

Staffordshire Prepared

The Newsletter of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum
Issue 2 - October 2007

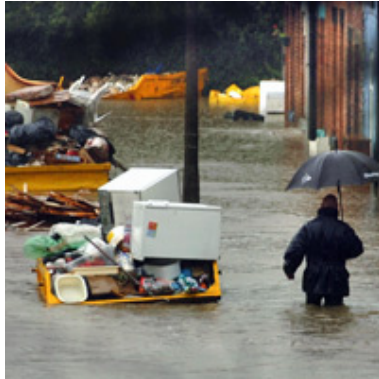
Staffordshire
Civil Contingencies Unit



Supporting Resilience in Staffordshire
www.staffordshireprepared.gov.uk

Staffordshire officer leads the way

Staffordshire Civil Contingencies officer Ian Harrison was at the forefront of this summer's multi-agency national response to stem flooding from Humberside to the Avon.



Ian, a nationally recognised expert on Fire and Rescue high volume pumping appliances has a unique knowledge of the worst floods on record to hit England. Ian (pictured below) is currently serving as a Principal Civil Contingencies officer on secondment from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue. He is using his experience to help write a new flood plan for Staffordshire. A special project board has been formed to research the new plan.

It will replace the current Major Incident Flood Plan which, although still useful, is now outdated.



The project board is chaired by John Tradewell, Director of Law and Governance, at Staffordshire County Council, supported by Marie Dale and Ian Harrison of the CCU.

Ian said: "The existing plan is still valid but could be better. Experience gained from this summer's flooding will be used to build a comprehensive Staffordshire Emergency Flood Plan."

The template for the new flood plan will be drawn up so that it can be used as the basis for all new emergency plans in Staffordshire. Staffordshire was not as badly hit as many areas this summer, but major flooding affected over 200 families in the Fazeley and Elford area of Lichfield in June and other incidents were reported across the county from Burton to Kidsgrove.

Training for executives

Space on special emergency planning training sessions for senior executives is rapidly running out.

The CCU is staging a series of one day courses for Cat 1 responder staff at chief executive and director level.

The Baseline training is being held at council offices in Tamworth and Newcastle in November and Burton and Stafford in January.

No spaces are now left at these sessions and an additional event is being planned at the Civic Centre, Stoke on Trent.

The sessions, funded by the CCU, are designed to give senior managers a baseline knowledge about emergency planning and their responsibilities.

Bill Almond of the CCU said: "They will learn about the Staffordshire Resilience Forum and the use of the gold, silver and bronze command control system to manage incidents."

For further information contact ccu@staffordshire.gov.uk.

Prestigious conference planned for Staffordshire

Work has begun to plan the Staffordshire Resilience Forum Conference on 19 June, 2008. The conference will be the first of its kind to be staged by the SRF and will involve a series of presentations and workshops exploring key civil contingency themes. A conference Project Team has been set up, led Principal Civil Contingencies Officer, Peter Taylor (pictured). The event will be held at the Yarnfield Conference Centre, near Stone.



Further information about the event will be highlighted in future Staffordshire Prepared newsletters.

New CCU appointments

Two new officers have been recruited by the Civil Contingencies Unit.



Sarah Moore (pictured left) joined the CCU in September as an Assistant Civil Contingencies Officer

Sarah, originally from North Wales, graduated from Coventry University earlier this year having gained a BSc (Hons) in Geography with Natural Hazards.



Ellie Gatrill-Smith began work as an Assistant Civil Contingencies Officer in early October. She previously worked for Sunderland City Council as an Emergency Planning & Response Assistant and has a physical science background.

Flu Pandemic planning

Regular liaison meetings are held in Staffordshire to plan for a possible pandemic flu emergency.

The potential for an outbreak of pandemic flu is seen by experts as a major risk to the UK.

A joint agency planning group meets every two months to consider Staffordshire's response to a potential epidemic. All Cat 1 responders attend including Primary Care Trusts, local authorities, ambulance and police. The meeting is chaired by Judith Wright with CCU officer Bill Almond (pictured) as Coordinator.



Similar meetings are held in Stoke on Trent, chaired by the city's Director of Public Health. Work has been carried out to identify vulnerable people throughout Staffordshire and to identify essential and non essential services if an emergency happened.

A new national flu pandemic plan is to be published this month and the county plan will be looked at again in the light of the new Government advice.

Avian Flu – the facts

A severe form of avian influenza or bird flu – called H5N1 – has affected poultry flocks and other birds in several countries since 2003. As of 11 September 2007, 328 people had also caught the infection as a result of close and direct contact with infected birds. Two hundred of these have subsequently died. There is no firm evidence that H5N1 has acquired the ability to pass easily from person to person. However, concerns remain that the virus might develop this ability, or that it might mix with human flu viruses to create a new virus. It is this ability of avian influenza, to change and to mix, that has given rise to the fear of a new human flu pandemic.

There have been no cases to date in the UK.

Information, including posters and leaflets are available from the Department of Health website at www.dh.gov.uk

Jargon buster: What is a Cat 1 Responder?

Category 1 responders, commonly referred to as Cat 1, include all Staffordshire unitary and district councils, the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services, hospitals, health service Primary Care Trusts and the Environment Agency.

All may have a vital role to play in an emergency and have a seat at Staffordshire Resilience Forum meetings.

Cat 2 responders include utility companies, transport providers, such as the Highways Agency and Network rail and Government bodies, including the Health and Safety Executive and the Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM).

Liaison meetings revamped

Major changes are being made to the format of the CCU liaison meetings with local authorities.

The quarterly meetings will now begin with a 10 minute question session with Director of Civil Contingencies, Andy Marshall.



The agenda for each meeting will be set by the councils. To put items forward for inclusion please contact Marie Dale (pictured) at

the CCU on 01785 898616. E-mail m.dale@staffordshirefire.gov.uk

BBC boss to address group

Sue Owen, Station Manager at BBC Radio Stoke, is to attend the November meeting of the joint agency project group on communicating with the public.

She will give a talk about the BBC's Connecting in a Crisis project.

The media group is chaired by Ian Fegan, head of communications at Staffordshire Police and attended by press officers from the emergency services, councils and health trusts.

New phone system on the way

A new satellite telephone system for selected Cat 1 responders has moved a step closer.

Site visits are planned in late October to ensure organisations are ready for the phone system to be installed.

The new system has been recommended following a series of Government sponsored presentations on resilient telecommunications in August.

The new system has been identified and will hopefully be in service before the end of the financial year.

National emergency planning exercise

A major field exercise is being planned by the Health Protection Agency's Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response. Exercise Orpheus, to be held at the Fire Service College, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire on 5 March 2008, is designed to test Ambulance and Fire & Rescue Service response to a series of major emergencies. Organisers believe the scale of the proposed exercise is unique and expect it to attract national attention. Four scenarios have been drawn up for the exercise. These include: Ambulance Urban Search and Rescue (USaR) teams working alongside Fire and Rescue colleagues to treat injured casualties trapped in a collapsed building; Ambulance Hazardous Area Response Teams (HART) and fire and rescue staff working to treat casualties in a train contaminated with the nerve gas, Sarin; decontamination of injured casualties by the ambulance service, supported by the fire service; and a hospital lockdown exercise, which will be held at a later date. Exercise Manager, Hilary Mousdale, said: "This is the first exercise of its kind in the UK and is expected to attract much interest from Government Ministers and the media." Organisers say observer places on the day will be limited. But, a conference will be held, probably in May 2008, to allow emergency planners from across the country to view filmed footage of the exercise and to benefit from feedback.

Negotiations move forward on virtual assistance centre

A decision on the siting of a Virtual Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) for Staffordshire is imminent. Negotiations are well advanced on the use of the Stoke on Call facilities at Dewsbury Road, Fenton. A virtual centre is vital in an emergency. Thousands of people rang virtual facilities in Yorkshire for support during this summer's floods. Stoke on Call is run by Stoke on Trent City Council. The virtual centre will compliment the seven sites in Staffordshire which will become HACs in the event of an emergency.



These include the new Bentilee District Centre (left), Stoke on Trent and the recently opened Burton Customer Service Centre.

Spotlight on Business Continuity Management

Major work is underway in Staffordshire to ensure vital services can bounce back following an emergency. Business Continuity Management is vital to the future of the county.

Civil Contingencies Unit officer, Jim McComisky (pictured), is working with Staffordshire County Council on making vital services resilient.

A risk assessment has identified 39 critical services at the County Council and Business Continuity Plans for the services are now being drawn up.

Jim said: "The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 says that local authorities must prepare and maintain plans to ensure they can continue to exercise their functions as far as is reasonably possible in the event of an emergency.

Staffordshire County Council has followed best practise in completing risk assessments and is now working to complete its Business Continuity Plans."

Topics covered by the plans include ICT back-up and disaster recovery, payment of creditors, children's residential homes, highways services and waste management.

Similar plans must be completed by each of the district councils in Staffordshire and by Stoke on Trent City Council.

Stuart Altman, chair of the Staffordshire Local Authorities Business Continuity Group, said: "Local authorities have a specific duty under the Civil Contingencies Act to promote Business Continuity to the commercial and voluntary sectors.

"Staffordshire's local authorities meet as a group to ensure a unified approach to Business Continuity Management."



Business Continuity Institute

The loss of, or serious disruption to, any critical process or function can have a significant impact on an organisation, in some cases threatening its survival. All organisations face a variety of threats, from natural disasters to terrorist incidents, from accidental or malicious damage to supply chain failure, from IT or power failure to loss or unavailability of key personnel.

A good source of advice for organisations and companies is the Business Continuity Institute whose website can be viewed at

www.thebci.org.

Successful training exercise for Press Officers

Forty people attended a training exercise for Press Officers from organisations involved in emergency planning.

The training was organised by the Communicating with the Public Joint Agency Project Group.

Training centred on a tabletop exercise called "Working with the media during a major incident."

The event was held at the Police Mutual Assurance Society Building in Lichfield.

Group chair Ian Fegan said: "Objectives for the day were to test the effectiveness of joint working by communications officers from organisations across the county."

"A scenario was played out involving a tornado which had led to multiple fatalities.

"The importance of a coordinated, multi-agency response to major incidents was paramount. Delegates were tested on sharing and communicating key messages. Role play included live media interviews."

Feedback from the session has been positive with a large majority of delegates rating the training as good or very good.



The communications group holds regular meetings attended by staff from the police, fire and ambulance services, local authorities and the CCU.

Health staff complete course

An emergency planning training event for health executives has been held in Rugeley.

Directors from health trusts across the county attended the session at the headquarters of the South Staffordshire Primary Care Trust in early September.

Further courses will be planned in future. To find out more contact Steve Berry or Bill Almond at the Civil Contingencies Unit, telephone 01785 898609.

Changes to major incident plan



Work is underway to revamp the county's Major Incident Plan. The Emergency Planning and the Voluntary Sector Joint

Agency Project Group is tailoring the plan to suit the requirements of each Staffordshire local authority.

Action cards will be produced for key officers to help to remind them of differing responsibilities in an emergency.

Staffordshire Prepared on-line

Work is continuing to build content on the Staffordshire Prepared website.

Latest news from the Civil Contingencies Unit, officer profiles, advice on issues such as Business Continuity Management and Avian flu is available on-line at

www.staffordshireprepared.gov.uk.

There is also a section of helpful information on emergency planning for local families.

New Staffordshire risk register to be published

A new version of the Staffordshire Community Risk Register is to be published on the Staffordshire Prepared website. Staff at the CCU have been reviewing the previous version of the register.

Their findings were sent out to Staffordshire Resilience Forum members for consultation.

The new register will be available within weeks on the website which can be accessed at www.staffordshireprepared.gov.uk

The risk register aims to reassure the people and communities of Staffordshire that potential hazards, risks and threats have been assessed and considered.

Burton evacuation plan agreed

The draft town centre evacuation plan for Burton has been agreed.

A final meeting to consider the draft plan was held on 7 September.

However, plans to test the draft plan have been delayed.

A desk top exercise scheduled for 17 October has been postponed due to the unavailability of some participants.

A new date will now be arranged.

This means that the proposed public launch of the plan on 22 November may also be put back. Meanwhile, work is underway on preparing an evacuation plan for Stoke on Trent City Centre.