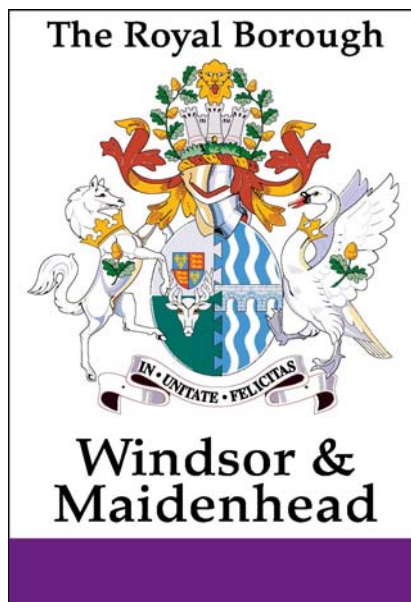


**ROYAL BOROUGH**  
**OF**  
**WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD**  
**GUIDE TO DEVELOPING**  
**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN**

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## THE GUIDE



# GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY SELF HELP PLAN

## Introduction

Nearly all emergencies affecting communities will be dealt with routinely by a joint response of the emergency services, local authorities and major utility companies. However, there may be occasions when circumstances, such as extensive flooding, storm damage or deep snow, delay the arrival of outside assistance, and the community will need to help itself. It will do this more effectively if it has a plan.



It is easier to draw up a plan in a small community, where people know each other and their surroundings better, than in a larger one which may be much more diverse and have less of a sense of identity. On the other hand, larger communities will probably have more resources, including perhaps a fire station and/or health centre, and there will be at least some trained assistance immediately to hand.

This guidance is therefore aimed more at planning for a small community, and for circumstances where external professional assistance is not available – either because access is difficult or because the situation is so urgent that the community itself must act without delay.

## Aim and objectives of the Plan

### Aim

To provide a framework to cope with emergencies affecting the community, when outside assistance from the emergency services and local authorities is delayed.

### Objectives

To establish an emergency management team to:

- Identify the risks to the community and take action to mitigate them;
- Identify vulnerable people in the community and develop plans to assist/protect them;
- Identify resources in the community available to assist during an emergency ; and
- Provide key contact details for the Emergency Management Team, Key Community Resources, the Emergency Services and Local Authorities

**Note:** The model plan should be considered as a guide, as circumstances and resources will vary.

## Community Emergency Team

The Parish/Town Council should select the Community Emergency Team – these people tend to be the natural leaders of the community and will come together in a crisis to manage the community's response to an incident and act as a link between the statutory emergency response agencies and the community.



It is important to identify one person in the Community Emergency Team (CMT) who will have overall responsibility for writing the plan and keeping it up to date.

## **Plan Content and Practical Guidance**

- Emergency Contacts
- Control & Communications Centre
- Rest Centre
- Resources List
  - People
  - Equipment
- Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment
  - Local Hazards
  - Vulnerable People
  - Pets and Livestock
- Practical Guidance

## **Emergency Contacts**

Key names, addresses and telephone numbers should be listed and kept up to date. These should include the CMT, who will come together in an emergency to assess the situation and decide what needs to be done, plus contact details for important local assets (e.g. key holders for the village hall, the garage, local shop etc.)

## **Control & Communications Centre**

This can be a local hall, pub, scout hut, cricket pavilion etc. – it doesn't matter as long as it is easily accessible, not prone to flooding and provides the facilities needed, which should include;

- Telephone(s), plus have good mobile phone reception
- Tables, chairs, wall space (for maps, black boards and/or flip charts for lists etc.)
- Stationery (paper, pens, note pads etc.)
- Catering equipment (for extended periods)
- Toilets

If telephones and mobile phones are affected, and road traffic is not moving freely, communications within the community, and to outside assistance may be difficult. Maintaining a listening watch to local and national radio stations will enable the community to assess the general situation, and also to hear messages from the emergency services and local authorities.

Communications within the community can be maintained through a system of runners. The number of runners required will depend on the size and layout of the community.

Consideration should be given to external communications between community and emergency services / local authority.

## **Rest Centres**

The Parish may have a village hall, which can be used to give emergency shelter to those who have to leave their homes during an emergency. An alternative could be a local school, barn or outbuilding. If one of the hazards is flooding, an emergency shelter that will not be affected by the flood should be identified. The type of heating (gas/oil/coal) in each building should be noted, in case of loss of a main service. The resources & equipment that would be of use, when providing an emergency shelter are:

• Blankets & Pillows	• Space Heating Equipment
• Camp beds	• Lighting Equipment

• Kitchen facilities, including utensils etc	• Toilets
• Waste Disposal	• Fire Fighting Equipment
• Radio & TV (with battery capability)	

## Resources

### People

A list of people with useful skills should be maintained (with their consent). The type of experience and skill base that may prove useful to the community are:



• Doctors	• Nurses
• First Aiders (e.g. St John, Red Cross)	• RAYNET Amateur Radio Operators
• CB Users/Owners	• Fire Fighters
• Gas/Electricity Board staff	• Plumbers
• Vets	• Mechanics
• Volunteers (e.g. Women's Institute/WRVS etc)	• Farmers

### Equipment

Together with the skills and experience offered by the local people, an equipment list, including who owns it, is key to the whole plan. Examples of what might be available locally are:



Equipment	Source	Comments
Portable Generators	Farmers, builders, local residents,	
Water Pumps	Farmers	
Lighting	Farmers, builders and light industry	
Sandbags & Sand	Farmers, builders, garden centre, nurseries	If the area is flood prone then householders should keep their own ready stocks of empty sandbags
Food/Drinking Water	Local shops, hotels, pub, clubs	
Alternative Water	Private wells, lakes & ponds	Unless certified as potable such water should be boiled or otherwise treated
Medical Supplies	Chemist, doctor, vets, community hospitals	
Two – way Radio	Radio Amateurs, commercial vehicles, farmers	
Heating & Fuel Stocks	Farmers, Schools, hotels, residents	

Chain Saws	Farmers, tree surgeons, residents	
4 x 4 Vehicles	Farmers, Private owners	Owning a 4 x 4 does not confer off-road driving skills. Identify skilled drivers.
Tractors / Trailers / Ropes	Farmers, tree surgeons	
Boats	Private owners, sailing, rowing, canoe enthusiasts	Ask residents even if there are no local lakes/ivers etc in your area

## Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment

### Local Hazard Assessment

Identify any particular hazards that might cause an emergency in the first place and plot them on a map. Obvious ones are watercourses, busy roads, local industrial premises/sites, a nearby airfield etc. Advice and guidance is available from a number of sources – see Appendix 'A'. Do not become too focused on hazard identification alone – it is important to concentrate on planning to cover a range of consequences rather than just the causes. By doing this you will ensure your plan remains flexible and able to cope with most incidents.



### Vulnerable People

These include the very old, the young, those with disabilities etc. In a small community good neighbourliness will generally be the norm, and those who will need extra help in an emergency are usually, already known. In a larger community it may not be so obvious, and in fact it may not be easy to find out, as much of the information will be covered by the provisions of the Data Protection Act and therefore unobtainable. The plan should therefore include arrangements for door-to-door checks in an emergency, in order to identify anyone in need of special assistance. Where Neighbourhood Watch Schemes exist these will help.



### Pets and Livestock

Animals are classed simply as property in law, but for most people mean much more. Pets are invariably regarded as part of the family, and for farmers a prize herd represents years of work and personal commitment. In a life-or-death situation the first priority will naturally be to save human beings, but owners will be very reluctant to abandon their animals and it is therefore a good idea to include them in your planning.



For all animals the prime needs are likely to be temporary shelter/containment, followed by veterinary attention, food and water. If your community includes premises such as boarding

kennels, stables, breeding establishments and/or livestock farms/holdings, owners should consider;

- Any local threats
- How they would evacuate animals to a place of safety, and
- If their premises could be used for other animals from a nearby emergency

## **Practical Guidance on Emergency Planning & Response**

### **Health & Safety**

Emergency situations by their very nature can be dangerous. People will take greater risk to help each other than they might in normal circumstances. Emergencies can be exciting, leading some people to lose their common sense – which can quickly turn a responder into a casualty or victim.

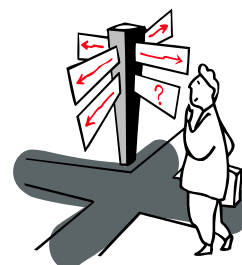
Where plant, machinery and special purpose vehicles are used it is vital to ensure, where possible, that people using them are experienced, trained and qualified and that someone is keeping an overall watch on safety issues. If there is time, think through what is being attempted, what might go wrong and what can be done to mitigate the risk.

For example – the use of a small boat in flooded streets. This may involve wading and unlike lakes/ponds, moving floodwater can be extremely powerful. There are often unseen obstructions and entanglements, many of them are hard or sharp which can cause serious injury. Flooding will often dislodge inspection covers, into which people can fall and become trapped. Remember, floodwater will probably contain raw sewage, so rescuers need to ensure they wash and disinfect themselves and equipment after exposure.

To protect the health and safety of your community – draw up some standard safety check lists and include them in your plan.

### **Plan Activation**

Putting the plan into action is unlikely to be a neat and tidy operation. The emergency may be so sudden that the Community Emergency Team may not actually manage to get together until after the first stage of confusion and chaos, during which people are generally focussed on protecting themselves and their property. Only then may realisation come that outside help is thin on the ground, or absent altogether, and the community will need to help itself.



### **Control and Co-ordination**

Unless there is a clear acceptance of a nominated Community Emergency Team leader, it is better to assume that the local response to an emergency will be more likely to resemble a co-operative effort rather than military operation! There will be disagreements and frictions, but not having to start from scratch when the emergency occurs will put those responsible for drawing up the plan (i.e. the Community Emergency Team) in a strong position.

In an emergency all kinds of people will have ideas as to what should be done. Some will be good, but mostly they will be spur of the moment ideas that the planners have already considered but rejected. Nevertheless, no plan is ever perfect and every emergency will have at least one surprise in store for the planners.

If circumstances permit, perhaps call a community meeting to tell people what is happening and what actions are proposed in response to the situation. If properly conducted this will allow

some debate, any good suggestions can be taken on board and the agreement of at least a majority to the proposed response.

On the other hand, there may be little time – rapidly rising floodwater for example – in which case the Community Emergency Team will need to make quick decisions and start to take action. Many lives were saved in Boscastle (Cornwall) in August 2004 when flash flooding inundated the village and decisive action by a few ensured that most people were evacuated just in time. “Better to be safe than sorry” is not a bad motto.

Once the plan is written, and the Community Emergency Team are happy with it, it’s a good idea to test it. Thinking up a suitable scenario and having the Community Emergency Team talk through a proposed response may be all that is necessary to check that a plan is workable. Doing this will inevitably expose some gaps, and additional ideas may flow that can be written in.

The plan should be updated regularly so that contact and resource information is current, and it should also be reviewed following any significant changes to the local infrastructure (such as new building development, a new road layout, change of use in industrial premises, alterations to water, gas or electricity distribution arrangements etc.)

If there are any really significant local hazards it may be worth holding a live exercise to test all or part of the plan. The most useful elements to test “live” are those concerning contact and co-ordination arrangements. Just having a surprise call out one evening to get key people to come to the control point will test the accuracy of the contacts list and whether people remember to write things down properly and bring the right things with them.

It is difficult to hold live exercises involving the whole community, as these often turn into just a fun day out, and generally this would not be recommended for a community plan unless there was a clear need for people to practise a specific drill such as a rapid evacuation. However, in that case the hazard will most likely already be included in the emergency services and local authority emergency plans and will be subject to their testing and exercising programme.

## **Keeping the Community Informed**

Once your plan is finished you will need to let the community know. It may not be practical to give a copy of the plan to every household, so take advantage of Parish Newsletters, web pages, notice boards or develop a special leaflet to let people know that there is an emergency plan, and who is responsible for it. Please ensure public versions have any confidential or personal information removed. Doing this will probably generate further questions, but the process of answering will only add to improving the plan.

**Note: Please ensure that you liaise with the Borough Emergency Planning Team from the outset. It is very important that all plans are consistent & coordinated.**

Appendix 'A'

<b>Further Sources of Information and Advice</b>		
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Preparing for an Emergency	HM Government	www.pfe.gov.uk
Flooding	Environment Agency	0845 988 1188 <a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood">www.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood</a>
Emergency Planning Team Generic Emergency Plan Generic Flood Plan	Royal Borough Windsor & Maidenhead	01628 796865 <a href="mailto:Emergency.Planning@rbwm.gov.uk">Emergency.Planning@rbwm.gov.uk</a> <a href="http://www.rbwm.gov.uk">www.rbwm.gov.uk</a>
Gas	Transco	0800 111999
Electricity	EDF Energy	08007 838838
	Scottish & Southern Energy	08457 708090
Water/Sewerage	Thames Water	08459 200800