



PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Draft Preparing for Emergencies – a guide for communities

Consultation document



AIM OF THIS LEAFLET

This leaflet will help you take the first steps to think about how and why you can help your community be prepared for an emergency. It invites you to think about:

- Why it is important to be involved and be prepared;
- What you can do to make it happen in your community; and
- The help available to you to do this.

Case studies show examples of how communities and organisations have equipped themselves to be ready to support people through emergencies. These can be used to help you think about what you might do in your community and what might work in your area.

What is Community Resilience and why is it important?

Emergencies happen. Our emergency services will always have to prioritise those in greatest need during an emergency especially where life is in danger. There will be times when you may be affected by an emergency but your life is not in immediate danger.

During this time, individuals and communities may need to rely on their own resources to ensure they are able to cope with the consequences of the emergency. Many

communities already spontaneously help each other in times of need but previous experience has shown that those who have spent time planning and preparing for this are better able to cope, and recover more quickly from national and local emergencies.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

In times of need, individuals and communities often already help each other. Volunteering and spontaneously helping each other does not need to be organised by central or local government.

Local people and communities who are prepared and who, working with the emergency services, are able to respond effectively and recover quickly from emergencies, show us how successful community resilience can work. How resilient is your community? Your ward, borough, village or street? Your sports club? And what can you do to help build this resilience?

By building on existing local relationships and networks, using local knowledge and preparing for risks, your community will be better able to cope during and after an emergency.

Case Study – Fairford Emergency Action Group

“Through the Town Council and with support from Cotswold District Council, we formed an Action Group to coordinate our community response to the risks we face. In Fairford, these include flooding, aircraft incidents (from the nearby RAF bases), and traffic accidents with a major trunk road going through our town’s narrow streets. We bought equipment to help in potential future crises and identified and equipped premises to be used as a place of safety if residents have to evacuate their homes.

We held a full live practice of procedures involving many residents, local authorities and emergency services and shared our experience with other parishes in the Cotswolds. We are planning to test out our emergency callout procedures to ensure that they are effective.

In order to alleviate the risk of flooding to the town, we have a volunteer workforce who annually clear the ditches and watercourses so as to provide natural overflow conduits for the main river to carry excess water away from homes and businesses.”



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

a. Make your contribution

Your help and skills in leading your community and helping them to be more resilient and prepared could be vital.

b. Work in partnership with the emergency services

Your community should know what the emergency services are able to do for you in an emergency and vice versa – this means talking to each other during the planning and exercising process.

c. Don't put yourself at risk

Individuals and community groups should never do anything which puts themselves or their community at risk.

d. Talk to each other

Talk to other communities who have done this work and experienced some of the successes and frustrations of developing community resilience locally. We can help to put you in touch with other community groups if you would like to share your experience with others. You can contact us at community.resilience@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk.

Case Study – Sedgeberrow Flood Group, Worcestershire

“Following the 2007 floods, we have worked together to minimise the damage flooding has on the community and help those who need assistance.

We appointed a flood warden, set up a Flood Group, developed a Flood Emergency Plan identifying community resources that could be used in an emergency, and held an open village meeting with experts, to inform everyone on local hydrological and meteorological issues and how the village can develop resilience through self-help.

We are working with local landowners to look at longer term catchment issues and have developed a self-help scheme with volunteers from ‘dry’ properties helping those in ‘at risk’ properties and obtained an emergency warning siren to be activated on receipt of an EA flood warning.

We communicate monthly to the village via a community magazine and held a ‘Sedgeberrow one year on’ party to help the recovery process.”

WHAT DOES A RESILIENT COMMUNITY LOOK LIKE?

Communities in the UK, already involved in preparing for emergencies, show some or all of the following features:

Are aware of risks that may affect them (both nationally and locally) and how vulnerable they are to such risks. This helps motivate them to personally take action to prepare for the consequences of emergencies.

Have a champion and/or group who communicates the benefits of community resilience to the wider community and motivates and encourages others to get involved and stay involved.

Case Study – Sunderland Point, Lancaster

“We are an isolated community of about 70 residents in about 35 properties at risk of tidal flooding and coastal erosion.

“We set-up a Community Association working with the Environment Agency and other partners to increase our resilience to a range of risks in the event that external help may not be immediately available.”

Case Study – Wales DangerPoint initiative

“DangerPoint is an independent charity, based around a purpose build education visitor centre featuring interactive, visual safety scenarios. It was set up to educate young people and communities across North Wales how to avoid risks and accidents. A project has been recently established to raise awareness of the safety issues around flood risk.”

Case Study – Vicar of Frampton on Severn

“I saw the impact of flooding on neighbouring communities and recognised the risks to our community. The village had previously experienced the Foot & Mouth Disease outbreak in 2001.

“I championed the benefits of producing a community emergency plan for the area. The Parish Council went on to recruit a group of residents who produced an emergency plan using local knowledge and expertise.”

Work in partnership to complement the work of the emergency services, their local authority and other organisations before, during and after an emergency.

Case Study – South Woodham Ferrers Community Safety Forum

“The Forum was set up as a voluntary partnership group involving the police, fire, ambulance, borough council, town council and local groups/organisations to establish a ‘joined up community’.

In collaboration with Chelmsford Borough Council, our local yacht & sailing clubs have set-up a ‘River Watch’ scheme to check river levels in a flood alert situation to provide an enhanced warning to the town. The clubs have also established a procedure with the local fire station to ensure small boats are made available should the need arise to respond to a flood situation.

In partnership with Chelmsford Borough Council and the Town Council, a primary ‘Emergency Rest Centre’ facility has been established in the town.

A community resilience exercise has also been undertaken involving all the emergency response groups and a Community Emergency Group set up.”

Case Study – Birmingham Communities and Neighbourhoods Resilience Group

“We liaise with statutory services and local emergency responders to drive community resilience forward. We work in partnership with the Birmingham Resilience Team to put on workshop events to raise awareness of the West Midlands Fire Service state-of-the-art, scenario-based facility that inspires people to think and act safely.”

Uses existing skills, knowledge and resources to prepare for, and deal with, the consequences of emergencies.

Case Study – Hanney’s Flood Group

“Following flooding in 2007 and 2008, we formed a community flood group and carried out a programme of flood alleviation measures including weed removal and bank strengthening and heightening of the local brook. We installed a data logger on the brook and established a regular maintenance regime for the brook and critical ditches.

We have worked actively with the Environment Agency, Parish, District & County Councils, local landowners and residents and established a website to help spread information to villagers and other flood groups.”

Community Emergency Groups

Community resilience is something many people and communities already do. It is not about creating or identifying a whole new community network or a one-off response to an incident, but rather an ongoing process of using and enhancing existing relationships. Some existing local community groups will have information on how to get involved or how they can fit resilience into their agenda. These could include parish councils, faith organisations, Neighbourhood Watch groups, Scout leaders, residents associations and youth groups. Communities should know what local responders are able to do for them in an emergency and vice versa – this means talking to them before an emergency happens.

5 STEPS TO GETTING STARTED

The steps outlined below are only a suggestion for getting started in building resilience in your community. There are many other ways to build resilience and you may wish to tailor it to the needs of your community. For further guidance, see the [Community Emergency Plan template](#).

1. Begin by considering who your community is and which communities you belong to

Geographical communities (those people living close to you) are the obvious choice for, and primary beneficiary of, community resilience. However, many people do not recognise their community as the people they live near. As such, other communities should be considered as valid groups within which to prepare for emergencies.

Community resilience is not about creating or identifying a new community or network; it is about considering what already exists around you, what you already do, who you already talk to or work with and thinking about how you could work together before, during and after an incident or emergency.



2. Get in touch with existing local networks you can work with

Many community groups already work to support and enhance life in our communities; e.g. flood wardens, Scout leaders, Parish Councils, Residents Associations and Neighbourhood Watch. Think about how you could use their skills, resources and expertise to make a more resilient community.

Case Study – Lechlade Emergency Response and Flood Action Committee

“The Town Council set up an Emergency Planning Committee and developed an Emergency Plan in consultation with the local community. Having assessed the risks it was clear that the priority in all of the most likely emergencies would be the evacuation of people from their homes to a place of safety.

The strength of the community came to the fore with the Memorial Hall and Recreation Ground Trustees offering the use of the community hall as a place of safety, the Women’s Institute taking on responsibility for operating it and the Lechlade and District Lions offering practical support such as help evacuating affected residents.”



3. Choose an Community Emergency Coordinator

These people represent their local community by providing the link between the community and the statutory bodies who provide emergency response services to them. Think about who would take on this role in your community.



4. Establish a Community Emergency Group

There are Community Emergency Groups already established in both rural and urban areas, where people have recognised the need to consider what their community might need in an emergency, and have set about helping themselves to be prepared. You do not have to establish a new group. You may instead wish to build on and use existing community groups and consider how they might include building community resilience into their activities.

Case Study – Chelmsford Borough Council

“We approached the local Parish Councils and encouraged them to appoint a liaison officer for emergency planning and set up a Community Emergency Group of local volunteers.

Volunteers have helped compile a parish emergency plan, and assist with information gathering (e.g. the number of single storey properties within a flood zone), helping us achieve better quality of information via local knowledge. Volunteers also assist with initial emergency response pending arrival of Council resources.”



5. Develop a Community Emergency Plan

Consider how you could use/complete the [template Community Emergency Plan](#) for your community.

Preparing as individuals and families

Individuals and families who are resilient will be better able to help themselves in personal, local and national emergencies and provide support to those around them.

For further guidance on building your individual or household resilience, see the [Preparing for Emergencies website](#).

How the government will help:

- Provide guidance, templates and checklists to help you.
- Listen to your feedback on our products and guidance
- Help put you in touch with the right people and provide ways for you to communicate with **local emergency responders**.
- Give you up-to-date and accurate information.
- Set up relevant web pages to communicate and share information with you.
- Champion your work nationally and listen to, and learn from, your good practice.
- Obtain useful advice from national bodies.

The Government's [Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience](#) sets out in more detail the Government contribution to enhancing and building individual and community resilience.

Useful information and links

You might also be interested in looking at the following websites or documents:

- **UK Resilience**
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx
- **Preparing for Emergencies**
www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies
- **The Community Emergency Plan template and guidance**
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/communityresilience
- **The Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience**
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/communityresilience
- **National Risk Register for Civil Emergencies 2010**
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/national_risk_register.aspx

For further information or if you have any queries, please contact community.resilience@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk