



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 6 July 2009

Subject : COMAH EXERCISE 'NE-OX' - SHASUN PHARMA SOLUTIONS LTD

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform committee members of the COMAH (Control of Major Accidents Hazards Regulations 1999) exercise carried out at Shasun Pharma Solutions Ltd at Cramlington in March 2009.
- 1.2 The duty to write specific 'off-site' emergency plans for industrial sites that fall under the COMAH 'top-tier' regulations lies with the Fire and Rescue Authority. This duty is discharged by the Emergency Planning Unit (EPU). One of the requirements of the COMAH regulations is that an off site emergency plan must be prepared and tested for any sites deemed by the 'Competent Authority' (ie the Health and Safety Executive and the Environment Agency) to have major accident potential.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In accordance with the requirements of the 'Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999', testing of off site emergency plans is required under the regulations to demonstrate that they are accurate, complete and practicable. Exercising of each plan is statutorily required every three years.
- 2.2 Currently there are eight off site emergency plans in place covering seven top tier COMAH sites in Tyne and Wear (one site in Sunderland is a split site requiring two separate plans to be maintained) to which the above regulations apply,
- 2.3 The aim of this exercise was to test and validate the Offsite Emergency Plan for Shasun Pharma Solutions Ltd, which included the testing of a multi agency response and the integration of agency plans into the offsite planning process.
- 2.4 The main objectives were to:
 - Establish relationships between all agencies involved during the initial stages of a potential accident

- Promote exchange of information and understanding of roles between participants
- Encourage cooperation between each organisation
- Increase the awareness of all parties of the Local Authority, and Voluntary sector assistance available to support an incident
- To address the inter-action and relationship between the major incident plans of the Emergency Services, Local Authority and all other involved agencies
- To promote a unified, coordinated approach in response to media demands
- To assess the practicalities for the recovery phase and business continuity issues.

3. EXERCISE 'NE-OX'

3.1 Exercise 'Ne-ox' was planned, coordinated and facilitated by the EPU and relevant partner organisations. It was held over two days (ie 17th and 18th March 2009). The first day was attended by representatives from the emergency services and Shasun Pharma Ltd. The second day was attended by representatives from the Local Authority, the police, health agencies and Shasun Pharma Ltd.

3.2 A scenario was presented to attendees, based on a leak of a hazardous substance from a tanker. This gave all agencies the opportunity to identify their responsibilities and actions they would take in such a situation, and how their actions would be coordinated. The exercise also explored a wide range of aspects including:

- Alerting procedures
- Communication arrangements between the agencies
- Establishment of cordons
- Warning and informing the public
- Dealing with casualties
- Identifying and dealing with Vulnerable people
- Public health issues
- Media arrangements
- Decontamination arrangements
- The potential wider implications of the event

3.3 Following the exercise a comprehensive evaluation was undertaken, to determine how future sessions could be enhanced and improved. Feedback from participants was very positive with an overall view that the exercise was successful and productive in that:

- The aim of the exercise was achieved
- The exercise proved professionally relevant to participants; and
- There were a number of issues to be taken forward as a result of the exercise.

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Control of Major Hazard Regulations 1999: Exercise NE-OX Evaluation Report