delivering contracted out services.

The duty to have in place business continuity plans came into force on 14 November 2005. It will be a key theme in performance assessments carried out by bodies such as the Healthcare Commission, the Audit Commission and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. While the Government does not expect perfection on day one, we do expect basic arrangements to be in place with a clear work programme to develop and refine them. How do your authority's BC arrangements measure up against the requirements described in the statutory guidance *Emergency Preparedness* and the risks in your Community Risk Register?

BCM promotion: "helping others to help themselves"

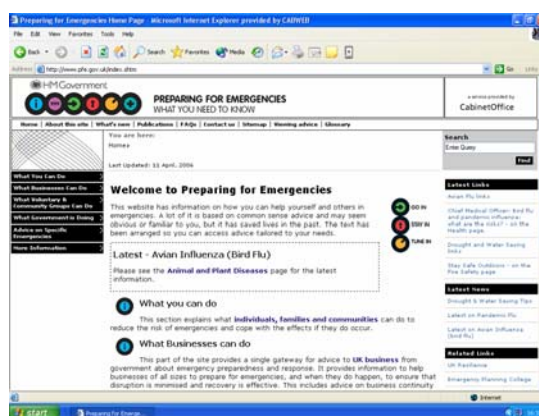
In the event of an emergency, local responders will do all that they can to bring it under control and minimise its impact, but there is real merit in communities themselves being resilient. The Bishopsgate and Manchester bombs and a succession of emergencies since have demonstrated that those organisations who have thought about the risks they face and put in place business continuity management arrangements are more likely to survive and spring back more quickly than those that have not. The rationale for the BCM promotion duty is clear – building resilient communities by helping others to help themselves.

From 15 May 2006 the Act requires local authorities to work with local partners to provide advice and assistance to commercial and voluntary organisations in their communities in relation to business continuity management. It mandates them to provide generic advice to these communities at large (e.g. via websites, leaflets, forums) and gives them the flexibility to undertake more detailed work with organisations on a one-to-one basis (e.g. risk assessments, plan and exercise development) if they feel competent and qualified to do so.

This duty and the new funding to deliver it represent an important opportunity for local authorities across England and Wales to become a catalyst in building the resilience of the communities they serve. Promoting business

continuity will help cement the excellent relationships local authorities already have with local organisations, relationships that are crucial in delivering effective civil protection. It can draw on expertise and materials produced as part of other duties in the Act (e.g. Community Risk Registers); existing networks of organisations who can lend assistance (e.g. other responders, business organisations, Business Links); and existing and emerging good practice.

We in the Cabinet Office are also working to promote business continuity management to the full range of public sector, commercial and voluntary organisations. We recently re-launched the Preparing for Emergencies website (<http://www.pfe.gov.uk>) with extensive new material on business continuity. This includes guidance, case studies and links to national, regional and local sources of support. We're also setting up a national Business Advisory Group on Civil Protection to provide an improved forum for dialogue between government and industry on civil protection – business continuity will be high on our first agenda.



The Preparing for Emergencies website (<http://www.pfe.gov.uk>) has recently been re-launched with detailed information on business continuity, including guidance, case studies and links to other sources of support and information.

### Why does all of this matter?

From the Carlisle floods to the London bombings and the Buncefield explosion, recent incidents have shown clearly the vast range of impacts emergencies can have on organisations across all sectors. They have shown



The guidance emphasises that, first and foremost, the risk of a human flu pandemic should be considered within wider business continuity planning. Focus on the possible impacts, in particular on the health of staff and how your organisation would cope with significant staff absence over a long period. Consider whether alternative working arrangements could be implemented in a pandemic, like flexible hours or remote working, in order to keep your operations going despite high levels of staff absence. And don't forget others who affect the continuity of your business – suppliers, caterers, postal services etc. Decide which is critical, how you would cope without them, and involve them in your planning. Finally, stand ready to advise your own staff and the public in your area if a pandemic does occur.

Fundamentally, our effective response to a pandemic, if one emerged, is dependent on local responders having in place the emergency preparedness framework mandated by the Civil Contingencies Act. And that means robust, flexible planning capable of handling a range of possible scenarios and impacts.



**Bruce Mann**  
**Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat**  
**Cabinet Office**

*You can find more information and guidance on planning for a human flu pandemic via our website, <http://www.ukresilience.info>, or on the Department of Health website, <http://www.dh.gov.uk>. The UK Resilience website also includes all documents and guidance related to the Civil Contingencies Act.*