

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Introduction

1. This paper sets out the arrangements for the response to an emergency (irrespective of its cause) requiring co-ordinated UK central government action. It describes how the UK central government response will be organised, and the relationship between the central, regional and local tiers in England, as well as the relationship between the UK central government and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales and the Northern Ireland Administration.
2. The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will, within their competencies, play a full role in response to an emergency. Their role will depend on two things: whether the incident affects Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland; and whether the response to the emergency includes activity within the competence of the administration. This is true even for terrorism-related emergencies (eg. whilst national security is a reserved matter, the emergency services and NHS in Scotland are the responsibility of the Scottish Executive and the investigation and prosecution of crime, including terrorist crime, is a devolved responsibility of the Lord Advocate). The devolved administrations will mirror many of the tasks of the UK-level crisis mechanisms, as well as fulfilling the same tasks as the English regional structures. In every case, the precise balance of activity will depend on the competence of the devolved administration involved (ie the terms of their devolution settlement) and the nature of the incident. In areas of reserved responsibility, The UK Government Lead Department will lead the response in the devolved areas working closely with the relevant devolved administration.
3. The paper **focuses primarily on the response to a no or short notice emergency requiring UK central government engagement**, although the principles, definitions and roles outlined would underpin the more tailored approach that would inevitably be adopted to manage an emergency that developed more slowly.

UK RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

4. An emergency (or disruptive challenge) as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act is a situation or series of events that threatens or causes serious damage to human welfare, the environment or security in the United Kingdom. Local

responders will almost always be first on the scene and carry the main burden. The amount and level of regional or national support to the area affected may vary. Most incidents can be managed by local responders, in some cases supported by a lead department in Whitehall or a devolved administration. But for the most severe emergencies a co-ordinated combined government response will be essential. The handling of the Government's response to an emergency occurring wholly within a devolved territory will depend on whether or not the subject is reserved or devolved.

LEVELS OF EMERGENCY

5. To aid planning and help understanding, this paper identifies, in addition to local emergencies (or major incidents), three broad types (or levels) of emergency requiring UK central government engagement (ie those departments and ministers directly accountable to Westminster Parliament). The response to an emergency at levels 2 or 3 would involve the activation of central government's crisis management facilities - the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) - to facilitate rapid co-ordination of the central government response and effective decision making. In practice, the actual response to a specific emergency will need to take into account the nature of the challenge and other circumstances at the time. By way of illustration, at Annex A is a chart indicating the likely central response arrangements according to the actual or potential spread and effect of an emergency. The response may also be handled at different levels over time (both up and down) as the need for central government engagement changes. The three broad levels of emergency requiring significant central government engagement are:

- a catastrophic emergency (Level 3) is one which has a high and potentially widespread impact and requires immediate central government direction and support such as a 9/11 scale terrorist attack in the UK, or a Chernobyl scale industrial accident. The response would be led from COBR, often with the Prime Minister in the chair and harnessing all possible resources. The Cabinet Office would chair preparatory meetings of officials although other departments might assume the chairmanship of groups addressing specific aspects of the response.
- a serious emergency (Level 2) is one which has, or threatens, a wide and prolonged impact requiring sustained central government co-ordination and support from many departments and agencies, including the regional tier in England and, where appropriate, the devolved administrations. Such challenges would include a major terrorist attack or serious outbreak of animal disease. In England and for reserved issues elsewhere in Great Britain, the central government response would be led from

COBR (the Northern Ireland Briefing Rooms – NIOBR - in Northern Ireland) under the direction of the Home Secretary or a nominated lead Minister. The Cabinet Office or the government department responsible for overall management of the Government response (the Lead Government Department or LGD) would normally chair meetings of officials.

- a significant emergency (Level 1) has a narrower focus requiring central government support primarily from a lead government department or devolved administration in addition to the work of the emergency services, local authorities and other organisations as part of their normal day-to-day activities. An emergency of this scale in England or affecting reserved issues elsewhere in Great Britain, would not normally involve the full activation of COBR, although there may be a need for periodic cross-government co-ordination and meetings convened in COBR by the Cabinet Office. In England, the regional tier is likely to have some input, if only to report on the impact of the emergency across their area or, at the request of the LGD (or Cabinet Office if the central government lead is initially unclear), to monitor the situation and provide an interface with the local Strategic Co-ordination Group. Input may also be required from the devolved administrations where this is necessary. Examples of emergencies on this scale could include prison riots, severe weather, or a terrorist incident with limited consequences.

6. In addition to the three types of emergency requiring significant central government involvement, there are local emergencies (or major incidents) which are routinely handled by the emergency services with local government (such as road crashes, localised flooding, or industrial accidents). The police will normally take the lead in co-ordinating the local response to an emergency where a crime has been committed or there is a threat to public safety. Where there is a police lead, the operational response to the emergency is in the hands of the Police Gold Commander (Strategic Police Commander in Scotland), appointed by the local Chief Officer of Police. The role will include chairing a Strategic Co-ordination Group to co-ordinate the response of all the emergency services and other organisations in saving life, protecting the public, and where appropriate bringing those responsible to justice.

7. In response to some local emergencies in England, the Strategic Co-ordination Group may wish to involve the relevant Regional Resilience Team to act as an interface between central government and the local response – feeding back information and potential requests for support from local responders as well as, potentially, facilitating the provision of support from across the region. This might involve deploying a liaison officer to the Strategic Co-ordination Group. In Wales,

the Welsh Assembly Government will be able to deploy staff in the same way and act as a link between the SCG and central Government in reserved matters. Emergencies of this sort are likely to be largely manageable through resources available within the region, though there is likely to be some liaison with central government departments and particularly the LGD. An example might be the effect of severe weather or power outages. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the devolved administrations will activate their equivalent structures if appropriate.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

8. The response to an emergency needs to be managed flexibly to reflect circumstances at the time, but in all cases are underpinned by the same guiding principles:
 - Preparedness. All those individuals and organisations that might have to respond to emergencies should be properly prepared, including having clarity of roles and responsibilities.
 - Continuity. Response to emergencies should be grounded in the existing functions of organisations and familiar ways of working, albeit delivered at a greater tempo, on a larger scale and in more testing circumstances.
 - Subsidiarity. Decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with co-ordination at the highest necessary level. Local responders should be the building block of response on any scale.
 - Direction. Clarity of purpose should be delivered through a strategic aim and supporting objectives that are agreed and understood by all involved to prioritise and focus the response.
 - Integration. Effective co-ordination should be exercised between and within organisations and tiers of response as well as timely access to appropriate guidance and appropriate support for the local or regional level.
 - Communication. Good two-way communication is critical to an effective response. Reliable information must be passed correctly and without delay between those who need to know, including the public.
 - Co-operation. Positive engagement based on mutual trust and understanding will facilitate information sharing and deliver effective solutions to issues arising.

- Anticipation. Risk identification and analysis is needed of potential direct and indirect developments to anticipate and thus manage the consequences.

9. Depending on the assessment of the emergency, government support may include direction, co-ordination, people, expertise, specialised equipment, advice or financial support. But all decisions about support will be taken on a case-by-case basis.

THE OBJECTIVES OF UK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

10. The guiding principles above allow for a clearly identifiable set of objectives for the UK central government response to all emergencies, including multiple incidents where a number of incidents occur close together in the same area or different parts of the country. The strategic objectives for the initial central government response are to:

- i) **protect human life** and, as far as possible, **property**. **Alleviate suffering**;
- ii) **support the continuity of everyday activity and the restoration of disrupted services** at the earliest opportunity; and
- iii) **Uphold the rule of law and the democratic process**.

In practice, not all these objectives may be achievable at the outset of an emergency. Ministers will provide early strategic direction on the appropriate balance to strike in light of circumstances at the time.

11. To achieve these strategic objectives, UK central Government will:

- react with speed and decisiveness;
- respect local knowledge and decision-making wherever possible, without losing sight of the national strategy;
- prioritise access to scarce national resources;
- use data and information management systems to gain a national picture and support decision making, without overburdening front-line responders;

- base policy decisions on the best available science and ensure that the processes for providing scientific advice are widely understood and trusted;
- draw on existing legislation to respond effectively to the event, and consider the need for additional powers;
- apply risk assessment methodology and cost benefit analysis within an appropriate economic model to inform decision-making;
- work with international partners to share information and request assistance if necessary;
- explain policies, plans and practices by communicating with interested parties (including the public) comprehensively, clearly and consistently in a transparent and open way that addresses national and local concerns while encouraging and listening to feedback.

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS FOR UK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

12. **Planning assumptions will ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear from the outset and that the UK central government response to a catastrophic emergency in the UK, any other emergency in England, and on reserved issues in Great Britain, will be effective, quick and certain.** The **devolved administrations** will assume responsibility for managing emergencies within their competence, including co-ordinating support on wider impact management and recovery issues. They will activate their own co-ordination arrangements as appropriate. If there is the possibility that an emergency has been caused by terrorist action, then that will be taken as the working assumption until demonstrated otherwise. Bearing this in mind, in the event of a no-notice emergency:

Any emergency

i) **The UK central government response will be handled in accordance with the concept of Lead Government Department (LGD)** whereby one department or devolved administration takes overall responsibility for co-ordinating handling and presentation. Individual departments and devolved administration remain responsible for their policy areas.

a) Where the LGD is not clear, it will be the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to make a judgement and appoint the most appropriate LGD in consultation with the Prime

Minister's Office. In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) or the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) would make a judgement on the appropriate lead department depending on the cause or outcome of the emergency.

- ii) **COBR will be activated in support of the UK Lead Government Department (LGD) in response to any actual or potential catastrophic emergency in the UK or serious emergency in England or on reserved issues elsewhere in Great Britain.**
 - a) Where the emergency is being managed by a devolved administration, COBR may be activated where there are significant cross-border implications or to support the DA's response;
- iii) **Cabinet Office will convene a meeting** (if appropriate in COBR) **if there is uncertainty over the direction of the UK central government response to any emergency or the effectiveness of the local response in England and Wales**, to assess the situation and advise ministers as necessary;
- iv) In Northern Ireland, NIOBR or the NI administration crisis management arrangements would be activated (see Annex B).
- v) In the event of any catastrophic or serious emergency in England or on reserved issues in Great Britain, **the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary or other senior Ministers nominated by the Prime Minister, will direct the central government response** from COBR. In cases of doubt, **the Home Secretary would at least initially, assume the chair in COBR** of the Civil Contingencies Committee of the Cabinet. The Cabinet Office or the Lead Government Department would chair meetings of officials in COBR. A Government Liaison Officer will be deployed to provide a two-way channel for information between COBR and the Gold Commander's Strategic Co-ordination Group (where established);
- vi) **use of the regional resilience tier in England**, including the need to convene the Regional Civil Contingencies Committee, will be considered by COBR and/or the Lead Government Department to support communication with the centre in response to a catastrophic, serious or significant emergency, local multi-agency co-ordination, and the identification and tasking of resources. The RRT could

provide the Government Liaison Officer (GLO) in a non-terrorist emergency (see paragraph 20);

- vii) where **multi-site and wide area emergencies** occur, COBR will prioritise the allocation of scarce resources. Where an emergency is confined to one region, this may be done at the regional level;

Business in COBR.

- viii) Once activated, relevant departments and agencies will immediately send representatives to COBR. COBR will remain open until the emergency has passed. The COBR Secretariat in consultation with the LGD will decide on the timings of meetings, and whether and, if so, which departments need to be represented in COBR 24/7.

Media and public information handling/co-ordination

- iv) ix) The News Co-ordination Centre will be activated at an appropriate level to support the UK central government response. The level will be determined by COBR, or in other cases the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Lead Government Department (see paragraph 29).

Additional arrangements for terrorist or suspected terrorist emergencies

- x) **where terrorism is suspected** the procedures set down in the national Counter-Terrorist Contingency Manual will be followed in Great Britain. The Cabinet Office in consultation with the Home Office will trigger the central government response;
- xi) the **Home Office is the Lead GB Department for counter-terrorist policy** and will ensure that action is taken in the interests of public safety, including alerting those in immediate threat through the police service. At least initially, the Home Office will lead on wider impacts in England. The Scottish Executive, Northern Ireland Administration and Welsh Assembly Government are responsible for co-ordinating wider impact management and recovery issues in their territories.
- xii) For terrorist incidents in GB below the threshold of a catastrophic emergency, the Home Office will chair meetings of officials in COBR, and the FCO for incidents overseas.
- xiii) The Northern Ireland Office is responsible for counter-terrorist policy in the Northern Ireland.

Regional support for local emergencies in England and Wales

- xiv) the **Regional Resilience Team will engage in response to a request from the Police Gold Commander** to co-ordinate the wider response to a local emergency where life or property is at immediate risk (such as one arising from flooding or heavy snowfall);
- xv) It may also engage **on its own initiative** or at the request of the Lead Government Department if:
 - a) the nature of the emergency is such that the local lead is unclear (eg a power outage) and this is hampering the local response requiring central government engagement; or
 - b) to monitor the situation so that the team can respond promptly to requests for advice from central government departments on the impact of the incident and the effectiveness of response and recovery activity.
- xvi) in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government can provide the same link between the local response and the Lead UK Government Department in reserved matters.

Continuity of UK Central Government

- xvi) the continuity of Central Government plan **will be activated by the Cabinet Office in response to a catastrophic or serious emergency affecting central London**, including Whitehall.

Use of Emergency Powers

- xvii) Circumstances permitting, the Prime Minister in consultation with the Home Secretary and other senior ministers would decide on the advice of officials whether existing legislation was adequate to manage the emergency or there was a need to take Emergency Powers under Part 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) if they were satisfied that the tests laid down in the Act had been met.

13. These planning assumptions as well as the underpinning principles and objectives will guide the development of tailored central government response arrangements where the nature of the potential emergency allows time for such refinement to take place. This is most likely to occur in the response to non-terrorist threats.

THE LOCAL RESPONSE IN GREAT BRITAIN

14. The local response is the basic building block of the response to any emergency reflecting the fundamental distinction between the independent operational command exercised by the Chief Officer of Police (where the police are in the lead) and the strategic direction/support provided by Government. Where there is a police lead, the operational response to the emergency is in the hands of the Police Gold Commander, appointed by the local Chief Officer.

15. **The police GOLD commander will normally chair a multi-agency Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG).** The SCG is made up of senior representatives with executive authority from each of the key local organisations involved in the local response and will take strategic decisions affecting the local management of the emergency based on a collective view of how best to manage the response. It is good practice in most emergencies to establish a Recovery Working Group to meet as a sub-group of the SCG as response decisions can greatly affect recovery efforts. **When COBR is activated, the SCG will normally co-ordinate with COBR through a Government Liaison Officer (GLO)** (see paragraph 20). Once the initial response has been completed, the Strategic Co-ordination Group is usually chaired by the relevant local authority during the recovery phase. In some scenarios, there might be police response and local authority led recovery/alleviation groups working in parallel within one police force area.

16. Where there is no local police lead in the absence of a crime or immediate threat to human life (eg a flu outbreak or animal disease), the local response will normally be led by the local offices of the lead central government department with support as necessary in England from the relevant Government Offices (see paragraph 23) and local authorities. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government would lead in matters falling within devolved competence and would work closely with the Lead Government Department in reserved matters.

17. Organisations and agencies that may be involved with the local emergency response will all work to the following common objectives:

- i) saving and protecting human life
- ii) relieving suffering
- iii) protecting property
- iv) providing the public with information
- v) containing the emergency – limiting its escalation or spread
- vi) maintaining critical services
- vii) maintaining normal services at an appropriate level
- viii) protecting the health and safety of personnel
- ix) safeguarding the environment

- x) facilitating investigations and inquiries
- xi) promoting self-help and recovery
- xii) restoring normality as soon as possible
- xiii) evaluating the response and identifying lessons to be learned

UK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

18. Where the scale or complexity of an emergency is such that some degree of UK Central Government co-ordination or support becomes necessary (as set out in paragraphs 5 and 12), a designated Lead Government Department (LGD), will normally be responsible for the overall management of the Central Government response. (In Northern Ireland, the NIO or a NI department would take the lead depending on the nature of the emergency). In response to a catastrophic or serious emergency, this would involve the activation of COBR (NIOBR or the Crisis Management Group (CMG) in NI) to facilitate rapid co-ordination and decision-making in support of the LGD. In less severe circumstances in England, the regional resilience team, on behalf of the LGD, may discharge the central government interest. In the same way, in Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government may take on this role or act as a LGD in its own right in devolved matters.

A pre-designated list of LGDs is maintained and can be found on the UK resilience website at www.ukresilience.gov.uk

19. UK Central Government (through COBR) will be responsible for:

- i) providing strategic direction, based on:
 - a common recognised information picture;
 - intelligence assessments and Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) threat levels in relation to terrorist threats where relevant;
 - advice from the Police Gold Commander when established or ACPO/ACPO(S) in other situations and the lead Government Department;
 - advice on the wider impact and longer-term recovery; and
 - scientific advice provided by, or on behalf of, the Lead Government Department.
- ii) decisions on the adequacy of existing legislation and the use of Emergency Powers at national or sub-national level;

- iii) authorising military assistance to the civil power or a central government department (where there is an immediate threat to life, the local military commander can deploy unarmed forces in support of the civil power);
- iv) mobilising national assets and central Government resources and releasing them to support response and recovery efforts as appropriate;
- v) determining national protective security measures and other counter-measures;
- vi) determining the public information strategy, and co-ordinating public advice in consultation with the Police Gold Commander (where appropriate), the devolved administrations (where appropriate) and other key stakeholders;
- vii) managing the international/diplomatic aspects of the incident;
- viii) determining the likely development of the emergency and providing early strategic direction of preparations for the recovery phase (including the restoration of services) to ensure coherent management without conflicting with immediate response, including the role of the regional tier;
- ix) sharing information with the devolved administrations on the evolving situation; and
- xiv) advising on the relative priority to be attached to multi-site or multiple incidents and the allocation of scarce national resources, consulting the devolved administrations where appropriate.

LIAISON BETWEEN UK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT (COBR) AND THE LOCAL RESPONSE

20. Where a Strategic Co-ordination Group has been established and a UK central government response is required, a Government Liaison Officer (GLO) will normally be despatched immediately at the onset of an emergency.

- For terrorist or potential terrorist incidents in GB, the GLO will be a senior Home Office official supported by a multidisciplinary team - the Government Liaison Team (GLT). In Scotland, the GLT will

include representatives from the Scottish Executive and the Crown Office. The NIO would provide the GLO in Northern Ireland.

- For non-terrorist incidents, the GLO may come from the Lead Government Department or in England from the relevant Government Office in the Regions (in Wales, this role may be assumed by the Welsh Assembly Government). The GLO might be augmented with staff from other departments and organisations as necessary, depending on the circumstances. In Scotland, the GLO would normally be provided by the Scottish Executive. Where the GLO is provided by a UK Government lead department, the Scottish Executive would deploy as part of the GLT.

In all circumstances, the GLO will be the main liaison channel between COBR (when activated) and the scene.

21. For emergencies without a police lead, or where there is a need to communicate more widely with other police forces, the Association of Chief Police Officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (ACPO) can channel requests between central government and police forces. ACPO(S) performs a similar role in Scotland. A senior ACPO representative in COBR will advise central government on the wider implications of response options and will represent the service's views on wider policing issues. The organisation can also issue national guidance to forces on specific issues.

22. The Local Government Association can perform a similar role in respect of local authorities in England. In Wales, the Welsh Local Government Association will be able to perform a similar role at a pan-Wales level.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES IN THE ENGLISH REGIONS

23. The Government Offices (GOs) represent central government in the English regions. In each GO a Regional Resilience Team has been established to improve co-ordination and the flow of information across and between regions, and between local areas and the centre in preparation for an emergency and, if necessary, in supporting the response to an emergency or subsequent recovery efforts. The key roles for the GO will be:

- i) supporting the local response and providing a channel for the exchange of information between central and local tiers
- ii) monitoring the wider impacts of an emergency;
- iii) supporting the co-ordination of the response where the emergency affects a number of localities within the region; and

- iv) providing support to the Home Office GLO in a terrorist incident where there are significant wider impacts.

24. Outside London, this is most likely in response to a wide-area emergency (eg severe weather or infectious disease), but could also apply in other circumstances. The full regional tier, including the convening of the Regional Civil Contingencies Committee, will only become involved in a single site incident (eg a single terrorist attack) if the local response (including locally arranged mutual aid) is in danger of being overwhelmed and requires support. In these circumstances it is normally for the Gold Commander or LGD to seek support from the regional tier.

25. London's position as the capital and as a city which is a region in its own right, combined with its political and economic significance, and the regional nature of the emergency services, make it more likely that the response to an emergency will be regional. In the context of London's arrangements, no distinction is made in handling an emergency between the regional and local tiers.

OVERSEAS LIAISON

26. The FCO is responsible for managing the UK's relationship with other countries through its network of embassies and High Commissions, as well as the UK's overall relationship with international organisations such as the UN, NATO and the EU which might have a part to play in the response to an emergency.

27. For incidents in the UK, the FCO representative in COBR will advise on the concerns and handling of other governments, and will handle requests for support or assistance from the UK government. The FCO will be responsible for ensuring that the UK meets bi-lateral and multi-lateral obligations to notify neighbours and/or partners of an emergency, though another department may be responsible for the notification (eg DTI in respect of a nuclear accident in the UK).

28. For incidents overseas (e.g. bombings or kidnapping) the FCO will normally be the lead department and chair meetings in COBR unless the nature of the event is such as to warrant a meeting of the Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC) given significant consequences in the UK (e.g. an accident at an overseas nuclear power station in which case Defra would lead). Where an overseas emergency requires the return and repatriation of British citizens, the FCO would be the lead department, at least until all the evacuees are back in the UK. Where there is a significant overseas dimension to an emergency in the UK, the FCO will be a member of the GLT where one is deployed.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

29. **Any emergency on a scale requiring a co-ordinated UK central government response will need national direction of public information from the outset.** Central government will be responsible for the national communications strategy for responding to the crisis, the development of which will be co-ordinated with the lead responder locally (normally the police).

30. The News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) will be established in response to emergencies generating significant media interest on a range of departmental interests to pull together the national media and public communications effort. Under Home Office leadership for a terrorist incident or the lead department in other cases, it will work to the policy direction of COBR. Information Officers from relevant Whitehall departments and agencies will be attached to the NCC for the duration of the emergency. Where there is a significant devolved dimension, an information officer from the relevant devolved administration will also normally join the NCC. The Welsh Assembly Government Press Office will provide 24/7 cover at its Emergency Co-ordination Centre where necessary and link into the Press Teams at the SCGs in Wales and the NCC in London.

31. Various levels of support for an LGD are available depending on the seriousness of the situation. This could include:

- i. producing co-ordinated/consolidated briefing for use by Ministers, press officers and stakeholders to ensure consistency in the messages delivered;
- ii. co-ordinating request for interview with Ministers, experts/ third parties
- iii. establishing a central press office – to work with the lead and other Government departments
- iv. work in conjunction with the Media Monitoring Unit and the GNN to operate an analysis and monitoring team, ensuring that coverage is monitored and assessed and, where necessary, errors corrected
- v. communications forward planning
- vi. work with the media to facilitate coverage, where necessary
- vii. establishing emergency media centre;
- viii. organise media briefings;
- ix. working closely with the Government News Network in the regions;
- x. working closely with the Press Offices of the devolved administrations
- xi. regular updating of ukresilience website and links to related sites as well as monitoring of other external sites; Additional work can also include developing bespoke websites where necessary.

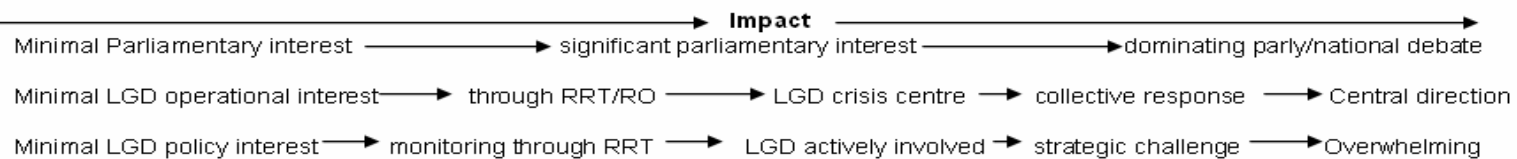
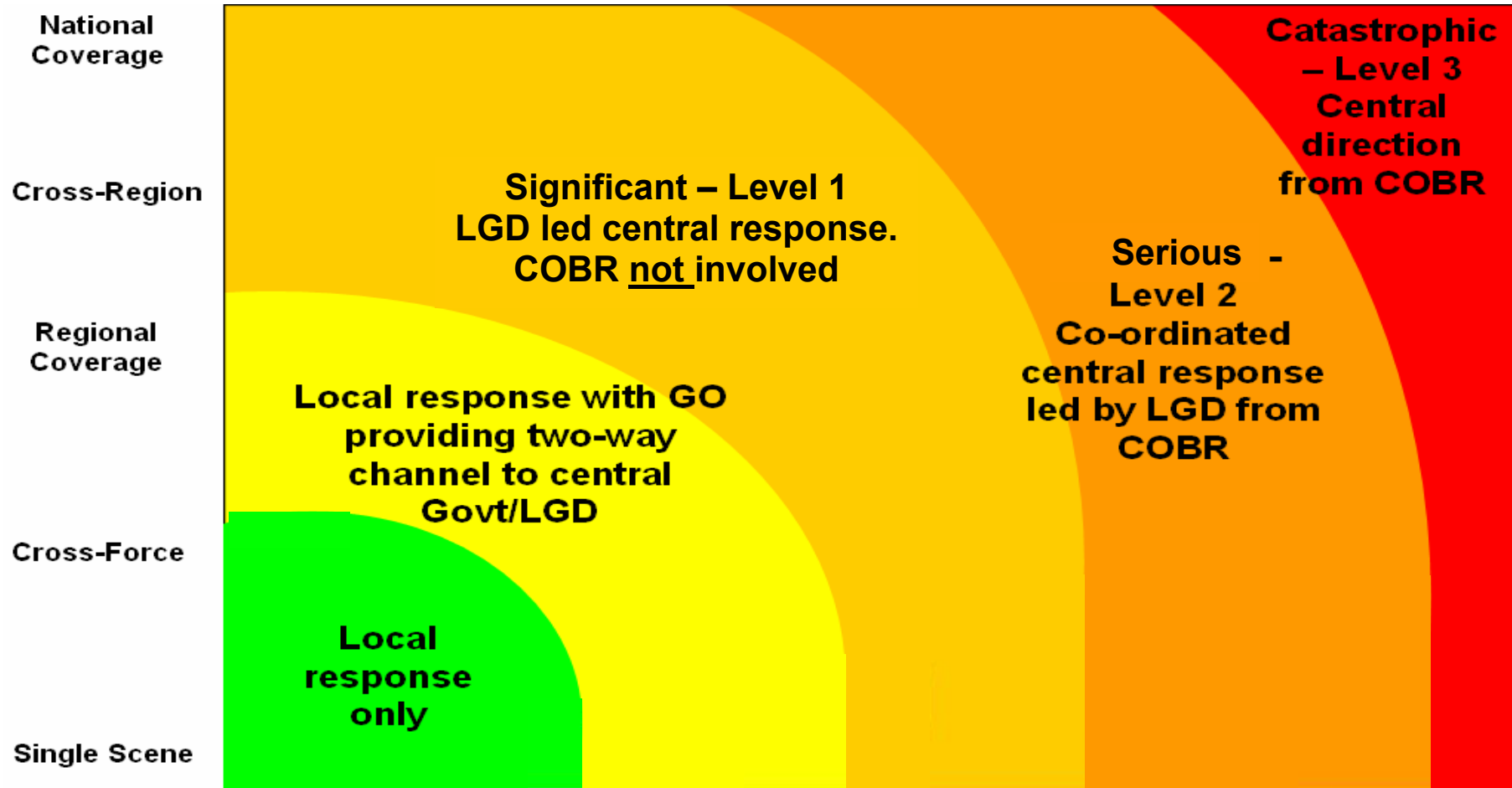
- xii. working with the lead government department to ensure that all relevant audiences – public and stakeholder - are targeted quickly and effectively
- xiii. liaising closely with Media Emergency Forum/regional MEFs;
- xiv. arranging emergency advertising; and
- xv. staffing a 24/7 operation.

Cabinet Office
31 March 2005

ANNEXES

- A Likely form of central government engagement based on actual or potential impact and geographic spread of an emergency
- B Arrangements in Northern Ireland
- C Role of the regional tier of central government in preparing for and responding to emergencies

Likely form of central Government engagement based on the actual or potential impact and geographic spread of an emergency



ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland Office is the Lead Government Department (LGD) in Northern Ireland for terrorist incidents falling into the following categories:

- **Conventional terrorism** - including a hostage-taking, siege or hijacking incident in which political demands may be made of Government;
- **A terrorist-inspired radiation incident** - any radiation hazard initiated or threatened by terrorism;
- **CBRN terrorism** - such as the release or the credible threat of a release of CBRN materials.

If there is a possibility that an emergency has been caused by terrorist action, the NIO response will assume that such events are terrorist-inspired until proved otherwise. The NIO's crisis management response will be coordinated through the activation of the Northern Ireland Office Briefing Rooms (NIOBR). NIOBR will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, a designated Minister or senior official.

At the request of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Incident Commander, the NIO will deploy a Government Liaison Team (GLT) to assist at the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG). This will be led by an NIO Government Liaison Officer (GLO).

For impact management and recovery issues arising from terrorist events and for all other level 1 to 3 emergencies, the Devolved Administration (DA)/ Northern Ireland Departments will have LGD responsibility and co-ordinate their response through their Crisis Management Group (CMG). Throughout such incidents, the NIO will participate in the NI Crisis Management Group or other co-ordination groups as necessary, offering political advice and support.

If NIOBR is activated, its role will be contingent upon the nature and level of the emergency:

- In a **catastrophic emergency** affecting Northern Ireland, NIOBR will co-ordinate through COBR and manage the local response;
- In a **serious emergency** affecting only Northern Ireland, NIOBR will lead but may call upon COBR to support by way of expertise and/or national assets. Where the emergency is assessed to be multi-sited, NIOBR will co-ordinate through COBR whilst continuing to manage the local response;

- In a **significant emergency** affecting Northern Ireland, a judgement will be made as to NIOBR activation.

NIOBR will be the single point of contact to COBR for counter-terrorist matters but where there are significant (potential) consequences/impact management and recovery assessments, there would be a need for parallel reporting by the Northern Ireland Departments. Where the emergency is wholly civil (and not requiring significant police or military resources) the Northern Ireland Departments will lead in reporting to COBR.

The NIO will lead in any cross-border, Island of Ireland counter-terrorist emergencies, although Northern Ireland departments will liaise with their opposite numbers in the Republic of Ireland on relevant impact management and recovery issues.

The Northern Ireland Information Service (NIIS) will coordinate the communications strategy for terrorist related emergencies affecting only Northern Ireland. Input on impact management and recovery issues would be co-ordinated by the Northern Ireland Departmental Information Service (NIDIS) which also has full responsibility for co-ordination if the communication strategy for all non-terrorist emergencies affecting only Northern Ireland. For emergencies which affect Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom, the NIIS and NIDIS would co-operate with the News Co-ordination Centre to ensure that a coherent and co-ordinated message is delivered.

THE REGIONAL RESILIENCE TIER

INTRODUCTION

1. A regional resilience tier has now been introduced throughout the English regions with the aim of enhancing the co-ordination and communication between local responders and central Government.
2. Since April 2003, the Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs) and Regional Resilience Teams (RRTs) have been operational in each of the Government Offices in the nine English Regions. The nine Regions are:
 - North East
 - North West
 - Yorkshire and the Humber
 - East Midlands
 - West Midlands
 - East of England
 - South West
 - South East
 - London (Resilience team established in 2001, London Resilience Forum in May 2002.)

THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH REGIONAL TIER IN PLANNING

Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs)

3. Regional Resilience Forums have been formed to bring together key players from within each region, such as local authorities, central government agencies, the armed forces, and the emergency services. Other organisations e.g. from the voluntary sector, utilities and transport operators can also be invited as necessary. The role of the Forums is to:
 - Improve communication across and between the regions; between the regions and central government and between the region and its local responders. It is also there to support planning for a response capability.
 - Provide multi-agency strategic direction to civil protection planning in each region. They also have a particular value to add in focusing on planning for

wider consequences of incidents and the means for an effective return to normality.

4. RRFs have been tasked with specific projects (e.g. the mapping of capabilities across the regions and compiling a regional risk assessment) They will work closely with existing local multi-agency emergency planning groups (which will be known as Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) under the new terminology introduced in the Civil Contingencies Act), to ensure that preparedness work is co-ordinated across the region. The building blocks of the response to crisis will almost always be local plans developed at a local level. The role of the RRF is in helping to ensure that local plans are developed where they need to be, and that they work well with other, neighbouring, plans. There may also be specific areas (eg. plans for Mass Fatalities incidents) where a regional plan is developed – building on scaleable local plans to generate a region-wide response to a crisis.
5. In London, the regional and local levels coincide to some extent, with regional provision of emergency services and the implications of being a capital city and the seat of Government. This is reflected by the increased involvement of the London Resilience Team in city wide planning.

Regional Resilience Teams

6. Small teams of civil servants led by a senior official and supported by 4-5 staff are in place to support the RRFs in each Government Office. (In London the team is larger, with a significant number of secondees from a range of organisations.) They act as the key interface between central Government and local responders on resilience issues.
7. In particular, the teams will provide the core of secretariat support for the Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs) and for Regional Civil Contingencies Committees (RCCCs) [see below], in the event of regional response arrangements being called upon (supported by the wider resources of the Government Office).
8. The teams will also work with the Devolved Administrations to ensure strong cross border arrangements are in place.

THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH REGIONAL TIER IN RESPONSE

Regional Civil Contingencies Committees (RCCCs)

9. RRFs have no role to play in the operational response to emergencies. However, there may be exceptional circumstances in which the scale and geographical extent of an incident requires the response and recovery effort to be co-ordinated at a regional level. In these circumstances a Regional Civil Contingencies Committee (RCCC) will be set up.

10. The role of an RCCC will be:

- to collate and maintain a strategic picture of the evolving situation within the region, with a particular (but not exclusive) focus on consequence management and recovery issues;
- to assess whether there are any issues which cannot be resolved at a local level;
- to facilitate mutual aid arrangements within the region and, where necessary, between regions to resolve such issues;
- to ensure an effective flow of communication between local, regional and national levels, including the co-ordination of reports to the national level on the response and recovery effort;
- to raise to a national level any issues that cannot be resolved at a local or regional level;
- to ensure that the national input to response and recovery is co-ordinated with the local and regional efforts;
- to guide the deployment of scarce resources across the region by identifying regional priorities;
- to provide, where appropriate a regional spokesperson.

11. RCCCs will observe the principle of *subsidiarity* - it is recognised that local decisions should be taken at the local level. The RCCC will not interfere in local command and control arrangements [unless specifically empowered to do so by emergency regulations] but will provide a mechanism for ensuring that local responders can be as fully informed as possible in the decisions they have to take. Where arrangements already exist for the co-ordination of mutual aid (e.g. the PNIACC mechanism) the RCCC will complement such arrangements and add value by taking a multi-agency overview.

12. RCCCs will also inform the deployment of national resources. So, for example, an RCCC will take a view on the need for military aid and on priorities within the region for such aid and will be the conduit for putting such requests to the national

level. However, MOD will authorise the use of military aid and decisions on the deployment and direction of military staff and resources will remain with the normal MACA command hierarchy.

13. An RCCC will only be established where it will add value to the response and recovery effort. It is unlikely, therefore, that an RCCC will be convened in the event of a single-site event (e.g. a conventional car-bomb attack) regardless of scale. In these circumstances, even in the most severe event, there would be a direct line of communication between local and national level and a multi-agency Gold Command structure would be created. In London, the multi-agency Gold Co-ordinating Group *is* the RCCC so there will in effect be an RCCC for single-site incidents.
14. An RCCC is more likely to be set up where a number of local Gold Commands are established within a region (e.g. in the event of a multi site terrorist attack) or, in particular, where there is an event with widespread effects and a non-police led response (e.g. severe weather, infectious disease outbreak, fuel shortages, etc.).
15. An RCCC can be called at the request of a member of a local Gold Command, with the agreement of the Government Office. A request for an RCCC meeting at level 1 (see para 19. below) can also be made by members of the Regional Resilience Forum. The Lead Government Department can also instruct the Government Office to establish an RCCC.
16. As with RRFs, the core membership of the RCCC will be drawn from representatives of the emergency services, local authorities, central government departments and agencies with a regional presence (e.g. MoD, DoH, HPA, MCA etc.) but other agencies such as voluntary organisations, utilities and transport operators could be invited, depending upon the circumstances.
17. In London, the RCCC (Gold Co-ordinating Group) for a large scale emergency would include representatives of the utilities and transport providers, as well as the wider health community, configured as cells to enable an efficient Gold Group.
18. In the first instance, the RCCC will be chaired by the Regional Director of the Government Office for the Region (or their deputy). However, the Committee can agree another chair, if the circumstances merit it (e.g. in the event of a human disease outbreak, the chair is likely to be the Regional Director of Public Health). The Government Office will provide specialist topic and geographical advice as well as secretariat support for the RCCC. In London, as the RCCC (for immediate impact events) is the Gold Co-ordinating Group, it will be chaired by the police. Proposals are being developed for the membership, chair and make up of the RCCC for “rising tide” events and in the recovery phase.

19. It is anticipated that the RCCC will meet at three levels:

Level One

Level One meetings would be convened in the phase prior to an emergency, where prior warning is available. The meeting would be held to review the situation and update local stakeholders, with a view to escalating to Level Two if the situation warranted.

Level Two

Level Two meetings would be convened in the event of a wide area disruptive challenge in the region. The meetings could be convened by the Government Office, in consultation with members of the RCCC and Central Government crisis management machinery. They might also be convened if a national response or national co-ordination of an event was required, such as during a fuel distribution crisis.

Level Three

Level Three meetings could only be called once the Civil Contingencies Bill becomes law, following the formal declaration of a decision to take special legislative measures.

The Regional Nominated Co-ordinator

20. Under the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act, if emergency regulations are introduced, the Government must appoint a Regional Nominated Co-ordinator (RNC), whose principle function will be to facilitate the co-ordination of activities under the emergency regulations. Specific functions for the RNC may be included in the regulations. The RNC would also assume the chairmanship of the (level three) RCCC.

The Regional Resilience Teams

21. The primary role of the Regional Resilience Team (RRT) in any emergency will be to co-ordinate the response of the whole Government Office and to ensure effective communications between the national and local level.

22. In many events, the scale or duration will mean that the resources of the RRT are quickly exhausted. In such cases, the Teams will be able to draw on other staff and expertise from within the Government Office and on the resources of RRTs in other regions, if available.

Liaison with central Government

23. In many smaller scale events, particularly where Ministers show an interest, Government Departments will approach the RRTs for information. The Teams will, therefore, request situation reports from local responders. Using the RRTs as the main point of contact will reduce the risk of duplicated requests from different Government Departments. Local responders can also use the Teams as a first port of call for requests for advice or assistance from central government.
24. In carrying out this role, it may be appropriate for the RRT to place a liaison officer within Gold command. This will be co-located with the Home Office led Government Liaison Team when present.
25. When the national Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC) mechanism is brought into play, the RRTs (drawing where necessary of the wider GO resource) will provide situation reports for the CCC Situation Cell, copied to the Lead Government Department and any other Government Department with a significant interest.

Support for RCCCs

26. Where events justify the setting up of an RCCC, the RRT will take the lead in:
 - a. arranging a location for meetings;
 - b. establishing video/teleconferencing links when appropriate;
 - c. drawing up agendas;
 - d. circulating papers and information to committee members as necessary; and
 - e. providing the formal record of committees' discussions and decisions.