



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

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 25 OCTOBER 2010

Subject : EMERGENCY PLANNING SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2010

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This year's Emergency Planning Society's (EPS) Annual Conference and Exhibition was held at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow on 21st-23 June 2010.
- 1.2 The Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority was represented by Councillor David Charlton, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer and the Deputy Chief Emergency Planning Officer. The Head of Resilience Planning from Newcastle City Council also attended.
- 1.3 The conference focused on the key challenges in the field of Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, and consisted of a series of presentations and workshops.
- 1.4 Running alongside the Conference was an exhibition with specialist companies displaying the latest equipment and services designed to provide the resources required in responding to modern day threats.

2 KEY PRESENTATIONS

- 2.1 Delegates heard from a wide range of speakers including:
 - Opening Address by Kenny MacAskill MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Justice
 - A Snapshot on the Future of UK Resilience by Christina Scott, Director of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office

The conference covered the following themes:

- Keynote Address 'Are We Ready for the Next Disaster';
- Session One – 'The Ghost of Futures Past'
- Session Two – 'Herding Cats? Cooperation and Coordination in Present Day Emergencies'
- Session Three – 'Critical National Infrastructure – How Resilient is our Future?'
- Session Four – 'Watch This "Space" – The Power of Mother Nature'

3 **SNAPSHOT ON THE FUTURE OF UK RESILIENCE**

3.1 **Christina Scott** is the recently appointed Director of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat at the Cabinet Office. The aim of her presentation was to brief delegates about recent changes following the creation of the Coalition Government. The key points were:

- A new National Security Council had been established and was being led by Sir Peter Ricketts;
- A new national security strategy was being prepared for possible release in the autumn of 2010 and the key document to look out for was the Strategic Defence and Security Review;
- The new Government had highlighted cyber and energy security as key issues to address;
- The National Risk Register (around which local plans and arrangements are based) would remain unchanged but themes within it would become more focussed with an all hazards approach;
- There was a need to ensure consistently good performance across responding organisations which required further consideration nationally.
- Government indicated that there was a need to focus on our capacities to deal with emergencies within a Protect and Prepare theme;
- Government had indicated a wish to involve communities in building capacities in terms of their own safety and security. This supports the Big Society initiative and the current work being undertaken on Community Resilience; and
- To further embed resilience in supply chains and the private sector, Government recognised that more needed to be done to promote business continuity at a national level.

3.2 Ms Scott highlighted the need for changes in order to deliver refreshed objectives which included a more structured military contribution to homeland security, national standards within and between organisations, particularly emergency services, to improve technical process interoperability and the possibility of a National Resilience Team to remove duplication and produce efficiencies.

3.3 Ms Scott also acknowledged the current economic climate in her presentation and emphasised the need for 'smarter' working to increase flexibility and encourage radical ideas and creative solutions. Ms Scott also touched upon the changing performance management landscape in line with the Big Society agenda, although the Comprehensive Spending Review due this autumn would provide more detail about some of these issues. Ms Scott emphasised the need for responders to maintain operational capacity throughout the changes to come.

- 3.4 In talking about the Big Society agenda, Ms Scott mentioned the focus on openness and information sharing and said that reviews would examine the type of information currently not in the public domain. The example that she gave was that the Met Office currently issue 3 day forecasts and warnings to the public and 7 day forecasts and warnings to organisations. Ministers had queried this on the basis that if the information was being produced and was not deemed to be sensitive, then it should be shared with everyone.

4 THE GHOSTS OF FUTURES PAST

- 4.1 **Carole Cameron** is the Director of International Affairs for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is based in the United States. Ms Cameron's keynote address looked at preparedness in general and gave some examples of recent emergencies in the United States. In particular, she noted that the use of technology was becoming increasingly important in delivering important messages to the public about evacuation and emergencies in general. Some of the key initiatives she talked about were:

- The use of social networking sites such as Twitter and Face book to get messages out to varying demographics;
- The use of technology in emergency planning such as GIS mapping;
- Providing more detailed information to the public via the internet before an emergency. Ms Cameron explained how FEMA were posting the locations of Rest and Information Centres in Google Map format on websites so that the public would know where to go during an emergency;
- The increasing use of education in schools and higher education establishments as a means to reach families; and
- A current pilot scheme which used MP3 players with teenagers with pre loaded pop songs and interspersed with messages about how they could help family members during an emergency. So far this had been used in an evacuation shelter situation and proved to be really popular.

- 4.2 **Dr Gerald Rockenschaub MPH** is the Regional Advisor for the Disaster Preparedness and Response Programme for the World Health Organisation (WHO), and is based in the Regional Office for Europe. Dr Rockenschaub described the key functions of the WHO in health emergencies as being the assessment and analysis of health information, coordination and leadership of health agencies in emergencies and identifying gaps in public health systems to mitigate the impacts of some health emergencies in future. Dr Rockenschaub also discussed ongoing events and developments planned for the future, the key points of which are described below:

- A recent outbreak of Polio in parts of Europe had led to a vaccination campaign being undertaken in some European countries. WHO were monitoring the situation as it unfolded.
- In an unconnected initiative, both Poland and Ukraine had participated in being assessed at national levels in order to identify areas where capacity for dealing with health emergencies could be improved.
- Dr Rockenschaub described some recent emergencies which had led to information being collated about extreme weather events and the impacts on public health. A new Public Guidance document was being prepared by the WHO and the Health Protection Agency (HPA).
- Dr Rockenschaub summarised the way forward in the UK as:
 - Adopting an all hazards approach;
 - Conducting exercises and drills;
 - Better cross border collaboration;
 - Strengthening coordination across multi sector partnerships; and
 - More capacity building and sharing practice.

5 COOPERATION AND COORDINATION IN PRESENT DAY EMERGENCIES

5.1 Several presentations took place within this session. These are the key points from each presentation.

5.2 **Kath Hindley**, Deputy Chief Executive for the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), gave a presentation on the current situation in Haiti following a devastating earthquake in January 2010.

- At the time of the presentation, the death toll stood at 230,000 people, with a further 300,000 injured during the tragedy.
- Almost 5,000 schools were affected.
- Out of a population of 3 million people, almost 1.2 million still required shelter.
- The estimated cost of re-constructing Haiti stood at £3.5billion and the donations received by the DEC from members of the public in the UK stood at £101million.
- Ms Hindley described the process for putting together such large appeals and the work that donations facilitate with partners such as Concern, Oxfam, Red Cross and World Vision to name a few.

5.3 **Matthew Price**, the BBC's World Affairs Correspondent, described the conditions on the ground when he arrived in Haiti less than 24 hours after

the earthquake struck. He told the personal stories of some of the people he met in the aftermath and described horrendous and tragic scenes at hospitals where access to health care and the provision of basic needs were unavailable to thousands of people. It was interesting to note the perceptions of the media during an emergency response and the resources the media has access to (the BBC got to Port-au-Prince before most responders could).

5.4 **Sjaak Seen MCDm** is from the Fire Department Rotterdam and also worked for the United Nations. Mr Seen gave a detailed presentation on the structures that his organisation uses in response and shared some examples of good practice in responding to incidents.

5.5 **Ed Gabriel**, Director for Global Crisis Management and Business Continuity from the Walt Disney Company highlighted the need to involve businesses in emergency planning and made these key points:

- New York's response to emergencies is now based on English structures. He raised a very good point about Leadership and the clarity of who is in charge during an emergency. He stated that while leadership was clear in New York during 9/11, leadership was somewhat less clear during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.
- He encouraged responders to involve businesses and use the private sector resources available to them. Mr Gabriel used the example of utilising cinemas for humanitarian shelter.
- Consider and address any legal issues which may arise in emergencies by planning ahead and using any professional advice and expertise available.
- Use private sector skills and resources and agree who will do what in advance. The private sector will have access to resources that responders simply won't have.
- Responders should consider involving the local business sector in operations rooms.

6 CRITICAL NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 **Dr David Kerridge MBE**, Head of the Earth Hazards and Systems Department of the British Geological Survey (BGS), focussed on natural hazards which could result in emergencies. He encouraged planners to work with scientists to ensure that relevant new knowledge is applied effectively to disaster preparedness, response and recovery. He gave a very interesting perspective of the threat of extreme weather such as earthquakes and tornados occurring in the UK and what the likely impacts would be. He also talked about solar flares and magnetic storms which occur in space and had been reported in the media fairly recently. It was clear that BGS considered that these new hazards may pose a threat, but more work was needed in the scientific community to better understand potential impacts.

- 6.2 **Richard Bryan**, Deputy Assistant Commissioner from the Olympic Security Directorate of the Home Office, gave a presentation on preparing London for the 2012 Olympics. He described the threat level as Severe and advised that resilience planning was considering all possible threats and hazards including terrorism, criminal activity, public disorder, domestic extremism and non malicious hazards (such as severe weather, utility failure and the impact of solar flares).
- 6.3 **Martin Hobbs**, Head of Network Resilience Strategy from the Highways Agency, gave a presentation on the strategic road network in the UK which consists of 4,400 miles of road and is worth around £88billion. Mr Hobbs talked about resilience planning within the Highways Agency, specifically in relation to severe weather. Post season workshops held after the severe weather earlier in 2010 had highlighted a need to educate drivers about severe weather. He also confirmed that an independent review was being conducted to learn lessons from the salt crisis earlier in the year.
- 6.4 **Bob Groves CBE**, Special Advisor to the Chairman of British Telecom, gave a talk on new developments. Mr Groves advised that BT Local Liaison Managers would be liaising with Local Resilience Forums in future to enhance joint working. He also talked about some recent work with Porton Down to develop specialist PPE so that BT engineers could work in hot zones to restore telecommunications and that BT had 40 people trained to carry out this work nationally.
- 6.5 A presentation was also given by **Paul McGee**, the author of 'Shut Up And Move On (SUMO)' which was a motivational talk for delegates. The key topics were around self reflection and recognition of behaviours which could impact on decision making.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Conference was yet again extremely useful and informative addressing a range of contemporary, pertinent issues. The Conference also provided an excellent opportunity to network with representatives of other relevant agencies and organisations, and the information gained will be used to inform the further development of plans and procedures in Tyne and Wear.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members are asked to note this report.
-

Background Papers

Working papers relating to the above are held in the offices of TWEPFU