

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



Be Prepared!

6

STEPS TO COMPLETE YOUR COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES



Have you ever asked yourself:



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

Not sure?

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

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6 STEP Guide

Developing your plan

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



What is community resilience?

Community resilience is the ability of a community to respond to and recover from adverse situations.

A Community Emergency Plan may help minimise the impacts of an emergency and greatly improve the resilience of a community by:

- ✓ Using local knowledge and the skills of local people to support friends and neighbours during and after an emergency.
- ✓ Raising awareness of the risks that may affect residents and local businesses.
- ✓ Helping to protect communities from a variety of risks which would threaten local life.
- ✓ Building closer links with the local authority and emergency services.
- ✓ Encouraging a stronger sense of community.

Community Resilience IS NOT:

- ✗ Replacing the work of emergency services, local authorities or other professional organisations.
- ✗ Acting alone: keep in contact with emergency services and local authorities as you plan, agree how you will work together and provide them with copies of your completed plan.
- ✗ Putting yourself at risk.
- ✗ Having your services reduced or cut. It is about you taking action to lessen the immediate and long term effects of an emergency on you and your community.
- ✗ Only planning for specific emergencies. By identifying the people, resources and facilities needed in an emergency, you have a greater ability to be flexible as a situation changes.



IMPORTANT NOTE: working with the emergency services and other responding organisations

County Durham and Darlington is a very large area and it may be impossible for emergency services and other statutory organisations to reach every community in the first hours of a widespread emergency.

Early action on the ground, especially in more remote areas, depends upon local capacity, skills and resources. Prior planning, using this guide, will ensure local response is as effective as possible and that your community can recover speedily from an emergency.

A Community Emergency Plan does not remove the responsibilities of statutory organisations. However having a plan will make an important contribution to the resources that emergency service organisations can call upon and to the response that takes place within your community.

Make sure you inform and involve representatives of the emergency services and other organisations. This is so that they are aware of your capacity, skills, resources and detailed local knowledge and how to call upon them when needed.



The likelihood of most emergencies actually happening is low, but having a plan can make a real difference to how quickly the community and individuals, can recover from an emergency.

So, what do you need to make this work?



How your plan might work

For example, imagine if one of your local community buildings floods during heavy rain. You know that it's home to many activities and crucially provides a nursery service for many families in the area.

If the nursery closes for a few days it would have a significant impact as the nearest alternative is miles away and is much more expensive. If the closure lasts for more than a week, the loss of money into the nursery and the cost of replacing damaged equipment could result in the centre closing.

WARNING

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

Community Emergency Plan

PLAN

Plan identifies loss of the community centre as a key risk. Mitigating actions are in the plan and flood protection equipment has been bought and is stored in the building.

PLAN ACTIVATED

As set out in your plan, volunteers assist the community centre staff to fit portable flood gates and vent guards. All indoor soft play equipment and story books are moved upstairs.

EMERGENCY

EFFECTS

The car park floods but the Fire and Rescue Service attend to pump it out.

Emergency is over in six hours with minimal impact caused.

No Community Emergency Plan

EMERGENCY

EFFECTS

The car park floods, as does the community centre.

Community centre (including nursery) is shut for four months.

All equipment inside community centre is damaged and needs to be replaced.

Risk of community centre never re-opening due to lack of funding for flood clear up.

Community members spending more money having to travel further each day to get to the nearest alternative nursery.

1

Get together and organise the work

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

To start this process, call a meeting. You could host an informal drop-in or hold a discussion at an already-formed community group.



Who should you involve?

- Friends, neighbours, potential volunteers, existing groups.
- Emergency services, Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) and the Environment Agency.

What should you discuss?

- Emergencies that are likely to occur.
- The impact on your community and how it would cope.
- The benefits of planning ahead and what is required.
- How this guide can help and who is willing to help prepare a plan.

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

Sally Laverick, Lanchester Parish Clerk

What outcomes should you aim for from the first meeting?

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

- Improve understanding of community emergency planning in your community.
- Establish contact with the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU), Environment Agency, emergency services and other relevant organisations.
- Appoint a coordinator and a deputy (who have the time and ability to guide the work of the group and development of the plan).
- Appoint someone who will be prepared to work with the media to raise awareness of the group and its purpose. Create key messages to communicate to the community.
- Appoint a note taker - someone to keep records of meetings, information gathered and decisions made.
- Plan further meetings.

Think about:

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



2

Know your risks

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

Assessing the risks:

- Consult the Community Risk Register www.durham.police.uk/Information-and-advice/Pages/Local-Resilience-Forum.aspx
- This document reviews a wide range of possible emergencies and provides ideas on risks to consider.
- What experiences of emergencies have local people had in the past? Use local knowledge of group members:
 - **Social risks** - particular groups of local people who may be vulnerable in emergencies (perhaps elderly people or those with disabilities).
 - **Environmental risks** - areas that are vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather, vulnerable heritage sites, environmental sites such as nature reserves or sites sensitive to contamination.
 - **Infrastructure risks** - major traffic routes or bridges, loss of utilities.
- Check the Environment Agency website for flood risk in your community - www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk
- Speak to emergency services, the local authority and other organisations about local risks.



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

Susan Williams, Community Resilience Coordinator in Hurworth Place, Darlington

Remember:

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

3

Identify skills, resources and key facilities

At the heart of your Community Emergency Plan will be a register of the local resources that can be called upon by the Community Emergency Group in the event of an emergency. The key to acting promptly and effectively in an emergency is having these resources identified and how they can be obtained, in advance. There are three main topics to research:

1. Who is good at what?

Who in your community has useful or specialist skills and are they willing to help? For example, farmers, contractors, health professionals, builders etc.

2. What resources do you have?

These could be vehicles (4x4s, tractors etc.), tools, machinery, generators, sources of food and water, construction materials etc.

3. How will you communicate?

Are landlines and mobile signals reliable? If they fail, what alternatives are there (door knocking, 2-way radios etc.)?

Make sure you keep contact details for key people and a record of the terms on which you might be able to utilise equipment and materials. Consider putting in place arrangements relating to individuals' availability in an emergency. Think about how you will use volunteers, perhaps identifying teams to:

- Staff your local co-ordination centre
- Assist with a place of safety
- Become local wardens to 'door knock'

What facilities might you need?

You need to think about facilities you might need in advance in order to effectively manage an emergency situation and to support people affected. These facilities should be locations not likely to be directly affected by an emergency, but which are readily accessible to as much of the community as possible.



Facilities needed include:

- **Local Co-ordination Centre** - somewhere the Community Emergency Group and local people can gather to share information about the emergency and meet with representatives of the emergency services and/or other organisations if necessary. This could be a community centre or church hall for example.
- **Place of Safety** - A place which people can be moved to for a few hours if they have to leave their homes in an emergency before the CCU set up a local assistance centre. You will need space for people to sit, toilet facilities and a small kitchen as a minimum requirement.

Remember:

Consult with the CCU as they may have already identified suitable premises in your community.



4 Keep in touch

In developing your Community Emergency Plan you will have identified key individuals and groups with significant resources, skills or knowledge to contact and mobilise should an emergency arise. Effective communications with these people are essential.

Your key people:

It is essential that you have the contact details of all of your key people. Be comprehensive and make sure that the information is readily accessible for members of the Community Emergency Group, the emergency services and the CCU.

How will you mobilise your contacts?

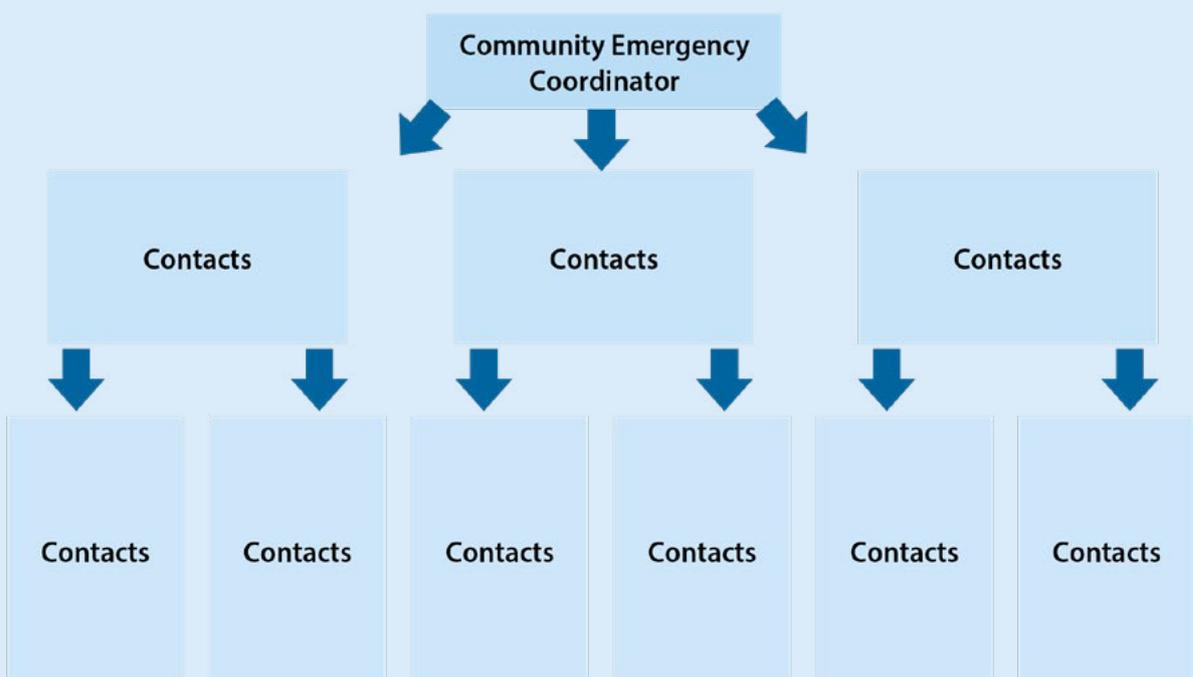
Use a pre-prepared telephone contact 'tree' or cascade in which each person telephones two or three others.

Have an alternative communication method in place (such as door knocking) in case the telephones are not working.

Whose contact information will you need?

- Community volunteers
- Emergency services
- CCU

Example:



5 Activate your community emergency plan and taking control

With all of the main components of your Community Emergency Plan in place (people, skills and resources), you next need to think about how your plan will be put into action when an emergency arises. That is, how will you know when an emergency is likely to occur or has already happened?

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

- Warnings/requests from the emergency services
- Environment Agency warnings
- Substantial changes in local river levels
- Locally recognised 'hot spots' that are often early indicators of problems arising elsewhere
- Media messages
- Severe weather warnings from the Met Office
- Severe cold weather alerts or heatwave alerts

Who should take responsibility?

Members of the group should agree who is responsible for:

- Monitoring the triggers as a possible emergency approaches.
- Carrying out key actions when triggers are identified.

Give some thought to the point at which the Community Emergency Group may need to apply its arrangements for mobilising local resources, the telephone tree and calling its first meeting to manage an emergency.

How can we co-ordinate our actions?

Prepare flexible plans in advance which can be used at your first emergency meeting.

- Agree:
 - Where this meeting should take place - perhaps your local co-ordination centre.
 - Who should attend - The community emergency group, local authority, local volunteers, emergency services and others with specialist knowledge, equipment or skills.
- What you will need to discuss.



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

Keith Preston, Regional Adviser at Community Resilience UK CIC

Remember:

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



6 Test your plan

Having thought through and prepared a Community Emergency Plan, it is important to test the arrangements that you have put in place to make sure that they work. Regular testing will build the confidence of those involved, and will help to ensure that your plans remain up to date and effective. There will inevitably be changes as people come and go and resources change.

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

The main reasons for testing the plan are:

- To verify that your procedures work.
- To involve local authority/ emergency services and other agencies.
- To develop the skills of all participants.
- To identify areas for improvement.

Routine checks might include:

- Updating contact and resource lists.
- Testing, maintaining and replacing equipment.
- Checking the continuing suitability and availability of facilities, including new facilities which may have become available.

Testing options:

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

- **Discussion based** - Cheap, easy-to-prepare and useful for talking through and training your plan.
- **Table top** – Using a scenario to simulate an emergency, which can help you to test and check your plans. Low cost but requires a significant amount of preparation.
- **Live play** - Great for testing and building confidence in your plan - such as setting up your co-ordination centre and place of safety, however it needs careful preparation and management and can be costly.

How will we know our plans work?

Do an annual test to verify arrangements and develop experience for your volunteers. Review the results of the tests to see if any changes need to be made to your plan.

Who can we get advice from?

Advice and materials to help you plan your exercise, are available from the CCU.



Useful websites

Durham County Council

www.durham.gov.uk/

Darlington Borough Council

www.darlington.gov.uk/

Durham Constabulary

www.durham.police.uk

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

www.ddfire.gov.uk/

The Environment Agency

to check local flood risk, flood warnings and river levels -

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency

The Met Office

www.metoffice.gov.uk

The Local Resilience Forum

For information including the Community Risk Register -

www.ddfire.gov.uk/local-resilience-forum

Keep In The Know

to find out what is happening in your area

[www.keepintheknow.co.uk/Neighbourhood Watch](http://www.keepintheknow.co.uk/Neighbourhood%20Watch) - www.ourwatch.org.uk/



Most of these organisations also have social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter which will provide further information.





Useful information:

Top Tip: GRAB BAG

If you are at home and an emergency happens, try to gather together:

- Medication
- Important documents
- Toiletries
- Mobile phone and charger
- Cash and credit cards
- Warm waterproof clothing
- Bottled water and ready-to-eat food
- Baby food and care items where necessary
- First aid kit
- Wind up or battery torch and radio

Free Safe and Wellbeing Visits

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service are offering free Safe and Wellbeing Visits.

Trained fire and rescue staff will carry out a personalised fire hazard assessment of your home. They will fit free smoke alarms where required and offer advice to make you and your family safer in your home.

Call: 0845 2234221 or Service HQ on 0845 3058383 and ask for Community Safety.

Email: csenquiries@ddfire.gov.uk



Priority Services Register

This is a free service provided by gas and electricity suppliers and network operators to customers in need. It can warn customers about planned power cuts and receive priority support in an emergency among other benefits. You can receive the service if you are:

- Of pensionable age
- Are disabled or chronically sick
- Have a long-term medical condition
- Have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs
- Are in a vulnerable situation

For more information visit www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/extra-help-energy-services/priority-services-register-people-need



Emergency Contacts

Emergency services (only in emergencies)	999
Police	
Non-emergency enquiries	101
Anti-terrorism hotline	0800 789 321
Crimestoppers	0800 555 111
Fire and Rescue , non-emergency enquiries	0845 305 8383
Health , non-emergency enquiries	111
Local Authority - Durham County Council	
General enquiries (including surface water flooding)	03000 26 0000
Social Care Direct, for concerns about someone's welfare	03000 267 979
Local Authority - Darlington Borough Council	
Adult Social Care, for concerns about someone's welfare	01325 406111
Highways Services	01325 405222
Environment Services	01325 405 111
Other useful numbers including utilities	
Gas emergencies- smell gas?	0800 111 999
Electric- Northern Powergrid	
Power cut	105
Emergency 24/7	0800 66 88 77
General enquiries	0800 011 3332
Water- Northumbrian Water	
Leakline - Emergency 24/7	0800 393 084
Emergency sewer flooding	0800 328 7648
Highways England	0300 123 5000
Floodline (for river flooding)	0345 988 1188



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

Email: ccuenquiries@durham.gov.uk

Phone (weekdays 9am-5pm only): 03000 260 000
and ask to speak to the CCU

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