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Welcome to the first edition of this update on what is happening in the civil contingencies field in Northern Ireland. We intend to issue a newsletter every six months and would welcome any contribution in relation to regional level or local level civil contingencies news.

Introducing Civil Contingencies Policy Branch

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) is a part of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland. The aim of the branch is to promote the development of civil contingencies arrangements within the NI public sector to ensure that the most efficient and effective response can be made to assist the public during, and in the aftermath of a civil emergency affecting all, or a large part of Northern Ireland. To achieve this, CCPB:

- co-ordinates information and advice to the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Executive on civil contingencies planning and policy;
- promotes civil contingencies preparedness across NI departments through provision of information, guidance and maintenance of effective civil contingencies policies;
- facilitates co-ordination of contingencies preparedness across NI departments and the wider public sector when issues are cross-cutting, and
- maintains the NI Central Crisis Management Arrangements.

We hope that this newsletter will help you to understand something more about what is happening in Northern Ireland and beyond in relation to civil contingencies. Our contact details are at the end of this newsletter if you would like further information on any of the articles.

Civil Contingencies Latest News

Below are some of the latest developments in civil contingencies both in Northern Ireland and at UK level.

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News from Civil Contingencies Policy Branch

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch Website

The CCPB website has been reviewed and comprehensively updated and has moved to a new address, www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/emergencies. Anyone using the old CCPB website address will be automatically redirected to the new site, but if you have bookmarked it on your own computer you may want to update the bookmark address.

The website contains recent news, training information, CCPB guidance documents and links to other civil contingencies sites. We would particularly welcome comment on the website and on any additional features which you would like to see included there. There is a facility on the website to record your comments (use the 'Feedback' link at the top of the homepage) or you can send them directly to Judith Brown – contact details below.

Crisis Management Facilities

CCPB has completed work to develop the NI Central Crisis Management facilities in Castle Buildings as part of a project to review and update the Central Crisis Management Arrangements. Testing of the new facilities is currently underway.

The project is overseen by a steering group made up of those directly responsible for delivery, and representatives of potential users of the arrangements. Over the coming months those people who would be expected to attend meetings of the Crisis Management Group or Civil Contingencies Group (NI) during an emergency will have an opportunity to see the new facilities and learn more about how they will be used in an emergency which requires strategic co-ordination and management.

Regional Government Headquarters

You may be aware that Northern Ireland has a cold-war era Regional Government Headquarters (RGHQ) building – commonly known as 'the bunker' - which has been mothballed for some years and is no longer needed for its original function. CCPB is currently exploring, with other government agencies, the potential for alternative uses for the facility and developing a strategy for its future.

If you are interested in the subject of cold war defence structures you may want to look at the [website of the Subterranea Britannica society](#)

New sub-groups of the Civil Contingencies Group (NI)

Two new sub-groups of the Civil Contingencies Group (NI) (CCG(NI)) have been established to provide strategic co-ordination on severe weather and regional communications, both of which have been identified by CCG(NI) as issues which would benefit from a cross-cutting approach at NI level. Both sub-groups have recently met for the first time. More information on all the sub-groups of CCG(NI), including these new ones is given below and updates will be provided in future editions of this Newsletter.

News from the NI District Councils

Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG)

The Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) brings together representatives of the Northern Ireland District Councils to:

- promote good practice in civil contingencies within district councils and to facilitate implementation within district councils;
- develop civil contingencies guidance for district councils;
- develop civil contingencies protocols for district councils and their partners;
- facilitate the co-ordination of civil contingencies preparedness across district councils;
- monitor and review civil contingencies preparedness / response within district councils; and
- co-ordinate information across district councils during an emergency and act as a conduit for information flow to central government.

District council representation on LGEMG is based on the Environmental Health Groups and consists of the Chief Executives of each of the Employer Councils for the groups and the Group Chief Environmental Health Officers. LGEMG meetings are also attended by representatives of the Department of the Environment Local Government Division, CCPB, the PSNI, the Local Government Association and others who may be invited depending on the subjects under consideration at any given time.

Multi-Agency Flood Plan for Antrim

LGEMG has an ongoing programme of work, carried out through sub-groups or ad hoc working groups to fulfil its objectives. As part of this work programme, the Northern Environmental Health Group (Northern Group Systems) has recently initiated a Flood Working Group to try and create a multi-agency Flood Plan. The initial Flood Plan is based on the

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Antrim Council area, and brings together a wide range of organisations including the emergency services, central government agencies, utilities and Antrim Borough Council to contribute to an integrated plan. It is intended that once this plan is complete and agreed it will form the basis of an electronic template which can be rolled out to other councils and customised to take account of specific local conditions.

News items from LGEMG will be included in future editions of this Newsletter.

News from the Cabinet Office

UK Resilience Website

The Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) of the Cabinet Office hosts the [UK Resilience website](#) (note that this is a new website address and you will be automatically re-directed from the old address) which is a key source of information on all aspects of civil contingencies in the UK. It provides background information on a range of civil contingencies issues, is a repository for guidance documents and reports (including those of other organizations in some cases), highlights latest news and developments in civil contingencies and provides links to a wide range of other relevant websites in the UK and beyond. CCS has recently added a whole area of the UK resilience website that is dedicated to Pandemic Influenza Planning which is a useful collation of documents and information from a wide range of sources which would otherwise be time consuming to track down. These Pandemic Influenza pages can be accessed by clicking on the 'Pandemic Flu' link on the left hand side of the UK Resilience homepage.

Review of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

CCS has announced that it is to carry out a review of the impact of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 on emergency preparedness in England and Wales, with a view to deciding if any changes need to be made to the Act or associated Regulations and statutory guidance. This is intended to be a developmental review to fine-tune the statutory regime, rather than a fundamental review of the Act, which is judged to be working well overall. CCPB is a member of the Steering Group for the Review and will contribute on behalf of Northern Ireland. In parallel with the review of the Act, CCS is carrying out a fundamental review of the non-statutory 'Emergency Response and Recovery' document.

The review will focus on Part 1 of the Act, which relates to local emergency preparedness, and will not consider Part 2 of the Act, which deals with emergency powers. However, as part of the ongoing work of CCS, consideration is being given to the type and format of emergency regulations which could be made under Part 2, particularly in the light of planning for an Influenza Pandemic and the lessons learnt from the 2007 flooding.

Pitt review of the lessons learned from the 2007 floods

Sir Michael Pitt was asked by Ministers to conduct an independent review of the flooding emergency that took place in England in June and July 2007. He has now launched his final report, '[The Pitt Review: Lessons learned from the 2007 floods](#)'. This final report is positive where it can be but demanding where change is needed.

Overview of Regional Level Civil Contingencies Groups

This edition of NI Civil Contingencies News introduces you to the various NI regional level inter-agency groups which are working on cross-cutting civil contingencies planning for Northern Ireland. More information on the output from these groups will be provided in future editions of this Newsletter.

Civil Contingencies Group NI (CCG(NI))

This group is the main means by which key stakeholders in civil contingencies are brought together at Northern Ireland level.

Member Organisations are:

- 11 Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments
- Northern Ireland Office (NIO)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)
- Marine & Coastguard Agency (MCGA)
- Food Standard Agency (FSA)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) representing the 26 District Councils

CCG(NI) meets at least three times per year to discuss policy issues and share information.

The role of the group includes:

- periodic review of civil protection policy in government departments and public bodies in Northern Ireland;
- maintenance of liaison between government departments, the emergency services, other key public sector bodies and district councils;

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- dissemination of information to and within member organisations on civil contingencies policy, current issues and risks and the response required to particular emergency situations;
- collection and collation of information necessary to inform policy development or the response to emergencies, either generally or in particular emergency situations;
- the facility to establish standing or ad-hoc sub-groups or working groups to develop policy for, or report on, particular issues or functions; and
- discussion and co-ordination of non-emergency service responses to emergencies which require a multi-agency strategic approach, either in support of the Crisis Management Group or instead of it.

Regional Level sub-groups

CCG(NI) has a number of sub-groups which take forward work on specific topics. These topics are generally cross-cutting across the public services in nature and represent the highest risks faced by Northern Ireland. They are:

Pandemic Influenza sub-group

This group meets approximately every six to eight weeks. The group is comprised of membership from:

- Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments
- Northern Ireland Office (NIO)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS)
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)
- Marine & Coastguard Agency (MCGA)
- Food Standards Agency (FSA)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG)

The terms of reference of the sub-group are to:

- assess the current capability of public services in Northern Ireland to respond to an Influenza Pandemic (set against the latest planning assumptions) and develop a programme of work to provide resilience;
- develop networks and share best practice between agencies and organisations in Northern Ireland (and cross border) to ensure that there is a co-ordinated multi-agency planning for managing and responding to the consequences of a Pandemic Influenza;

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- monitor developments in the rest of the UK to inform planning in Northern Ireland and ensure that Northern Ireland interests are represented on appropriate national working groups;
- produce Northern Ireland guidance, as appropriate; and
- ensure that, where appropriate, reports on the progress of the Sub-group's work are provided to the CCG(NI), Permanent Secretaries Group (PSG), the NI Executive and the Cabinet Office.

A key current objective for the sub-group is to prepare a Northern Ireland strategic Pandemic Influenza framework which will provide a consistent basis for Northern Ireland organizations to further develop their own operational plans. An initial draft of this document is currently in preparation and will be circulated for consultation in due course. Further information on Pandemic Influenza and the overarching UK planning framework can be found on the [UK Resilience website](#)

Pandemic Fatalities Management sub-group

This sub-group looks at the measures which would need to be put in place to deal effectively and sensitively with the additional deaths which could arise from an Influenza Pandemic. Members of this sub-group are: -

- Northern Ireland Office (NIO)
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)
- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
- General Register Office (GRO)
- Coroners Service for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Court Service (NICtS)
- Belfast City Council (BCC)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG)
- National Association of Funeral Directors

The terms of reference of this sub-group are to:

- develop networks and share best practice between agencies and organisations in Northern Ireland (and cross border) to ensure that there is a co-ordinated multi-agency planning for handling and responding to the consequences of excess deaths due to Pandemic Influenza;
- assess the current capability in Northern Ireland (set against the latest planning assumptions) and develop a programme of work to provide resilience;

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- monitor developments in the rest of the UK to inform planning in Northern Ireland and ensure that Northern Ireland interests are represented on appropriate national working groups;
- produce Northern Ireland guidance on managing excess deaths; and
- ensure that, where appropriate, reports on the progress of the sub-group's work are provided to CCG(NI), Permanent Secretaries Group (PSG), NI Ministers, the Home Office and the Cabinet Office.

This sub-group is well advanced with producing draft NI guidance on managing deaths. A number of issues are being considered, including:

- ensuring that death certificates are issued promptly;
- examining what can be done to make the death certification, coroners referrals and registration processes as easy as possible; and
- considering how variations could be introduced to normal funeral and burial/cremation processes, which would allow additional numbers to be accommodated in a way which is respectful of the deceased and their relatives and which respects cultural and religious preferences.

NI Food / Fuel Supply sub-group

This sub-group looks at the measures which can be taken by Government to support the maintenance of supplies of food and fuel to Northern Ireland in periods of disruption.

Members of this sub-group are:

- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)
- Department for Regional Development (DRD)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG)
- Invest NI
- Food Standards Agency (FSA)

The terms of reference for this sub-group are to:

- identify and review risks to the supply chains;
- make recommendations aimed at reducing or mitigating the impact of disruption;
- agree and validate planning for serious disruption;

- monitor and report on the impact of incidents; and
- identify the interfaces with other workstreams.

Events relevant to this sub-group which have occurred recently include the Foot and Mouth disease/Bluetongue virus outbreaks in England, the industrial action by staff at Grangemouth oil refinery and the Shell tanker drivers strike in GB. During these events the relevant lead departments kept the sub-group members informed of possible implications for the food and fuel supply chains in Northern Ireland.

Severe Weather sub-group

This new sub-group met for the first time in July 2008. The intention of the sub-group is to bring together relevant organizations at regional level to consider strategic actions which would support the operational response to weather-related emergencies. Membership, terms of reference and a work programme for the sub-group were discussed at the first meeting.

Further information on the development of this sub-group will be reported in future editions of this Newsletter.

CBRN sub-group (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear)

This sub-group considers planning for a wide range of incidents involving chemical, biological and radiological materials and the potential impact of nuclear incidents. Such incidents may result from accidents, eg involving the transport or storage of chemicals, or terrorist acts. This workstream currently consists of a CBRN steering group, which is chaired by the Chief Medical Officer, and a number of working groups which address specific aspects of the response to a CBRN incident.

Membership of the steering group is:

- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)
- Northern Ireland Office (NIO)
- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
- Environment and Heritage Service (EHS)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)

The aim of the steering group is to ensure that Northern Ireland is capable of responding quickly and effectively to deal with, and recover from, the consequences of CBRN incidents, particularly those caused by terrorism.

A review of how CBRN planning is organized has been commissioned by CCPB and the report of that review is nearing completion.

Further information on developments in CBRN planning will be included in future editions of this Newsletter.

Regional Communications sub-group

This new sub-group met for the first time in June 2008. The main purpose of the group is to ensure that Northern Ireland has facilities in place to enable effective and efficient communication during an emergency. At the first meeting membership, terms of reference and a work programme were discussed. Further information on the working group will be included in future editions of this Newsletter.

Regional Risk Assessment sub-group

This sub-group is responsible for facilitating the production of a Northern Ireland risk assessment, within the UK risk assessment framework.

Members of this sub-group are:

- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)
- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)
- Department of Regional Development (DRD)
- Department of the Environment (DOE)
- Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS)
- Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG)
- Health and Safety Executive, Northern Ireland (HSENI)
- Environment and Heritage Service (EHS)

In addition to the standing members, other organizations attended meetings when there were relevant risks to be discussed.

Training for Northern Ireland Departments

Training for Northern Ireland Civil Service departments is provided centrally through the Centre for Applied Learning (CAL). CCPB is currently working with CAL to develop an 'Introduction to Civil Contingencies' course specifically for the NI departments. It is planned that this course will include an overview, but not detail of:

- integrated emergency planning processes, including the definition of an emergency; the different forms which an emergency can take; horizon scanning and risk assessment; risk Management and Prevention; preparedness; plan validation; response arrangements; recovery; and business continuity in the context of emergencies;
- legislation and guidance relevant to Northern Ireland;
- roles and responsibilities of the emergency services, public service organizations, voluntary organizations and private sector utilities in emergencies;
- co-ordination and strategic decision-making arrangements in Northern Ireland;
- public communications and media liaison in emergencies; and
- recovery issues for NI Departments;

CAL also offers training in [Business Continuity Planning for NI Departments](#), which takes account of the New British Standard for Business Continuity Planning, BS 25999.

Any NI departmental staff who are interested in either the CAL courses or civil contingencies courses through the Emergency Planning College or other providers (see below) should contact their Local Training Commissioners for further information.

Emergency Planning College

[The Emergency Planning College](#) is a branch of the CCS and is based at Easingwold in North Yorkshire. The College runs residential courses at its home site on the full range of civil contingencies issues. Students are normally expected to complete a foundation 'Introduction to Civil Protection' course which gives a grounding in the basics of civil contingencies and can then progress to a range of more focused courses. College courses are accredited by the University of Leeds as contributing to academic qualifications in a range of emergency planning-related subjects. Attending a course at the College enables students to meet and work with people from a broad geographical area and from a range of public and private-sector organizations, all of whom have a common interest in the subject-matter of the course. This

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encourages networking and assists in spreading good practice and identifying potential novel solutions to problems.

The Emergency Planning College also runs courses in Northern Ireland, in conjunction with Associate Course Directors from Emergency Planning Solutions Ltd. These courses are tailored to Northern Ireland audiences and offer an opportunity to meet and train with other Northern Ireland people. [Details of the Northern Ireland prospectus can be found on the Emergency Planning College website](#)

If you would like to know more about any of these issues or what is happening in the sub-groups, please contact your organisational representative – CCPB can provide you with advice on who this is - see below for CCPB contacts.

Contact Us

Keith Jagelman	028 9052 3407	keith.jagelman@ofmdfmni.gov.uk
Judith Brown	028 9052 8641	judith.brown@ofmdfmni.gov.uk
John Ross	028 9052 3235	john.ross@ofmdfmni.gov.uk
Richard Grace	028 9052 8645	richard.grace@ofmdfmni.gov.uk

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
Block A
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast
BT4 3SR

E-mail: ccpb@ofmdfmni.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/emergencies>