

1. INTRODUCTION

How to use the Register

The National Risk Register is intended for those who want to improve their ability to respond to emergencies.

Chapter 2 outlines the risks of civil emergencies, how the Government and Emergency Responders are planning for them, and where you can find further information. For local assessments of how far these and other risks apply in your area, consult your Community Risk Register (or, for Scotland and Northern Ireland, consult the relevant Devolved Administration's website).

For public, private and voluntary sector organisations and businesses: familiarise yourself with the risks outlined in Chapter 2 and then read Chapter 3 which gives advice for organisations on how to prepare for emergencies.

For members of the public: familiarise yourself with the risks outlined in Chapter 2 and then read Chapter 4 which gives advice for individuals, families and communities on how to prepare for emergencies.

How is the risk assessment conducted?

To find out more about how the Government carries out risk assessment, and how the National Risk Assessment and registers are created, read Chapter 5.

If you have any comments please use the feedback form on the Cabinet Office website¹ to tell us what you found useful and what you think could be improved.

1.1. The risks that the UK faces are continually changing: risks emerge, threats evolve and our ability to respond to the disruptive challenges we face improves. The Government monitors the most significant emergencies that the United Kingdom and its citizens could face over the next five years through the National Risk Assessment (NRA). This confidential assessment is conducted annually and draws on expertise from a wide range of departments and agencies of government and is used in planning, including for future events such as the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The National Risk Register (NRR) is the public version and this 2010 edition has been produced to reflect the latest iteration of the National Risk Assessment.

1.2. The National Risk Assessment and National Risk Register are intended to capture the range of emergencies that

¹ <http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/nrr/feedback.asp>

might have a major impact on all, or significant parts of, the UK. These are events which could result in significant harm to human welfare: casualties, damage to property, essential services and disruption to everyday life. The risks cover three broad categories: natural events, major accidents and malicious attacks.

1.3. Much of the information in the National Risk Assessment and National Risk Register is unsurprising, but emergency planners have found it useful because:

- they bring together a great deal of information about potential risks that is relevant and consistent;
- the different risks can be compared on a broadly like for like basis; and
- in an age where there appear to be so many possible kinds of emergency, they help in making decisions about which to plan for and what their consequences are likely to be.

1.4. As well as identifying the risks, the National Risk Register also provides information on how the Government and emergency responders are preparing should these risks materialise. Furthermore, it provides guidance on some steps that organisations, individuals, families and communities might consider taking to prepare for emergencies.

HOW SHOULD A RISK ASSESSMENT BE USED?

1.5. The risk register provides the basic information needed for planning for emergencies:

- In Chapter 2, the register illustrates the types of emergency that can happen in the country as a whole. These are designed to help readers **identify** and visualise the risks. They give examples of the most serious instances in recent history, but the assessment is that they are realistic possibilities and not an implausible 'worst case'.
- Figure 1 gives a broad indication of the relative likelihood, and the relative impact, of each of the main groups of risks in the country as a whole. This is designed to provide a starting point for readers interested in **knowing what the highest risks are**. But the risks will differ in likelihood and impact from place to place within the country, so emergency planners should cross-refer the national assessment with information on local risks published in Community Risk Registers (which can be accessed via www.direct.gov.uk).
- In the event of an emergency, it is often not the events themselves that people have to deal with, but their **consequences**. Many of these consequences are common to a number of quite different kinds of emergency. Chapters 3 (for businesses and other organisations) and 4 (for individuals, families and communities) explain the most common kinds of consequence that can be planned for even though the emergencies are unpredictable.

- But some of the impacts of emergencies may not themselves be so predictable. The register (again in Chapters 3 and 4) identifies not only the direct impacts of common types of emergency, but also the more complex, indirect or knock-on, effects.

NATIONAL RISK REGISTER MATRIX

- 1.6. Figure 1 summarises the types of risks covered by the National Risk Register. It attempts to illustrate the breadth of the high-consequence risks we face. It also gives an indication of the *relative* likelihood and impact of these types of risks in comparison to each other. In Chapter 2 you will find examples of each type of risk. This information on individual risks gives an indication of the potential impact through reference to historical examples. It is not possible to represent an exact comparison as each risk grouping is a loose representation of a number of specific risks identified within the confidential National Risk Assessment.
- 1.7. The risk of human pandemic disease remains the highest risk on this matrix. The outbreak of Swine Flu (Influenza A/H1N1) in 2009 did not match the severity of the worst-case scenario that we plan for and is not necessarily indicative of future pandemic influenzas; the three influenza pandemics of the 20th century (1918-9, 1957-8 and 1968-9) all had differing levels of severity. The Swine Flu pandemic does not change the risk of another pandemic emerging (such as a pandemic H5N1) or mean that the severity of any future

pandemics will be the same as the 2009 H1N1 outbreak.

- 1.8. The National Risk Register illustrates the kinds of contingencies that primarily drive planning by government and the emergency responders and for which organisations, individuals, families and communities can reasonably plan if they want to do so. The selection excludes some risks that are classified for reasons of national security. The use of some chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials has the potential to have very serious and widespread consequences. An example would be the use of a nuclear device. There is no historical precedent for this type of terrorist attack and it is excluded from the non-conventional attacks grouping on the risk matrix.

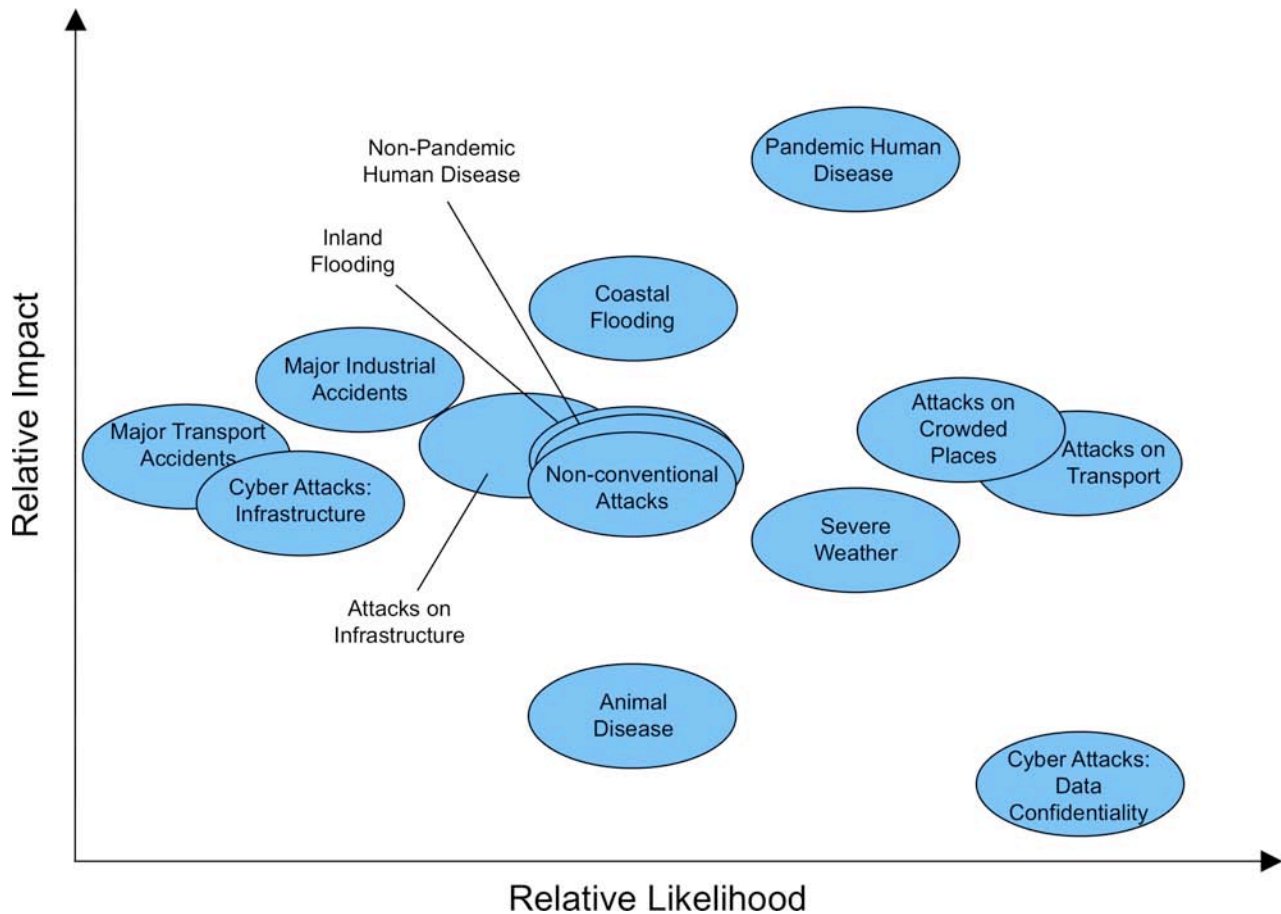


Figure 1: An illustration of the high consequence risks facing the United Kingdom

RISKS IN CONTEXT

1.9. Catastrophes, on the scale of the recent earthquake in the Republic of Haiti, are thankfully rare in the UK. Over the past few years, however, we have seen various emergencies of one sort or another that still have a significant impact on our ability to go about our daily lives. In setting out the risks, their likelihood, and their impact, the National Risk Register is not predicting that any particular type of emergency will happen in the next five years or that, if it were to do so, it would happen on a specific scale. Events have a habit of confounding predictions; prudent emergency planning is based on consideration of a wide range of risks rather than on a forecast that any particular risk will occur.

Further information:

For civil protection practitioners

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx

Links to Community Risk Registers and Preparing for Emergencies Guidance

www.direct.gov.uk/en/governmentcitizensandrights/Dealingwithemergencies/Preparingforemergencies

National Security Strategy

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/national_security.aspx

Information on the Civil Contingencies Act

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/ccact.aspx

**World Economic Forum Global Risk
Report**

www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/globalrisk/index.htm

Scottish Executive

www.scotland.gov.uk

Welsh Assembly Government

www.wales.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Executive

www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/emergencies