



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

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 5 July 2010

Subject : COMAH EXERCISES: Exercise Kestrel (SRM Ltd) and Exercise Harrier (Chemson Ltd)

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform committee members of two COMAH (Control of Major Accidents Hazards Regulations 1999) exercises carried out at SRM Ocean terminal at Hendon Dock in March 2010, and at Chemson Ltd, Wallsend in May 2010.
- 1.2 The duty to write and test 'off-site' emergency plans for specified industrial sites that fall under the COMAH 'top-tier' regulations lies with the Fire and Rescue Authority. This duty is discharged on behalf of the FRA by the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit (TWEPU).
- 1.3 TWEPU is well placed to carry out facilitative management of this process with its responsibilities spanning Tyne and Wear and overview of resilience.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In accordance with the requirements of the COMAH regulations, testing of 'off site' emergency plans is required to ensure that they are accurate, complete and practicable. Exercising of each plan is required at least 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.

3.0 EXERCISE KESTREL: SRM LTD (OCEAN TERMINAL AT HENDON DOCK) SUNDERLAND

- 3.1 This exercise was planned, coordinated and facilitated by TWEPU with contributions from Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) colleagues; it was held 16th and 17th March 2010. The first day was held at the SRM site offices and was attended by representatives from TWFRS, Northumbria Police and the operator. This table top phase

concerned the immediate on site response resulting from the release of hazardous material and a fire.

3.2 The second day, held off site, was attended by TWFRS, SRM, Northumbria Police, Environment Agency, Port of Sunderland, NHS South of Tyne, North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), GENTOO, Met Office, Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit and had strong representation from Sunderland City Council. This ensuing table top phase considered the wider consequences of the smoke plume affecting the surrounding area and how responders would address emerging issues.

3.3 Evaluation: Exercise Kestrel Day 1:

- Seven out of eight responding participants confirmed that the exercise tested the initial incident response actions for SRM Ocean Terminal where there is potential for the situation to escalate to major accident/incident level.
- All responding participants said that they benefited from the exercise, that it was relevant to their role, that format conduct and pace was appropriate and the exercise was 'very good' or 'good'.
- Seven out of eight responding participants said that visual aids enabled learning with particularly positive comments about the use of internet mapping.
- Seven out of eight responding participants said that questions were relevant and at appropriate level: the exercise had raised awareness of the issues involved in this type of incident.
- Five out of six responding participants identified areas of concern that need to be addressed within their organisation.

3.4 Evaluation: Exercise Kestrel Day 2

Twenty three out of a possible twenty eight participants returned evaluation forms.

- Twenty responding participants said that generally the exercise was 'very good' or 'good'; three said that the exercise was 'average'
- Twenty three responding participants said the exercise tested and validated the Offsite Emergency Plan and they benefited from participation.
- Twenty one responding participants said that visual aids enabled learning, comments were favourable.
- Twenty one responding participants said that the exercise was relevant to their role and that conduct and pacing was suitable for the scenario.
- Twenty two responding participants said that the questions posed were relevant and at the appropriate level.

- Twenty responding participants said that multi agency format was appropriate the exercise had raised their awareness of the issues involved in this type of incident.
 - Sixteen responding participants identified areas of concern that need to be addressed within their organisation
- 3.5 There were a number of very positive comments on facilitation and learning methods. Nearly all participants felt that, overall, the exercise had been a good opportunity for multiagency working/coordination. All had gained an understanding of each agency's expectations and capabilities and the need to ensure that plans tie in with those of others.
- 3.6 It was also felt that the scenario allowed a useful evolution of response and reflection on making informed decisions. The Environment Agency welcomed the focus on the existence of the new Air Quality Cell and on the possibility of a Major Accident to the Environment (MATTE): there was general consensus on the usefulness of reinforcing command and control procedures.
- 3.7 A number of significant points have been identified from this exercise. The most significant point identified is the provision of relevant information to the newly formed Air Quality Cell; TWEPU is taking this forward with partners in the Region.

4 EXERCISE 'HARRIER' CHEMSON LTD., WALLSEND, NORTH TYNESIDE

- 4.1 Exercise 'Harrier' was planned, coordinated and facilitated by TWEPU with contributions from TWFRS and the company. It was held 18th and 19th May 2010. The first day, held at Chemson Site Offices, Wallsend was attended by representatives from TWFRS, Northumbria Police and the operator; a HSE representative attended as an observer. This phase looked at immediate response following a fire at a warehouse and the resulting release of hazardous material.

The second day, held at North Tyneside Council Major Incident Room, Perth Gardens Wallsend, was attended by representatives from Northumbria Police, TWFRS, TWEPU, NEAS, Environment Agency, North Tyneside Council, Health Protection Agency and Chemson Ltd; again, a representative of the HSE attended as observer.

- 4.2 Evaluation: Exercise Harrier day 1

All 12 participants returned evaluation forms. All participants said that the aims of the exercise were met, that it was relevant to their role, they benefited from attending, that information was delivered at an appropriate level, and visual aids enabled learning and the format was appropriate:

- 11 participants said that it had raised their awareness of issues involved and 9 identified issues for their own organisations. 10 participants said that conduct and pacing was appropriate.
- As part of the exercise a new draft pre-plan for the specific major hazard was considered, this was enthusiastically welcomed by participants.
- Overall 8 participants rated the exercise as 'very good' and 4 rated it as 'good'.

4.3 Evaluation: Exercise Harrier Day 2

The format of the exercise had been altered from being an independently facilitated discussion style to a chaired discussion of response to tasks (to closely mirror a Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) /Multi Agency Silver). There were clear benefits to Chemson, an example being a closer representation of an actual TCG.

4.4 The general consensus was that the exercise was well chaired and from the exercise planners' viewpoint, key discussions occurred, options were considered and appropriate decisions taken. There was little need for directive facilitation and all pre-identified major issues were considered. There was good liaison and provision of advice both from the HPA and site operator.

4.5 16 out of a possible 18 evaluation sheets were returned. Of these 3 participants stated that they were 'very familiar' with the Off Site Plan, 8 'familiar', and 5 were 'not familiar'.

- In response to the question '*How well did the Tactical Co-ordinating Group seek to use the plan?*' 4 participants reported 'very well' 10 'well' and 1 'not well'.
- In response to the question '*How well did the plan support TCG decision making?*' 3 participants reported 'very well' 11 'well' and 1 'not well'.
- The format was considered appropriate;
- 7 participants identified issues for their own organisations.

4.6 At the time of writing the formal debrief has not yet been held, therefore conclusions and issues are not finalised.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 That Members note the content of this report;

5.2 That Members welcome the lead TWEPU is taking regionally regarding provision of information to the Air Quality Cell.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999: Statutory Instruments 1999 No. 743

