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

***Committee Report***

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**Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 12 OCTOBER 2009**

**Subject : RESILIENT TELECOMMUNICATIONS - UPDATE**

***Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer***

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update on the Mobile Telecommunications Privileged Access Scheme (MTPAS) and the National Resilience Extranet (NRE)

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 Telecommunications are fundamental in the effective response to any emergency. Experience during a number of recent emergencies showed that communications could be disrupted and that emergency planning needs to take this into account.

2.2 The Government's strategy for enhancing the resilience of responding agencies' communications comprises of four main themes:

- Working with providers and responders to enhance the resilience of every-day commercially available telecommunications
- Improving the management, take-up and resilience of privileged telecommunications schemes that are only accessible to emergency responders
- Delivering a high integrity telecommunications system providing connectivity and services between key responder sites at the national, regional and local level and
- Delivering a means for securely sharing information between all local regional and national responders both in preparing for and in response to an emergency.

2.3 This report provides an update on two of the initiatives intended to improve resilient telecommunications.

**3. RESILIENT MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS PRIVILEGED ACCESS SCHEME (MTPAS)**

3.1 Mobile Telephone networks can become overwhelmed by a large concentration of calls that often occur at the time of a major incident.

Access to the mobile networks when large numbers of calls are being made is achieved by installing a special SIM card into the mobile telephone.

3.2 These special SIM cards are only available to entitled users who have a response role in the event of an emergency, and organisations meeting the entitlement criteria for this scheme include:

- Category 1 and 2 responders as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act (including emergency services and local authorities)
- Partner organisations who have requirement to be in communication with Category 1 responders when providing a front line response role, including the voluntary sector
- Central Government departments
- Public bodies with a defined national security role.

3.3 The Cabinet Office has been working to enhance the resilience of telecommunications, and reviewed the arrangements for entitlement to the scheme. This new scheme for mobile telecommunications is called Mobile Telecommunications Privileged Access Scheme (MTPAS), and became operational from September 2009. It replaces the Access Overload Control (ACCOLC) system for managing mobile privileged access.

3.4 Applications to the Cabinet Office for registration were coordinated by the LRF Telecommunications Sub Group, which is currently chaired by Sunderland City Council.

#### **4 NATIONAL RESILIENCE EXTRANET (NRE)**

4.1 The National Resilience Extranet is a strand of the Cabinet Office Resilient Telecommunications Strategy designed to enhance the resilience of responding organisation's communications, and is now planned to go live in January 2010.

4.2 It is a secure web based tool that will enable responding organisations to have access to key information that will help them to plan for, and manage emergencies in a more joined-up and consistent way. It will allow the transfer of sensitive information up to 'RESTRICTED' level, and interchange of messages up to this level of security with other services and Government offices who have this capability

4.3 The system will also provide access to centrally stored information, including templates and good practice guidance. The purpose of the Extranet is to support collaboration between partners locally, regionally and with central government.

4.4 The Cabinet Office held local briefings in July 2009 at the British Telecom premises in Gateshead to explain the capabilities of the system. These briefings were well attended by delegates from a wide range of agencies from the North East region.

4.5 The service is available only to approved organisations on a subscription basis, with three levels of option available. These are likely to be:

- The Collaboration package- £85.00 per annum
  - Emergency information package- £365.00 to £402.50 per annum depending upon number of users
  - Geographic Information System- £500.00 to £1500.00 depending upon the specific package chosen
- 4.6 At the last meeting of the LRF members were strongly recommended to consider subscribing to at least the Collaboration package. Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue service and the EPU are currently evaluating their requirements for this capability.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 These initiatives will enable organisations to both plan, and respond to emergencies effectively, by providing an effective means of communication through the MTPAS scheme, and access to a wide range of useful information through the NRE.
- 5.2 It is clearly important that LRF members should subscribe to the NRE (collaboration package) in order that effective communications with partners can be maintained in future, and in particular to ensure that any sensitive information can be shared safely and securely. The CEPO considers it essential that TWEPU should subscribe to the NRE, and members endorsement of this recommendation is requested.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are asked to:

- a) note this report.
  - b) Agree that TWEPU should participate in the NRE
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## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- i) National Resilience Extranet (NRE)  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/resilient\\_telecommunications/govt\\_strategy/strand4/nre\\_about.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/resilient_telecommunications/govt_strategy/strand4/nre_about.aspx)
- ii) Northumbria LRF Telecommunications Sub Group report 'Resilient Telecommunications Update' 16 September 2009
- iii) Mobile telecommunications Privileged Access Scheme (MTPAS)  
[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/resilient\\_telecommunications/enhancing/mtpas.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/resilient_telecommunications/enhancing/mtpas.aspx)