

# Developing a Community Emergency Plan

A guide for communities at risk



**FLOOD ALERT**



**FLOOD WARNING**



**SEVERE FLOOD  
WARNING**



**FLOODS  
DESTROY  
BE PREPARED**

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“Who will check that the vulnerable are okay?”

“Will the responders know what issues are facing them?”

“It’d save everyone a lot of time and discomfort if we could use our own resources”

“Why don’t they use some local knowledge when responding in my area?”

# COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN TOOLKIT

**You could be one of the communities across the country who are organising themselves in the event of an emergency. This toolkit describes a method that you can follow to help prepare for an emergency in a way that meets the needs of your community.**

**It will help identify the key tools that you will need, local people, local knowledge and local resources.**

## Start Planning – Ten Steps

This document has been produced to assist communities develop their own Emergency Plan through a simple 10 step approach.

It needs you to work out what could happen and then what you might want to prepare for an emergency.

The Community Emergency Plan should;

- Contain information on key roles
- Outline simple processes
- Be regularly checked and updated

For the plan to be successful a core group of people are required to start the plan, it is important to encourage a

wide range of volunteers to be involved with different backgrounds and experience. The plan is your communities plan – but Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit (EPU) would be happy to help and advise. Contact the EPU on 01642 232442 or [Emergency.Planning@hartlepool.gov.uk](mailto:Emergency.Planning@hartlepool.gov.uk)

## TEN STEPS

ONE	Working Together
TWO	Organising the work
THREE	Knowing the unknowns
FOUR	Identifying skills and resources
FIVE	Legal issues
SIX	Organising key facilities
SEVEN	Keeping in touch
EIGHT	Activating your Emergency Plan
NINE	Taking Control
TEN	Testing your plans



## STEP ONE WORKING TOGETHER

**To prepare a Community Plan voluntary input will be required from across the community, gathering local knowledge, skills and resources. Community plans have been produced by town councils, villages at risk of flooding, neighbours and voluntary organisations.**

An open meeting can take a variety of formats from an informal “drop in” where small numbers of people can view and discuss information about emergency planning, such as this toolkit, to a full scale public meeting.

Thought needs to be given to how the event will be publicised, where it will be held, what information and materials may be required and who should be invited.

The event can be used to talk about shared concerns, review this toolkit and decide whether there is support for the preparation of an emergency plan

The meeting can provide an opportunity to identify potential members of a Community Emergency Group, a set of volunteers prepared to work together to develop a local plan.

### **Key skills for the community response group:**

- Local knowledge
- Organisational skills
- Communication skills
- Leadership
- Ability to work in partnership

### **There are lots of valuable skills within the community you could approach:**

- Local residents
- Members of town / borough council
- Members of local organisations / voluntary groups
- Members from Neighbourhood Watch
- Representatives from schools
- Representatives from the local church or faith group
- Potential Volunteers
- Emergency Services
- Local business representatives/ traders
- Care home representatives
- Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit

### **What should be discussed?**

- How your community would cope in an emergency, and the benefits of planning ahead.
- How the toolkit can help, who is willing to help prepare the plan.

# THE TEN STEPS

ONE	Working Together	SIX	Organising key facilities
TWO	Organising the work	SEVEN	Keeping in touch
THREE	Knowing the unknowns	EIGHT	Activating your Emergency Plan
FOUR	Identifying skills and resources	NINE	Taking Control
FIVE	Legal issues	TEN	Testing your plans

## STEP TWO ORGANISING THE WORK

### Coordination

Coordination is the role of a Community Emergency Group. Members should be a number of volunteers with a good range of local knowledge. The group should be led by a Community Emergency Coordinator and with a suitable deputy with the time and ability to guide the work of the group, and the development of the Emergency Plan. Consideration should be given to involving Councillors' and local representatives of the Emergency Services, including any local Voluntary Organisations.

### Media

A further function of the group is to liaise with the media. Identify a suitable person to lead in this role who communicates well, can manage questions and stay focused under pressure. Work together to agree what key messages the community wishes to communicate and work with media representatives to help the flow of information.

### Community Emergency Group

The Community Emergency Group will be the lead organisation in the community for working through the 10 step process and for leading the community's response

should an emergency arise. It may need to meet on a number of occasions in order to work through the steps in a comprehensive and structured way.

It should be identified where the group will meet, and prepare an agenda or programme for its meeting so that all areas are covered. It is essential that meetings are recorded and that good written records are kept.

Step 10 in the planning process involves regularly reviewing and testing the Community Emergency Plan, this and its responsibility for directing local action in an emergency means that the group has important responsibilities that extend beyond the drafting of the emergency plan itself.



## STEP THREE KNOWING THE UNKNOWNNS

### Assessing the risks

One of the main tasks for the Community Emergency Group is to think about what types of event may occur, providing some context for the group's work in emergency planning. Cleveland Community Risk Register could be a good starting point and indicates things that may trigger an emergency. The Community Risk Register can be accessed at:

[www.clevelandemergencyplanning.info](http://www.clevelandemergencyplanning.info)

### Consider various types of risks

Local representatives of the emergency services should be consulted, along with local knowledge of members of your group and other volunteers. **For example you should think about and record:**

- **Social Risks**

Particular groups of local people who may be vulnerable in the face of an emergency.

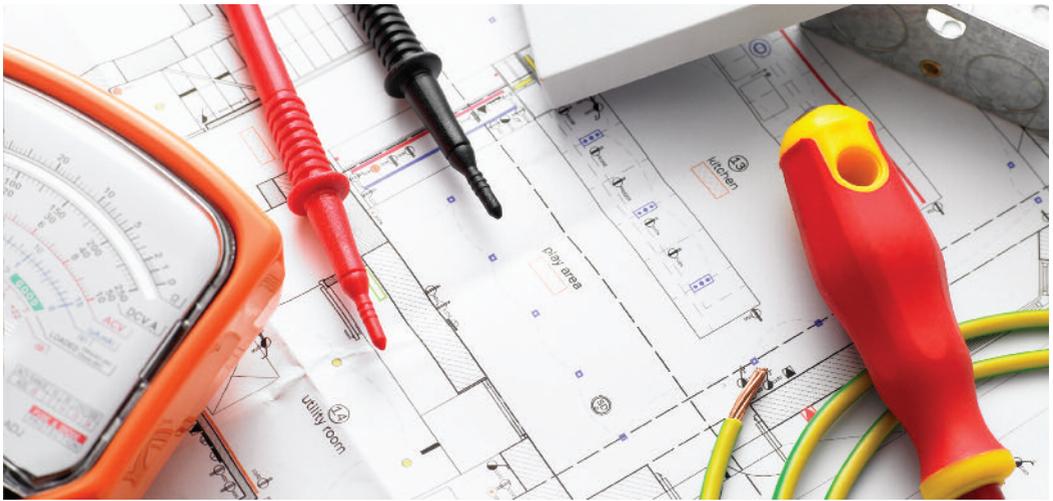
- **Environmental Risks**

Areas that flood regularly, vulnerable sites of heritage or environmental interest.

- **Infrastructure Risks**

Major traffic routes, bridges, industrial sites that are possible sources of emergency problems.

Do not try to plan in detail for each specific risk - focus on identifying the people, resources and facilities that area has available and utilise flexibly as a situation arises and changes.



## STEP FOUR

# IDENTIFYING SKILLS & RESOURCES

**All communities have access to a range of local skills, knowledge, physical resources and support organisations that can be mobilised in the event of an emergency. To be able to act promptly and effectively in an emergency is having identified these in advance.**

**There are three main topics to research:**

**Who is good at what?**

Every community has people who have helped in the past or who have the skills that would be particularly useful. These will include local farmers, health

professionals, first responders, builders, electricians, search and rescue team members and others with specialist skills and training.

**What resources do we have?**

There are likely to be a variety of vehicles, tools, machinery, equipment, and resources of food, water and construction materials.

**How will we communicate?**

Where in the community are there good telephone communications and a strong mobile phone signal. How might these be affected in an emergency and could you need alternatives?

All information should be recorded. Contact details will be required of everyone involved. You will need an understanding of the terms on which you might be able to utilise equipment and materials. Think about how volunteers will be best used i.e. staffing the local control centre, door knocking etc.

Consider whether you need to put in place agreements with the individuals and organisations concerned, relating to their availability in an emergency.

Consideration needs to be given to where to store equipment, so that is secure and accessible when needed, also identify who is responsible for their security and maintenance.



## STEP FIVE LEGAL ISSUES

### **Resolving legal issues in advance**

The use of resources, buildings and vehicles in an emergency may not be covered by their present insurance.

There may be health and safety concerns about volunteers using unfamiliar equipment. You may incur costs for premises hire, materials, etc that will need to be paid. These issues should not be left until the emergency takes place because they may result in real constraints on what community members can actually do.

### **Issues to consider**

Planning ahead will help to minimize any problems of this type. **There are a number of practical things that you should be able to do:**

#### **Buildings and equipment insurance**

Liaise with the owners of buildings and vehicles about any constraints that may arise from their insurance and see if it is possible to remove these, perhaps by notifying the insurer.

#### **Equipment use**

Think about the types of equipment that might be used by volunteers, and the circumstances in which they will do this. Prepare a risk assessment of the activity to

help identify any training or ways of working that will minimize the risks identified.

### **Insurance for volunteers**

Consider whether you need insurance for local volunteers, it is possible that an existing local organisation or an organisation of which the volunteer is already a member, already has appropriate cover.

### **Costs**

Consider the costs of any emergency action that you take, e.g. room hire, materials, etc.



## STEP SIX

# ORGANISING KEY FACILITIES

### Facilities needed

Thought should be given in advance to what facilities are required to manage an emergency.

Facilities that are often found necessary:

### Local control centre

Somewhere the Community Emergency Group and representatives of the Emergency Services can meet to review the situation and plan and coordinate their actions. This may be a good sized room where people can get round a table and talk. Good communications are at the heart of responding to an emergency situation, reliable telephone communication is a must.

### Rest centre

A place which people can be moved, to spend the night and be fed if they have to leave their homes.

A village or school hall may be able to provide what is needed:

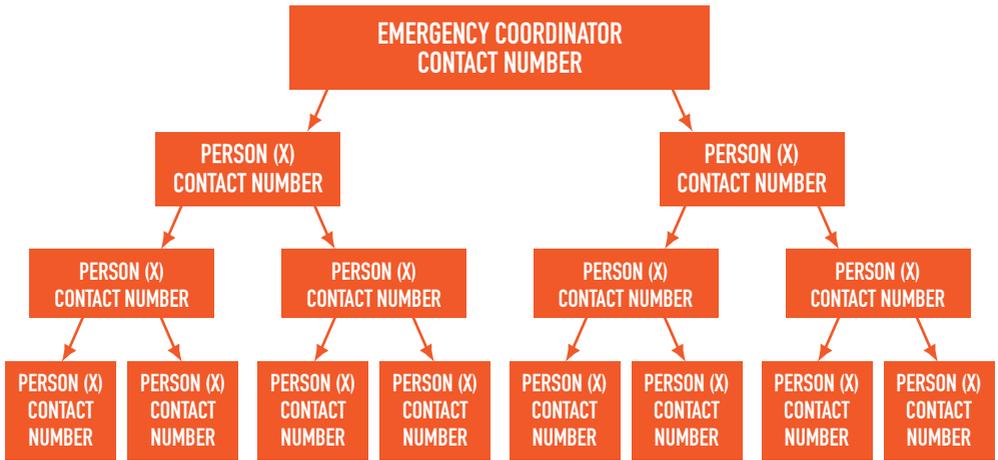
- space for people to sit
- secure storage for their belongings
- toilets
- kitchen
- sufficient space for people to sleep

### Issues to consider

Check the Rest Centre plan which is held at Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit, to see whether this has already been identified as suitable premises in the community. If not, try to pick locations

that are unlikely to be directly affected by an emergency (e.g. unlikely to flood) but which are readily accessible to as much of the community as possible. The decision to open a rest centre is usually undertaken by the relevant local authority.

Think also about reserve facilities in the event that those you first identify are not available when required and how things would be managed in the selected premises if mains services are not available. A generator may be required. Talk to those responsible for the identified buildings, secure an agreement in principal to their use and have plans in place for how you will use them should an emergency arise.



## STEP SEVEN KEEPING IN TOUCH

### Identify key people

In developing plans a significant number of people will be identified who will be important in the response, people with significant resources, skills or knowledge, local volunteers and professional advisers.

It is essential that contact details are recorded. Be comprehensive and make sure that the information is readily accessible by key people such as the members of the Community Emergency Group and the Emergency Services.

### Telephone tree / Cascade

It should also be planned how you will mobilise these people when an emergency occurs. This is usually achieved using a telephone 'tree' or cascade in which each person telephones two or three others.

In designing your cascade you may want to divide it into several teams so that only the people needed at the time are mobilised.

The communications plan should be backed up with a plan "B" that can operate should any of the key people in the tree not be available.

### Data protection

In preparing records it will need to be considered whether they are subject to the provisions of Data Protection legislation and, if so, how you may best comply with these. Consider that data may need to be registered with the information commissioner and have procedures in place to restrict the access to information to specific individuals and for specific purposes.



### FLOOD ALERT



### FLOOD WARNING



### SEVERE FLOOD WARNING

Flooding is possible.  
Be prepared.

- Be prepared.
- Prepare your grab bag of essential items.
- Monitor local water levels on the Environment Agency website.

Flooding is expected. Immediate action required

- Protect yourself, your family and help others.
- Move family, pets and valuables to a safe place.
- Keep your grab bag ready
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if it is safe to do so.
- Put flood protection equipment in place.

Severe flooding.  
Danger to life.

- Stay in a safe place with a means of escape.
- Be ready should you need to evacuate your home.
- Co-operate with the emergency services.
- Call 999 if you are in immediate danger.

## STEP EIGHT ACTIVATING YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN

### Know the triggers

Following the preceding steps an emergency group has been established, likely causes of an emergency identified, listed the key people, resources and facilities that are available, and agreed how they will communicate and mobilise these.

The next task is to think about how you will know when to put these plans into practice, that is, how will you know when an emergency has occurred.

It is valuable for the Community Emergency Group to have thought about this in advance and to have agreed, in so far as is possible, the types of event that will trigger local action.

Members of the group should consider who is to be responsible for monitoring these as possible emergency approaches. Give some thought to the point at which the Community Emergency Group may need to apply its arrangements for mobilising local resources, the communications cascade and first meeting.

Examples of types of "trigger" you might identify could include:

- Warnings / requests from the Emergency Services
- Environment Agency Warnings
- Substantial changes in local river levels
- Locally recognised hot spots and early indicators for flooding
- Media messages
- Severe wet weather warnings from the Met Office
- Cleveland Community Messaging



## STEP NINE TAKING CONTROL

### **Prepare to take control**

Have a prepared checklist for actions that the Community Emergency Group and / or Coordinators will need to take.

The critical first step in the process will be to hold a meeting of the key people involved. So the second piece of advance preparation that can be done is to have pre-prepared plans for this meeting.

To ensure that this important meeting covers all of the necessary issues and drives an appropriate local response, prepare an agenda for such a meeting in advance. Make it sufficiently flexible to work effectively whatever the emergency that has arisen.

### **You also need to consider:**

- Where the meeting will take place
- Who should attend - The Community Emergency Group, local Councilors, local volunteers, and representatives of Emergency Services (if available)?

### **(See 'Sample First Emergency Meeting Agenda' opposite)**

The first meeting is just the first step in developing a local response to an emergency and it may take some time for the full extent of the challenge to become apparent and to be implemented in the plans that have been prepared.

There may be a requirement to arrange to meet regularly over a period of time.

Arrangements for follow up meetings should be put in place and communicated clearly to everyone who needs to be involved. Meeting frequently, at fixed times, can help individuals organise their activities and ensure their attendance.

# Sample First Emergency Meeting Agenda

Date:

Time:

Location:

Attendees:

1. What is the current situation?
  - Type of emergency
  - Is there a threat to life
  - Is the emergency near a school; a vulnerable area, a main access route?
  - Has electricity, gas, or water been affected?
2. Are there any vulnerable people involved?
  - Elderly
  - Families with children
  - Non-English speaking people
3. What resources do we need?
  - Food
  - Vehicles
  - Blankets
  - Shelter
4. What is the effect on our community?
5. Establishing contact with the emergency services
6. How can we support the Emergency Services?
7. What actions can be safely taken?
8. Who is going to take the lead for the agreed actions?
9. Arrangements for future meetings?
10. Any other issues?



## STEP TEN TESTING YOUR PLANS

### Checks and trials

If all of the steps described have been followed you will have: harnessed local voluntary support, set up a group to coordinate actions, identified key people, resources and places that may be needed, thought about communications and prepared arrangements to be implemented should a real emergency take place.

However it is very important that arrangements are tested. Regular testing will help to ensure that plans remain up to date and effective. There will inevitably be changes as people come and go, resources change etc.

The main reasons for doing this are to:

- Involve outside agencies
- Train participants
- Test your procedures

Routine checks might include:

- Contact lists: ring every 3 months
- Communications equipment: regular checks
- Activation process: trial annually
- Facilities set-up: trial annually

### Trial exercise options

There are several types of exercise that you can use to test your arrangements and train participants, these include:

- **Discussion based**  
Low cost and easy to prepare, useful as a talk through of your plan and a handy tool for training.
- **Table Top**  
A scenario based simulation of an emergency which can help validate your plans but requires a significant amount of prior preparation.
- **Live Play**  
A great tool for testing and building confidence in your arrangements, such as the setting up of your control centre and rest centre, however the process needs careful preparation and can be costly.



**Preparing a community emergency plan will also:**

Raise local awareness of the risks that may affect residents.

Encourage local people to adapt and use their existing skills, knowledge and resources to deal with an emergency.

Build local commitment to working in partnership with Emergency Services.

**Remember**

If producing a complete community emergency plan appears to be a daunting task, any preparation that you and your neighbours can do will be worthwhile, perhaps focusing your efforts on Step 4 – identifying skills and resources.

Do not try to make detailed plans for specific emergencies, instead identify the people,

resources and facilities that you might need and be prepared to use these flexibly as a situation changes.

Any activity should complement, and not replace the borough emergency teams and emergency services. Keep in touch with them as you work, agree how you will work together and provide them with copies of your completed plan.

**Acknowledgement**

**This document is based on an original version prepared by ACTION with Communities in Cumbria.**

This template has been prepared by Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit. The information contained in this document is for guidance only.

It is acknowledged and accepted that Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit will not be liable, either under this Guidance or otherwise, for any actions or omissions of any community groups or volunteers in an emergency situation. The suitability of the application of this guidance to the emergency situation shall be entirely for the determination of the communities themselves. This Guidance does not constitute legal advice in relation to emergency planning.

# CONTACTS & LINKS

## Further information can be found at:

Cleveland Emergency Planning Unit  
[www.clevelandemergencyplanning.info](http://www.clevelandemergencyplanning.info)

The Cleveland Community Risk Register can be located via this link

North East Ambulance Service  
[www.neas.nhs.uk](http://www.neas.nhs.uk)

Cleveland Police  
[www.cleveland.police.uk](http://www.cleveland.police.uk)

Cleveland Fire Brigade  
[www.clevelandfire.gov.uk](http://www.clevelandfire.gov.uk)

## Other relevant resources

Preparing for Emergencies  
[www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies](http://www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies)

National Risk Register  
[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register)

British Red Cross  
[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

Royal Voluntary Service  
[www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk](http://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk)

St John's Ambulance  
[www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

RSPCA  
[www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/international/emergencyresponse](http://www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/international/emergencyresponse)

RAYNET  
[www.raynet-uk.net](http://www.raynet-uk.net)

Salvation Army  
[www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk)

Cleveland Mountain Rescue Team  
[www.clevelandmrt.org.uk](http://www.clevelandmrt.org.uk)

Environment Agency  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

Communities Prepared Hub  
[www.epcollege.com/community-hub](http://www.epcollege.com/community-hub)