

“How would my community survive the first 48 hours of a serious emergency?”



Be Prepared!

10 STEPS to complete your
Community Emergency Plan

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES



Have you ever asked yourself:



“How would I get through the first 48 hours of a serious emergency, such as flooding, and how would others in my community cope?”

If you answered yes then this 10 step guide may be for you. It is not a rigid template, it simply suggests how you can prepare for an emergency in a way that fits the particular needs of your community. It will help you put together a local Community Emergency Plan and identify the key tools that you will need; local people, local knowledge and local resources.

Contents

Introduction to the 10 step guide	3
How your plan might work	4
The ten steps:	
1. Getting together	5
2. Organising the work	6
3. You know your risks	7
4. Identifying skills and resources	8
5. Organising key facilities	9
6. Keeping in touch	10
7. Activating your Community Emergency Plan	11
8. Taking control	12
9. Testing your plan	13
10. Things to consider	14
Sources of further information	15
Emergency Contacts	16

Introduction to the **10** STEP Guide

This 10 step guide reflects the experiences of communities who have put plans together and then had to use them in real emergencies. Your plan will belong to your community, so put it together to suit your needs.

Community Resilience IS:

- ✓ Communities utilising their enthusiasm and skills to improve their resilience, with help from the emergency services and the local authority.
- ✓ Helping to protect the health and economic wellbeing of communities from a variety of threats, from flooding to heavy snow. The likelihood of most risks actually happening is low, but evidence shows that having a plan can make a real difference to how quickly the community, and individuals, can recover from an emergency.
- ✓ Raising local awareness of the risks that may affect residents.
- ✓ Supporting local people to adapt and use their existing skills and knowledge to deal with an emergency.
- ✓ Building commitment to working in partnership with the local authority and emergency services.
- ✓ Encouraging and maintaining a sense of community where you live.

Community Resilience IS NOT:

- ✗ Replacing the work of the emergency services, local authority or other professional organisations.
- ✗ Acting alone; keep in close contact with the emergency services and local authority as you plan, agree how you will work together and provide them with copies of your completed plan.
- ✗ Putting yourself at risk in any way. Your community having a robust Community Emergency Plan does not mean any of your services being reduced or cut. It is about you taking action to lessen the immediate and long term effects of an emergency on you and your community.
- ✗ Only planning for specific emergencies. By identifying the people, resources and facilities that you might need in an emergency, you have a greater ability to be flexible as a situation changes.

Working with the emergency services

The emergency services and local authorities have tried and tested plans that are activated when an emergency occurs. The geographical area of County Durham and Darlington is large and diverse however, it may be impossible for these services to reach every community in the first hours of a widespread emergency. Early action on the ground, especially in more remote areas, depends upon local capacity, skills and resources. Prior planning, using this guide, can make sure that your local response is as effective as possible and that your community can recover speedily from an emergency.

The plan you prepare will make an important contribution to the resources that they can call upon and to the operational response that takes place within your community. As you prepare your plan make sure that you inform and involve representatives of the emergency services and local authority, so that they are aware of your capacity, skills, resources and how to call upon these when needed.

Example activation: How your plan might work

Emergency - A Met Office weather warning for heavy rain is issued for the following day which is likely to cause localised flooding.

The local community centre, which acts as a base for many activities and crucially provides a nursery service for many families in the area.

Potential Consequences - if the nursery closes for even a few days it would have a significant impact as the nearest alternative is several miles away and is much more expensive.

If the closure lasts for more than a week, the loss of money into the nursery and the cost of replacing damaged equipment could result in the centre closing.

The Community Emergency Plan - has identified the loss of the community centre as a key risk. Mitigating actions are in the plan and equipment has been bought and is stored in the building.

When the warning is received, the action plan is initiated and six volunteers assist the centre staff. The portable flood gates and vent guards are fitted to the building and all of the indoor soft play equipment and story books are moved to the upstairs store room.

The car park floods but the Fire and Rescue Service attend to pump it out and the emergency is over in 6 hours with minimal impact caused.

1 Getting together

Preparing a Community Emergency Plan will require voluntary input from across the community and the harnessing of local knowledge and resources. Remember YOU are the local experts.

An open meeting

One way to start this process is to call an open meeting, working with neighbours and local authorities, to encourage wider consideration of the key question - "How could we better survive the first 48 hours of an emergency?"

An open meeting can take a variety of formats, from an informal 'drop in' involving a small number of people, to a full scale public meeting. It is an opportunity to view and discuss information about Community Emergency Planning at a local level, such as this guide.

In either case you need to think about how you might publicise the event, where it will take place, what information and materials you may need and who you should invite.

The emergency services and the local authority's Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) may be able to support your event. Why not check what help is available (contact details on page 15 of this guide)?

Whatever the format you decide upon you can use the event to talk about your shared concerns, review this guide and decide whether there is support for the preparation of a Community Emergency Plan.

"It is really important that as a community we are as prepared as possible to minimise the impact of emergencies, not just as individuals but as neighbours too. Through working together we can co-ordinate the available support for everyone's benefit."

Sally Laverick, Lanchester Parish Clerk



Who should you involve?

Friends, neighbours, local authorities, potential volunteers, existing groups.

Emergency services (Police, Fire & Rescue, etc), Civil Contingencies Unit.

What should you discuss?

What emergencies are likely; the impact on your community and how it would cope; the benefits of planning ahead and what is required.

How this guide can help, who is willing to help prepare a plan.

Possible outcomes from the first meeting:

Determine the level of interest to develop a plan and some key risks it may cover.

Improved understanding of Community Emergency Planning in your community.

Assistance from the Civil Contingencies Unit or other organisations.



2

Organising the work

Essential to seeing through the preparation of a Community Emergency Plan is the effective coordination of the work involved and the championing of the use of the plan once it is completed.

Making sure it happens 1:

Set up a Community Emergency Group, appoint a Coordinator and a deputy.

Invite your local authority and representatives of the emergency services.

Making sure it happens 2:

Identify someone who will be prepared to work with the media.

Keep good records of your meetings, information that you gather, and decisions.

Possible outcomes:

Establish members of the group.

Establish a contact within the local authority, emergency services and other organisations.

Plan further meetings.

The Community Emergency Group

The key role of a Community Emergency Group is coordination. It should comprise a number of volunteers with a good range of local knowledge. The group should appoint a Community Emergency Coordinator and a deputy with the time and ability to guide the work of the group and the development of the Community Emergency Plan.

You should think about how you will involve the local authority and local representatives of the emergency services.

Spreading the word

A further function of the group, the importance of which has been highlighted by past experience, should be liaising with the media. You may need to use local media to raise awareness of the group and its purpose. Work together to agree what key messages the group, or community, wishes to communicate and work with media representatives to help the flow of information.

Group meetings

The Community Emergency Group will be key in planning and leading the community's response to an emergency. It will probably need to meet a number of times to work through the 10 step planning process. Before meeting, you may need to think about:

- Where the group will meet?
- Who will prepare an agenda?
- How will outcomes be recorded and circulated?
- Who will record and circulate this?

3 You know your risks

Every community faces unique risks from a range of different sources. A key task is to think about the types of emergencies that are most likely to occur in your area.

Assessing the risks

It is important that the Community Emergency Group does not try and second guess every possibility, but to think about the types of emergencies that are most likely to occur.

A good starting point for this is the Community Risk Register that has been prepared by the Local Resilience Forum: <https://www.durham.police.uk/Information-and-advice/Pages/Local-Resilience-Forum.aspx>

This handy document reviews a wide range of possible emergencies and provides ideas on risks to consider.

Consider various types of risks

You should consult - the emergency services, local authority and other organisations. Use the local knowledge of your group members to think about and record the likely risks. For example:

- **Social Risks** - Particular groups of local people who may be vulnerable in the face of an emergency (perhaps elderly people or those with disabilities).
- **Environmental Risks** - Areas that are vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather, vulnerable sites of heritage, those of environmental interest, or sensitive to contamination.
- **Infrastructure Risks** - Major traffic routes, loss of utilities, bridges.

Remember: do not try to plan in detail for each specific risk as this will limit your flexibility to respond to very different situations. Focus on identifying the people, resources and facilities that you have and which you can utilise flexibly as a situation occurs and develops.



What things might trigger an emergency?

Consult the Community Risk Register.

What experiences have local people had in the past?

Talk to key informants

Representatives of the emergency services.

Local people.

Possible outcomes:

Agree risks that the group will address.

"As residents who have lived in the area for many years, we are in an excellent position to monitor local risks and provide an accurate information picture to emergency responders. This includes knowing when a situation starts to become an emergency."

Susan Williams, Community Resilience Coordinator in Hurworth Place, Darlington



4

Identifying skills and resources

At the heart of your Community Emergency Plan will be a comprehensive register of the local resources that can be called upon by the Community Emergency Group in the event that an emergency does arise.

Your community's assets

Every community has access to a range of local skills, knowledge, physical resources and support organisations that can be mobilised in the event of an emergency. The key to acting promptly and effectively in an emergency is having identified these, and how they can be obtained, in advance.

There are three main topics to research:

- **Who is good at what?** - Are members of the community with useful skills available? Farmers, health professionals, builders, etc. - anyone with specialist skills and training.
- **What resources do you have?** - These could be vehicles (4x4s, tractors, etc.) tools, machinery, sources of food and water, construction materials, non-English language skills, driving licence, etc.
- **How will you communicate?** - Are land lines and mobile signals reliable? If they fail, what alternatives are there (2-way radios, vehicles, door knocking etc).

Make sure that you record the relevant information in an easily accessible format. Keep contact details for key people and a record of the terms on which you might be able to utilise equipment and materials. Think about how you will use your volunteers, perhaps identifying teams to:

- **Staff your local co-ordination centre.**
- **Assist with a place of safety** (somewhere for people to take refuge when they can't stay in or go back to their own homes).
- **Become local wardens** to 'door knock' particular parts of your community should an emergency arise.

Consider if you need to put in place agreements with the individuals and organisations concerned, relating to their availability in an emergency. If you identify the need to acquire special equipment (for example 2-way radios, first aid materials, blankets, battery-powered radios, torches, grit), where can these be stored securely but be accessible when needed? Who will be responsible for their security and maintenance?

Who is good at what?

People with useful or specialist skills e.g. farmers, contractors, health professionals, builders, etc.

What equipment do we have?

Tools, machinery, communications equipment, specialist vehicles, 4x4s.

Sources of food, water, construction materials.

Possible outcomes:

Develop a register of skills, resources and facilities.

Investigate and record how they could be accessed and also any limitations.

Initiate contacts with suppliers and owners of resources.

5 Organising key facilities

Think in advance about the facilities that you may need in order to effectively manage an emergency situation and to support local people who are affected.

Facilities needed

Effectively managing an emergency is likely to require some facilities. You will need to think about these in advance and have plans in place for suitable buildings or locations to meet the needs you identify.

Facilities that are most often found necessary include:

- **Local Coordination Centre** - Somewhere the Community Emergency Group and local people can gather to share information about an emergency and meet with representatives of the emergency services or other organisations if necessary. This may simply be a good sized room that the community know has been designated for the purpose. Remember that reliable and robust communications are at the heart of any successful response to an emergency situation.
- **Place of Safety** - A place to which people can be moved to for a few hours if they have to leave their own homes before the CCU set up a local authority rest centre. You probably need space for quite a few people to sit, toilet facilities and a small kitchen as a minimum requirement.

Issues to consider

In both cases consult the CCU (at the local authority) to see whether suitable premises have already been identified in your community. If not, try to pick locations that are unlikely to be directly affected by an emergency but which are readily accessible to as much of the community as possible.

Also think about the possible need for 'reserve' facilities in the event that those you first identify are not available when needed, as well as if a key service such as gas, electricity or mains water is not available. You might, for example, need a generator. Talk to those responsible for the buildings you identify and agree plans for how you may use them should an emergency arise.

What facilities might we need?

Local Coordination Centre
- accessible, good communications, available space.

Place of safety - warm, accessible, toilets, etc.

Other things to think about?

Facilities identified by Emergency services.

Managing without mains services like electricity, water and telephone communications.

Possible outcomes:

Identify a main venue and a reserve venue.

How will you communicate the location to the community before and during any emergency?

Guidance from the property owner.





6

Keeping in touch

In developing your Community Emergency Plan you will have identified key individuals and groups that you may need to contact and mobilise should an emergency arise. Effective communications with these people are essential.

Identify key people

In developing your plans you will have hopefully found a number of people who will be important in your response; individuals with significant resources, skills or knowledge, local volunteers and professional advisers.

It is essential that you record the contact details of all these people. Be comprehensive and make sure that the information is readily accessible for the members of the Community Emergency Group, the emergency services and the Civil Contingencies Unit.

Telephone tree / cascade

Importantly, you should also plan 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 (for example Control Team, Rest Centre Team, Local Action Teams) so that you can mobilise only those people who are needed at the time.

Have an alternative communications plan in place (such as door knocking) in case any of the key people in the tree are not available or telephone communications fail.

Data protection

In preparing your records you will need to consider whether you are subject to the provisions of Data Protection legislation. You may need to get volunteers to sign a consent form so their data can be held. You will need to restrict the access to the information to specific individuals for specific purposes. The CCU will be able to advise you on this.

Whose contact information will we need?

Emergency services, Civil Contingencies Unit.

How will we mobilise our contacts?

Use a pre-prepared telephone contact 'tree' or cascade.

Alternative communication methods if telephones are not working.

Possible outcomes:

A way of testing the telephone cascade and an alternative communications plan.

A system to ensure your contacts details are kept current.

7

Activating your Community Emergency Plan

With all of the main components of your Community Emergency Plan in place (people, skills and resources,) you next need to think about how your plan will be put into action when a real emergency arises.

Know the triggers

By following the preceding steps you will have established a Community Emergency Group, identified likely causes of an emergency, listed the key people, resources and facilities that you have available, and agreed how you will mobilise and communicate with these volunteers.

Your 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 is likely to occur or has already happened?

It is vital that the Community Emergency Group has thought about this in advance and has agreed, 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 a 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 its first meeting.

Examples of the 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.
- A heatwave.

Agree key sources of information and advice for example:

Emergency services, local authority, Environment Agency, Met Office.

Local radio stations, local news channels, Facebook, Twitter and other social networking sites.

Agree local signs that will alert you to a possible emergency for example:

Substantial changes in local river levels.

Known local 'hot spots' that are often early indicators of problems arising elsewhere.

Possible outcomes:

Confirm early indicators/triggers.

Agree who should take responsibility for key actions when triggers are identified.





8 Taking control

How can we coordinate our actions?

Prepare flexible plans in advance for an emergency meeting.

Agree where this should be, who should attend and what you will need to discuss.

Remember

Remember that you need to maintain regular contact with the emergency services, local authority and other organisations to ensure that your actions support and complement their actions.

Possible outcomes:

'Sign off' (confirm) a tested Community Emergency Plan.

Agree who should take responsibility for key actions when triggers are identified.

"Whenever we work in County Durham we find a real sense of togetherness and positive spirit in local communities. In my experience these qualities are a huge advantage in both responding to emergencies and in preparing for future risks."

Keith Preston, Regional Adviser at Community Resilience UK CIC

When an emergency actually happens and you begin to activate your plans you will need to coordinate what happens next. There are some key things that you can do to help this process run smoothly.

Prepare to take control

Refer to your Community Emergency Plan and follow the guidance / action plan / check list your group has prepared. A critical first step in the process will be to hold a meeting of the key people involved. Ideally you should have a flexible pre-prepared plan and an agenda for this meeting.

If an emergency is likely to happen, or has happened, you should notify your contacts in the CCU and emergency services. In the event of an emergency you should ring 999 to inform the emergency services.

The group should consider:

- Where the meeting will take place - perhaps your Local Coordination Centre.
- Who should attend - The Community Emergency Group, local authority, local volunteers, representatives of emergency services (if available), others with specialist knowledge, equipment or skills.

Your first meeting, of course, 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 for you to implement the plans that you have prepared.

You may therefore need 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.

9 Testing your plan

Having thought through and prepared a Community Emergency Plan it is important to test the arrangements that you have put in place to make sure that they work. Identifying possible problems and resolving these will ensure things go smoothly in a real emergency.

Checks and trials

Although you now have a plan in place, it is very important that you test your arrangements. Regular testing will build the confidence of those involved, and will help to ensure that your plans remain up to date and effective. There will inevitably be changes as people come and go and resources change.

The CCU and the emergency services will help you to test your plan as it will help them work with you in a real emergency.

The main reasons for testing the plan are:

- Involving local authority/agencies/999 services.
- To develop the skills of all participants.
- Verifying that your procedures work.
- Identifying areas for improvement.

Routine checks might include:

- Updating contact and resource lists.
- Test, maintain, replace equipment.
- The continuing suitability and availability of facilities.

Trial exercise options

There are several types of exercise that can be used to test plans and train volunteers, including:

- **Discussion based** - Cheap, easy to prepare and useful for talking through and training in your plan.
- **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** - Great for testing and building confidence in your plan - such as setting up your Coordination Centre and Place of Safety, however it needs careful preparation and can be costly.



How will we know our plans work?

An annual test of the plan; verifying arrangements, experience for your volunteers.

Review the results of tests to see if any changes are required to plans.

Advice available on how to test arrangements effectively:

Advice and materials to help you plan your exercise, are available from the Civil Contingencies Unit.

Possible outcomes:

Contact the Civil Contingencies Unit for help with testing your plan.

Agree timescales and method for checking, maintaining and testing equipment plus who will be responsible.

Buildings and equipment:

Agreements with owners and insurance to cover usage.

Arrangements for paying any costs incurred.

Working with volunteers:

Safe working arrangements.

Methods of communicating information.

Possible outcomes:

Safe working practices / Insurance issues identified.

Agreement to seek advice from the CCU or other appropriate organisations.

10 Things to consider

The use of resources in an emergency may raise a range of issues. Thinking about these in advance and putting in place any necessary agreements can minimise any difficulties.

Resolving issues in advance

If you plan to use resources in an emergency, especially buildings and vehicles, you should fully explore any issues beforehand - there may be health and safety concerns about volunteers using unfamiliar equipment or some vehicles may require special licences to drive them.

These issues cannot be left until the emergency takes place because they may prevent or delay your work.

Planning ahead

Planning ahead will help to minimise any disruption to your work in any emergency. 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 their insurance to identify what is possible within their existing policies.

Equipment Use

Think about the types of equipment that might be used by volunteers, and the circumstances in which they will do this.

Identify safe working practices to help you minimise any hazards identified and plan any training you need to do. Agree ways of working that will minimise the risk from hazards that you have identified.

Insurance

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





Sources of further information

Advice and support in County Durham and Darlington

For more information on anything contained in this guide, contact the Civil Contingencies Unit.

Civil Contingencies Unit
Durham County Council,
Green Lane Offices,
Green Lane, Spennymoor,
County Durham DL16 6JQ
Email:
ccuenquiries@durhamdarlingtonccu.gov.uk
Phone: 03000 264 654
www.durham.gov.uk/emergencies

Other local agencies

Durham Police:
www.durham.police.uk

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service:
www.ddfire.gov.uk

Environment Agency:
www.environment-agency.gov.uk



Other relevant resources

Preparing for Emergencies:
www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies

National Risk Register:
<https://www.durham.police.uk/Information-and-advice/Pages/Local-Resilience-Forum.aspx>

Informed. Prepared. Together:
www.informedprepared.eu

Further information

Find out about the local risks that have been identified by the Emergency services on the **Durham Community Risk Register:**
http://content.durham.gov.uk/PDFRepository/Community_Risk_Register.pdf



For the latest community resilience updates, 'like' us on Facebook:

 www.facebook.com/ResilientDurham

Emergency contacts



A number of useful numbers are included below. Some of them are for emergencies only and should not be used for routine enquiries.

Emergency services (to report an emergency only)	999
Police Non-emergency enquiries Anti-terrorism hotline Crime stoppers	101 0800 789 321 0800 555 111
Fire and Rescue , non-emergency enquiries	0845 305 8383
Health , non-emergency enquiries	111
Flu information line	0800 151 3513
Local Authority - Durham County Council	03000 26 0000
Social Care Direct , for concerns about someone's welfare	03000 267 979
Local Authority - Darlington Borough Council	01325 380 651
Adult Social Care , for concerns about someone's welfare (emergency)	08702 402 994
Highways Services	01325 388 799
Other numbers including utilities	
Gas emergencies	0800 111 999
Electricity emergencies	0800 66 88 77
Water leaks , non-household	0800 328 7648
Sewer leaks	0845 717 110
Highways Agency , for the A1(M), A19 and A66	0300 123 5000
Northern Powergrid , general enquiries For power cuts, 24 hour emergency number	0845 070 7172 0800 66 88 77
Northern Gas Networks	0845 634 0508

This document is based on an original document 'Be Prepared! 10 Steps to Complete your Community Emergency Plan', produced by ACTion with Communities in Cumbria and their partners. They maintain the copyright of the original publication and it is with their kind permission that this document has been produced.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

العربية (Arabic) (中文 (繁體字)) (Chinese) اردو (Urdu)
 polski (Polish) ਪੰਜਾਬੀ (Punjabi) Español (Spanish)
 বাংলা (Bengali) हिन्दी (Hindi) Deutsch (German)
 Français (French) Türkçe (Turkish) Melayu (Malay)

ccuenquiries@durhamdarlingtonccu.gov.uk

03000 264 654



Braille



Audio



Large Print