



CBRN News

Issue 3 June 2005

News from the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Resilience Programme

'From the Editor...'

Welcome to the third issue of CBRN News, a Home Office quarterly publication bringing news and articles from across our key partners and stakeholders on a wide range of CBRN issues.

This newsletter is designed to be an interactive forum bringing together topical articles and interviews, as well as providing the opportunity for our stakeholders to air their views through a letters and questions section.

This issue sees the introduction of our 'Regional Focus' pages, bringing you articles and updates from across the country, and which we hope will also include contributions from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the future.

We are interested in receiving your views and suggestions, as well as any ideas and contributions for future issues of CBRN News to the following email address: cbrenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk, and would like to thank those who have already contributed.

You can also access this publication, along with further information on CBRN issues, via the UK Resilience website at www.ukresilience.info/cbrn.

Exercise Atlantic Blue



From the 4 to 8 April this year, the UK took part for the first time in a transatlantic counter terrorism exercise with the US and Canada, designed to test simultaneous responses to internationally linked terrorist incidents.

Code-named 'Atlantic Blue' in the UK, the exercise formed part of the Home Office's National Exercise Programme and, hosted by the Metropolitan Police Service, was an ambitious project involving over a year of intensive planning, and more than 2,500 personnel as well as over 200 national and international observers.

Whilst the exercise in the US was a live full scale exercise, the UK and Canada opted for 'command post' exercises (or CPX). For the UK this allowed us to focus entirely on strategic-level communication issues both domestically and internationally, testing our response procedures and mechanisms in the face of a catastrophic incident involving chemical and biological materials, occurring both overseas and in London.

Although the exercise itself is over, the evaluation process is now in full swing, with all those involved contributing strategic and operational lessons learnt from a local, national and international basis, that will inform the full post-exercise report, due to be completed later this year.

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Exercise Director quotes...



Canada – Exercise Director Jo-Ann Schwarz, *Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC)*

“The ATLANTIC BLUE, TOPOFF 3, TRIPLE PLAY exercises provided a unique opportunity to test our mutual response to a CBRN incident; and in Canada’s case, allowed us to validate protocols, authorities and coordination mechanisms of our National Emergency Response System (NERS) both domestically and internationally.

“We severely stressed the system in response to the consequence management issues arising from the scenario and it proved itself viable. We will be undertaking certain refinements to strengthen it even more, but it clearly proved its worth.

“In addition, there was significant proactive enforcement activity in the lead up to and through the exercise period, and public health investigative and preventative work took us beyond consequence management into mitigative activity, advancing early recovery and resilience.”



US – Exercise Director, Jim Kish, *Department for Homeland Security (DHS)*

“As terrorism is a global issue, we must work with our allies around the world to become better prepared to deal with its threats and impacts.

“Terrorist attacks affecting important, privately held infrastructure will require a coordinated international response.

“AB/T3/TP allowed three nations to exercise not only an international response, it involved an element of international prevention, the sharing of intelligence and investigative information.

“In planning and executing the exercises the planners of the three nations developed personnel relationships. They came to understand the policy and procedural issues relevant to the other two nations. This is important in understanding the international impact of a domestic issue.

“Actions taken from the ‘lessons learned’ will improve mutual prevention and response capabilities across all three nations.”



UK – Exercise Director, Ch Supt Alan Webb, *Metropolitan Police Service*

“Ex AB provided us with the opportunity to test how well we communicate internationally in the event of a major incident, in a way which hadn’t been done before.

“The exercise also provided us with a very good test of our ability to respond to a catastrophic incident in London and there are a number of strategies and tactics that will be revisited as a result.

“An evaluation process is now under way by all the agencies that participated on an international, national and regional level, and we look forward to applying the key lessons learnt not only within future exercises, but essentially to enhance our response and recovery capabilities in the event of an incident on this scale.”

The pseudo media effect

In any large emergency or major incident the media plays a vital role in determining what information the public receives and when, as well as providing a running commentary on how the incident is being handled both politically and on the ground.

In order to convey some of this pressure within an exercise scenario, a 'pseudo media' team was brought together tasked with producing in-

exercise broadcast coverage of the events as they unfolded.

This is nothing new, but for the first time an online news site (VBCNews.com) was also produced by the Home Office in order to provide an alternative pseudo media news source, and designed to add further pressure to players, while providing greater accessibility of international news coverage to all involved in the exercise.

Roles reversed – a pseudo journalist's account...

"As someone who normally works in a policy team, the experience of working as part of the VBCNews.com team on Atlantic Blue really highlighted how important it is for the media to be kept fully informed of the situation in an emergency.

"Working alongside the web-team, we were able to upload articles onto the website within a short time of an 'incident' occurring; this meant that any shortcomings in information or the length of time it took to receive responses were quickly apparent not only to us, but to anyone using the site as a news source.

"It was also clear how important accuracy in the reports and the briefing from the various key players is in providing information and reassurance to the 'public'.

"In terms of the exercise, the online tool was also very helpful in reflecting the perceived media and public response to how the incidents were being handled, and in consultation with Exercise Control we were able to drive player action accordingly."

News updates

While the exercise took place, VBCNews made regular pseudo news updates on screens situated around the site, with real news being shown between pseudo broadcasts. This provided the feeling of round-the-clock coverage.

The VBC website – as with real news websites – allowed a varied spread of stories and points of view, but had to be deliberately accessed and logged into. This also allowed records to be kept of how the site was used. Over the week the site was visited 2,200 times, with 47,070 page views and an average length of visit of 26 minutes. This reliance on technology during the exercise showed the need for strong IT and information systems during exercises and in the event of a real incident.

The exercise took place over 5 days. On the VBC website 152 articles were written that covered subjects as wide ranging as the weather forecasts to latest updates on the 'terrorist' events.

International coverage

To reflect the international focus of the exercise, our pseudo media team linked up daily with the US and Canada in live 'down the line' interviews and news clips.

The strong co-operation between the UK and the US on the pseudo media allowed information to be fully shared, and website articles to be jointly used encouraging the international perspective of the exercise to be conveyed to players on both sides of the Atlantic.

News from the frontline – latest police developments in CBRN

The ACPO CBRN team is currently very busy with an increasing range of projects. These include;

- Work underway with the G8 countries in developing a document of accepted common standards of counter-CBRN capability. This work has been overseen by the G8 Law Enforcement Sub Group Chaired by Mr Bill Hughes (Director General Designate of SOCA – the Serious and Organised Crime Agency) as a Hazardous Agents (CBRN) work stream, and should be finalised in time for presentation at the G8 Summit in Scotland at the beginning of July. The first piece of work of this type, it looks at incident response all the way through from planning to post event procedures, and sets out what the G8 countries consider to be the very minimum they would expect to provide through the life of an event. The document has been consulted on with UK stakeholders through the Home Office CBRN forum before being made available for July. This will be followed by further work during the UK G8 presidency, looking in detail at common thematic issues that all nation participants want to address.
- A CBRN procedures Aide Memoire for all police officers and staff – whether CBRN trained and kitted or not – has recently been produced as just one part of the continuing process of awareness training, and copies are in the process of being distributed from the Police National CBRN Centre at Winterbourne Gunner to all forces in the UK. Electronic versions are also going on police forces' internal Intranet sites. Although it is directed at police, much of the advice and procedures are generic, and complement the advice and procedures available to other emergency responders and health professionals.
- A new CBRN awareness DVD is being prepared through the Centre and a contract to develop this important item has been placed. It is hoped that this product, which will also complement command level training, will be available later in the year. It should also assist with distance learning for officers and staff attending future courses.
- The target of having 5% of police officer strength equipped and trained for CBRN work, which was achieved last year, is being maintained this year with an active conversion programme to train and equip CBRN officers with the CR1 (Civil Responder) suit which is the new generation of PPE. The objective is to complete that training by the end of the current financial year. All this training is being delivered with the assistance of six extra staff places funded by the Home Office.
- Further work is being done at the Centre to update joint Command Band training and a prototype interactive system is being developed with a Hampshire company who have much experience in international fire service training systems. This should be available by the end of the summer.
- As part of the policing operation for security and safety at the G8 Summit meeting in Gleneagles this July, CBRN equipped and trained officers from England and Wales are being made available to assist their Scottish colleagues.
- Meanwhile, as notified in the last edition of CBRN News, Mr Colin Smith, formerly ACPO CBRN policy lead and Assistant Chief Constable of Hampshire, has gone out to Basra as Senior UK Police Adviser. His place as ACPO lead has now been taken by Mr Richard Stowe, Assistant Chief Constable (Operations) of Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. Mr Stowe will also be a member of the ACPO TAM (Terrorism and Allied Matters) and Emergency Procedures Committees.

Government Decontamination Service

The Government Decontamination Service (GDS) is part of the Government's commitment to building resilience to deal with the consequences of a range of emergencies. It has been developed as part of the cross-government CBRN Resilience Programme, led by the Home Office.

The intention to set up the GDS was announced on 25 January 2005, by Elliot Morley, Minister for the Environment. "The new Decontamination Service will have a UK-wide remit to help those responsible for clearing up after a CBRN incident, such as local authorities, to make sure they have considered and planned for decontamination.

It will also ensure that if there were such an incident, authorities would be able to call upon a carefully assessed panel of specialist companies to carry out the decontamination operations." The Service is planned to be set up as an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) in summer 2005, but will serve the whole of central and local Government on the issues within its remit.

To ensure the UK has a highly effective decontamination capability, the GDS will fulfil four principal functions, following a CBRN or significant HAZMAT incident:

- 1** Provide high quality advice and guidance to responsible authorities during their contingency planning for CBRN or significant HAZMAT incidents, and regularly help validate the arrangements that are in place.
- 2** Assess the ability of companies in the private sector to carry out decontamination operations, and ensure that responsible authorities have ready access to those services if the need arises.
- 3** Work, through research and collaboration, to improve decontamination technologies and techniques.
- 4** Finally, the Service will be the Government's eyes and ears on the national capability for decontamination and will be a centre of advice in the event of a major release of CBRN or significant HAZMAT materials.



The process of ensuring we have access to the necessary expertise has recently begun. On 15 March, the GDS advertised the first stage of the procurement process to establish the specialist supplier framework which will form the backbone of the GDS (in the Official Journal of the EU, reference number 2005/S 54-052379, or contact the GDS team at gds.framework@defra.gsi.gov.uk).

There has already been a good degree of interest. Concurrently, the GDS contracts team is developing both the next stage tender documentation and the supporting technical statement of requirements. We aim to conclude the procurement exercise and placing the first set of contracts in October 2005. We will keep everybody up to date with progress over the coming months.

The GDS is keen to engage fully with our principal customers and stakeholders. We recently ran a 12-week consultation exercise, aimed primarily at local authorities and emergency planners, which enabled individuals and organisations the opportunity to provide their views on the role, functioning and capabilities of the GDS. The outcome of the consultation document will be published on the website shortly.

For more information on the GDS please see: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/risk/cbrn/gds/index.htm> or email the team at gds@defra.gsi.gov.uk

The CBRN Resilience Programme

In response to the increased threat over recent years from ‘unconventional’ acts of terrorism, the Government has been working hard to enhance the UK’s capability and resilience for dealing with an incident involving CBRN materials.

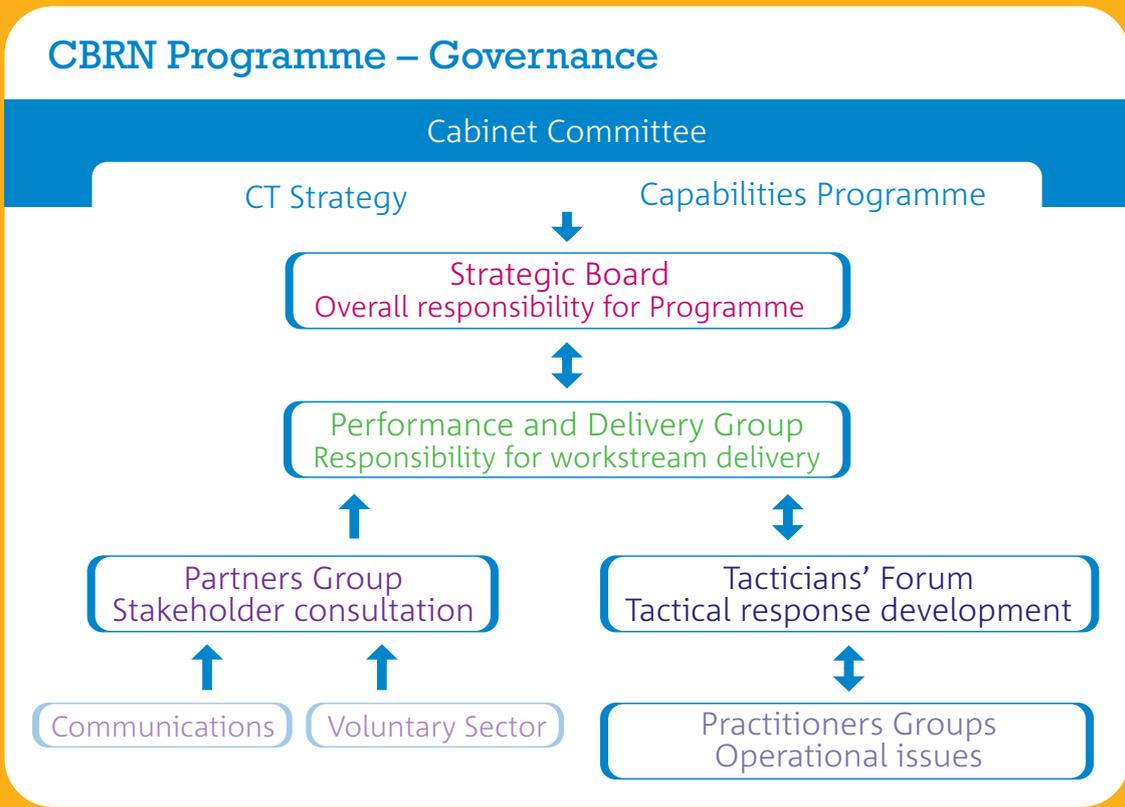
Many government departments and partner agencies are involved in developing expertise around CBRN issues, both directly and indirectly. Whatever the cause of the incident, whether accidental or deliberate, the response in terms of detection, identification, personal protective equipment and decontamination procedures will often be the same.

In order to bring together this expertise, the CBRN Resilience Programme was established as part of the Government’s Capability Programme in October 2001, and is led by the Home Office. Its main aims are:

- To make it harder for terrorists to achieve their goals; and
- To ensure that in the event of a terrorist incident the response from all concerned will be quick and effective, with the result that lives are saved, and the impact on property and the environment is minimised.

Since the Programme’s establishment, much progress has been made in increasing the UK’s capability to respond to a CBRN incident. The following examples of published guidance outline many of these areas of progress:

- Strategic National Guidance – the Decontamination of People Exposed to Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) Substances or Material (second edition)*
- The Release of Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) Substances or Material – Guidance for Local Authorities*
- Strategic National Guidance; the Decontamination of Buildings and Infrastructure Exposed to CBRN Substances or Material*
- The Decontamination of the Open Environment exposed to Chemical, Biological Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) Substances or material – Strategic National Guidance*
- Public Health Response to Deliberate release of Biological and Chemical Agents*
- Taking Sensible Precautions – HSE Guidance on Biological/Chemical Threats by Post.*



To drive forward the CBRN Resilience programme, the former CBRN Programme Board has now been reconstituted with two new bodies created: the Strategic Board and the Performance and Delivery Group, which plan to meet on alternate months.

The Strategic Board (chaired by Helen Bayne, Home Office) is made up of senior representatives from all the key delivery partner organisations, and will be responsible for the overall programme direction and prioritisation.

The Performance and Delivery Group (chaired by John Jones, also Home Office) reports to the Strategic Group, and comprises representatives from all the main delivery partners. The Group will be responsible for generating proposals for new work as well as monitoring Programme performance.

An important extension of the programme is the Tacticians' Forum, made up of the Emergency Services and Government Departments to consider and resolve immediate response and tactical issues in dealing with CBRN incidents. Key is the joint working of the Emergency Services, and

ensuring clarity between them on joint objectives, terminology and training.

To encourage communication and co-operation across the Programme, we have a number of tools including this newsletter, the Government's UK Resilience website and a working group referred to as the 'CBRN Partners Forum'. This group brings together a wide range of stakeholders enabling those organisations that need to prepare for, or respond to, a CBRN incident can share information and concerns, and hear about and comment on central Government work on CBRN resilience.

Supporting the programme is a CBRN Science and Technology Programme providing the models and necessary evidence that forms the basis of policy and planning [see inset box]. In this way the CBRN Resilience Programme can focus its resources on developing an effective response capability to current and evolving threat involving CBRN materials.

Any enquiries about the CBRN Resilience Programme can be directed to the following email address: cbrnenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

CBRN Science and Technology Programme

The Home Office's CBRN Science and Technology Programme consists of a range of research and development projects to improve UK resilience towards CBRN terrorism. It is a three-year programme with funding to start in FY2005.

In January 2005 the Home Office organised a CBRN bidders' conference in London for the purpose of generating proposals for scientific research and development projects. Delegates to the conference came from private industry, academia and government laboratories. Some 550-initial proposals were submitted; 170 of these have been taken forward to a second stage of the evaluation, the results of which will be available in mid-June 2005. The short-listed projects will be down selected to produce a programme valued at approx. £10 million.

The proposals cover a broad range of CBRN capability gaps including aspects of detection technology, decontamination, medical countermeasures, modelling systems, waste management and agricultural terrorism. It is hoped that contracts for selected projects will be placed from the end of June.

A second call for proposals for FY 2006 will be made later in the year and the whole competition process repeated on an annual basis.

For more information and guidance on CBRN Science and Technology, please visit the Home Office Terrorism website www.homeoffice.gov.uk/terrorism.

Exercise Horizon 2 & 3

Helen Braithwaite, Deputy Regional Resilience Director, W. Mids

Given the scale of Exercise Horizon (held in the West Midlands last July and featured in the last issue of CBRN News), it was not possible or practical on the day to fully test all aspects of the response. Two key elements that were intentionally excluded from the exercise were:

- Gold Control – Although a notional gold control was set up at West Midlands Police HQ, this operated as a “debating cell” keeping an overview of exercise progress and providing advice & guidance to the Exercise Director when requested, rather than having a direct strategic input to exercise play.
- Recovery Phase – The post decontamination elements of the scenario, such as movement of casualties to rest centres.

During the exercise de-briefing period, the West Midlands Regional Resilience Forum decided that it would benefit all response agencies if the issues around these elements were explored by two further “tabletop” exercises using the Horizon scenario as the basis for discussion.

The scenario unfolds

An element of continuity was maintained by the NEC providing the venue for both of the exercises and by developing the original Exercise Horizon scenario, involving the release of a toxic substance during a major national art exhibition, but for the two subsequent exercises the numbers of people requiring treatment was increased significantly to enhance the realism and scope of the multi-agency response that would be required.

Exercise Horizon 2 took place on the 25 January this year and was developed as part of the programme to review the key aspects of the recovery phase, focussing primarily on the Local Authority response to the post decontamination issues raised by the Horizon scenario such as transport of casualties, inter-agency liaison and activation of rest centres.

Exercise Horizon 3 “Strategic Command & Control” took place on the 14 March and was developed to exercise regional agencies at the



“Gold” level in response to a variety of issues such as intra and inter-agency notification and escalation of the incident response, deployment of resources and capability, media issues and consequence management.

Both exercises benefited from a wide-ranging representation of exercise players from across the West Midlands region, including local authorities, the emergency services, the military and the regional health sector. An “experts panel” was also convened for both of the exercises, providing support to the syndicate groups as the exercise scenarios developed.

A number of keynote speakers attended Exercise Horizon 3 to provide strategic input on a variety of subjects. These included a representative from the BBC to talk about the principles of “Connecting in a Crisis” and the BBC’s Public Service Broadcaster role, the newly formed Government Decontamination Service on their remit in post-incident recovery, and HM Coroner for Surrey and Coroner of The Queen’s Household on consequence management issues.

Lessons learned

At the time of writing formal de-brief procedures for Horizons 2 and 3 are ongoing, none-the-less both exercises have raised a number of key learning points or issues where further discussion and where appropriate, joint decisions between agencies will be required.



These include:

- Sustaining the response, especially where the incident will be for an extended duration, ensuring there is sufficient turnover of staff at the appropriate level to maintain the quality and effectiveness of the response.
- Initiating at an early stage strategic planning for the recovery phase thereby ensuring a more holistic approach to the incident response.
- Effectively handling the transition of lead responsibility from the emergency services to the local authority for the recovery phase.

- Communicating with the media and ensuring a consistency of messages at the national, regional and local levels including the possibility of disseminating information via community leaders to help overcome cultural or religious barriers.

The completion of Exercise Horizon 2 & 3 marks the end of over 12 months of effort for a number of regional stakeholders and their organisations, and the Planning Team would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in the planning, preparation and execution of all the Horizon exercises that have taken place.

Exercise ‘Gold Top’

Ted Vary, Regional Resilience Director, S East

On 10 March this year, had you visited the Metropolitan Police Sports Club at Imber Court in Surrey, you would have discovered one hundred senior emergency managers from all five GOLD co-ordinating groups across the South East Region, gathered together to take part in Exercise GOLD TOP; a National first.

GOLD TOP was conceived to examine how the links between all responding agencies might work in a multi-agency, multi-GOLD scenario, and how they might link to the Region and the Centre.

The tabletop exercise, planned in partnership between the Region and the Home Office, was designed to identify any changes needed to traditional procedures to enable this type of response, especially in view of the greater emphasis on working in partnership that the Civil Contingencies Act and the Regional Civil Contingencies Committees now require.

In terms of exercise format, the five area ‘Golds’ each occupied their own table and syndicate rooms. There was also a Regional table to examine the contribution of a Regional Civil Contingencies Committee, and a National table to provide the COBR input. The syndicate rooms were all

connected by secure telephone links to enable cross-GOLD communications and local/regional/national links. Script consultants and Facilitators for the event were David Buckenham and Peter Clarke of Paladin Crisis Management Limited, and Directing Staff came from GOSE, TPU, Metropolitan Police, the RAF and Surrey EPU.

In his opening address, the Regional Director Paul Martin said:

“We are treading new ground, especially in relation to the way that the Centre might manage a multi-site scenario and the place of the Region in all this.

“A key purpose of this exercise will be to sharpen our awareness of when it will be appropriate, indeed desirable, for the regional layer to be invoked, and conversely when it would only complicate matters which are best resolved by simpler means.”

The post-exercise reports show overwhelmingly that the event met its defined aim and objectives, and that many useful lessons were learned and new problems identified, and the exercise concept will now be rolled out nationally on an annual basis. GOSE would like to thank all who helped to make it so, and to wish GOLD TOP bon voyage.

Regional Resilience Teams explained

Regional Resilience Teams are small teams of civil servants in each of the nine Government Offices for the Regions. They are there to support the Regional Resilience Forums and to act as a key interface between Central Government and local responders on resilience issues including CBRN.

What is a Regional Resilience forum?

The forums bring together key players within each region, such as the emergency services, central government agencies, and local authorities. The forum provides multi agency strategic direction in protection planning in each region.

The role of the forum is to promote communication across and between the regions; between the regions and central government, and between the region and its local responders. Another role of the forum is to support planning for a response capability.

To support the work of the Regional Resilience Forum, regions have developed a number of specialist sub-groups that report to the forum. The focus of these sub-groups varies from region to region which means resilience planning remains relevant to the local area.

In Yorkshire and Humber region for example there are six sub-groups looking at CBRN, Health, Transport, Utilities, Mass Fatalities and multi-agency resilience.

So what happens in an incident?

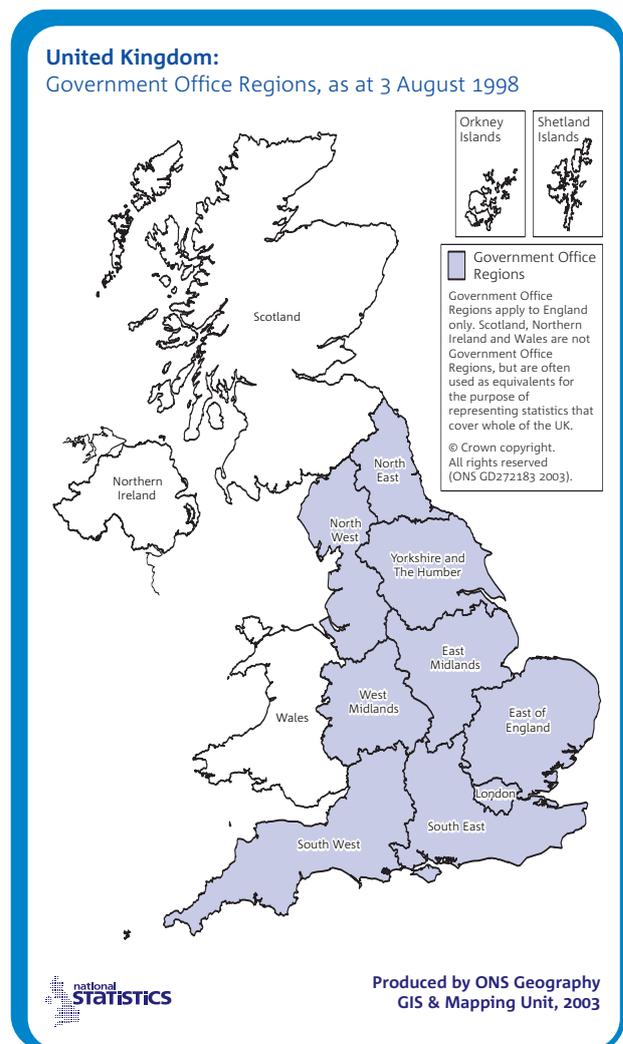
The Regional Resilience Forum is there to improve the co-ordination of planning and ensure there is the best possible response to an incident.

In the event of an incident, the emergency services and local responders would respond and a Regional Civil Contingencies Committee (RCCC) would be set up to coordinate the response at a regional level.

Many of the organisations represented on the forum would attend the RCCC and others would be invited to attend depending on the nature of the incident.

Both the Regional Resilience Forum (including its sub-groups) and the Regional Civil Contingencies Committee provide the platform for a regional role in both planning and response in relation to civil contingencies.

For more information on regional issues go to www.ukresilience.gov.uk





ON THE SPOT



Interview with Bruce Mann for CBRN News

Thanks for agreeing to be our third “on the spot” interviewee – can I start by asking you to tell us a bit about your background and your current role.

I've worked at the Ministry of Defence for 25 years, in a variety of roles but with a heavy emphasis on policy and planning, as well as in OD Secretariat in the Cabinet Office before this post, and in the Treasury for 12 months. I became the head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, which sits within the Cabinet Office on 1st September last year. The role includes responsibility for the identification, assessment and if necessary response to any potential disruptive challenge; building better UK resilience through the capabilities programme; and the Emergency Planning College at Easingwold near York.

And what is the role of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat?

The Secretariat's role is to ensure that the UK's resilience against any disruptive challenges is improved, by detecting, preventing and if necessary handling the challenge, and by leading work to build better in-place capabilities we can call on in a crisis. The CBRN programme which is led by the Home Office forms a very important strand of the capabilities programme, and is an area where great progress has been made.

What is the aim of the Civil Contingencies Act?

It is local responders that will manage the operational response of an incident, not “Whitehall Departments”, and the Act aims to ensure that these local, regional, and national responders carry out risk assessment and emergency planning; have an active dialogue

with each other; and are clear about their own and others' roles in the event an incident so that they can work together effectively

Can you tell us a bit about the Civil Contingencies Act roadshows, what are the aims of the roadshows and who are they aimed at?

The regional roadshows took place in January this year and were very well attended. The aim of the roadshows was to publicise the guidance that accompanies the Act. The audiences were very diverse and included Regional Resilience Teams, the emergency services, Local Authorities, utility companies, transport companies and the voluntary sector.

Discussion at the roadshows focused in particular on how responders could best fulfil the requirements inside the Act to carry out risk assessment, and the process involved in establishing and operating Local Resilience Forums.

As a result of these useful discussions and the feedback we got from them, I believe we now have an improved package of measures in place.

Did you play an active part in the roadshows?

Yes, I attended and introduced most of the events, but I was also involved behind the scenes in the strategic planning of the roadshows.

What would you personally like to achieve in the next 12 to 24 months?

I would like to know that all areas of the UK are better prepared to respond to an incident – without I hope activation of that response ever being necessary.

Letters & Questions

More information please!

How will the UK Presidency work with the wide range of civil protection matters, especially the issues related to prevention and preparedness?

Lars Hedström

Deputy Director General,
Swedish Emergency Management Agency

An early priority in our Presidency is to reach agreement on a programme for protecting critical national infrastructures. To this end we have arranged a seminar this June in Brussels, where we will aim to agree common approaches, including policy and regulation.

We are also aiming to ensure that resilience planning is realistic and takes more account of assessing risks. Horizon scanning and risk

assessments are essential for identifying capability requirements across the EU.

Meanwhile the Cabinet Office will chair the EU Civil Protection Working Party (PROCIV) for the duration of the EU Presidency. The Committee has responsibility for advising the Council on civil protection and response in the event of natural, technological and man made disasters. It is also responsible for oversight of the Community's Civil Protection Mechanism through which the EU response in the event of a disaster is channelled and to which requests for assistance from EU partners come.

Improvements will focus on better using the EU's resources and management structures to meet the needs of and prepare for a rapid response in the event of a disaster.

What provision for people with disabilities such as heart conditions and diabetes is there within the Emergency Services' decontamination arrangements – at the moment it seems that all personal items will be removed, but won't this be counter-productive?

Peter Streets

Emergency Planning Office, Coventry.

This is an important issue; it is important to bear in mind that medication exposed to CBRN agents could pose a threat to the health of the patient,

and the containers in which the medication is carried would be as contaminated and therefore as dangerous as any other personal item such as keys, phones or wallets.

Although it may seem an alarming prospect, the medicines should therefore be surrendered and arrangements made for the patient to be supplied with substitute medication. This would be co-ordinated through the Ambulance Service at the scene or NHS staff if the decontamination is taking place at hospital or carers at Rest/SR centres.

Correction

We would like to correct the telephone number provided in last issue's article 'Police CBRN work gathering pace' and apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused our readers. The PNCB Number is 01980 611220.

We welcome your views, comments and suggestions for future additions and articles

Please email us at the following address: cbrnenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Coming Up...

Look out in our August issue for an article on the Faith Community Guidelines, a new 'Going Global' international page, our next 'Regional Focus' page, and an 'On the Spot' interview with the new ACPO CBRN lead, ACC Richard Stowe.