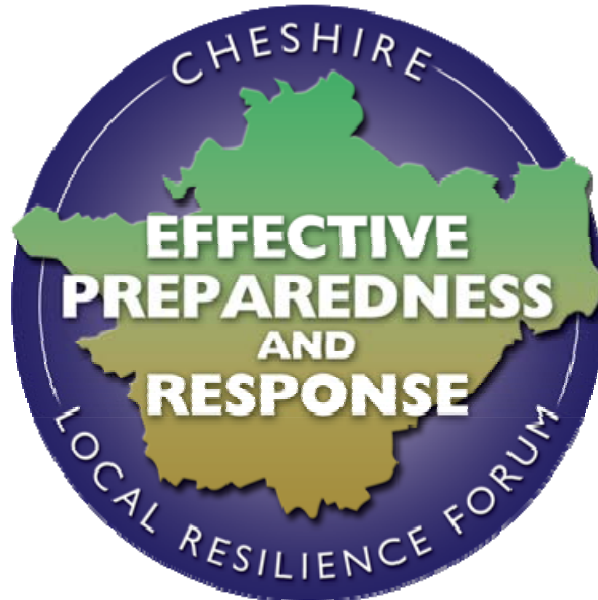


Cheshire Local Resilience Forum



MEDIA PLAN

January 2012

CONTENT

1.0 Executive Summary	
1.1 Aim	4
1.2 Objectives	4
1.3 Stakeholders	4
1.4 Trigger and Activation	4
1.5 Review	5
1.6 Ownership	5
2.0 Introduction	6
3.0 Media Plan	
3.1 What is it?	7
3.2 Why do we need a Media Plan?	7
3.3 Who shares the Media Plan?	10
4.0 When would the Media Plan apply?	
4.1 Definition of an incident	11
5.0 Generic Principles of Working Together	
5.1 Co-coordinating the multi-agency media response	13
5.2 Summary of the generic principles of working together	17
6.0 Practical Steps to Working Together	
6.1 Setting the scene	18
6.2 What happens when an incident is declared?	18
6.3 Gold, Silver, and Bronze response	18
7.0 The Primary Roles of Responding Agencies in a Major Incident	
7.1 Who is responsible for what?	20
8.0 The Communications Structure	
8.1 Generic Police Press Office Incident Response Functions	22
8.2 Other Agencies' communications structure in an emergency	
9.0 Managing The Media Response	
9.1 What will the media do?	26
9.2 Media Scene Management	27
9.3 Media Crossing Cordons	28
9.4 Media Briefing Centres	29
9.5 Police Media Overlay	29
9.6 Away from the Scene	30
10.0 Pre-planning for an Emergency	
10.1 How can we be best prepared?	32
10.2 Civil Contingencies Emergency Preparedness Checklist	34
11.0 Stages of an Incident	
11.1 Key stages of an Incident	37
11.2 Media reporting - phases of an incident	37

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Multi Agency Contacts – *removed re confidentiality*

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

Appendix C

Media Accreditation

Appendix D

Debrief Proforma to review application of Media Plan

Appendix E

Humanitarian Assistance Centre Communications Strategy

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Aim

Maintain a Media Plan which ensures that First Responding Agencies work effectively together and with the media to keep the public warned and informed during a Major Incident or Emergency.

1.2 Objectives

- Establish over arching principles which ensure co-ordinated information flow among First Responding Agencies in a Major Incident or Emergency.
- Recognise the role of the media in keeping the public warned and informed during a Major Incident, and establish agreed processes to support this.
- Ensure all First Responding agencies are aware of the requirements upon them under the Civil Contingencies Act in the field of communications, and are equipped to respond.
- Provide Stakeholders with an understanding of the principles and processes behind the complex multi-agency communications response.
- Highlight the interface between local, regional, and national response.
- Identify the responsibilities of each responding Agency.

1.3 Stakeholders

- All first Responding Agencies
- Others involved in the Emergency response – including industry and second tier responders.
- Government
- Media
- Public

1.4 Trigger and Activation

- The LRF Media Plan will be invoked should a Major Incident or Emergency be declared in Cheshire, Halton, or Warrington.
- The principles of the LRF Media Plan may also be invoked for Serious Incidents, or those incidents which attract significant media attention to more than one First Responding Agency.
- The LRF Media Plan may be invoked by any First Responding Agency, who will then make contact with the Police Press Desk.
- Stand Down of the LRF Media Plan will occur when formal stand down of the incident is declared by the Gold or Silver Commander (depending on the level of the incident). However, there may be ongoing communications issues which will need to be addressed by agencies individually or jointly following official stand down from the incident.
- In addition to this, the LRF Media Plan will be applied during major Exercises which take place.

1.5 Review

- The LRF Secretary will circulate the First Responders contact list (Appendix 1) for updates each quarter. It is the responsibility of the First Responding Agency to ensure their contact details are maintained and updated.
- The LRF Media Plan will be dynamically reviewed by participating agencies in the wake of each Exercise application, or following invocation for an Incident. This process will be co-ordinated by the LRF.
- The LRF Media Plan will be formally reviewed by all First Responding Agencies every two years. This will be co-ordinated by the Media Plan owner and the LRF Secretary.

Last Review: February 2011
Next Review due: February 2013

1.6 Ownership

Appendix A (Multi Agency Contacts) of the LRF Media Plan are maintained and updated by the LRF Secretary

lrf.secretariat@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

Appendix E (Humanitarian Assistance Centre Communications Strategy) is maintained and updated by Cheshire East

martin.grime@cheshireservices.gov.uk

The body of the LRF Media Plan, and remaining Appendices are maintained by the Media Services Manager of Cheshire Constabulary

corporatecommunications@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

The owner of the LRF Media Plan is the Executive Board of the Cheshire, Halton, and Warrington LRF.

Lrf.secretariat@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This Plan sets out the overarching principles which co-ordinate the response of agencies and the media to a major incident in Cheshire.

Each incident involves an individual set of circumstances which formulate our specific responses to it – our response to major flooding in the area would be different to our response to a plane crash or chemical release for example. However, there is also a set of generic principles which can be applied to each set of circumstance and which govern how we work together as communicators to achieve the best possible outcome. This Plan outlines those generic, organising principles. It should be read in conjunction with the specific plans prepared by each agency for its own detailed response to particular incidents.

This Plan recognises the importance of planning, agreeing, applying, and exercising a co-ordinated communications response by the emergency services, health, local authorities, other agencies, and industry in keeping the public warned and informed during a major incident in Cheshire.

During the formulation of this Plan, consultation has taken place with the emergency services, local authorities, health, media, and industry.

This Plan is a living, dynamic document. It will be subject to formal review by the Communications leads for each public sector responder annually, following changes in key legislation if sooner, or after an incident has occurred. Following implementation of the Plan in an emergency, review will also take place to ensure that the Cheshire LRF Media Plan continues to embody the best of current good practice.

3.0 MEDIA PLAN

3.1 What is it?

Natural disaster, human error, accidents, targeted attacks – thankfully such occurrences are rare in Cheshire. However, we have to recognize that they could happen and have plans in place to ensure that those entrusted with responding to them do so promptly, effectively, and in a co-ordinated manner.

These plans fall into two spheres. **Specific** plans are in place outlining the response to various emergency situations which might occur, from floods to a toxic chemical release, flu pandemic to an airplane crash. This is a requirement by law under the terms of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Specific responses will vary, according to the demands of the situation. The multi-agency response to flooding, for example, will differ from the multi-agency response to the release of a dangerous chemical into the air, and the law requires responders to have considered all possible emergency situations and detail in plans our specific response to them.

Generic plans overarch these responses to specific emergencies, detailing how the various agencies will work together to provide a co-ordinated and tested response to a given set of circumstances, and outlining the principles by which we work together to deal with the emergency and restore normality. These overarching principles which co-ordinate the multi-agency response apply to all emergency situations, and are not event specific.

This Media Plan is one of those generic plans. It outlines how the emergency services, Local Authorities, Health services, and where appropriate other agencies and industry, will work together during an incident which has attracted significant media attention to provide co-ordinated information to the communities of Cheshire and beyond.

3.2 Why do we need a media plan?

During an emergency the public will turn to the media for information about what is happening, and the role of the media during an emergency has long been recognised. It is therefore vital to ensure that the media receive accurate, timely information from all the agencies involved in the emergency response so that the public are informed about how the emergency is affecting them and what they should do. In co-ordinating the multi-agency response to the media, we can ensure that while the public are kept fully informed about how each agency is responding to the situation, communities are not receiving conflicting messages about what is happening and what they should do to safeguard themselves.

The Cheshire LRF Media Plan sets out the principles which govern a co-ordinated response from all the agencies involved in an incident to keep the public fully informed.

The media perform a number of roles in conveying information to the public in an emergency:-

Warn	<p>The media carry the important message “Go in, Stay in, Tune In” during the course of an emergency. Radio plays an important role in communicating this message quickly and to large numbers of people, and arrangements are in place with local BBC and independent radio broadcasters, working through local Media Emergency Forums, to work together when it is vital to convey this shelter advice quickly.</p> <p>The media can also assist in warning sections of the community of an impending emergency, such as predicted flooding, or during an ongoing incident such as a major motorway closure when motorists can be diverted to other routes. This Plan sets up contingency to communicate such messages via the media, both during and outside normal working hours. However, such contingency arrangements, it must be noted, are designed to supplement and not replace structured warning mechanisms which should be in place to alert the public, for example, in communities around major chemical sites.</p>
Inform	<p>Keeping the public informed as an emergency develops is vital in obtaining co-operation for a recommended course of action, conveying health or other safety advice, and maintaining public re-assurance that those responding to the incident are doing a good job. Most people will obtain information on what is happening directly from the media – if the media are kept informed, then so are the community.</p>
Reassure	<p>The media are crucial in carrying messages of re-assurance to the public during an emergency, and this important message can take many forms – that the responders are prepared and managing the developing situation appropriately, contact numbers for advice, assuaging the concerns of those not directly involved, or those with relatives or loved ones involved – these are just a few of the possible re-assurance messages that the media can convey quickly to large sections of the community, and to the public nationally.</p>

Public Interest	<p>Public interest in an emergency is likely to be substantial. This will include not just those involved, but those who have loved ones involved, or believe loved ones to be involved, and those who are watching the situation unfold.</p> <p>The public have a right to know about events which impact on them, and the media remains the most effective means of communicating information of interest to the public on a large scale.</p>
Operational Effectiveness	<p>The media can help us to achieve greater operational effectiveness if we engage professionally with them. For example, broadcasting a Casualty Bureau number will help us to collate information from the public on large numbers of unidentified fatalities or casualties. Conversely, asking the media to broadcast a dedicated helpline number for, as an example, parents concerned about children held in school in a designated shelter area, could prevent vital police call centres being clogged by calls from anxious parents, preventing other urgent calls from getting through.</p> <p>Our operational effectiveness when responding to an emergency will also be scrutinised by the media, and the conclusions drawn will influence public perceptions about how effectively the incident was managed. By endeavouring to be open and honest with the media, and keeping journalists regularly updated, as well as explaining the reasons why information may not be forthcoming, we can help to positively influence media scrutiny of the work of responders.</p> <p>However, it is important to remember that the media also have the potential to hamper operational effectiveness if their needs are not managed. The media themselves will often arrive at the scene of an incident quickly, and in large numbers. The presence of large numbers of media at the scene of an incident can hamper the work of the responding agencies, if the media presence is not effectively managed and provided for. This Plan also outlines the principles of media scene management as part of a co-ordinated multi-agency response to an emergency situation.</p>

3.3 Who shares the Media Plan?

The following agencies have all been involved in formulating this Plan:-

Emergency Services

- Cheshire Constabulary
- Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
- North West Regional Ambulance Service
- British Transport Police
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Local Authorities

- Cheshire West & Chester Council
- Cheshire East Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Warrington Borough Council

Health

- Central and Eastern Cheshire Primary Care Trust
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Trust
- 5 Boroughs Partnership Trust
- Countess of Chester Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- East Cheshire NHS Trust
- Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust
- Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust
- Warrington and Halton Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Warrington Primary Care Trust
- NHS Western Cheshire Primary Care Trust

The following Agencies and Organisations have been consulted for their views:-

- Greater Manchester Police
- Merseyside Police
- Lancashire Police
- Cumbria Police
- North Wales Police
- Urenco (Capenhurst) Ltd
- Environment Agency
- Health and Safety Executive
- The Coroner for Cheshire
- British Telecom
- Liverpool Airport
- Manchester Airport
- GNN
- National Grid
- United Utilities
- All COMAH sites in Cheshire
- Highways Agency
- Network Rail
- Regional Military
- BBC North West
- Granada TV
- BBC Radio Merseyside
- Radio City
- BBC Radio Manchester
- Key 103
- BBC Radio Stoke
- Signal Radio
- Heart 103.4
- Dee 1063FM Radio
- Wire FM
- Silk FM
- Century / Smooth FM
- Cheshire Local Media Emergency Forum
- Chronicle / Trinity Mirror
- Guardian / Newsquest
- Express and Advertiser

4.0 WHEN WOULD THE MEDIA PLAN APPLY?

A major incident can happen at any place at any time, and it is important that the organisations who are likely to play a part in responding to the incident have detailed response plans drawn up to cover each eventuality. In 2004, this became a legal requirement with the advent of the Civil Contingencies Act which required each area to identify its risks, which agencies have responsibility for leading the response to them, and to publish the details on a community risk register. This allows the communities in Cheshire to be familiar with the potential risks close to them. The Community Risk Register is available at www.cheshireresilliance.org.uk/riskregister.aspx

While such incidents are rare, how do we decide what is a major incident which necessitates the implementation of the Media Plan?

There are definitions, some bound in law, some derived from practice, of what constitutes an emergency or major incident.

4.1 Definition of an Incident

The Civil Contingencies Act - Definition of an Emergency

The Civil Contingencies Act defines an emergency as follows:-

“An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom, the environment of a place in the United Kingdom or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom”

In addition to this, the Home Office has developed a definition of a major incident and Cheshire has developed a definition of a serious incident –each demanding a certain set of responses. These definitions continue to be adopted by agencies in Cheshire.

Major Incident

A Major Incident is any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, the NHS or the local authority for:-

- The rescue and transportation of a large number of casualties
- The involvement either directly or indirectly of large numbers of people
- The handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated both from the public and the news media, usually to the police
- Any incident that requires the large scale combined resources of the emergency services
- The mobilisation and organisation of the emergency services and supporting organisations, e.g. Local Authority to cater for the threat of death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people.

Serious Incident

A Serious Incident is any incident that is **NOT** a Major Incident, but:

- Has the potential to develop into a Major Incident, or
- Involves contamination of the environment, water courses or air pollution, or
- Involves evacuation or the potential for evacuation of any members of the public, or
- Involves major road closures, or
- Involves the distribution of specific health advice to any members of the public.

Reference has also been made to a “catastrophic incident”, defined in the Civil Contingencies “Preparing for Emergencies” Glossary as:-

Catastrophic Incident`

“An incident of such a magnitude that it requires an exceptional response, including a requirement for full government involvement”

Notwithstanding the formal definitions which categorise a set of circumstances as being a catastrophic, serious or major incident, or an emergency requiring the appropriate multi-agency response, it may well be that individual agencies from time to time may face a set of circumstances which meet their organisations criteria for implementing an emergency response plan, but which do not engage other agencies to the same degree. Alternatively, a relatively minor incident may result in the media mobilising as they would to a major incident. In such circumstances, the good practice outlined in this Plan will be applied by the agencies involved.

5.0 GENERIC PRINCIPLES OF WORKING TOGETHER

5.1 Co-ordinating the Multi Agency Media Response

Speak Up	<p>The most fundamental principle of a co-ordinated response to an emergency is that each agency has a part to play in responding to the situation and is responsible for keeping the public informed on all that it has done to carry out its duties. This requires each agency to speak within its remit to the media in a timely and accurate manner. No one agency will speak on behalf of another agency, or comment within the remit of another agency.</p> <p>While the Police Press Officer has the responsibility of co-ordinating the flow of information during an emergency situation, this does not preclude individual agencies from speaking directly to the media on matters within their remit. However, it does place a responsibility on those agencies to share, preferably prior to publication, media statements with the Police Press Office.</p> <p>Failure by individual agencies to keep the media fully and promptly informed of developments within their area of remit will result in the public being ill informed, and may lead to media speculation or criticism, resulting in misinformation passing to the public, increasing fear or concerns among communities, and impeding the overall emergency response by the combined agencies. It is therefore vital that each agency recognises its role in being open and honest with the media, and is equipped to communicate quickly and effectively.</p>
Be prepared	<p>The media are fast and continuous in relaying news, and responding agencies have to recognise that when formulating their responses, otherwise there will be gaps in the information the public is receiving, and they will be ill-informed. Agencies should therefore ensure that their Press Officers are prominent on the list of people to be notified in the event of an emergency, so that the communications strategy can keep pace with the media and emergency response.</p> <p>Press Officers should also be authorised to speak on behalf of their organisations – or have immediate and direct access to someone who has that authority – to avoid delays while press statements are cleared.</p>

	<p>The Civil Contingencies Act requires all responders to maintain a level of emergency preparedness to communicate with the media and the public in an emergency situation. This is dealt with separately elsewhere in the Media Plan, however one of the generic principles of a co-ordinated response to an emergency situation is that all responding agencies are self sufficient in terms of the communications process and can carry out their role without relying on other agencies, except where mutual aid is agreed and documented.</p> <p>Such preparedness would routinely include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The technology to draft, e-mail out, and receive press releases both in and out of the office environment. • The ability to telephone others and to be reached by telephone, particularly if MTPAS (Mobile Telephone Privileged Access Scheme – see Glossary) is invoked. • The means to receive and respond to enquiries from partner agencies, and to share press releases with agencies responding to the emergency situation. • The ability to receive and respond to media calls. • Resilience to maintain the emergency response 24/7, via in house reserves or mutual aid arrangements. Such arrangements should be tested to ensure staff are fully trained, competent and confident in the roles they are to perform. A major incident is not the time to familiarise staff with their role. • The means to log all decisions and disclosures for the purposes of audit, debrief, review, or a criminal or formal public enquiry. • The means to monitor media output – broadcast, print, and online. <p>Preparedness therefore, means being able to respond quickly, and have the resources to deliver.</p>
<p>Be Factual</p>	<p>Only known and established facts should be put into the public domain. Particularly in the early stages of an incident, the facts may not be clear and there may be confusion over what has happened. Agencies should be honest and inform the media that the facts are still being established, and provide only information which has been confirmed. The media are often unhappy with this, and will seek to plug such gaps with speculation, for example on the number of casualties.</p>

	<p>This makes it all the more important to be honest with journalists as to why the information is not yet available and to ensure that as soon as information becomes available it is released.</p> <p>Agencies should never offer information, even if it is factual and confirmed information, to the media if it does not fall within their area of remit. There may be a strong operational reason why the agency who has precedence on releasing that information has delayed disclosing it – for example, to notify parents personally of the death of a child, rather than to let them find out via a news bulletin. We should also exercise caution and never pre-empt the findings of the Coroner by apportioning cause of death, or a criminal court by apportioning blame.</p> <p>Issue factual confirmed information within your area of remit promptly. This will result in good working relationships with journalists, avoid speculation, and remove pressure from journalists chasing the information to turn to other agencies who will be busy working within their own remit, for the information.</p> <p>Never speculate.</p>
<p>Police co-ordinating role</p>	<p>It is the role of the Police to co-ordinate the multi-agency response to an emergency situation, and the Police Incident Commander will spearhead the strategic response of the emergency services. Supporting this role, the Police Press Officer has the responsibility of co-ordinating the flow of information during an emergency situation. This does not preclude individual agencies from speaking directly to the media on matters within their remit, but it does place a responsibility on those agencies to share, preferably prior to publication, press statements with the police press office. This allows the Police Press Officer to maintain a global view of information entering the public domain, and to ensure that there are no conflicting messages which would confuse or alarm the community or bring the joint agency emergency response into disrepute. It also allows the Police Press Officer to maintain an overview necessary to ensure that the communications strategy being set by the multi-agency Gold group is being fully implemented, and where COBRA (Cabinet Office Briefing Room – see Glossary) is active, that the Government Liaison Officer present in the Strategic Co-ordinating Group is aware of the key messages being disseminated to communities by all agencies involved in the emergency response;</p>

	<p>and that these messages do not conflict with any national messages of re-assurance or advice being issued by Government ministers.</p> <p>Agencies should share their press statements with the police press office by e-mailing them to corporatecommunications@cheshire.pnn.police.uk. Urgent or verbal updates can be telephoned through to the Police Press Office Emergency Telephone Line – all public sector Press Officers have this number.</p> <p>The role of the Police Press Office to co-ordinate the flow of information in an emergency does not mean that the Police Press Office will prepare or approve other agencies’ press statements or disseminate other agencies’ press statements to the media or partner agencies.</p> <p>During an emergency situation, information is fluid, and situation reports can change quickly. For example, a shift in wind direction could carry an airborne chemical release from one populated area to another within minutes. The Police Press Office will focus its resources on conveying the information quickly to those who most need to know. This may involve contacting broadcasters directly to interrupt programmes and issue new shelter advice. The Police Press Office will not have the capacity to update all agencies involved in the emergency with each new release issued, and agencies are advised to monitor the Police Media Newline or website for updates pro-actively to keep themselves abreast of developments. However, should the changing information impact on an individual agency’s remit – for example, the airborne chemical release be heading towards a school – that agency’s Press Officer will be liaised with by the Police Press Office. The Police Press Office will establish a contact point within Silver and ensure that Silver (Joint Tactical Co-ordinating Centre) are notified of all updates.</p>
<p>Reassure</p>	<p>While each responding agency may be undertaking very different tasks during an emergency, we will all share core key messages as part of our co-ordinated response. These messages will focus on:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing the public of what steps they need to take to protect themselves, e.g., “Go in, Stay in, Tune in”. • Providing re-assurance that the emergency situation is being dealt with professionally and competently by the responding agencies.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advising communities of things they need to know – such as health advice, relevant contact numbers, and when normality will be resumed. • Providing regular updates so that people do not feel they are being kept in the dark. <p>It is important that key messages and advice being disseminated to the public do not conflict, as this can result in dissatisfaction at the multi-agency response, public concern, fear, and alarm. This is why the overarching communications strategy is set at the multi-agency Gold, and implemented uniformly by agencies, and underlines the importance of the Police Press Officer role in maintaining an overview of all information put into the public domain by the responding agencies.</p>
Record	<p>Each agency should maintain a log both of its decision making process, and of all disclosures made. This will assist in debriefs, but may also be required by law should criminal proceedings or a public enquiry take place.</p>

5.2 Summary of the generic principles of working together

- Speak within your remit.
- Confirm only facts. Never speculate.
- Issue confirmed factual information within your remit quickly to the media.
- Be dynamic – ensure you can respond promptly to changes in the situation. Keep yourself updated, and do not rely on others.
- Ensure you are equipped to play your part, or you will affect the response as a whole.
- Make sure your Press Office is high on your call out rota.
- Ensure your Press Officer has authority to speak on behalf of your organization.
- Make sure that you meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act emergency preparedness response.
- Exercise your communications response.
- Are staff trained, confident, and competent?
- Can you operate 24/7? Do you have resilience?
- Share your releases with the Police Press Office.
- Pro-actively keep yourself updated on developments – don't rely on others.
- Do your key messages fit in with the Strategic Command Group Communications Strategy? Do they conflict with partner's key messages?
- Record everything.

6.0 PRACTICAL STEPS TO WORKING TOGETHER

6.1 Setting the scene

An emergency situation can happen at any location and at any time. The Generic Principles outlining the co-ordinated multi-agency response which are detailed in the previous section can be applied in any situation, at any time, and at any location.

However, there are also some basic operating procedures which form the basis of good team work and good practice which will apply to most situations and these are outlined below.

6.2 What happens when an incident is declared

In order to correctly apply the principles of the Media Plan, it will be helpful to consider the response to the declaring of a major or serious incident. The procedures described below are outlined broadly to provide a basic understanding of the emergency response and in no way represent the complexity of each Agency's activity as detailed in their own emergency response plans.

A major or serious incident can be declared by any Agency, although in practice it is most likely to be the Police or Fire Service who do so.

Once the Police are aware that a major or serious incident has been declared, the Force Incident Manager (FIM) will commence the process of cascading the information to the relevant agencies, who in turn should initiate their communications plan and mobilise their communications teams.

6.3 Gold, Silver and Bronze Response

Police resources on the ground will deploy to an identified emergency services' rendezvous point, and a Police Bronze Commander will assume responsibility at or near the scene.

Consideration will be given as to whether the incident requires the setting up of a Joint Tactical Co-ordinating Centre (Silver), a Gold Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, or a LAEC (Local Authority Emergency Centre). Not all incidents require the establishing of these centres. Other centres – such as triage to assess casualties, mortuaries for the dead, or media briefing centres, may or may not be required during the course of an incident, depending on circumstance.

Most incident scenes will consist of an inner and outer cordon. The outer cordon protects the area around the scene of the incident, and the emergency responders will usually gather and work from within this area.

Generally, the police are responsible for maintaining the outer cordon, with the responsibility falling to the Bronze Commander. The inner cordon is usually managed by the Fire Service, although it can also be set up by another agency depending on the incident. Access within the inner cordon can only be granted with the authority of the officer in command within the inner cordon, and health and safety issues will be a priority alongside the preservation of evidence.

The Gold Group, also known as the Strategic Co-ordinating Group, if it is convened, will generally be based at Police HQ where dedicated facilities to meet the needs of all agencies are in place. Led by the Police Gold Incident Commander, the relevant agencies will each have a representative on this group. If the emergency has the potential for national impact, a Government Liaison Officer will also sit on the group, and act as a link with Government. It is the role of Gold to set the strategic response to the emergency. A Police Press Officer is appointed to the Gold group to advise on the communications strategy, and to feed the Communications Strategy out to other Agency Press Officers.

Silver - Joint Tactical Co-ordinating Centre will be set up at a suitable location, which is often a designated police or fire station. The Police Silver Commander is responsible for tactical issues, such as resourcing, and will ensure the strategy set by Gold can be implemented. Silver Command will also have representation from the appropriate agencies, including Fire, Ambulance, Local Authorities, and Health. A Police Press Officer will not always attend Silver Command, but Silver will appoint a liaison officer to receive and relay information to the Police Press Office if a Police Press Officer does not attend.

LAEC – The main function of the Local Authority Emergency Centre is to co-ordinate the Local Authority response, as part of the overall response. It may provide a location which brings together those agencies necessary to implement the emergency response, and is managed by the Local Authority. Representatives might include Health professionals, Environment Agency, Local Authority, and where appropriate, police and fire. It allows agencies to confer and share information, implement the appropriate actions to deal with the emergency, and is particularly significant in protecting the welfare of those affected by an incident – such as establishing rest centres for those evacuated or displaced during the course of an incident.

Bronze – The Police Bronze commander will deal with events at and around the scene. Bronze is responsible for deploying the resources allocated by silver, establishing and maintaining cordons, and local road closures. There may be more than one Bronze commander at incidents with multiple scenes.

This is the backdrop against which the principles of the Media Plan are implemented.

7.0 THE PRIMARY ROLES OF RESPONDING AGENCIES IN A MAJOR INCIDENT

7.1 Who is responsible for what?

POLICE

- Preservation of life and property
- Protection and preservation of the scene
- Initiate, lead, and co-ordinate the multi-agency response
- Investigation of the incident in conjunction with other agencies as appropriate
- The collection and dissemination of casualty information
- Restoration of normality at the earliest opportunity
- British Transport Police has operational responsibility for the management of a major incident on a railway infrastructure (except in the event of a terrorist incident). At the point in which BTP takes operational responsibility for an incident they will also take overall management for the responsibility of the media, maintaining a close liaison with the Cheshire Constabulary Corporate Communications Department

CHESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

- Life saving through search and rescue
- Fire fighting and fire prevention
- Management of hazardous materials and protecting the environment
- Salvage and damage control
- Safety management within the inner cordon
- Mass decontamination

NORTH WEST AMBULANCE SERVICE

- To save life
- To provide treatment and care to those injured at the scene
- To establish effective triage points and systems and determine the priority evacuation needs of those injured.
- To provide a focal point at the incident for all National Health Agencies and other medical resources.

PRIMARY CARE TRUSTS

- To mobilise health professionals
- Provide public health, NHS, or other health specialists for the Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC).

HEALTH PROTECTION AGENCY

- Provide public health advice in emergencies to responding agencies and the public
- Support the Health Advisory Team in terms of specialist advice and administrative support.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- Provide support to the emergency services.
- Provide support and care for the community.
- Use resources to mitigate the effects of the emergency.
- Lead on the Recovery Phase.
- Provide information to the community, both local and business.
- Set up and manage a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) if required.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

The Environment Agency respond to many different types and scales of incidents affecting the environment. Broadly, the priorities are:

- To ensure the impact on people, the environment, and property is mitigated – i.e., to stop, to contain.
- To investigate the cause, collect evidence, and consider enforcement action.
- To seek remediation, clean up, or restoration of the environment.

CORONER

- Initiate the establishment of a temporary mortuary in consultation with Police and the relevant Council.
- Authorise the removal of bodies.
- Authorise the examination of bodies to determine a cause of death.
- Chair the identification commission and take all reasonable steps to identify the deceased.
- Organise the collection of data concerning bodies which may be irrecoverable, but who are believed to have died in the event.
- Liaise with Coroners outside of Cheshire who may also have bodies in their districts from the same event.
- Authorise the disposal of bodies after appropriate procedures complete.
- Maintain liaison with relevant emergency services and government departments.

MARITIME AND COASTGUARD AGENCY

- The Maritime and Coastguard Agency is an executive agency of the Department of Transport.
- The MCA may intervene on behalf of Secretary of State for purposes relating to safety and pollution in respect of ships and offshore oil and gas installations.
- HM Coastguard can mobilise, organise, and dispatch resources to assist people in distress at sea, on danger on cliffs or shoreline, or in certain inland areas.
- The MCA Hazardous and Noxious Substances Response Team will respond to a CBRN incident at sea or on the coast.

PORT HEALTH AUTHORITY

- Responsible for the control of infectious diseases, food safety, pest control, waste management, and environmental protection on the waterways of the Manchester Ship Canal and the River Weaver.

8.0 THE COMMUNICATIONS STRUCTURE

Mirroring the operational response structure outlined in the previous chapter, the Cheshire LRF Media Plan requires each of the responding agencies to have a clear structured response for their Communications Strategy, in order to effectively implement the principles of the Plan. This structured response must have:-

- Early mobilisation procedures for communicators
- Defined roles which carry out specific functions
- Resilience
- The resources to effectively deliver

8.1 Generic Police Press Office incident response functions

During a major, serious, or catastrophic incident, the Police Press Office communications response will mirror the operational Gold (Strategic), Silver (Tactical), and Bronze (Operational) response structure. The Police Communications roles / functions are outlined below to assist responders in identifying the functions required in their own organisations and to provide insight into the mechanics which lie behind the Police communications response:-

Gold Press Officer

- A member of the Gold Strategic Co-ordinating Group whose role is to create and advise on the communications strategy, ensuring that communications and media issues are considered as part of operational and investigative planning.
- Also to consider broader communications implications such as community communications, internal communications, and the communications needs of particular audiences or groups of people.
- Act as a conduit for information or intelligence arising from media enquiries and media coverage into the Gold group to aid decision making.
- Co-ordinate the information flow among partner agencies.
- Relay media issues or public concerns to the Gold group if they are significant enough to impact upon the formation of the communications strategy.
- Ensure that the communications strategy as set by Gold is implemented.
- Task other press officers with media handling functions as appropriate.
- Request / instigate mutual aid arrangements via the Logistics manager.
- The Gold Communications role should be filled by the Head of Communications, their Deputy, or in their absence a Senior Press Officer.
- The Gold Communications Officer should be in a position to take the lead on the strategic communication response, and to decide how the organisation will deal with all internal and external communications issues.
- The Gold Communications Officer represents the Organisation at the highest level and has delegated authority to make instant decisions on behalf of the Chief Constable or the Police Gold Commander.

Gold Spokesperson

- A senior police officer, and generally a person of ACPO rank, appointed to undertake media interviews. This role reflects the seriousness of the situation and promotes public and stakeholder re-assurance. In certain emergencies, for example a flu pandemic, the Strategic Command Group spokesperson may be from another agency, such as a senior clinician from the Health Service.
- Incidents likely to be prolonged will require two dedicated spokespersons, generally operating 12 hour shifts.

Silver Press Officer

- Assist the Gold Press Officer in co-coordinating the information flow among agencies, by receiving press releases from other agencies and collating.
- Ensure tactical objectives are delivered in support of the Gold Media Strategy.
- Oversee the work of the Police Press Desk responding to media enquiries on the incident. The Police Press desk is where all media calls to the police are received and responded to by Police Press Officers.
- Maintain liaison with the Joint Tactical Co-ordinating Centre (Silver), the LAEC, and the Bronze Press Officers to remain abreast of developments.
- Provide a link to the Internal Communications team to ensure Constabulary staff remain up to date with developments.
- Liaise directly with other agency Press Officers as the incident demands.
- Provide regular updates to the Police call handling centre to assist with calls from the public.
- Provide regular updates to the Constabulary webmaster to ensure information on the Cheshire Constabulary website is current.

Media Liaison Officer (Silver)

- Attend Silver (if appropriate to incident).
- Act as conduit for information between the Joint Tactical Co-ordination Centre and the Police Press Desk.
- Does NOT authorize or initiate press releases on behalf of Silver.

Silver Press Officer (Media Briefing Centre)

- Identify suitable location for MBC, and notifying media.
- Ensure appropriate logistics are in place, for example, electricity, parking, press conferences.
- Act as a contact point for the media and other agencies at the MBC.
- Regularly brief the media present.
- Maintain a register of media present.

Bronze Press Officer (Scene)

- Attend scene – following risk assessment to establish safety of attendance.
- Identify media rendezvous point at the scene.
- Facilitate media requests at the scene.
- Feed back to Silver Press Officer.

Bronze Press Officer (Media Monitoring)

- Make arrangements for the real time monitoring of broadcast, electronic, and print media, considering the invoking of mutual aid if need be.
- Provide regular executive summary bulletins to Gold of the main issues as reported by the media. This would normally be hourly, but may be more frequently if the situation demands.
- Identify potential intelligence and information in the media and submit to Gold strategic Co-ordinating Group.
- Notify Gold Press Officer immediately of any developments portrayed in the media and likely to have implications on the strategic, tactical, or operational decision making processes.
- Identify inaccuracies reported and seek to correct them as quickly as possible.
- Consider questions submitted by journalists and the effect of journalists' information gathering as part of the overall communications strategy.
- Ensure that written summaries of media coverage are logged.

Community Communications (Bronze)

- Consider the impact which incidents may have on particular sections of the community, and sit on consequence management groups set up for this purpose. This role could also be met by a Press Officer from a partner agency, such as the Local Authority.
- Assess the potential and actual impact of media coverage and media handling as one of the critical factors in determining community impact.
- Devise appropriate communications strategies to negate, minimize, or manage that impact.

Logistics Manager (Bronze)

- Manage shift patterns, provide sustenance, seek mutual aid, undertake risk assessments, and maximize resilience and business continuity. This administrative manager means that there is no detracting from the media handling and communications response and Press Officers can focus on their roles rather than on administrative functions.
- Consider health and welfare issues for Police Press Officers deployed during the incident, such as working hours, exposure to trauma or suffering, counselling.

E Communications (Bronze)

- Update website.
- Consider implementing substitute website front page during emergency.
- Consider other forms of e-communication which could be utilized during the emergency.
- Assist in media monitoring of electronic media as appropriate.

Internal Communications (Bronze)

- Update intranet.
- Utilise other internal communications channels to keep staff updated.

Family / Victim Liaison (Bronze)

- Liaise with Family Liaison Officers to determine the timing and level of disclosure of personal information on casualties, victims, or the deceased to the media.
- Where appropriate, maintain liaison with the Coroner, on the disclosure of information on the deceased to the media.
- Maintain a log of all personal information disclosed in relation to victims, casualties, or the deceased, and who authorized disclosure.
- Provide advice to FLOs regarding media attention at the homes of those affected or their relatives, at funerals or commemorative events, and at subsequent events such as court cases or inquests.
- Provide copies of press releases issued in respect of individual casualties, victims, or deceased to the relevant FLOs to ensure that families remain informed.
- Relay family's wishes regarding direct approaches by journalists to the media.

Loggist

- Record decisions made to provide an audit trail for debrief purposes, or for disclosure purposes in a subsequent criminal trial, inquest, civil action, or public enquiry.
- Maintain responsibility for the Communications Log Book until formally relinquished to the Gold Press Officer at the conclusion of the incident, to ensure continuity and preservation of the log intact and untampered.

Status Board Manager

- Maintain the whiteboard log of information known.
- Ensure all facts are confirmed, and where confirmation of accuracy of information logged was obtained, together with time and date of confirmation.
- Ensure all confirmed facts are visible and accessible to Press Officers receiving enquiries on the Press Desk.
- Seek and confirm information from appropriate sources including the Police Incident Log, Silver, and other agencies.

Coroner's Liaison Press Officer

- Liaise with the Coroner regarding the timing and content of disclosure of information on fatalities.
- Issue press statements on behalf of, and agreed by the Coroner, in respect of fatalities, the timings and locations of inquests, and the identification of the deceased.
- Act as contact point for journalistic enquiries to the Coroner.
- Liaise with Family Liaison Officers and the Family Liaison Press Officer regarding the timing and content of releases, and the management of media interest in bereaved families.
- In the event of a small number of fatalities this role could be performed by the Police Family Liaison Press Officer. In the event of mass fatalities, mutual aid will be sought on behalf of the Coroner from other Police Forces whose staff hold the appropriate skills and experience.

An understanding of this structure will allow other Agency Press officers to target their requests at the appropriate role.

9.0 MANAGING THE MEDIA RESPONSE

9.1 What will the media do?

The media will find out about serious and major incidents very quickly, often with the public calling them directly. With the advent of cameras in mobile phones, pictures of an incident scene can be broadcast or made available on line even before the emergency services have arrived. In addition to this, journalists can deploy very quickly to an incident scene, and in very large numbers. From this point onwards, the public is being influenced by what is heard and seen via the broadcast media or media websites. This is why it is so vital that the deployment of the Press Officers from all the Agencies likely to be involved is done quickly by their organisations, and the process of managing the media interest can begin.

The media are a valuable vehicle to convey information to the public, and are willing to work with responders to carry key safety messages to communities. However, 24/7 television news broadcasting and media websites means that the supply of information from authoritative sources has to be continuous, up to date, and cognizant of relevant media deadlines. If the media do not receive information from an authoritative source, they will look elsewhere to fill airtime on a “happening” story.

The media carry out two functions when reporting on an emergency. The first is to convey public safety information and re-assurance. Most radio broadcasters will interrupt local programmes, or broadcast at the next available opportunity, safety information to the public, such as shelter advice, and are keen to work with responders to safeguard the communities of Cheshire. Local and Regional Media Emergency Forums, which meet quarterly, allow responding agencies and the media to meet together and plan together for emergency situations, as well as review past incidents with a view to identifying good practice and improving procedures.

However, the media are also news outlets, reporting on events which have occurred. Such reporting may analyse the response of agencies to the incident, it may be critical and invite comment from professionals which conflicts with our key messages of re-assurance, for example. The news media constantly require updates, interviews with practitioners, and access to the scene. While we work with the media to relay safety information to the public, we must also recognize the importance of keeping the news media updated with developments, otherwise our key messages may be lost and our communications strategy undermined.

9.2 Media Scene Management

The media will arrive quickly at a scene in large numbers, often with large outside broadcast vehicles which take up a lot of space. Unless well managed, they will impede the work of the emergency services at the scene. The media will therefore require:-

- Designated parking for OB vehicles – this must be as near as practicable and safe to the incident scene. This will be arranged by the Police Bronze Commander at the emergency services rendezvous point after liaison with the Police Bronze Press Officer at the scene.
- Designated parking for reporters cars where practicable and safe. Bronze as above.
- A media vantage point. This should allow journalists to safely view what is taking place, without hampering the work of responders. At the scene of a major motorway collision, for example, this might be a bridge overlooking the scene - again designated by the Bronze Commander. Editors and journalists should be reminded that they are responsible for their own health and safety.
- If a vantage point is not practicable, for example in an incident involving a chemical leak where journalists cannot safely approach, agencies should consider providing footage, such as from the police air support unit, or fire service evidence gathering cameras. The Police Press Office should always be consulted before footage is provided by other agencies, such as CCTV for example, as there may be operational reasons for withholding the footage at this stage, particularly if the incident is likely to result in criminal proceedings.
- Briefing – Regular at the scene briefings to keep journalists updated.
- Interviews – Agency representatives to talk on camera about what has happened, and what is being done about it.
- Access to victims – the media will want to talk to the people who have been affected by the incident if they are fit and willing to talk. This could be the walking wounded survivors of a train crash, or evacuees at a rest centre. Access to victims or eye witnesses should not be given to the media until they have provided statements to the police.

The incident scene requirements of the media will be arranged by a Press Officer – sometimes a Police Press Officer, although not always – who will liaise with Silver Control and the Bronze Commander when making the arrangements. The Press Officer at the scene is designated a Bronze Press Officer, and there may be more than one Bronze Press Officer at the scene, or at multiple scenes, and they may be from different agencies responding to the incident. Where the media request falls within the remit of another agency, such as for example, a request to interview evacuees at a Local Authority rest centre, Humanitarian Assistance Centre, or to interview casualties in a hospital, the Bronze Press Officer will pass that request to the appropriate Agency Press Officer for consideration and action. The Bronze Press Officer will also ensure that the Silver Press Officer is kept up to date on the facilities provided to the media from the scene.

The Bronze Press Officer also has responsibility for the following:-

- Maintaining an overview of the numbers of media at the scene. If the numbers grow too large and are impeding the work of responders, it may be necessary to discuss pooling with the media present.
- Consideration as to whether it is necessary to open an MBC near the scene.
- Advising journalists present of their responsibility for their own health and safety while near the incident scene. At the minimum, all journalists should be wearing high conspicuity jackets which clearly identify them as media.
- Setting up security procedures to check the credentials of journalists at the scene to ensure that all those in attendance are bona fide media. A national Press Accreditation scheme has been introduced by ACPO Communications Advisory Group working with journalistic unions, which supports a photographic identity card for all journalists. However, this has not been universally adopted by editors in Cheshire and not all regional media will be in possession of the identity card. Incidents attracting foreign news gatherers will also be problematical. Persons claiming they are journalists should not be allowed privileged access unless their identity can be confirmed. Appendix C outlines the Press Identity Card scheme.

9.3 Media Crossing Cordons

The Bronze Incident Commander may agree that journalists can enter the inner cordoned area to obtain footage for broadcast. It will be the responsibility of the Bronze Press Officer at the scene to co-ordinate these arrangements as follows:-

- Media can only cross a Cordon with the consent of the officer in charge within the cordoned area.
- All media entering the cordoned area must wear high visibility jackets and be identified as media. These jackets will not be provided by the responders at the scene.
- An officer designated by the Bronze Incident Commander, and who has knowledge of conditions within the cordoned area, will conduct a generic and dynamic risk assessment with media before leading them into the cordoned area. This will remind journalists that they are responsible for their own health and safety, identify the route in and out of the cordoned area, and highlight any risks, such as cutting equipment, diesel spillage, etc. Journalists must agree they understand and will abide by these conditions of entry before being allowed supervised access.
- Journalists will be supervised by the designated officer and the Bronze Press Officer while inside the cordoned area to ensure compliance with the conditions agreed.
- Once the appropriate footage is obtained, journalists will be led out of the cordoned area via the designated route.
- A dynamic risk assessment will then be conducted by the Bronze Press Officer to ensure no injury or loss of equipment was experienced while in the cordoned area. Journalists must agree this before dispersing.
- In cramped conditions, it may be appropriate to operate either a pooled arrangement or a number of controlled trips within the cordoned area, rather than have large numbers of media within the inner cordon at one time.
- Journalists remain responsible for their own Health and Safety at all times.

9.4 Media Briefing Centres

In prolonged incidents, or in the event of large numbers of media attending the scene, it may be appropriate to consider setting up a Media Briefing Centre (MBC).

A Media Briefing Centre offers a centralised facility, close to the scene, where journalists can gather for updates from responders, conduct interviews with officers, and attend press conferences. It has the advantage of bringing large numbers of media together, allowing key messages to be delivered from one point to all media covering events. Those press officers whose agencies are actively engaged in managing media interest in the emergency situation should attend the MBC as appropriate. A Police Press Officer (Silver) will be present at the MBC and oversee its operation.

An MBC may provide the following:-

- Shelter from the elements
- Toilet, and preferably, refreshment facilities
- Parking for media vehicles
- Access to Press Officers for regular briefings
- Facilities for press conferences
- Electrical and telephone sockets for telephones and computers
- Facilities to monitor television and radio broadcasts
- Facilities to access the internet and relevant websites
- Maps
- Basic furniture – chairs and tables
- Stationery
- Whiteboards and markers
- Ideally, small interview rooms away from the noise and bustle, to allow broadcast interviews.

9.5 Police Media Overlay

In certain designated major or catastrophic incidents, a media overlay facility may be implemented at Cheshire Constabulary HQ. This provides a Media Briefing Centre with full facilities where journalists can assemble as detailed above, but also a Press Officers Briefing Centre where Press Officers from partner agencies can work alongside each other during sustained incidents. Press Officers attending the Briefing Centre will be required to be self-sufficient (as detailed in the Civil Contingencies Act for emergency preparedness) and be equipped with a laptop computer and compatible printer and mobile phone. Please note that the Cheshire Constabulary IT policy does not allow the transfer of data from non Constabulary computers to Cheshire Constabulary computers or printers via data keys or other means.

The Briefing centre will provide:-

- Desk and chair
- Landline
- Facsimile
- Photocopier
- Maps
- Stationery
- Access to toilet and refreshment facilities
- Access to the assembled media
- Press Conference facilities (agencies must provide own corporate backdrop if required)
- Opportunity for face to face briefings with Gold Press Officer
- Opportunity for face to face briefings with partner agency Press Officers
- Regular factual updates via the police Command and Control system of emerging developments in the incident
- Administrative support
- Parking facilities
- Media monitoring facilities
- Access to media and other appropriate websites

All non Police Press Officers attending the Police Media Overlay must be invited to do so by the Silver Police Press Officer, have current photographic identification, and will be met at reception to enable familiarization with the facilities and surroundings. Access within Police HQ is limited. It is also important to note that the Police Media Overlay is not a call handling centre – it does not offer the facilities to take large numbers of calls from the public or the press.

Its purpose is to allow the Press Officers from responding agencies to work together and improve the sharing and co-ordination of information in certain designated incidents.

In the event of a Media Overlay facility being set up at Police HQ, there are facilities for an adjoining, but separate, Media Briefing Centre to be established also at the Police HQ, providing the facilities detailed for an MBC for large numbers of news gatherers, and providing Press Officers with proximity to journalists reporting on events.

9.6 Away from the Scene

Away from the incident scene, much work will be done by Press Officers to continue the process of informing the public and feeding the news media with new information. As well as at the scene, Press Officers may be based at the Joint Tactical Co-ordinating Centre, the LAEC, Hospitals, Humanitarian Assistance Centres, Evacuee Centres, Temporary Mortuaries, or at their own normal place of work, as the circumstances demand.

Each Press Officer will be adhering to the generic principles for co-ordinated working, as outlined in the previous chapter, and will be advising the media about the steps taken by their organization, talking factually and within their own agency's remit only.

All disclosures will be forwarded through to the Police Press Office to enable the Silver Press Officer to co-ordinate the flow of information, maintain a global overview of what is in the public domain, and check that the communications strategy as set by Gold continues to be implemented.

The media will contact all the agencies involved in the incident directly for information, and Agencies will respond directly to journalistic enquiries. If the incident involves business or industry, the media will seek to make contact with that company. At the earliest opportunity, the Police Press Officer will liaise with the Press Officer for the industry involved in the incident to maintain the process of sharing and co-coordinating information entering the public domain.

10.0 PRE – PLANNING FOR AN EMERGENCY

10.1 How can we best be prepared?

Planning is crucial to meeting our goals under the pressures of an emergency situation. To meet the requirements of the planning processes all agencies will undertake the following measures.

Effective contact list

Provide a 24 / 7 point of contact to the Secretary of the LRF, and ensure that any amendments are immediately notified. The Secretary will review the contacts list quarterly to ensure it remains current. The contact point should include a name, office hours telephone number, out of hours telephone number, fax, e-mail, and business postal address.

This will enable us to quickly make contact with each other in an emergency.

Early Notification

Press Officers should ensure that they are among the first people in their organisation to be alerted in an emergency.

Authorised Voice

Press Officers must have the authorisation of their organisation to speak on its behalf, or have immediate and direct access to someone who has that authority. This will avoid delays while press statements are cleared.

Sustainability

Each organisation must identify the resources required to maintain their response beyond the first 24 hours. Mutual aid protocols may assist beyond this point, but should be agreed, documented, and tested prior to a major incident occurring to ensure that those providing mutual aid are familiarised with what is required of them.

When determining resources to maintain service over a protracted period, organisations should not forget the requirements of the European Working Time Directive which impacts on the numbers of hours individuals should work without a break.

Resourcing

Press Officers should ensure that they have the equipment to do the job. This includes being able to operate “in the field” should the emergency demand it, and have the means to prepare, edit, send, share, and print press releases as well as speak on the telephone. The Plan requires all agencies to be self-sufficient and meet the basic requirements for business continuity should the situation demand.

Health and Safety

Each organisation is responsible for the Health and Safety of its employees and representatives. This applies particularly when Press Officers attend the scene of a major incident where there may be many risks, such as spilt fluids, cutting equipment, or debris. No individual should cross an emergency service’s cordon without the express permission of the officer in command at the scene.

Where appropriate the officer in charge may give permission for Press Officers and journalists to enter the scene under escort, and on these occasions a full Health and Safety Generic and Specific Risk Assessment will be conducted by an officer designated to undertake this role by the officer in charge. The Generic Risk Assessment highlights the risks which may be present to news gatherers, but journalists and Editors remain responsible for their own health and safety.

Most scenes, including those in proximity to COMAH sites or adjoining road networks, require high visibility jackets or vests to be worn to allow access. These will not be provided by the emergency services and should form part of the organisation's basic Health and Safety Emergency Response Equipment.

Organisations should also plan for the welfare of their staff in terms of toilet facilities, refreshments, adequate breaks, as well as considering counselling issues where staff are dealing with human suffering.

Exercises

A key area of preparedness is providing the opportunity for Communications Staff to exercise their Plans – indeed regular exercises are a requirement by law under the Civil Contingencies Act. Cheshire LRF operates a series of exercises during the course of each year providing the opportunity to test the principles of the Media Plan in a realistic scenario. It is also vital for Contingency Planners not to test emergency response plans in isolation of the Communications processes.

Training

Organisations should ensure that staff providing the first line response are competent and fully trained to undertake the role. A number of accredited courses, including emergency preparedness courses, are available to improve the skills and knowledge of staff, coupled with regular involvement in Contingency Exercising. Untrained staff will reflect poorly on their organisation, as well as weakening the process of co-ordinated, joined up working.

Best Practice

Lessons learnt is the best way to improve future practice. It is therefore vital that organisations include communications managers, and editors views, in any debriefs on major incidents which take place. Senior journalists have also acted as official Observers on multi agency exercises, producing a written report on the effectiveness of the Plan in meeting the needs of the public and of the news media. These views have then been incorporated into future practice.

Civil Contingencies Act

The Civil Contingencies Act provides a check list for emergency preparedness for responders. This follows below, and it is recommended good practice that compliance with the checklist is reviewed and assessed by Agency's Press Officers quarterly.

10.2 Civil Contingencies emergency preparedness checklist

ANNEX 7D TO THE CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ACT EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

ANNEX 7D **Media Planning Checklist**

The following checklist sets out a number of areas that organisations may wish to consider in terms of their emergency and crisis communications.

It should be reviewed at least once a year.

IN YOUR ORGANISATION OR COMPANY ...		
Do you know who will tell you about an incident?	Yes	No
Do they have all of your contact numbers?	Yes	No
How often do you check that these contact numbers are up to date?		
IN YOUR OWN OFFICE ...		
Do you have an out-of-hours service or communications contact?	Yes	No
Have you given these names/numbers to the relevant key staff?	Yes	No
If an incident occurs, who in your office will need to know?		
Do you have procedures in place to contact them (e.g. call cascade)?	Yes	No
Have you tested the procedures?	Yes	No
Test date	_____	
Do you have back-up procedures in place?	Yes	No
Have you tested back-up procedures	Yes	No
Test date	_____	
Do you have an emergency contact number for staff (e.g. with a recorded message giving details of what they need to do)?	Yes	No
WHEN AN INCIDENT HAS OCCURRED ...		
Do you know who to contact in your organisation for the most up-to-date information	Yes	No
Do you know how to contact key organisations, including the emergency services, in the office and out-of-hours?	Yes	No

Do you know who your spokesperson will be?	Yes	No
Have they received media training?	Yes	No
Who will brief them in advance of any interviews?		
Who will clear any statement that you release during an incident?		

WHEN AN INCIDENT HAS OCCURRED ...

Are there others in your organisation who will be able to support your communications team (e.g. to answer the phone, act as runners, do admin)?	Yes	No
If you answered yes to the question above, have they received regular training dates?	Yes	No
Date of last training update _____		
If you end up working as part of the Press Office at a remote location, do you have technical facilities that would allow you to do so?	Yes	No
If so, what do you have in place?		
Do you have a plan in place for the longer term that would look at:		
• Staffing?	Yes	No
• Forward planning?	Yes	No
• On going filming opportunities		

WEBSITES

Are you able to update your website at short notice?	Yes	No
Do you have out-of-hours contacts for your web team?	Yes	No
Have you tested the provisions?	Yes	No
Date of test _____		

EMERGENCY PACK

Do you have an emergency pack?	Yes	No
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EXERCISES

Have you held an emergency exercises in your organisation in the past 6 months?	Yes	No
Did these specifically look at communication/integrate communications?	Yes	No

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Do you have a business continuity plan (BCP) in place for your part of the organisation?	Yes	No
Has your BCP been tested?	Yes	No

Date of test	_____		
If you are unable to use your own office, will your team be allocated space at your back-up location?		Yes	No
Have these back-up facilities been tested?		Yes	No
Date of test	_____		
Are all staff familiar with the location and arrangements?		Yes	No
Is the IT equipment there compatible with existing equipment		Yes	No

11.0 STAGES OF AN INCIDENT

11.1 Key stages of an incident

Most responses to major incidents can be considered to have four stages:-

- The initial response
- The consolidation phase
- The recovery phase
- The restoration of normality.

These four stages are a generalised summary of how a Major Incident or Emergency may unfold. Other definitions of the phases of an incident are available.

However, it is also important to recognize that media reporting on a major incident will move through various stages, and this is outlined below. Awareness of the stages of media reporting can assist us in our communications strategy.

11.2 Media reporting – phases of an incident

Media reporting on an incident will generally move through phases. While there is no precise guide as to how the media will report an incident, the phases below are not uncommon. It is important to remember that the phases described may not be distinct, or have fixed timescales attached to them.

Stage 1 – Breaking News

As an incident breaks, the media will head to the scene. Early coverage will seek to establish what has happened, and to obtain pictures and coverage to capture the nature of the incident and the initial emergency response.

At this stage broadcast newsgathering will aim to feature live reports and pictures from the scene as a priority. The media response is rapid, with reporters sometimes on the scene within minutes. Competition to get the first footage, or exclusive footage which no other media outlet has, will be fierce. “Citizen journalism” is now predominant and within minutes, even before emergency responders are on the scene, incident scene pictures from mobile phones may be broadcast by the media or published on line having been supplied by the public present when the incident occurred. Similarly, people sheltering or eye witnesses to the incident will do radio and television interviews.

Stage 2 – Talking Heads

As the incident unfolds, and while confirmed information is still limited, the media will call on “experts” with specialist knowledge or experience, relevant to the incident. Depending upon access available to the scene and other material to fuel or prolong the initial dramatic coverage, reporting can sometimes move quickly on to analyse the incident, consider its cause, and its consequences with interviews and reports from “talking heads”.

These early reports may be more speculation than fact. This is important to consider when deciding what information to release during the early stages of an incident. It is worth remembering that the public gets most of its information about what has happened through the media, and tend to believe what they hear, see, or read. This becomes very significant when the reporting is speculative, inaccurate or misleading, and makes all the more important the need for a prompt multi-agency communications response to help plug that speculative gap and reach the public with our key messages.

Stage 3 – Naming and Blaming

Media coverage moves to considering who is to blame for the incident and its aftermath. If the emergency response is perceived to be slow or ineffective, the finger of blame will point clearly at the responders. This highlights the need to be fast in keeping the media and the public informed, and honest in explaining why information sought by the media is not yet available while implementing our media strategy.

This phase of reporting may be protracted if the incident is subject to judicial proceedings, public enquiry, etc.

Stage 4 – Epilogue

The media shelf life for the reporting on a major incident can last for weeks, even years. In the aftermath of an incident, the media may report on funerals, memorials, inquiries, or criminal investigations. The anniversary of an incident may be significant, and the incident will also be referred to in the context of other similar incidents elsewhere.

Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

ACPO – Association of Chief Officers, which incorporates officers of the rank of Assistant Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, and Chief Constable.

Broadcast Media – Television and radio.

Bronze – This refers to Command at operational level - the level at which the management of 'hands-on' work is undertaken at the incident site or impacted areas.

Business continuity management (BCM) - A management process that helps manage the risks to the smooth running of an organisation or delivery of a service, ensuring that it can operate to the extent required in the event of a disruption.

Business continuity plan (BCP) - A documented set of procedures and information intended to deliver continuity of critical functions in the event of a disruption.

Business impact analysis - A method of assessing the impacts that might result from an incident and the levels of resources and time required for recovery.

Capability - A demonstrable capacity or ability to respond to and recover from a particular threat or hazard.

Casualty Bureau - The purpose of the Casualty Bureau is to provide the initial point of contact for the receiving and assessing of information relating to persons believed to be involved in the emergency. The primary objectives of a Casualty Bureau are (1) to inform the investigation process relating to the incident; (2) trace and identify people involved in the incident; (3) reconcile missing persons and collate accurate information in relation to the above for dissemination to appropriate parties. The police are responsible for setting up and running the Casualty Bureau.

Catastrophic incident or emergency - An incident or emergency that has a high and potentially widespread impact and requires immediate central government attention and support.

Category 1 responder - A person or body listed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Civil Contingencies Act. These bodies are likely to be at the core of the response to most emergencies. As such, they are subject to the full range of civil protection duties in the Act.

Category 2 responder - A person or body listed in Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Civil Contingencies Act. These are co-operating responders who are less likely to be involved in the heart of multi-agency planning work, but will be heavily involved in preparing for incidents affecting their sectors. The Act requires them to co-operate and share information with other Category 1 and 2 responders.

CBRN – Chemical Biological Radiological or Nuclear incident.

Civil defence - Preparedness by the civil community to deal with hostile attack.

Civil protection - Preparedness to deal with a wide range of emergencies from localised flooding to terrorist attack.

COBR (Cabinet Office Briefing Room) – Provides central government co-ordination and support for an emergency, where appropriate, and may be led by the Prime Minister or a Senior Minister nominated by the PM.

Command and control - Principles adopted by an agency acting with full authority to direct its own resources (both personnel and equipment).

Community resilience - The ability of a local community to respond to and recover from emergencies.

Community Risk Register (CRR) - An assessment of the risks within a local resilience area agreed by the Local Resilience Forum as a basis for supporting the preparation of emergency plans.

Consequences - Impact resulting from the occurrence of a particular hazard or threat, measured in terms of the numbers of lives lost, people injured, the scale of damage to property and the disruption to essential services and commodities.

Control centre - Operations centre from which the management and co-ordination of response to an emergency is carried out.

COMAH - Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 - Regulations applying to the chemical industry and to some storage sites where threshold quantities of dangerous substances, as identified in the Regulations, are kept or used.

Controlled area - The area contained – if practicable – by the inner cordon.

Counter-Terrorism Security Advisers (CTSA) - Police officers who provide advice on preventing and mitigating the effects of acts of terrorism.

Critical function - A service or operation the continuity of which a Category 1 responder needs to ensure, in order to meet its business objectives.

Data Protection Act - The Data Protection Act 1998 came into force in March 2000. It requires organisations that hold data about individuals to do so securely and to use it only for specific purposes. It also gives an individual the right, with certain exemptions, to see that personal data.

E – media – News outlets which disseminate information via websites or other electronic means.

Emergency - An event or situation that threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK or to the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK. To constitute an emergency this event or situation must require the implementation of special arrangements by one or more Category 1 responder.

Emergency mortuary - Demountable (temporary) structures or conversion of existing structures whose function is to provide an area where post-mortem and identification examinations of victims can take place and, where necessary, provide body holding capability prior to bodies being released for funeral arrangements to be made. Also known as a temporary mortuary.

Emergency planning (EP) - Development and maintenance of agreed procedures to prevent, reduce, control, mitigate and take other actions in the event of an emergency.

Exercise - A simulation to validate an emergency or business continuity plan, rehearse key staff or test systems and procedures.

Family and Friends Reception Centre - Secure area set aside for use and interviewing of family and friends arriving at the scene (or location associated with an incident, such as at an airport or port). Established by the police in consultation with the local authority.

FIM – Force Incident Manager. Usually an officer at the rank of Inspector whose responsibility is to monitor all incidents reported to police, and to instigate police call out arrangements.

FLO – Family Liaison Officer – a police officer trained to liaise with a family affected by an emergency, providing advice, support, and keeping them updated on developments.

GNN – Government News Network –The Government's regional press office. In a major emergency it will support the GONW Regional Resilience Team and the Regional Resilience Forum if established. It will also link the regional response to the News Co-ordination Centre in the Cabinet Office if established from the emergency control centre. Other roles include representing government departments.

Government Liaison Officer – Facilitates two way communications between central government and local responders, and can also facilitate support.

Humanitarian Assistance Centres - A one-stop-shop for survivors, families, friends and all those affected by the emergency, through which they can access support, care and advice. Set up and managed by the Local Authority.

Freedom of Information Act - The Freedom of Information Act 2000 allows the public access, regardless of nationality or country of residence, to information held by public authorities or anyone providing services for them, subject to certain exemptions. It came fully into force in January 2005.

Generic plan - A single plan designed to cope with a wide range of emergencies.

Gold - Strategic decision makers and groups at the local level. They establish the framework within which operational and tactical managers work in responding to and recovering from emergencies.

Hazard - An accidental or naturally occurring event or situation with the potential to cause physical (or psychological) harm to members of the community (including loss of life), damage or losses to property, and/or disruption to the environment or to structures (economic, social, political) upon which a community's way of life depends.

Impact - The scale of the consequences of a hazard or threat expressed in terms of a reduction in human welfare, damage to the environment and loss of security.

Inner cordon - Surrounds and protects the immediate scene of an incident.

Integrated Emergency Management - approach to preventing and managing emergencies which entails six key activities – anticipation, assessment, prevention, preparation, response and recovery. IEM is geared to the idea of building greater overall resilience in the face of a broad range of disruptive challenges. It requires a coherent multi-agency effort.

Joint Emergency Service Group (JESG) - A steering group for multi-agency working between the emergency services.

Joint working - A single programme being delivered jointly by a number of organisations.

Lead government department (LGD) - Government department which, in the event of an emergency, co-ordinates central government activity. The department which will take the lead varies depending on the nature of the emergency. The Government regularly publishes a full list of LGDs.

Lead organisation - Organisation appointed by a group of organisations to speak or act on their behalf or to take the lead in a given situation, with the other organisations' support. The exact role of the lead organisation depends on the circumstances in which the lead role is being operated.

Lead responder - A Category 1 responder charged with carrying out a duty under the Act on behalf of a number of responder organisations, so as to co-ordinate its delivery and to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Liaison officer - Person within an organisation who co-ordinates their organisation's staff at the scene of an incident.

Local Authority Emergency Centre (LEAC) – The main function of the LEAC is to co-ordinate the Local Authority response, as part of the overall response. Other agencies may attend if the situation requires.

Local resilience area - The Civil Contingencies Act requires Category 1 and 2 responders to co-operate with other Category 1 and 2 responders in their local resilience area. Each local resilience area (with the exception of London) is based on a police area. The principal mechanism for multi-agency co-operation is the Local Resilience Forum.

Local Resilience Forum (LRF) - A process for bringing together all the Category 1 and 2 responders within a local police area for the purpose of facilitating co-operation in fulfilment of their duties under the Act.

Local responder - Organisation which responds to emergencies at the local level. These may include Category 1 and 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act and other organisations not covered by the Act.

Local Risk Assessment Guidance (LRAG) - A document provided by central government with information on generic hazards and threats that should assist Category 1 responders in performing their local risk assessment duty under the Civil Contingencies Act.

Major incident - This term is commonly used by emergency services personnel operationally to describe an emergency as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act.

Media accreditation – The process of checking the identification of journalists attending the scene of an incident or a Media Briefing centre to ensure they are bona fide. The nationally recommended system of media accreditation is the UK Press Card or a valid photographic NUJ (National Union of Journalists) Card.

Media Briefing Centre (MBC) – A central location, as near as practicable to the scene of an incident, where the media will assemble to receive regular updates from Agency Press Officers.

Media Emergency Forums (MEF) – Operating at national, regional, and local level the MEF brings together responders, the media, and as appropriate, wider agencies to plan for emergencies, and to review incidents to establish best practice and improved joined up working.

Media Managers Group – Press Officers, and those responsible for communication issues within the public sector, who meet quarterly to share experience, establish best practice, debrief and review the management of incidents, and improve joined up working in all sectors of public sector communications. Sometimes referred to as PR Managers Group.

Media Overlay Facility – The arrangements in place to provide a Media Briefing centre and Press Officers facility during an emergency, generally in pre-identified areas at Cheshire Constabulary HQ.

Media Plan - A key plan for ensuring co-operation between Category 1 and 2 responders and the media in communicating with the public during and after an emergency.

Mobile Telephone Privileged Access Scheme (MTPAS) – System which prioritises mobile phone use during an emergency, to ensure key responders remain able to communicate via mobile phones in the face of high demand / usage.

Multi-agency plan - A plan, usually prepared and maintained by a lead responder, on behalf of a number of organisations who need to co-ordinate and integrate their preparations for an emergency.

Mutual aid - An agreement between Category 1 and 2 responders and other organisations not covered by the Act, within the same sector or across sectors and across boundaries, to provide assistance with additional resource during an emergency which may go beyond the resources of an individual organisation.

News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) - The NCC works with the lead government department to provide co-ordinating media and public communications support during a crisis, emergency or major event.

Newsline – A dedicated number which journalists ring to receive updates from the Police Press Desk. The newsline is updated as frequently as required during an emergency. The newsline is also the means for Agencies to obtain updates on emergencies as they develop. The newsline number is 0871 550 6079.

OB (Outside Broadcast) vehicles – Vehicles used by the media to undertake news broadcasts either live or pre-recorded from the scene or at some other location outside of the broadcast studio. Such vehicles tend to be large in size.

Outer cordon - Seals off a controlled area around an incident to which unauthorised persons are not allowed access.

Plan maintenance - Procedures for ensuring that plans are kept in readiness for emergencies and that planning documents are up to date.

Plan validation - Measures to ensure that a plan meets the purpose for which it was designed, through exercises, tests, staff buy-in' and so on.

Police Press Desk – Part of the Cheshire Constabulary Corporate Communications Department, the Press Desk is staffed by Police Press Officers who receive and respond to enquiries from the media, and issue information, advice and appeals to the public via the media.

Primary Care Trust - Primary Care is the care provided by those professionals the public normally see when they have a health problem (e.g. doctor, dentist, optician, pharmacist). These services are managed by Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

Print Media – Newspapers, magazines, and other journalistic outlets which convey news in print.

Public awareness - A level of knowledge within the community about risk and preparedness for emergencies, including actions the public authorities will take and actions the public should take.

Public Information Line - A help-line set up during and in the aftermath of an emergency to deal with information requests from the public and to take pressure off the Police Casualty Bureau (which has a separate and distinct purpose).

Recovery - The process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency.

Regional Capability Co-ordination Plan - Plan to support local planning by ensuring coherence and identifying resources, available at both local and regional level, across the region.

Regional Civil Contingencies Committee (RCCC) - A committee which meets during an emergency when a regional response or other action at regional level is required.

Regional Media Emergency Forum (RMEF) - Group of representatives from the media (editors, journalists), government, emergency services and other organisations involved in dealing with an emergency, meeting to plan and discuss communications challenges and common interests in planning for and responding to emergencies.

Regional Resilience Forum (RRF) - A forum established by a Government Office to discuss civil protection issues from the regional perspective and to create a stronger link between local and central government on resilience issues.

Regional Risk Map - Map of assessed risks across a region.

Rendezvous point - Point to which all vehicles and resources arriving at the outer cordon are directed.

Resilience - The ability of the community, services, area or infrastructure to withstand the consequences of an incident.

Rest centre - Premises used for temporary accommodation of evacuees from an incident.

Risk - Risk measures the significance of a potential event in terms of likelihood and impact. In the context of the Civil Contingencies Act, the events in question are emergencies.

Risk assessment - A structured and auditable process of identifying potentially significant events, assessing their likelihood and impacts, and then combining these to provide an overall assessment of risk, as a basis for further decisions and action.

Risk management - The culture, processes and structures that are directed towards the effective management of risks.

Sensitive information - Information that is not reasonably accessible to the public because its disclosure to the public would, or would be likely to (a) adversely affect national security, (b) adversely affect public safety, (c) prejudice the commercial interests of any person; or information that is personal data, within the meaning of section 1(1) of the Data Protection Act 1998, disclosure of which would breach that Act.

Silver - Tactical level of management introduced to provide overall management of the response.

Specific plan - A plan designed to cope with a specific type of emergency.

STAC – Scientific and Technical Advisory Cell – provides health information during a Major Incident or emergency.

Strategic Co-ordinating Group - Multi-agency group which sets the policy and strategic framework for emergency response and recovery work at local level (see also Gold).

Survivor reception centre - Secure area where survivors not requiring acute hospital treatment can be taken for short-term shelter, first aid, interview and documentation.

Survivors - Those who are directly affected by an emergency, but not killed by it. Including those who have been injured, traumatised or displaced.

Temporary mortuary - See Emergency mortuary.

Threat - The intent and capacity to cause loss of life or create adverse consequences to human welfare (including property and the supply of essential services and commodities), the environment or security.

Threat assessment - A component of the risk assessment process in which identified threats are assessed for future action.

Utilities - Companies providing essential services, e.g. water, energy, or telecommunications.

Voluntary sector - Bodies, other than public authorities or local authorities, that carry out activities otherwise than for profit.

Vulnerability - The susceptibility of a community, services or infrastructure to damage or harm by a realised hazard or threat.

Appendix C

Media Accreditation

The UK Press Card

All the UK's professional reporters, photographers, and broadcast crews rely on swift public and official help to bring the news to Britain's homes and business. And every one of them can get a genuine UK Press Card.

The official UK Press Card is an excellent way to identify news gatherers in the aftermath of a major news event or at any other time. This is guaranteed by the UK Press Card Authority's gatekeepers, who represent all the organisations which employ or represent Britain's news gatherers.

At the core of the scheme is a unique photocard and hotline system managed jointly by the gatekeepers. It has a number of security features and is recognised by the Association of Chief Police Officers for England and Wales (ACPO) and by its sister organisation in Scotland, ACPOS.

Each UK Press Card has a unique serial number. Each cardholder has a separate personal identification number or word. By using the hotline – 0870 8376477 – anybody can verify that the card is genuine and that the holder is a bona fide news gatherer.

The card also has several secret security features in addition to the verification hotline. These are only revealed to the police or similar authorities. The card is produced using similar technology to the photo driving licence, with the photograph and design integrated into the structure of the card.

Every card carries the logo of the issuing organisation or the holder's employer together with the holder's name and the card serial number. And no card is valid for more than two years, ensuring a periodic review of the holder's right to have it.

The UK Press Card Authority

The UK Press Card Scheme has been in operation since the early 1990s. It was set up to provide a single, national identity card for professional news gatherers. It is managed by the UK Press Card Authority Ltd. A list of designated gatekeepers is available on www.ukpresscardauthority.co.uk.

Appendix D

Debrief Proforma following application of the LRF Media Plan

The attached Proforma should be completed by each responding agency immediately following stand down of an incident during which the LRF media Plan has been applied.

The Proforma is in the form of a drop down menu.

The completed Proforma should be e-mailed to the LRF Secretary within 48 hours of the conclusion of an incident during which the LRF Media Plan has been applied.

LRF Media Plan for Major Incidents in Cheshire, Halton, and Warrington

Debrief proforma

1. Terms of Reference for Application of the Debrief proforma

- The purpose of this proforma is to provide feedback following the application of the LRF Media Plan during the course of an incident.
- The proforma should be completed by every agency engaged in the delivery of communications following application of the LRF Media Plan.
- The proforma should be completed within 24 hours of the conclusion of an incident in which the LRF Media Plan has been applied, to allow immediate thoughts to be captured in the form of a “hot debrief”.
- The completed proforma should be e-mailed to the LRF Secretary by each responding agency, where responses will be collated.
- The responses may also form part of a later structured debrief.
- Feedback obtained from the proforma will be analysed and shared with participating Agencies by the lead agency for the incident in question. Feedback will be used to revise / update / amend the LRF Media Plan and maintain its status as a dynamic document, as appropriate.
- Amendments to the LRF Media Plan will be made under the guidance of the Plan owner – the Cheshire, Halton, and Warrington LRF Executive Board.

2. This Section to be completed by each responding agency.

Responding Agency		
Responding Individual	Title	
	Name	
Date of Incident		
Location of Incident		
Brief Details of your Agency involvement in the communications supporting the Incident		
Brief Details of your Agency involvement in the communications supporting the Incident		
Did you apply the principles of the LRF Media Plan?		
What worked well?	1	
	2	
	3	
What did not work so well?	1	
	2	
	3	
Best practice identified		
Lessons learnt		

In the light of the learning from the application of the LRF media Plan on this occasion, would you put forward any suggestions for amendment to the Plan? This should include a specified date for implementation of the change.

Any other comments?	
Name	
Date	

2. This section to be completed by the LRF Secretariat:

Has the LRF Media Plan been amended following review of its application?	
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Details of amendments made.	
Date of implementation of amendments.	
Has the amended LRF Media Plan been circulated to all stakeholders?	
Date of circulation of amended LRF Media Plan.	

Appendix E

CHESHIRE LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CENTRE

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Within 48 hours of a major incident, a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) will provide a 'one-stop shop' offering vital wide-ranging support and information from all relevant agencies to anyone affected.
- 1.2 The following Communications Strategy will be an essential partner to the operation of any HAC- whether physical or on-line - opened within the Cheshire Local Resilience Forum area.

2. Purpose of the HAC in the context of the Strategy

2.1 The HAC will:-

- Offer access to a wide range of services allowing survivors, bereaved relatives, the temporary homeless etc., to make informed choices to meet their needs.
- Protect the dignity and privacy of those requiring psychological / social support.
- Ensure a timely, co-ordinated and seamless multi-agency approach designed to minimise duplication and cover all eventualities.
- And when needed, act as a collection point for forensic evidence to assist the identification process.

3. Strategy Rationale

3.1 Effective communications will:-

- Tell those who need help and advice where and when to get it.
- Ensure the HAC is used - and used appropriately.
- Deliver reassurance and consistency of message throughout.
- Offer continued support once the initial period is over (advice from trauma experts.)

4. Target Audience

- Those directly involved or
- Potentially affected and seeking information on relatives or friends.
- Referrers – police, NHS, doctors, family and friends and employers.
- The Media as conduits of vital information to the wider public.

5. Messaging

5.1 Communications messages should focus on the 'relief operation' because the HAC location could change and many users will prefer to telephone either before or as an alternative to visiting the HAC. The local authority should prioritise the opening of a dedicated 24- hour telephone line to ensure message consistency. It should also make use of new media and technology via the use of digital media

5.2 Core Message: 'There is help available for all.'

Sub Message: 'Who we are and who we are there for.'

Core Message: 'Contact us 24 hours a day- either by phone, on-line or personal visit.'

Sub Message: 'Location, travel info and what visitors should bring with them.'

6. Media Relations

6.1 Press Officers will play a major role in the management of the HAC, both in media briefing on the centre's purpose and also ensuring the privacy of those seeking its help. Striking a careful balance between the two is essential to ensure operational effectiveness.

6.2 Operational Guidelines

In consultation with press officers supporting the Strategic Co-ordination Group, the HAC Management Group should develop a strategy to facilitate the media at the centre and to communicate its location and purpose to potential users.

To ensure minimum delay in communications delivery advanced planning should include that:-

- The Lead Agency for communication purposes shall be the relevant local authority under the auspices of the Lead Local Authority Communications Team. However, all agencies will operate to the principles agreed in the Cheshire LRF Media Plan for Major and Serious Incidents" and agencies should refer to this plan
- It be agreed that the opening of an HAC should be supported by mutual aid via all Cheshire LRF Local Authority Communication Teams.
- Agreements with TV and radio to accommodate government public service broadcasts (if appropriate and required).
- A skeleton website structure ready to be populated with content and partner agreements to provide links to site.
- A visual operation ID to be used on all communications.

6.3 Media Relations, HAC Press Officer, Marketing and Advertising.

To cope with considerable media interest during the initial response stage, a designated media officer- appointed from the local authority will be required on-site at all times, aided by a rota of support from other local authorities, via mutual aid if required.

Prior to the HAC opening, the on-site Media Relations Officer under the auspices of the Lead Communications Team of the relevant local authority must:-

- Establish a media centre (secure and protected from the weather) close to HAC and establish layout and design of site.
- Determine what IT equipment and phone facilities are available to visiting media representatives - and what they must bring with them.
- Establish estimated completion time
- Determine the estimated time for completion / barriers that may prevent this.
- All media releases must be in accordance with the Cheshire LRF Media Plan.
- Draft the daily agenda and determine the daily meeting representation.
- Designate partner media officer meeting times
- Establish spokespersons

7 HAC Communications: Main Messages

7.1 Two major strands to HAC publicity are recommended, preferably in advance if resources would be limited in the 48 hour lead up to the opening of a HAC:

- General information on the purpose of the centre, services provided, its location, opening hours and contact details.
- An advertising and marketing strategy aimed at local, regional and possibly national media and relevant websites. Necessary because the media will initially concentrate on the incident itself.

7.2 This might include:

- On-street signage directing people to the site (Day 1)
- Phone line (Day 1)
- Advertising in key media. A logo for all materials should be developed and templates provided to lead agency. Budget will be required unless there are pre-negotiated arrangements (Day 1)
- Public service announcements. Dependent on the scale and reach of the disaster the operation may wish to make public service announcements on TV / Radio: these must be pre-negotiated by central government (Day 1 or 2)
- Website: if a template site is developed off-line in preparation (Day 2)
- Web hyperlinks sent out to all key agencies and online media to publicise the operation and link into the site (Day 3).

- Advertising campaign: Will need to be available for paid for advertising (Week 2 + one month, three month, six month, 1 year anniversaries).
- Flyers advertising only the phone line and website.
- Leaflets for use at the centre and supporting the core content of the website.
- Media releases.
- On- site / off site interviews.
- Regular media briefing at set times of the day.
- Tour of site prior to opening

8 Funding

8.1 The Local Authority as the lead agency responsible for the HAC would fund an advertising/ marketing budget, possibly later recoverable from central government. In an incident involving private companies, finance could be available from this source.

9 Public Confidence : Managing The Negative:-

9.1 The handling of any major incident is always liable to criticism via the media and operation of the HAC will be no exception. The unknown factor may arise at any time and emphasises the need for an on-site press officer able to mobilise instant media officer support.

9.2 Possible scenarios could include:

- criticism of centre's performance.
- incorrect address and phone details provided.
- unexpected under use or difficulties in coping with pressure.
- access by individuals who have lied about their identity
- requirements to move to another location at short notice
- further incidents requiring different / additional resources.
- foreign media attention outside set times.
- Equality and diversity together with disability issues also need to be considered and addressed.

10 General Communication Protocol.

10.1 All agencies will operate to the principles agreed in the Cheshire LRF Media Plan for Major and Serious Incidents"and agencies should refer to this plan and:

- comment only on their specific area of expertise and share 'release' with partners.
- gain approval for the release of new information from the Strategic Co-ordination Group
- honour the confidentiality of those who have attended the HAC .
- not comment on aspects of wider incident when this is outside their remit

- 10.2 If the Major Emergency affects people outside the Cheshire LRF Area, the HAC Management Group should liaise with the home authorities of those involved and advise local agencies on the facilities the centre can provide.

11 HAC Website

- 11.1 The website must contain basic information on the purpose of the HAC, its available facilities and the 24/7 Telephone Support Helpline, together with links to useful sites, like the Local Authority, police, Disaster Action, BBC Website feeds and other statutory and voluntary bodies. A local authority's Emergency Planning Microsite can be adapted and utilised for this purpose.
- 11.2 If required, a Local Authority's Emergency Planning Microsite can also be adapted for use as a Virtual HAC. If for example, the Major Emergency was overseas but affected persons came from the Cheshire LRF Area.
- 11.3 Use should also be made of the Cheshire LRF Resilience Website

<http://www.cheshireresilience.org.uk/default.aspx>

12 Exercising and Review Date

- 12.1 The Strategy shall be reviewed annually in association with the Cheshire LRF Media Plan and also exercised in accordance with that Plan
- 12.2 The Head of Communications at Cheshire East Council will be responsible for its dynamic and formal annual review

March 2011