



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

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 18 JANUARY 2010

**Subject : Recommendations of the Buncefield Major Incident
Investigation Board: Review of Progress**

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members of the progress to date in implementing the recommendations of the Buncefield Major Incident Investigation Board (MIIB).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The explosions at the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot in Hertfordshire in December 2005 resulted in injuries and significant damage to the surrounding area and environment. There were 43 people injured, none seriously and fortunately there were no fatalities. Significant damage occurred to both commercial and residential properties in the vicinity, and a large area around the site was evacuated on emergency service advice. About 2000 people were evacuated and sections of the M1 motorway were closed. The fire burned for several days, destroying most of the site and emitting large clouds of black smoke into the atmosphere, dispersing over southern England and beyond. Large quantities of foam and water were used to control the fire, with risks of contaminating water courses and ground water.

2.2 The Buncefield Depot was close to the Maylands Industrial Estate, home to some 630 businesses employing about 16,500 people. All businesses were disrupted by the explosions and fire, some severely. The premises of 20 businesses employing 500 people were destroyed; the premises of 60 businesses employing 3500 people required repair and some were not usable. Most businesses faced difficulties in delivering pre-incident levels of service from dispersed and temporary accommodation. Reduced trading and supply disruptions affected businesses over a wider area. Impact on employment was initially limited, and following the incident, job losses became significant.

2.3 The incident also damaged nearby housing, mainly in Dacorum district, but also in St Albans district. Some houses closest to the site suffered significant structural damage; several families lived in temporary

accommodation while their houses were repaired. At least 300 houses suffered lesser damage.

- 2.4 The incident disrupted fuel supply to London and South-East England. Remedial measures by the industry restored supplies of road transport, commercial and domestic fuels generally back or close to pre-incident levels. However, supplies to Heathrow were disrupted for some considerable time. This required fuel rationing by the BAA to allow the airport to function normally, with no flight cancellations. For all supplies the industry had to try to find permanent solutions to replace transitional arrangements put in place following the incident.

3.0 NEWTON REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This incident prompted an extensive investigation by the Major Incident Investigation Board led by Lord Newton of Braintree. The Health and Safety Commission directed the investigation using its powers under section 14(2)(a) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.
- 3.2 In 2007, the so called 'Newton Report' on the Buncefield incident was published, and this was entitled: '*Recommendations on the Emergency Preparedness for response to, and Recovery from incidents*'. This report contained 32 recommendations which had implications for a wide range of organisations, including:
- Local Authorities
 - The site operators
 - Fire Service
 - Government Departments
 - Health Protection Agency
 - Health and Safety Executive
 - Environment Agency
- 3.3 In respect of the recommendations concerning 'off-site' emergency plans for industrial sites that fall under the 'Control of Major Accident Hazards' (COMAH) 'top-tier' regulations, this responsibility lies with the Fire and Rescue Authority, however the duty is discharged on its behalf by the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU).
- 3.4 The Buncefield site was designated a 'Top Tier' site under the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH). ('Top tier' refers to sites deemed to have the greatest major accident hazard potential, which are consequently subject to the more stringent requirements of the regulations). The COMAH regulations require, amongst other things, that an Off Site Emergency Plan must be prepared for such sites. In Tyne and Wear, there are seven 'top tier' sites requiring a total of eight Off-Site Emergency Plans to be prepared (as one site is a split site). There are a further two top tier COMAH sites in Northumberland. Only one site in

Northumbria, Shell UK Oil Products Ltd., Jarrow, has similar characteristics to the Buncefield site in that it distributes petroleum fuels, although it must be stressed that the inventory and scale of this site is significantly less than the Buncefield Depot.

- 3.5 The recommendations of the MIIB had implications for the operation of this site, and indeed for all other COMAH top tier sites in Northumbria.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTHUMBRIA LRF

- 4.1 In December 2007 a report was prepared by TWEPU and circulated to LRF member organisations containing all 32 recommendations, with proposals as to which organisation should take each of these forward. Some recommendations called for reviews of existing arrangements and procedures and, particularly where this involved a multi-organisational approach, as in the work of the National Recovery Working Group, required longer timescales before robust plans could be implemented. It was essential to have clear timescales, understood and committed to by industry, the relevant government ministers, agencies and authorities, and emergency planners, against which progress could be measured and reported.
- 4.2 At the meeting of the LRF in March 2009 it was agreed that a review of local progress should be undertaken at LRF level, to identify any gaps or slippage, and to determine whether member organisations might require LRF support to help implement any outstanding recommendations.
- 4.3 In August 2009 TWEPU, on behalf of the LRF, commenced an exercise to establish the progress made locally in implementing the recommendations of the MIIB. Appropriate organisations asked to provide an updated assessment of their progress against the relevant recommendations. The information was collated and analysed in a 40 page report for presentation to the LRF. This can be made available for inspection should members require.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The exercise provided an assessment of the progress made by various organisations in meeting the recommendations of the MIIB at a national, regional and local level. Analysis shows that satisfactory progress is being made by the relevant organisations and that there are no significant outstanding issues to report.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

Members are asked to note this report

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 'Land Use Planning And The Control Of Societal Risk Around Major Hazard Sites' - Report to the Civil Contingencies Committee, 9 March 2009
- 'Comah Regulations 1999: Recommendations From The Buncefield Major Incident Investigation Board' - Report To The Civil Contingencies Committee, 10th December 2007
- 'Buncefield: Lesson Learned' – Report to the Civil Contingencies Committee 4th September 2006
- Background Papers are also available on the following website:

www.buncefieldinvestigation.gov.uk/index.htm