

November 2007

Post Exercise Monsoon Report
Berkshire Regional Continuity Forum

5th November 2007

The content of this document represents an exercise carried out under Chatham House rules and as such any content should not be quoted or used to represent an opinion of any individual or organisation attending.

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1. Overview

On 5th November 2007 the Berkshire Regional Continuity Forum organised a business continuity exercise drawing on the experience of member organisations, the local community and infrastructure during the July 2007 floods. This document summarises the outcomes of the day and provides a collation of the feedback received.

2. Lessons Identified

Overall the exercise was a success. It was felt that the case studies especially were both informative and provided useful information to attendees. A number of lessons were learnt and issues were identified that needed to be raised within other areas.

The networking was particularly useful for the business community who were given the opportunity to understand the issues for responding agencies. This also worked the other way allowing responding agencies to consider the impact on the business community.

The scenario raised issues surrounding the need to plan for the impact of flooding on individual organisations and the community in general. The co-operation and sharing of information helped dispel any assumptions made by attendees, especially issues surrounding aid offered by Local Authorities in an emergency situation. The need for organisations to be self reliant and not dependent on emergency services and local authorities who would be faced with the same issues was made clear.

The Chatham House Rules applied to the exercise and gave attendees an opportunity to review their plans and responses in a confidential environment. The scenario gave attendees a better understanding of short and long term impacts of flooding allowing attendees to build this into their plans.

The venue, Easthampstead Park Conference Centre was considered excellent although there were issues with acoustics and the distance some attendees were from the screen. With 80 attendees the table groupings worked, although the layout meant that in some cases attendees were sat apart from their fellow colleagues, some found this beneficial but others felt that they would have gained more from the exercise if they had been sat with colleagues.

The information pack provided at the end of the day was found to be very useful, especially the weather and flood warning advice.

Some attendees considered the discussion and feedback time was not sufficient for the number of questions that were posed. Others felt that the fast pace kept attendees 'on their toes.'

The use of a panel of experts on the "GOLD" table was found to be beneficial although some felt the GOLD team could have made a bigger contribution to the day in terms of advice.

The case studies provided by Vodafone, The Oracle, AXA insurance, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead were considered extremely useful.

Becky Lane on behalf of Berkshire Regional Continuity Forum

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3. Background Information

The Berkshire Regional Continuity Forum is a free forum comprised of businesses from the private, public and voluntary sector. The key aim of the Forum is to promote local community resilience and in particular encourage business continuity across the Berkshire community, thus ensuring the local community is able to recover quickly and effectively from any disruption that may affect the Berkshire region.

The Forum meets on a quarterly basis to discuss a wide range of business continuity and disaster management issues. It was the third local exercise involving Category 1 and 2 responders¹ and the business community. The first exercise presented by the Forum was Exercise Chicken Run in October 2005. This scenario concentrated on the potential impacts of a Flu Pandemic on business and local communities. The second exercise was Exercise Bright Star which focussed on a major utility failure.

A small planning group was established to develop Exercise Monsoon, this consisted of:

Nic Handy	National Grid (Forum chairman)
Gil Susteras	National Grid
Sarah Davies	Met Office
Becky Lane	Bracknell Forest Borough Council

Valuable input was gained from Darren Firth (Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead) Louise Osborn (Bracknell Forest Borough Council) Dean Trussler (Wokingham Borough Council) and Mick Gee (Thames Valley Police)

4. Aims and Objectives of the Exercise

The aim of the exercise was to contribute to and enhance local community resilience through highlighting the importance of pre-flood planning by the business community.

To provide case studies from which local businesses could share experiences.

To raise awareness and confirm the benefits of planning by the local business community in responding effectively to a crisis within the community

To develop an understanding and an appreciation of the roles, responsibilities and the needs of those involved in the management of the impact of a crisis

To develop an understanding of the link between the effective response to a crisis and the management of the economic impact of a crisis on the community

To identify areas for further action to achieve a resilient community capability

To further stimulate debate examining the impact that disruptive events have on the economy and wellbeing of the Berkshire region as a whole

¹ The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 lists responding agencies to emergencies as Category 1 & 2 Responders.

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5. Exercise Structure

Attendees were split into syndicates of mixed organisations to gain maximum sharing of information and knowledge, though some organisations requested seating with colleagues and found this beneficial.

The day commenced with Vodafone giving an overview of its experiences from the recent flooding to ensure all attendees understood why pre-flood planning is essential. The scenario was split into 3 situation reports with questions/considerations and feedback sessions following the weather warning inject and short video footage BBC news clips. A local case study followed each scenario. The final part of the exercise included a debrief report on the July floods by the Environment Agency, and a presentation on future climate change by the Met Office.

A "GOLD" table of experts was available for attendees to seek advice. The GOLD table also assisted with feedback on the questions. Experts from the GOLD table were:

Peter Downing	Thames Valley Police
Sarah Davies	Met Office
Simon Smith	Royal Berks Fire and Rescue Service
Rob Dakin	AXA Insurance
John Parfitt	Highways Agency
Steve Richardson	Wokingham Borough Council
Ted Vary	Regional Resilience Unit GOSE
Katherine Dolman	Environment Agency

The exercise finished and was followed by an immediate debrief to collect feedback and evaluations from the attendees.

6. Timeline

10:00-10:20 – Welcome/Introduction

10:20-10:35 – Case study 1 – Vodafone

10:35-11:20 – Situation Report 1 – Pre-warning (Information sharing)

11:20-11:30 – Case study 2 – Windsor

11:30-11:46 – Comfort Break (police helicopter footage)

11:46-11:50 – BBC Video Clip 1

11:50-12:40 – Situation Report 2 – During the storm (Information sharing)

12:40-12:50 – Case study 3 – The Oracle

12:50-13:40 – Lunch

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13:40-14:25 – Situation Report 3 – Recovery (Information sharing)

14:24-14:25 – BBC Video Clip 2

14:30-14:45 – Case study 5 – AXA insurance

14:45-15:00 – Comfort Break (police helicopter footage)

15:00-15:10 – Case study 6 – Debrief by Environment Agency

15:10-15:25 – The future: climate change

15:25-15:45 – Conclusions/feedback

7. List of Organisations Represented at Exercise Monsoon

Atomic Weapons Establishment
AXA Insurance
Bayer
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Buckinghamshire County Council
East Hampshire Council
Environment Agency
FSB/ Doc-u-ment
GOSE
Hewlett Packard Ltd
Highways Agency
HSBC Bank
ING Direct
Interserve PLC
Kent County Council
Met Office
Milton Keynes Council
National Grid
Reading Borough Council
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Thames Valley Police
Thames Water Utilities Ltd
The Oracle Shopping Centre
University of Reading
Vodafone UK
Verizon Business
West Berkshire Council
Wokingham Borough Council

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8. Feedback Quotes– good points

Excellent venue and lunch
Case Studies were very useful and informative
The information pack was excellent
Useful opportunity to share experiences
Good networking day
Good to see the public versus private company experiences
Weather warning sites very useful
Practical tips were appreciated
Good to share lessons learnt
Gold table was beneficial
Good to see the Local Authority helping the business community

Feed Back Quotes – bad points

Acoustics of room not good
SME's under-represented
Too many questions and not enough discussion time
No psychological effects of flooding presentation
More information needed on how to build a plan
More advice from GOLD table would have been useful
No media organisation represented
Need clearer directions to the venue
Some agencies not represented

Learning Points

Flooding must be taken seriously
The local authority and fire service can not offer much help
Sign up to weather and flood warning reports
If flooding is to get worse in the future we must ensure plans are in place that actually work
A generic plan will enable a scaled response
Plans must be tested
Difference between pluvial and fluvial flooding