

Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Update

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

This report updates members on compliance with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and outlines some of the activities that have been undertaken to reach the current position.

The onset and publication of Joint Inspectorate Proposals on Comprehensive Area Assessment add further to the importance of monitoring our compliance. In particular, the assessment proposals state that:

‘The report on the organisational assessment for fire and rescue services/authorities will encompass how effective the organisation is in:

Resilience and large scale civil protection arrangements which are tested for effectiveness’

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) note the contents of the report
- b) agree to continue to monitor compliance at regular intervals
- c) note that Members are invited to take an active part in future resilience activity, details of which will be distributed as appropriate.

3 Background

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (The Act) establishes a consistent level of emergency preparedness across the UK, based upon a system of “Integrated Emergency Management” (IEM). As a Category 1 Responder, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has a duty to engage with other responders and voluntary agencies in the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) area.

The Act requires responders to become involved in seven distinct areas of work, monitored by both Government and the responders, through the LRF. This report summarises the current position within SFRS in respect of each of the work strands.

4 Work Strands

4.1 Co-operation

SFRS continues to be actively involved in all LRF activities. The Chief Fire Officer sits on the main LRF, chaired by the Chief Constable. The Head of Operational Response continues to chair meetings of the Risk Assessment Working Group. Other Officers are involved with Resilient Telecommunications, Exercise Planning and Training, and Business Continuity Groups. SFRS provides delegates, facilitators and trained debriefers to a variety of exercises and other events throughout the year, providing benefit to the individuals, the organisation and partner agencies. In particular, since the last Civil Contingencies Act update paper, we have been involved in:

- Exercise “Rainbow” – multi-agency severe weather exercise
- Exercise “Flyer 2” – practical Chemical, Biological, Radiation and Nuclear (CBRN) exercise involving three LRFs
- Exercise “Aaron” – Major Incident Response plan enactment / LRF Joint Emergency Response arrangements
- Exercise “Resilient Macaw” – testing military response in a multi-agency environment
- Strategic National Flood debrief in support of the Pitt review

Wide involvement of partners in these events has led to greater knowledge and understanding at the operational command levels of all organisations, which has led to increased confidence amongst partners.

Working with colleagues in Hereford and Worcestershire Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS), and with support from local business, SFRS has undertaken extensive preparation for events involving Urban Search and Rescue (USAR). Dedicated training facilities have been made available in Telford allowing crews to practice some of the practical skills required to support national mobilisation of USAR resources. Full mobilisation of these was seen in November 2007 at the tragic fire at Atherstone in Warwickshire.

4.2 Information sharing

Many of the exercises highlighted have led to informal information sharing arrangements. Local protocols have been signed by SFRS and West Mercia Police to allow for sharing of sensitive information which might provide planning benefits for each organisation.

The LRF provides a mechanism for sharing of information amongst responders, and brings together a network of interested parties for specific tasks, for example, planning for a potential fuel shortage during the summer of 2008. Sharing of information, procedures and good practice around this issue provided all agencies with a coordinated approach to the potential crisis.

4.3 Risk assessment

The Head of Operational Response, supported by a colleague from HWFRS provides the lead for risk assessment within the LRF environment. The full Community Risk Register has been published, with links from the SFRS Homepage. The contents are reviewed and updated as appropriate.

4.4 Emergency Planning

SFRS maintains plans for higher risk premises (7(2)d premises) within the county, with contingency plans for major risks including flooding. Local exercises are arranged to familiarise our staff and partner agencies with these plans. A series of training and exercise days (Exercise Cadet) concentrating on our response to a requirement for mass public decontamination have been conducted in August and September 2008. These were attended by a variety of partners, including West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Staffordshire and West Mercia Police, Shropshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit, and media teams. A number of photographs of these training events are attached at the appendix to this report. This training will culminate in a major exercise, likely to be centred upon mass casualties at one of the main hospitals. This is planned for **Sunday 23 November 2008 and all Fire Authority Members are urged to attend.**

A new initiative being considered is the production of a Local Risk Register, sitting beneath the Community Risk Register. The Shropshire "Sleeping Silver" Group is discussing ways to move this forward, but it is likely that the Local Register will be based upon the SFRS 7(2)d list, and may be accessed by other agencies through the systems in place within SFRS, perhaps by mobilising the Service's Incident Command vehicle which carries this information electronically. Owing to issues of commercial sensitivity it is unlikely that this will be published for public consumption, although a simple list of those premises considered within the register will be useful for the public in determining the likelihood of an incident materialising and being dealt with effectively in their locality.

4.5 Business Continuity Management

The SFRS Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was approved by Policy Group in September 2006. Since then, there have been two BCP exercises held to validate the plan. In June 2007, the exercise involved a major fire which severely affected IT systems at Service Headquarters. The exercise also tested a number of other SFRS policies, including “recall to duty” for officers. In September 2008 the exercise concentrated on planning for influenza pandemic and will support the review of the Operational Response Resilience Strategy.

In addition, the plan was implemented for real in December 2007 when Service Headquarters was flooded, for a second time, by a burst water pipe installation.

4.6 Communicating with the Public

As previously outlined, the Community Risk Register has been published and is available via the West Mercia police website, with links from the SFRS homepage.

In the event that the community need to be advised of an impending situation this will be arranged by the West Mercia LRF Communications Group. This is generally facilitated through a pre-meeting of responders at a strategic level (pre-Gold), ensuring consistency of messages.

4.7 Advice and Assistance to Business

Local Authorities, rather than Fire and Rescue Authorities, are tasked with providing business with information on business continuity. To this end West Mercia LRF has produced an information booklet which SFRS continues to distribute to businesses during fire safety audits and on request from businesses.

5 Conclusion

SFRS continues to engage in national and regional resilience issues working very closely with partners through the West Mercia LRF. SFRS is highly regarded by partners in the field of resilience and as a result of a series of exercises we have confidence in our operational ability to support multi-agency involvement in incidents. However, we should not be complacent, and must continue to commit resources to further improving our service delivery and supporting partners to provide an effective, resilient response to major incidents.

6 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

8 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

9 Appendix

Photographs from Exercise Cadet training sessions

10 Background Papers

There are no background papers associated with this report.

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	
Capacity		Member Involvement	
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	
Efficiency Savings		Retained	
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial		Staff	
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

Photographs from Exercise Cadet Training Sessions



Large scale Exercise Cadet at Nescliffe Training Camp



Police Involvement in Exercise Cadet



Command at Exercise Cadet with Emergency Planners



Mass Decontamination at Exercise Cadet

