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Office of the
**First Minister and
Deputy First Minister**
www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk

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Welcome to the second edition of this update on what is happening in the Civil Contingencies field in Northern Ireland. We would welcome any contribution in relation to regional level or local level Civil Contingencies news for inclusion in future newsletters.

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Meet the Team

Introducing Civil Contingencies Policy Branch:

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) is a part of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and contributes to the department's strategic objective of supporting Ministers and the institutions of government by delivering a cross-cutting co-ordination and facilitation function in relation to civil contingencies.

The Branch is headed by Keith Jagelman and has a total of ten staff divided into three work groups. For day-to-day purposes each work group has responsibility for a range of topics and

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for liaison with specified stakeholder organisations as shown on the structural chart below. These responsibility areas are not set in concrete however, and the nature of civil contingencies work, with its ever changing priorities and pressures, means that you will often find individual CCPB staff working flexibly by becoming involved in work areas outside of their normal remit. This is perhaps particularly true of the CCPB support team, which provides the all important administrative services to the Branch as well as maintaining a very close involvement in setting up, testing and operating the central crisis management suite.

CCPB is based in Castle Buildings on the Stormont Estate, Belfast. Its suite of offices has a dual purpose both as day-to-day offices and in the event of a regional emergency as an operations room, part of the wider crisis management suite which is also located within Castle Buildings – see the article below for an update on the NI Crisis Management Facilities.

CCPB staff can be contacted on ccpb@ofmdfmni.gov.uk. More information about the Branch and its functions can be found at www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/emergencies or see the 'contact us' section at the end of this Newsletter.



CCPB staff Left to Right: John Ross, Mary Ann Mallon, John Murphy, Judith Brown, Keith Jagelman, Julie Cuming, David Skelton, Chris Allen.

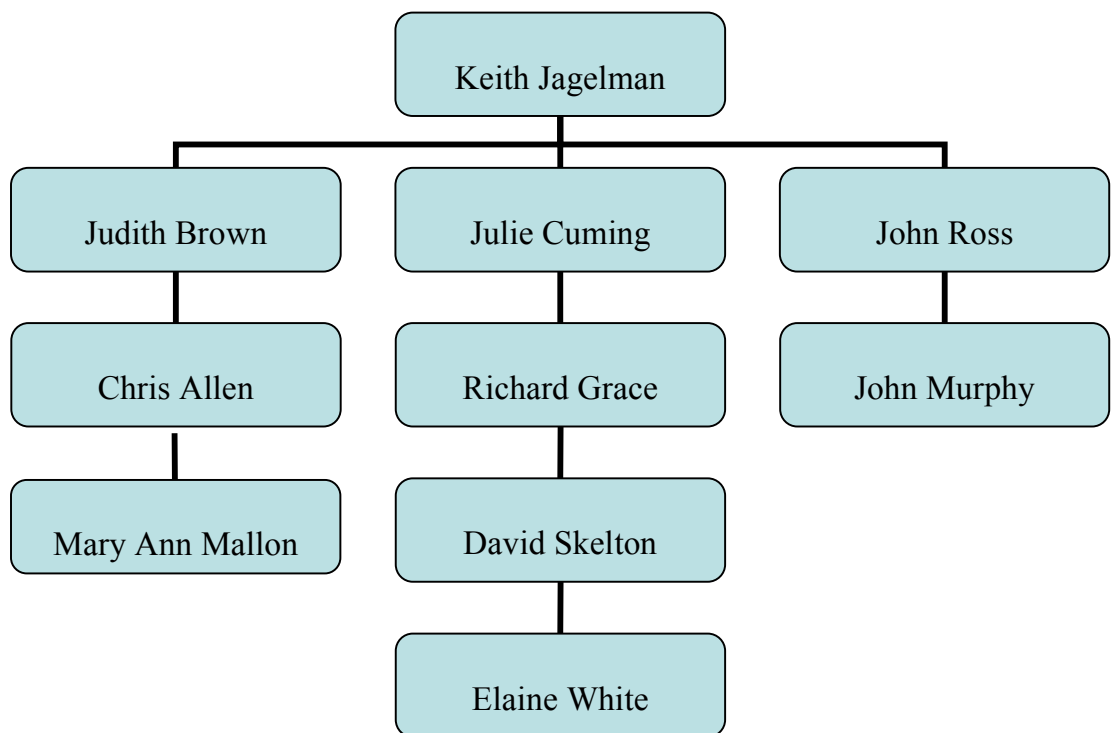
Below is an organisational chart for the Branch along with the key subject areas for each of the work groups. Some of the current issues for the Branch include:

- Promoting and facilitating cross-cutting planning for some key risks as identified in the National Risk Register (see below), including pandemic influenza;
- Overseeing the Flooding Improvement Plan following the August 2008 flooding;
- Completing an upgrade of the central crisis management suite and provision of appropriate familiarisation and training for personnel likely to be involved;

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- Liaising with the Cabinet Office to represent Northern Ireland interests on a range of topics to contribute to the development of UK strategy and policy and to ensure that Northern Ireland organisations are kept informed of relevant UK level civil contingencies activities;
- Facilitating a better understanding of risk on a cross-cutting basis through the work of the Risk Assessment Sub-group on a Northern Ireland risk assessment.

Organisation Chart for Civil Contingencies Policy Branch



- Pandemic Flu
- Management of Pandemic Fatalities
- Pandemic Influenza Exercises
- Regional Risk Assessment
- Humanitarian Assistance
- Recovery
- Infectious diseases
- Communication strategy
- Training strategy
- Exercise co-ordination
- Coastguard and Maritime issues

- NI Central Crisis Management Arrangements
- Continuity of Government
- RPA and Local Resilience
- Flooding and severe weather
- Animal & Plant diseases
- Local government issues
- Policing issues
- Military liaison
- Branch Management: Finance, Business Plan monitoring, FOI, EDRMS, File Review, AQs, correspondence cases, Branch Business Continuity, general departmental returns

- CBRN/NITAG
- RGHQ
- Food and Fuel supply issues
- Money supply issues
- Water supply issues
- CCG(NI) organisation
- Cabinet Office liaison
- North/South contact
- Resilient communications policy
- EU issues
- Ports & Airports
- NI Oil Industry Emergency Committee

Civil Contingencies Latest News

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

Boston College Crisis and Emergency Management Study, 3-13 November 2008

Judith Brown reports on her experience of the Crisis and Emergency Management study hosted by the Irish Institute at Boston College.

The Irish Institute at Boston College in Massachusetts, USA, hosts professional development themed programmes in policy areas such as government, non-profit, business, and education throughout the year. Program participants, mainly professionals, officials, and policymakers from Ireland and Northern Ireland meet with their American colleagues in Boston and elsewhere in the United States to share knowledge and best practice and build relationships and networks which will have long-term benefit for public policy and practice on the Island of Ireland. In November 2008 the study topic was Crisis and Emergency Management and I was a member of a team of 15 people from the emergency services, central government and local government in Ireland and Northern Ireland which travelled to Boston on the eve of the presidential election.

A full programme of visits was arranged in and around Boston for the first week of the study, including a tour of Boston College itself and visits to senior emergency services officers and emergency planners at municipality, city, state and federal levels. All of these people were generous with their time and knowledge and the group were able to compare policies, equipment and operational arrangements with their own. Particularly interesting were the crisis management centres which have been upgraded in recent years.

For the second week of the study the party moved to Oklahoma City to study crisis and emergency management in an area with a more dispersed population and regular experience of severe weather conditions, particularly flooding and tornados. A highlight of the visit was the Oklahoma City National Memorial to the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 in which 168 people were killed. Again, in Oklahoma City and in the neighbouring municipality of Norman, state and city officials gave freely of their time to discuss their preparations for and response to emergencies. The professionalism of those involved in the emergency services and emergency management organisations and the facilities and equipment they maintained were impressive.

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The Study Group at the National Weather Center, Norman, Oklahoma.



Some of the key learning points which I took away from the study were:

- Understanding risks and ensuring that planning takes account of these.
- Understanding in detail the secondary impacts of emergencies, such as the many welfare needs of evacuees, and planning flexibly to meet these.
- The importance of multi-agency crisis management arrangements for managing large emergencies.
- Understanding that different levels of government can make different contributions to the management of and response to an emergency. The detail varies according to different models of government.
- Different means of working across levels of government in an emergency, including virtual meetings and web-based information sharing.

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A particular treat was to be in Boston – a city with a passion for politics – for the Presidential election, to see the announcement of the outcome live on TV and to hear people from all walks of life talking about their perspectives on an historic occasion.

For more information on the study programmes run by the Irish Institute at Boston College see <http://www.bc.edu/centers/irish/institute/>.

If you would like to know more about the Crisis and Emergency Management Study contact Judith Brown at judith.brown@ofmdfmi.gov.uk.

New Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100

Northern Ireland's new flooding incident line provides the citizen with a single number to report serious flooding.

No longer will the public have to decide which of the three flooding response agencies to call.

By ringing **0300 2000 100** callers will get through to someone who will log their call and pass the information to the relevant agency. Calls will not be redirected, nor will callers be given other numbers to call. The line is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and all calls are at local rates.

Tall Ships Come to Town

This year sees the return of the Tall Ships to Belfast when the Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge race finishes in August.

Up to 30 Tall Ships (including the larger Class A vessels) will be in-port between the 13th and 16th of August to join in with the end of race festivities.

When Belfast last hosted the race in 1991, around 400,000 visitors came to Pollock Dock. This year the event will be based over a larger footprint around the Queen's Quay, Donegall Quay and Albert Quay areas.

There will be plenty of activities for visitors along the quayside, with fun, food and plenty of excitement as well as access to the Tall ships themselves. Activities will showcase music, street theatre, fireworks display and a variety of magical performances for the whole family to enjoy. Similar numbers of visitors will be expected over the 4 days that the event will run.

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A management company, Belfast Tall Ships 2009 Ltd, overseen by Belfast City Council and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners has been set up to deliver what will be Belfast's biggest event of the year.

The technical aspects of the event are being planned and organised through a Technical Committee, chaired by the port's Operations Director. Sub-groups are meeting to develop work in the areas of Port Infrastructure, Transport, Traffic Management, Volunteer Recruitment, Public Safety, Logistics and Communications.

The Public Safety group will be responsible in delivering a detailed contingency plan. Initial work on the plan is underway, and a Maritime and Coastguard Agency sponsored exercise took place on 25 March to consider the marine aspects of the event. The actions arising from the exercise along with completed event risk assessments will form the basis for the development of the plan.

The Harbour working group of the Belfast Resilience Forum has been re-structured to facilitate the drafting of the plan. The Plan, due for completion in June, will then be validated by a control post exercise to train those who will have co-ordination roles for the event in August.

Crisis Management Facilities

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch has recently completed work on an upgraded Crisis Management Suite for the use of the Crisis Management Group and associated committees/structures in an emergency which affects all of Northern Ireland and requires strategic management at central government level. The Suite makes use of conference rooms in Castle Buildings on the Stormont Estate, Belfast. These can be quickly converted for use by the central crisis management machinery when an emergency has occurred or is imminent.

The Suite includes a meeting room for the use of the Crisis Management Group (CMG) and/or Civil Contingencies Group NI (CCG(NI)); a room for support staff; and a secondary conference/office space for a technical advisory group if required (for example if the emergency involved the release of a dangerous chemical). A Central Operations Room would also be established in the office suite which normally houses the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch.

All of the rooms in the Suite are fully supplied with ICT equipment, including laptop computers with e-mail, messaging, internet, and mapping applications; telephones; video-conference equipment and a smartboard for displaying and managing geographical and other information. Significant work has been undertaken in Castle Buildings to provide cabling and data and phone points for all of the ICT equipment, thus making the suite flexible and robust.

Following final testing of the Suite by Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, familiarisation training is currently being provided for those organisations which would send representatives during an

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emergency. This is part of an ongoing project led by OFMDFM to ensure that central crisis management arrangements for Northern Ireland are effective.

The CMG/CCG(NI) Room set up for a meeting



For further information on the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements, please contact Julie Cuming on julie.cuming@ofmdfmi.gov.uk.

Website watch

As part of a programme to rationalise government websites the UK Resilience and the Emergency Planning College websites have been moved to the Cabinet Office website. The content and look of the two sites will not change. The new addresses are:

- www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx
- www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/epcollege.aspx

Those with an interest in civil contingencies issues should keep a regular watch on the UK Resilience website where latest information is regularly posted. For at least the next six months people who use the old address will be automatically redirected to the new site, but if

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you have the old address bookmarked on your system you may want to amend the bookmark now to avoid problems in the future.

The 'Preparing for Emergencies' website which gives advice to the public has moved to the DirectGov site. The core content of the site has not changed but there have been changes to the structure and presentation to make it consistent with the DirectGov style and make it more user-friendly. The new address is:

- www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies

The CCPB website at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/emergencies is kept up-to-date with background information on the Branch and its activities, items of interest, and NI publications. If there are specific features which you would like to see in the future on this website, please contact us.

Information on civil contingencies in Scotland can be found at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/emergencies>.

News from the NI Departments

Exercises

EXERCISE HARBOUR HIGHWAY - DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

On the 25 January 2009 the Department of the Environment (DOE) carried out a desktop exercise to specifically test the resilience of its alternative emergency operations room located in the Driver and Vehicle Testing Centre at Ballymena. Key to the exercise was the testing of a recently installed generator considered essential at the location to provide a back up power supply in the event of electricity supply being lost.

The scenario – developed with the assistance of colleagues from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency – envisaged an incident taking place on Monday 26 January during the morning rush hour. It involved a lorry which had arrived on the 0415 sailing from Cairnryan in Scotland overturning just outside Larne, shedding its load. The lorry was known to be carrying radioactive material and oil supplies bound for an oil rig off the west coast of Co. Donegal. Based on this information the scenario required action by a number of DOE business areas, Larne District Council and DRD Roads Service. It was acknowledged that the involvement of Fire and Rescue Service, PSNI and Ambulance Service would be critical in a real emergency of this nature. However, given the key objective of the exercise was to test the alternative operations room, it was decided not to request these and other relevant organisations to play. The exercise ran in real time over a two and a half hour period involving the activation of the Department's Major Emergency response Plan (MERP). Colleagues from DOE and Larne

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District Council acted out various roles as the exercise was played and this was observed by DOE colleagues who will be providing a report of their observations and recommendations to the Department's Emergency Management Steering Group.

EXERCISE REFLEX - DEPARTMENT FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

"Oil lorry skids on Westlink"; "Collapse of Belfast Sewer"; "Train with 34 passengers stuck in snowdrift" - these were some of the issues which the Department for Regional Development (DRD) Central Management Branch had to deal with on just one nightmare day in February in liaison with the Department's Emergency Planning Officers, as part of "Exercise Reflex".

Exercise Reflex was a tabletop exercise to test the communication protocols of the Department's Major Emergency Response Plan (MERP) in order to ensure the timely and accurate flow of information during a major emergency.

The fictitious scenario centred on a severe and prolonged snow event. Roads Service and Ports and Public Transport Division reported on the major transportation and service disruptions and problems which would have been faced in such a situation. Central Management Branch, with volunteers from across the Department, set up an operations room to gather information and to regularly update the media, the Crisis Management Group and the Department's top team on the changing situation. As part of the exercise, computer systems and phone lines went down - a further test of staff resourcefulness and contingency arrangements.

An observer from Civil Contingencies Policy Branch, OFMDFM, was present throughout the exercise and provided some valuable feedback. Overall, the tabletop exercise was considered to have been useful in familiarising staff in their roles and responsibilities in an emergency. The MERP is being revised to reflect some of the useful learning points gleaned from the exercise.

News from the Cabinet Office

National Risk Register

On 8 August 2008 the Cabinet Office published the National Risk Register, which sets out their assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different risks that may directly affect the UK.

The National Risk Register is designed to increase awareness of the kinds of risks the UK faces, and encourage individuals and organisations to think about their own preparedness. The register also includes details of what the Government and emergency services are doing to prepare for emergencies.

The National Risk Register can be accessed at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/national_risk_register.aspx.

Business Continuity Management for Fuel Shortages

During the summer of 2008 there were two, mainly localised, disruptions to fuel supplies in GB following industrial action by workers in the energy sector. Although these particular disruptions were for only relatively short periods of time and did not affect Northern Ireland, this highlighted for many organisations the potential impact of a more significant fuel supply problem.

Following events over the summer, and results of the 2008 National Capabilities Survey suggesting that organisations would find it difficult to deliver their critical activities in the event of a disruption of oil and fuel supplies over a period of ten days, the Cabinet Office and the Department of Energy and Climate Change have produced some short guidance to assist organisations in planning for such disruptions. The guidance - Business Continuity Management for Fuel Shortages - is intended to sit alongside other business continuity management tools and assist organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors in planning for and managing the consequences of a disruption to fuel supplies.

The guidance explains the benefits of effective business continuity management, the possible impact on an organisation of a disruption to fuel supplies and suggests issues and activities that organisations might usefully consider when planning for such a disruption.

A copy of the guidance can be found at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/news/bcp_fuelshortage.aspx.

Review of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) brought into being a single statutory and regulatory framework for civil protection in the UK. When the CCA was enacted, there was an explicit intention to review it within three years. Given the range of disruptive challenges that have occurred in the intervening years, and the subsequent inquiries such as the Pitt Review, it has been decided that the CCA Enhancement Programme will be established to take this review forward.

The objectives of the CCAEP are as follows:

- Assess whether there are aspects of the CCA where original intentions are not being met and develop solutions where these are needed.

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- Consider whether the CCA regime needs to be modified to reflect relevant experience and changes in relevant structures which have emerged since 2004.
- Consider how to reflect good practice in the CCA regime to help raise the standards of UK resilience activity.
- Evaluate whether the scope of the CCA should be broadened beyond emergency preparedness to cover other aspects of integrated emergency management.
- Ensure that the CCA framework is effectively aligned and integrated with relevant legislation and policy initiatives.

These objectives are to be met via a range of projects, organised into a four phase programme, with delivery ongoing over the next three years.

Further information on the CCA Enhancement Programme can be found at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/news/ccact_enhancement_programme.aspx.

Regional Level Civil Contingencies Groups

CCPB facilitates a number of multi-agency civil contingencies groups at Northern Ireland level. Some recent updates are provided here.

Civil Contingencies Group NI (CCG(NI))

The CCG(NI) last met on 27 January 2009. Updates were provided on the various civil contingencies workstreams. A number of papers were circulated to members and discussed.

These included:

- A paper proposing the process for updating the NI Risk Assessment, including reconvening the Risk Assessment Sub-group.
- A paper introducing the "Pandemic Influenza: A Strategic Framework for Northern Ireland" draft document.
- A paper outlining the allocation of fuel permits for the DETI-led Priority Use Scheme.

CCG(NI) is expected to meet again before the end of May. For further information on any of the above items please contact CCPB staff.

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. These include:

Pandemic Influenza Sub-group

The Pandemic Influenza Sub-group meets regularly to consider cross-cutting Pandemic Influenza planning for the public sector in Northern Ireland. Subjects considered in recent months include:

- Provision of support to the social care sector during a Pandemic.
- Situation reporting and information flows.
- Northern Ireland strategic management arrangements for a Pandemic.

The Sub-group has also considered how policy at UK level on a number of Pandemic related issues would apply to Northern Ireland.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) issued a revised Northern Ireland Contingency Plan for Health Response for an Influenza Pandemic on 25 November 2008. This document was accompanied by a range of supporting guidance to assist pandemic planning in: acute hospitals; mental health services; social care; and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service. This guidance will be revised and further guidance issued as Pandemic Influenza preparedness in the health sector develops at operational planning level. Further guidance is in preparation.

The Department also continues to stockpile a range of medical countermeasures necessary to mitigate the effects of a Pandemic, the most significant recent development being the doubling of the current antiviral stockpile to cover 50% of the population.

Further information, and all DHSSPS Pandemic Influenza guidance, can be accessed at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/php/infectious_diseases/pandemicflu.htm.

For further information on Pandemic Influenza planning please contact Judith Brown on judith.brown@ofmdfmi.gov.uk.

Pandemic Fatalities Management Sub-group

The Pandemic Fatalities Management Sub-group meets to discuss cross-cutting planning for Pandemic Influenza related deaths. The key organisations involved in deaths processes are represented on the Sub-group. Subjects covered in recent months include:

- Managing referrals to the Coroner.
- Managing funeral director processes and burials.
- Business continuity and resilience-building measures for Registrars.

For further information on planning to manage Pandemic fatalities please contact Judith Brown on judith.brown@ofmdfmi.gov.uk

CBRN Steering Group (Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear)

The CBRN Steering Group met on 20 January. Members received a presentation on progress towards the development of a site-specific plan for Belfast. The stock-take review report was also discussed, and it was agreed that the Group would put together a formal response to the recommendations contained in the report.

The Steering Group hopes to meet again during May.

Regional Risk Assessment Sub-group

At a recent meeting of the CCG(NI) it was agreed that the Northern Ireland Regional Risk Assessment Sub-group should be re-convened to review and refresh our understanding of hazards facing Northern Ireland. The Sub-group is made up of representatives of key public services, including government departments, emergency services and district councils. This provides a cross-sectoral view of wide-ranging impacts of risk and permits the risks associated with hazards of different sorts to be assessed relative to each other. This knowledge enables individual organisations to target their civil contingencies efforts at the most important and relevant risks and highlights where cross-cutting action is required to reduce the likelihood of emergencies and increase our capacity to respond effectively to them.

Further information on risk assessment in the UK can be found on the Cabinet Office website at www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/national_risk_register.aspx.

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Civil Contingencies Training

Training for Northern Ireland Departments

The Centre for Applied Learning (CAL) provides training for the Northern Ireland Civil Service on a wide range of subjects. One course provided by CAL which is relevant to all involved in emergency planning is 'Business Continuity Management' which will run on 15 May and 16 June. Further information can be obtained on the CAL website at <http://nical.nigov.net/>.

Emergency Planning College

The Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College continues to offer a wide range of Civil Contingencies courses in Northern Ireland. Further information can be obtained from the College website at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/epcollege/training/ni_courses.aspx.

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