



CBRNNews

Issue 1 October 2004

News from the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Resilience Programme

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF CBRN NEWS, a Home Office quarterly publication bringing news and articles from across our key partners and stakeholders on a wide range of CBRN issues.

This newsletter is designed as an interactive forum and we will be including a letters and questions page in future editions, as well as a regular 'on the spot' interview section in order to provide more insight into some key figures within the CBRN community.

**We would welcome your contributions and views to the following email address:
cbrnenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk**

Preparing for emergencies – What you need to know

Last month the Government launched a booklet aimed at offering practical advice to the public on how to prepare for a range of emergencies. By now most households in the UK will have received their booklet and will have seen or heard the associated advertisements.

Why now?

The booklet was not produced in response to any specific or heightened threat to the UK, but rather as a result of research showing that the public wanted more information about what to do in the event of an emergency, whatever its cause.

It also builds on a significant increase in public information over the past three years primarily through Home Office, UK Resilience and the MI5 websites.

Where does the advice come from?

A key factor in the preparation of this booklet has been the invaluable support, advice and contributions from some of the Government's main stakeholders such as the emergency services, local authorities, voluntary organisations and medical experts.

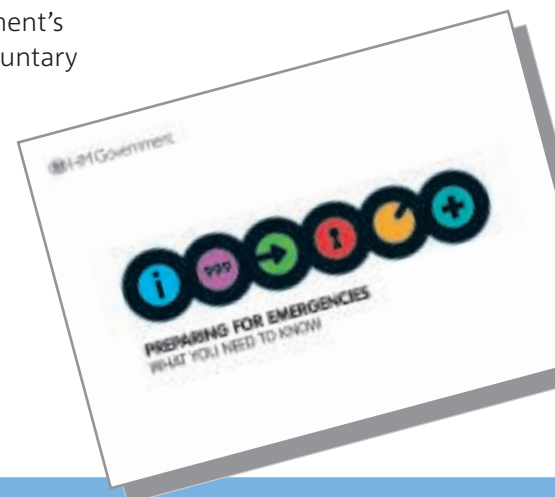
And we know that it is only through working together that we can continue to strengthen and develop the UK's resilience, whether on a local, regional or national basis.

Public safety and security remains the number one priority for this Government, and we are committed to continually reviewing how best to provide the public with the information they want and need.

For more information on the booklet go to www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk.

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Equipping the Fire and Rescue Service to deal with CBRN and other challenges

The New Dimension Programme provides a capability for the fire and rescue service to respond to a range of emergency incidents, and has already delivered equipment and procedures to enable the service to decontaminate large numbers of the public at the site of a CBRN incident.

The Government has allocated up to £188 million to the New Dimension Programme, which is managed by ODPM's Civil Resilience Directorate.

New Dimension has procured and deployed 80 new Incident Response Units (IRUs), vehicles carrying two mass decontamination structures each capable of decontaminating up to 200 people per hour. The vehicles also carry a fire fighter decontamination unit, gas tight suits, disrobe and re-robe packs, and detection equipment.

The IRUs have been located across England and Wales on a risk-assessed basis and can be flexibly deployed to ensure an incremental and sustained response according to need.

Designed to cope with major incidents on-site, the IRUs enable the fire and rescue service to decontaminate large numbers rapidly and at source, thereby easing the burden on health service resources and reducing the number of self-presenting casualties at hospitals.

A comprehensive programme of training is delivered via a series of courses and through interactive media at the Fire Service College and in brigades.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the New Dimension Programme on 0207 944 5724, or visiting www.odpm.gov.uk



The Multi-Agency Initial Assessment Team Trial

On 19 July a trial got underway of 'MAIAT' (a multi-agency initial assessment team) involving all 3 emergency services working and training together for 12 months to carry out fast initial assessments at suspected CBRN incidents. This will involve a 24 hour response to attend any CBRN incident within 15 minutes of Central London to quickly assess the threat for the operational commanders at the scene.

When the team arrive at the scene, 3 members – one from each of the emergency services – will enter the hot zone suitably equipped to carry out their assessment and then withdraw. They

will be supported by other members of the team able to enter the areas if necessary. In all there will be 8 members of the team at the incident. The team will work closely with the Metropolitan Police Service's Anti-Terrorist Branch.

In addition the team will attend major HAZMAT and other non-CBRN incidents and events in support of the operational commanders.

The trial is being formally evaluated to identify the benefits and any drawbacks of the current arrangements elsewhere in London. A report of the trial will be completed in the Summer 2005.

The Emergency Planning Society CBRN Professional Interest Group

When it became obvious to some in the Emergency Planning Society that the rules had changed and our existing emergency plans needed updating, a group of people began communicating on the subject of CBRN incidents and emergencies, which lead to the establishment of a 'Professional Issues' group on the subject.

Although some of the initial issues have since been addressed through the Government's suite of CBRN guidance, new areas of concern have arisen and other issues remain, for example, resource and training issues for the emergency services and local authorities, and the security levels required for obtaining information.

So what's the group done so far?

- A group representative is working closely with the Home Office CBRN team;
- A series of CBRN briefing notes for EPS members has been produced;
- A workshop was held at the 2002 Autumn Study.
- The Group reviewed and commented on the Home Office's guidance, "The Decontamination of people exposed to CBRN substances or material – Strategic National Guidance" and "The Release of CBRN Substances or Material – Guidance for Local Authorities".

Who is on the group?

The group is made up of EPS members with an interest in, and knowledge of, CBRN issues, as well as an observer from the Home Office CBRN Team. Member backgrounds include:

- Armed Forces
- Business
- Consultants – training and equipment suppliers
- Fire Service
- Department of Health
- Industry
- Local government
- Police Service
- Regional government
- Primary Care Trusts

What the future holds?

There is still a lot of work to do. Questions regarding equipment, training, capabilities, and national and local lessons learnt are still being raised. Information on best practice, problem-solving and new ideas still need to be discussed and cascaded to EPS members, not only to benefit the profession but the UK as a whole.

If you have issues or questions regarding this group contact:

Nigel Furlong
Chairman, CBRN Professional Issues Group

Lindsay Cowen
Secretary, CBRN Professional Issues Group





Exercise Magpie

As part of the Department of Health's national strategy for CBRN exercises, the HPA Emergency Response Division held a combined one-day Field Training Exercise and Desktop Command Post Exercise in Newcastle upon Tyne on 28 April 2004.

The exercise was the first of its kind to be held outside London.

Hundreds of staff and officers from health and emergency services took part. There were also two hundred volunteer casualties. The purpose of the field exercise was to test elements of the region's health services' response to a deliberate release of the chemical agent sarin.

The Field Exercise involved all the emergency services who play a role in the consequence management of a major CBRN incident. The scale of the incident triggered deployment of, and practice in the use of, decontamination equipment and activated the emergency plans of one receiving hospital and a primary care trust.

The exercise also included a desktop training exercise, where representatives from health and emergency services

planned their response to additional major emergency incidents. This included the use of call-out procedures, contact lists and the set-up and running of relevant operation centres.

Exercise Magpie was a large and very public exercise and was open to the media from early in the planning phase. This was mainly due to the need to get key messages to the public, but also to build goodwill and trust with both the media and public in the value of such exercises.

As a result of the scale and scope of Exercise Magpie, all the agencies involved identified many useful and important lessons that will serve to improve and inform many aspects of the management of CBRN incidents, as outlined in the interim report released in June.

Health Minister John Hutton who attended the exercise thanked everyone who had taken part. He said: "We have always had emergency plans but it is important that we test exactly how our health and emergency services would deal with a situation like this. This exercise has been an important part of the learning process for health and emergency services throughout the country."



Interview with Permanent Secretary Leigh Lewis

Home Office (July 2004)

1. Could you explain your role and key responsibilities?

I am the Permanent Secretary for Crime, Policing, Counter-Terrorism and Delivery, which makes me responsible to Ministers and John Gieve for the whole of the Law and Order side of the Home Office, and within that Counter-Terrorism and CBRN is a major part of the job.

2. Could you tell us a little about your background?

Well in fact most of my 30 plus years in Government have been spent working on employment and labour market issues rather than within the Home Office. I spent the six and a half years prior to joining this Department working as Chief Executive of the Employment Service and then the merged Jobcentre Plus. However I'm extremely pleased to have made the transition, it has been fascinating and I have learnt a huge amount.

3. How do you feel the threat of terrorism since 9/11 has changed our society?

9/11 changed the world. It made us appreciate that some things we'd only ever conceived of as the stuff of novels and films, could actually happen in our cities and our

countries. It caused us to look completely afresh at the range of measures and security processes and procedures which we need to have in place, as far as it is possible, to ensure that acts of terrorism are not perpetrated against us.

4. What are the Government's current priorities in terms of countering terrorism?

We have a clearly articulated strategy with a number of key strands that seek to go through the process of preventing the conditions which can give rise to terrorism; having the intelligence and resources that help us understand what may be being planned and perpetrated; being able to react if we do have imminent intelligence about possible terrorist attacks, and having the resilience to cope if, despite all those actions and endeavours, an act of terrorism were to take place.

5. What more can our stakeholders and partners do to help us in this strategy?

We can ask them to help in a number of ways. We have some very different partners and stakeholders. In one way every citizen in the UK is

a partner and a stakeholder and we ask people to keep their eyes and ears open, and if they see or hear something that seems odd or strange to make contact with the police or the counter-terrorist hotline (0800 789 321) and pass those concerns on so they can be looked at properly.

Beyond that, we are increasingly working with a whole range of organisations in both the private and public sector to ensure that we have a protective capability which looks at those national assets which might be targets for terrorists and which might inevitably have some vulnerabilities and that we move in a co-ordinated way to reduce or eliminate those vulnerabilities.

So I think we are working more effectively than ever before with a wide range of partners. That does not mean that we cannot do better; of course we can.

6. **What progress and further developments would you like to see in the next five years within counter-terrorism and CBRN resilience?**

I hope obviously that we will have significantly reduced the risk of actual attacks in this country, and that we won't have suffered them in that period, but nobody can actually know that of course.

I also hope that within each of the key areas of our overarching strategy that I set out earlier we will have become yet more effective at delivering the objectives that we are seeking to achieve; that we will have even more effective organisations and individuals, policy and programmes to ensure that we are capable of understanding, detecting, foiling and, if absolutely inescapable, responding to acts of terrorism in this country.

There's another dimension to this too; we must also ensure that everyone in this country, no matter what their religion, ethnic origin or background, really feels part of this country. The best defence in the end against terrorists wanting to use this country as a base or wanting to perpetrate acts of terrorism here is a population absolutely determined that they shall not succeed, and that means every single person in this country.

7. **What personal contribution do you hope to make?**

I suppose on a very personal level I hope that at the point where I cease to hold these responsibilities people will say that at least to some degree the work that I did has helped to make us safer and better prepared than we would otherwise have been.