



TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE – 6 JULY 2009

Subject : NATIONAL CAPABILITIES SURVEY

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A report was presented to this Committee on the 10th March 2008 providing information on the National Capabilities Survey (NCS) which was carried out in 2008, the results of which have now been received. The purpose of this report is to provide background on the survey, and make Members aware of the findings.
- 1.2 Every two years the Government carries out the detailed survey within the United Kingdom, which is a vital element of the Government's programme to make the country more resilient to disruptive events.
- 1.3 The NCS is intended to assess the extent of current national, regional and local capability as defined in the UK Capabilities Programme, to enable the analysis of gaps at each level. The survey plays a key role in assessing the UK's readiness to respond to a range of assessed risks, whether these are threats in the form of terrorist attacks or natural hazards such as flooding. The results of the survey help to improve understanding of national preparedness and inform priorities for future investment, exercises and policy development.
- 1.4 The survey goes to a range of involved organisations, which in this area includes the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF), the Tyne and Wear Councils, and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The survey is divided into three strands; essential services, government, and local responders. The survey was issued to over 1000 responders within these groups. It was accessed electronically on-line, and each organisation issued with a unique access code.
 - i) **The Essential Strand** was sent to Gas, Electricity, Telecoms, Transport, Health and Water sectors. The Financial Sector and Food sector provide responses via alternate surveys.

- ii) **The Government Strand** was sent to government departments and regional government offices.
- iii) **The Local Response Strand** was sent to all category 1 responders and some category 2 responders. The latest survey contained some questions which focus specifically on the work of the LRF partnership. LRFs were issued with these and it was recommended that the constituent partner organisations should work together to provide a consolidated response.

2.2 The questionnaires were tailored to the specific organisation, and designed to collect specific information relating to its capabilities.

3. NATIONAL CAPABILITIES SURVEY 2008

3.1 Following a pilot survey in 2007 to improve the system, the full 2008 survey was officially launched on 8th January 2008 and was available online for a period of two-months during which time organisations were free to access and revisit the system at any time. Organisations were required to make their individual submissions by Friday 7th March.

3.2 The 2008 survey involved a larger number of response organisations and a more extensive set of questions making the process more complex than in the previous survey. It contained some questions which focussed specifically on the work of the Local Resilience Forum partnership.

3.3 The results have now been issued to responding organisations via a report by the Regional Resilience Team (RRT) of the Government Office for the North East (GO-NE).

3.4 The report to the LRF by GO-NE stated that Over 1,200 organisations took part in the NCS from three sectors; essential services, government departments and local responders. Questionnaires were sent to every local authority (upper and lower tier), Police Force, Fire Brigade, Primary Care Trust, Foundation Trust, Acute Trust, Strategic Health Authority, Mental Health Trust and Environment Agency regional office in England and Wales,

3.5 In addition to the involvement of individual organisations, Local Resilience Forums were asked 180 questions which followed a similar format to those given to individual organisations with a focus on multi-agency relationships and collective capabilities.

4. 2008 SURVEY RESULTS - THE LOCAL RESPONSE STRAND

4.1 The key messages from the survey report include;

The overall finding for the 2008 is that the general level of preparedness is higher than in the last survey.

The picture shown is of qualified improvement in all four pillars of resilience (general planning and levels of capability; specific plans for major contingencies; business continuity; organisation for crisis management).

Capabilities of local responders have improved, in some cases following the issue of central guidance or lessons identified from real-life crises or exercises. Areas of improvements have included for example:

- The emergency response to **flooding** – fluvial (river) flooding is shown as a high risk in most community risk registers, and there is an increase in capability overall; but the 2007 floods and the subsequent review have shown the need to embed lessons learnt through further improving planning, guidance, and clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities.
- Capacity for handling **evacuation and shelter** – one of the more important functions of local emergency responders, in particular but by no means only, during flooding emergencies, and the subject of central government guidance.
- Arrangements for the provision of **humanitarian assistance** during and after an emergency – a key lesson from the July 2005 London bombings have improved.
- Overall levels of preparation for **CBRN** (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) incidents were high with 100% of blue light services having CBRN response plans in place and 82% of these plans having been tested through a multi-agency exercise.
- **Urban Search and Rescue**, where there is a high degree of planning, training and exercising activity among the emergency services concerned; and where an increase of Fire and Rescue Services with plans in place (from 77% to 91%), reflects the continuing roll-out of equipment supplied under the New Dimensions programme.
- Other aspects of capability have advanced, but less so. This is apparent for some aspects of planning and exercising for mass fatalities; site clearance; and the identification of vulnerable groups (on which central government guidance was issued earlier this year, too late to influence NCS responses).

4.2 The regional report goes on to say that “Capabilities is working. Locally all of our responders are engaging well with LRFs and Sub-groups and have input into our RRF. There are clear signs of strong multi-agency working”.

4.3 This report has been backed up by presentations (where requested) at each of the LRF and RRF meetings. This will kick start the information sharing process and enable LRF and RRF members to identify their next steps.

5. EPU INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Officers from the EPU assisted colleagues in the councils and the FRS by advising on certain aspects of the completion of the Survey. An officer from Tyne and Wear EPU assisted the County Emergency Planning Officer for Northumberland to prepare the LRF element of the survey.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The NCS is an important aspect of the Government's resilience programme in determining priorities.

6.2 The findings as listed above will allow the LRF members to focus on the specific areas which need more work, and allow a programme of work to be developed ensure resilience in this part of the country is at a high standard.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Members are asked to:

Note this report, and endorse the continued involvement of the EPU in this important work-stream.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- NCS Pilot Results 2007
- Tyne Wear FRS Civil Contingencies Committee report 10th March 2008
- The National Capabilities Survey 2008 - Results from the Government Office for the North East Region

Copies of these documents are available in the Emergency Planning Unit.

ANNEX 1

NATIONAL CAPABILITIES SURVEY 2008

The National Capabilities Survey asked local responders just over 400 questions contained in 16 modules as listed below:

Business Continuity	Generic Resilience
CBRN	Site Clearance
Urban Search and Rescue	Human Infectious Diseases
Animal Infectious Diseases	Mass casualties
Evacuation and Shelter	Warning and Informing and Alerting
Mass Fatalities	Humanitarian Assistance
Flooding	Recovery
Data Sharing	Human Capabilities

Categories of questions to be answered by the Local Resilience Forum

LRFs were asked a different set of questions in the following modules:

Generic Resilience	CBRN
Human Infectious Diseases	Pandemic Influenza
Animal Infectious diseases	Mass Casualties
Evacuation & Shelter	Warning, Informing and Alerting
Mass Fatalities	Humanitarian Assistance
Flooding	Recovery