

Chapter 18

Planning at the regional level in England

Summary

- Civil protection planning for emergencies at the regional level is different from planning by Category 1 and 2 responders at the local level. However, the purpose of planning is still for crisis management to operate as effectively as possible in the region (paragraphs 18.1–18.2).
- Each region must produce a generic emergency response plan to ensure that the regional tier is prepared to respond. Like local plans, this regional plan should deliver known key benefits (paragraphs 18.3–18.6).
- Each Government Office will have its own business continuity plan to ensure it can support regional responses to emergencies (paragraphs 18.7–18.8).
- Each region may also have Regional Capability Co-ordination Plans (RCCPs), covering the co-ordination and support of the local response and the support of local government responses (paragraphs 18.9–18.15).
- It is just as important for the Regional Resilience Forum to know how to validate regional plans through exercises as it is for Local Resilience Forums (paragraphs 18.16–18.25).
- All Category 1 and 2 responders need access to regional plans; Regional Resilience Teams may need to decide how to manage access to sensitive information in plans (paragraphs 18.26–18.27; see also Chapter 3).

Planning at the regional level

18.1 Planning at the regional level is different in many ways from planning by Category 1 and 2 responders at the local level. The objectives of this planning work are:

- improving co-ordination across the region and between regions;
- improving co-ordination between the centre and the region; and
- improving co-ordination between the region and the local response capability.

18.2 There are three types of regional plan:

- a generic response plan for activating Regional Civil Contingencies Committees (RCCCs) and regional apparatus;
- a business continuity plan for the Government Office; and
- Regional Capability Co-ordination Plans.

Each type is explained in more detail below.

Generic Regional Response Plan

18.3 Each region will have a plan to ensure that, should it be necessary, regional crisis management machinery can be activated as smoothly as possible.

18.4 As at the local level, the generic plan will deliver four key practical benefits:

- a recognised corporate basis of response for the region to any type, or most types, of emergency;
- key supporting elements (that is, capabilities and procedures) which can be selected from and combined as necessary, depending on the nature of the emergency;
- a recognised framework for
 - awareness-raising throughout the region;
 - developing training and exercising throughout the region;
 - building ownership of regional civil protection throughout the region; and
- a recognised corporate framework for participating with Category 1 and 2 responders in any combined response.

18.5 The plan will have three main elements:

- procedures for activating the crisis facilities in the Government Office;
- procedures for activating the RCCC; and

- procedures for communicating with the local level, other regions and the centre of government.

18.6 The plan will be owned by the Regional Resilience Forum (RRF) and maintained by the Regional Resilience Team (RRT).

Government Office Business Continuity Plan

18.7 The second element of regional planning is the Government Office Business Continuity Plan (GOBCP). The purpose of this plan is to make sure that the Government Office can continue to operate its essential functions in an emergency, particularly those which might be necessary for the response to that emergency.

18.8 The GOBCP will be developed on the same basis as Category 1 responder business continuity plans (as set out in Chapter 6). This is to ensure that Government Offices meet the same standards, and adhere to the same procedures.

Regional Capability Co-ordination Plans

18.9 The regional tier has an important role to play in terms of consistency of approach at the local level. This will not be true of each specific area of planning – many specific plans can and should be produced in isolation. But certain types of planning, particularly in relation to events which could impact across much or all of a region or which could overwhelm a single locality, are likely to fall to the regional tier to ensure an effective, co-ordinated response.

18.10 The purpose of a Regional Capability Co-ordination Plan (RCCP) is to support local planning, by ensuring that local plans can be scaled up in response to wider impact events. It will do this by identifying the resources needed.

18.11 The decision to have one or more RCCPs will be taken either by the RRF, reflecting local pressure for increased support, or by the relevant lead government department as part of its national planning work. The decision will not be taken by the RRT.

18.12 RCCPs will be critical in developing capabilities on a regional basis to deal with emergencies which overwhelm individual local areas. By setting out how mutual support will take place in a co-ordinated way, this planning will ensure that more effective arrangements are in place to deal with ‘mass’ impacts. For example, a large-scale incident with a high number of fatalities could exceed emergency mortuary capacity in a local area. But by drawing on a Regional Fatalities Co-ordination Plan, mortuary facilities across the region could be brought into play to support the affected local area.

18.13 Although much of the existing capacity to respond sits at the local level, some capacity also sits at the regional level. Essentially, this is the capacity that can be found in central government bodies which are located regionally. For example, the armed forces have a long history of providing capabilities to support the local response. Other government bodies such as the Department for Work and Pensions have staff who could, in the event of a serious emergency, be deployed to assist with certain tasks (as they were during the 2001 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak).

18.14 RCCPs will also identify those government resources in the regions which could be brought to bear in an emergency, and plan how that would be achieved with maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

18.15 These plans will be owned by RRTs, but developed in close collaboration with organisations involved. The plans will be drawn up in accordance with the principles and practices set out in Chapter 5. All plans will be signed off by the RRF.

Plan validation

18.16 The validation of regional plans is just as important as plan validation at the local level.

Plan publication

18.17 The publication and dissemination of an emergency plan for internal purposes (that is, for the staff, teams and organisations covered by the plan) is an important part of plan validation. A regional plan is not valid if it only exists in draft form. For a regional plan to be valid, it must be accepted as the stated policy of the RRF, on whose behalf it has been produced. For this to happen, both the RRF and the

Category 1 and 2 responders it represents must have an awareness of the plan and have accepted part ownership of it where that is relevant.

18.18 Persons responsible for carrying out roles in the plan must be aware of those roles. Dissemination of the plan will often be accompanied by awareness-raising events designed to promote the plan to those ‘who need to know’.

18.19 There should also be a general level of awareness throughout the region that the plan exists and that organisations have a commitment to carry out agreed responsibilities under the plan.

Exercises

18.20 Regional planning will be supported by exercises. Just as at the local level, regional exercising has two main purposes:

- to validate plans; and
- to develop staff competencies and give them practice in carrying out their roles in the plans; and
- to test procedures and systems.

Most exercises will have some elements of both.

18.21 In developing an exercise programme across a number of plans and over a period of time the regional resilience tier will focus on:

- all aspects of the main Generic Regional Response Plan;
- plans which address the most probable risks and are most likely to be used;
- those elements of a plan which are weakest; and
- those plans or parts of plans where the least exercising has been done.

18.22 Persons writing and delivering exercises and training should be suitably experienced or qualified.

18.23 The combined response will be strengthened if Category 1 and 2 responders are aware of regional exercises and invited, where appropriate, to play a part in them. Multi-agency exercise and training programmes can be publicised through the RRF.

18.24 Equally, some regional participation in exercises will be on the basis of involvement in a locally or nationally organised event.

18.25 The detail of exercises at the regional level will be developed in accordance with the principles and procedures set out in Chapter 5.

Access to plans

18.26 As set out above, regional planning will not be effective if the work is not shared with the right organisations at both the regional and local levels. Better information sharing will lead to more effective planning and response. Equally, as Chapter 3 sets out, not all information can be shared because some of it is sensitive. But the general presumption is that information should be shared wherever possible.

18.27 On that basis:

- The Generic Regional Response Plan will be shared with members of the RRF and cascaded appropriately. This is both part of the validation process and a means to ensure that all are clear about their roles in a regional response.
- The GOBCP will not be circulated beyond the Government Office.
- RCCPs will be circulated to all those Category 1 and 2 responders which need to be familiar with their contents for the purposes of planning at the local level. The decision about how widely to disseminate an RCCP will be taken by the RRF, acting on the advice of the RRT in relation to sensitive information. Should the contents of the plan be deemed sensitive, the RRF might agree to issue parts of the plan or an abridged version of the plan.