

Preparing for an emergency in the community

Guidance on developing a community
emergency plan for **community groups**

working in
partnership with

LRF

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire
Local Resilience Forum



Emergencies should be reported to the relevant **Emergency Service on 999**

If you need to contact **Nottinghamshire County Council** in the event of a serious emergency please telephone:

0115 977 3674

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Introduction

An emergency can have a significant effect on a community.

An emergency could impact on a community in a number of ways, including:

- Death or injury of people
- Loss or damage to homes, businesses, community buildings
- Disruption to road, rail, or air transport networks
- Disruption to electricity, telephone, water or gas networks
- Supply of goods and services
- Isolation or evacuation of residents
- Large scale media focus

In extreme conditions such as heavy snow and flooding, there is a possibility that the emergency services may not be able to reach the scene immediately. In such circumstances, the initial response may rely entirely on local people. A Community Emergency Plan can help a community prepare for an emergency and reduce its impact.

Communities may know about particular hazards and problems that affect an area, know about individuals who would need additional or specific assistance in an emergency, and have access to people, resources or buildings that allow them to respond to specific incidents.

Definition of a Community

For the purposes of Community Emergency Planning, there are two types of community – one based on geographic location e.g. neighbourhoods, villages, parishes, towns etc and another that recognises people who share a common interest regardless of where they live e.g. faith groups and communities, voluntary groups, local sports clubs or associations etc.

The aim of this guidance and accompanying plan template is to help community groups plan for emergencies in order to provide support to each other during an emergency, particularly those that may be vulnerable, and to provide information to responding agencies (emergency services, local authority etc) who may be coordinating the response on a wider scale.

Definition of an Emergency

For the purposes of Community Emergency Planning, an emergency can be defined as an event or situation, which threatens serious damage to:

Human welfare – but only if it involves, causes or may cause loss of human life, human illness or injury, homelessness, damage to property, disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel, disruption of a system of communication, disruption of facilities for transport or disruption of services relating to health.

The Environment – but only if it involves causes or may cause contamination of land, water or air with harmful biological, chemical or radioactive matter, or disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life.

Security of the UK – if it involves war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

Definition of a Major Incident

A major incident is any incident that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, some elements of the National Health Service, or a local authority for:

- The initial treatment, rescue and transport of a large number of casualties;
- The involvement either directly or indirectly of large numbers of people;
- The handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated from both the public and news media usually to the police;
- The large scale combined resources of two or more of the emergency services;
- The mobilisation and organisation of the emergency services and supporting organisations, for example, local authority, to cater for threat of death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people.

Roles and Responsibilities

All major emergencies are dealt with by the Emergency Services, Local Authorities, Health Agencies, Utility Companies and Voluntary Agencies in a combined response. In Nottinghamshire these agencies work together, as the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF), to produce and test a variety of emergency plans and procedures.

There is no statutory responsibility for community groups or respond to, emergencies in their locality. However it is good practice for communities to identify hazards and make simple plans on how they may assist the agencies above should an emergency occur. This guidance and plan template does not place any formal requirement on any group to make emergency plans. Any participation is purely voluntary.

It should also be recognised that Community Groups are not an emergency service. They will not be trained, equipped, empowered or resourced to carry out the functions of an emergency service. The response should generally be confined to looking after the welfare of people in the community or helping to maintain the infrastructure.

The information contained in this document is for guidance only. The community organisation acknowledges that Nottinghamshire County Council shall not have any liability, either under this Guidance or otherwise, in respect of the provision of services or for any actions or omissions by the group/organisation in any emergency situation. The suitability of the application of the Guidance by the group/organisation to perform the services shall be entirely for the group/organisation to determine. This Guidance does not constitute legal advice in relation to emergency planning.

What do we need to plan for?

There are numerous hazards and risks that can have an impact on a community, such as fire, severe weather, flooding, industrial accidents, transport accidents, flu pandemic etc. The LRF develops and maintains a number of emergency plans that can be used to respond to such emergencies. However, developing the ability to help each other at a local level will assist if the emergency services are overloaded in the initial response. It could also lessen the impact of the emergency on the community.

What should a plan include?

A Community Emergency Plan should aim to include information and contacts that will:

- Provide a co-ordinated response from the local community
- Identify key contacts and resources within the locality that may assist the emergency services and the local authority
- Assist the emergency services in identifying an initial place of safety for residents should an evacuation of properties be necessary
- Identify the location(s) of vulnerable groups of people that may require additional assistance e.g. schools, special schools, special homes, care in the community hostels and residential homes
- Identify local hazards within the community
- Assist in keeping residents within the parish informed of the situation.

You may also wish to supplement plans with geographical maps of the local area.

Nottinghamshire County Council has produced a plan template that will aid Communities to develop their own community emergency plan. The template is not intended to be prescriptive and can be amended as necessary to suit the needs of a particular community.

Individuals with a specific role highlighted in the plan should be well briefed.

The plan should be reviewed regularly (preferably on an annual basis) in light of possible changes within the community and changes to any risks.

Identifying those that are vulnerable or at most risk

Cabinet Office guidance defines vulnerable people as those 'that are less able to help themselves in the circumstances of an emergency'. The agencies mentioned previously (Emergency Services, Local Authorities, Health Agencies, Utility Companies and Voluntary Agencies) will hold information on many groups and individuals who may be defined as 'vulnerable' and will utilise this information during an emergency.

There will be others who, for a variety of reasons, are more difficult to identify – such as those who live in the community as individuals, visitors to the area or the homeless. Your community emergency plan could help the responding agencies identify more quickly those that may potentially be at more risk.

Role of Emergency Coordinator/Team

An emergency coordinator should be nominated to develop the plan. The emergency coordinator should:

- Live locally and have a good knowledge of the geographical area and the groups and individuals that live and work there
- Have the backing of their group to represent their community
- Be willing to speak on behalf of the community

The emergency coordinator should perform the following roles:

- Develop, test, review and maintain the Community Emergency Plan
- Where possible identify a small team of people from the community that could assist in developing the plan and in responding to an emergency
- Identify a suitable location for those involved in coordinating the response to meet if necessary
- Identify vulnerable groups or individuals that might be at more risk during an emergency
- Provide a link between the local community and Emergency Services and Local Authority
- Activate the emergency plan on notification of an emergency incident and stand down those involved in the response when appropriate or directed to do so by the emergency services/local authority
- Coordinate the work of volunteers as outlined in Appendix 1 'Working with Volunteers'
- Shortly after a response, conduct a debrief with those involved to capture any lessons from the emergency/incident that would improve a future response (NCC can provide further guidance on debriefing if necessary)

In a response to any incident those involved should always be aware of their own Health and Safety and that of others. The Emergency Team should be easily identifiable to both the public and emergency services.

Where can I go for further information?

Useful websites:

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire LRF	www.nottsprepared.gov.uk
Nottinghamshire County Council	www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk
UK Resilience	www.ukresilience.gov.uk
Preparing for Emergencies	www.pfe.gov.uk
Environment Agency	www.environment-agency.gov.uk
Nottinghamshire Police	www.nottinghamshire.police.uk
Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue	www.notts-fire.gov.uk
Met Office	www.metoffice.gov.uk
Advice for businesses on business continuity	www.nottsprepared.gov.uk/np_home/np_for_business

If you have any further queries then please contact the Nottinghamshire County Council Emergency Planning Team on our general office number - 0115 977 3471 – or by emailing emergency.planning@nottsc.gov.uk

Guidance for Emergency Workers

1. Introduction:

During an emergency in the community it is possible that volunteers may be requested by the Town Council, Parish Council, Emergency Services or Local Authority to perform an activity to support those affected by the incident in order to bring it to a safe and successful conclusion.

The type of request will vary depending on the nature of the emergency which will have an effect on the choice of volunteer and plant / equipment being used.

2. Management of Requests:

It is vitally important that a request for volunteers to supply equipment or services is managed.

Best practice includes the following:

- the activity is risk assessed and actions necessary to bring a safe conclusion are identified.
- the person or persons are competent and trained to carry out the task requested.
- the appropriate personal protective equipment is available and used.
- that any equipment or plant used is fit for purpose.
- that any equipment or plant deployed is used for the purpose it is designed.
- that all reasonable precautions are taken and that a process or procedure is agreed and recorded before any action takes place.
- that any alteration to the process is agreed and recorded before deviation takes place.
- that the volunteer is thoroughly briefed before action takes place.
- that the volunteer is supervised as appropriate during delivering the request.

In order to fulfil these criteria the key persons should meet to agree the process to ensure that the volunteer and / or members of the community affected by the emergency are not placed at risk.

3. Indemnity and Insurance:

Should an accident occur whilst the volunteer is delivering the request, and depending on the circumstances, third party liability may be apportioned to an individual or organisation?

Indemnity and the need to have insurance covering third party liability is a complex subject which will therefore require careful consideration at the planning and operational stages of an emergency.

Following an accident it is likely that an investigation will take place to identify the reasons behind the accident and it is possible those liable, or partially liable, will be identified which may include:

- the volunteer
- the person or organisation making the request.
- a combination of each
- another party

Liability costs may then be apportioned to the individual or organisation responsible.

Procuring insurance is a method of preparing to meet the costs of liability and if a person or organisation does not have insurance or sufficient insurance cover they will have to meet the costs by other means. By not having insurance does not mean that responsibility is relinquished.

The result of any investigation by the insurance companies will decide who is liable whether they are insured or not.

NCC has liability insurance coverage which protects NCC, its employees, its own volunteers etc where the authority is negligent. Such cover does not include the liability of other organisations/their staff/their volunteers etc. It is NCC's expectation that all other organisations will have appropriate insurances which will include Public Liability with a limit of indemnity of not less than £5M. (NCC Insurance Officer)

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Use of Plant / Equipment:

If plant or equipment is used for an activity that it is not designed for and that equipment is insurable then the volunteer is advised to check with their insurers that it is satisfactory to deploy that equipment for the use identified.



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published

January 2010



Nottinghamshire
County Council

