

GDS Newsletter

Date: 31 January 2008

Edition: 4

Please accept my good wishes for the New Year.

As I write this I am struck by the realisation that we are already one year on from the main decontamination work following the polonium (Litvinenko) incident in December 2006. The GDS formed an element of the multi-agency recovery work, and, at the time of writing, all available venues have actually been decontaminated for some months. My sincere thanks go to all those involved (both GDS and non-GDS) in making this a successful response to such an unprecedented and unusual incident.

We are considering the lessons identified throughout the incident, and continue to work with key partners on "what went well" and "what could have gone better". The GDS has taken on board a number of lessons, including the amendment of our operational and supplier engagement procedures, and have integrated the key messages into our liaison work with Responsible Authorities.

Finally, we are busy planning the year ahead - and there is plenty to do! We are already part way through a new procurement round to establish the next Specialist Supplier Framework (more about that in the newsletter itself), and regional and national liaison work continues at full steam. We will also be updating Strategic National Guidance - again more on this below.

Robert Bettley-Smith
Chief Executive

Our Mission:

The UK Government Decontamination Service increases resilience by providing advice and guidance to those responsible for dealing with decontamination following a CBRN or major HazMat incident.

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GDS to expand the supplier framework.

The current GDS Framework of Specialist Suppliers expires later this year, and the Agency is therefore working with the Office for Government Commerce Buying Solutions (OGCb.s) to establish a new Framework, and to ensure continuation of service.

An advert for CBRN decontamination services was published in the Official Journal of the European Journal on 4th December with a deadline of 4th January. This asked for suppliers to provide a full range of services covering the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear arenas.

Pre-qualification responses have now been received and the technical, operational and financial aspects of these are currently being evaluated by a team from GDS and OGCb.s, along with colleagues from other relevant Government Departments and Agencies. This initial evaluation will be completed by the end of February.

Bidders who have been successful at the pre-qualification stage will then be invited to enter into dialogue with GDS and OGCb.s. Dialogue with bidders is scheduled to commence at the end of March, during which time potential options and solutions for the GDS requirement will be developed. The final evaluation and Invitations to Tender will be issued in the summer. Once the new contracts are in place GDS will begin the process of integrating the suppliers into contingency plans.

The Emergency Services Show 2007.

GDS took part in the Emergency Services Show at Stoneleigh in November 2007. Chief Executive Robert Bettley-Smith presented "An introduction to GDS and its role in recovery" at the show. For the first time GDS exhibited a stand at the show. Thank you to everyone who visited the GDS stand. We spoke to over 150 people and very much appreciated the opportunity to discuss aspects of our work with responders from the emergency services and local government. The subjects discussed included:

- advice and guidance that we offer to support contingency planning and during actual incidents.
- our emergency "On Call" team that can be contacted 24/7, and 365 days a year.
- the GDS science team and how science underpins many aspects of our work.
- exercises and incidents that have involved GDS.
- the Framework of specialist suppliers maintained by GDS
- how Framework specialist suppliers are deployed if the need arises.

Following the success of this attendance we are taking part in London Prepared at London Olympia in March.



Strategic National Guidance – for the decontamination of land and buildings

The Strategic National Guidance currently in place was developed separately by Defra and what was then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, now Communities and Local Government, about four years ago. GDS has recently taken on responsibility for merging and updating this Guidance relating to the decontamination of the open environment, buildings, infrastructure and transport assets exposed to CBRN substances or material. Some of you may have seen our brief questionnaire asking for comments on the current guidance. If you have seen and commented we offer our thanks. It is intended to produce an updated, single, high level document to replace these in April/May once all consultation and ministerial agreements are finalised. If you would like to be involved in commenting on the draft please contact the National Liaison Team at GDS via gds@gds.gsi.gov.uk

GDS Science

The in-house science team, based at Stafford, provides scientific support across the full range of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. The science team manages, through the Home Office Science and Technology Programme, research and development projects on aspects of decontamination in partnership with universities, private industry and government laboratories. The science also assesses the capabilities of suppliers on GDS's framework of specialist contractors and supports the development of their decontamination capability.

Strong links are maintained with scientists in other government departments working on related CBRN issues to develop effective joint working. Members of the science team are actively engaged with researchers in the USA and Canada, where we are contributing to the inter-governmental effort to develop capabilities. Contact with wider scientific community is fostered through liaison with scientific and learned societies such as the Royal Society of Chemistry. The science team also participates in exercises and trials to test and develop operational plans.

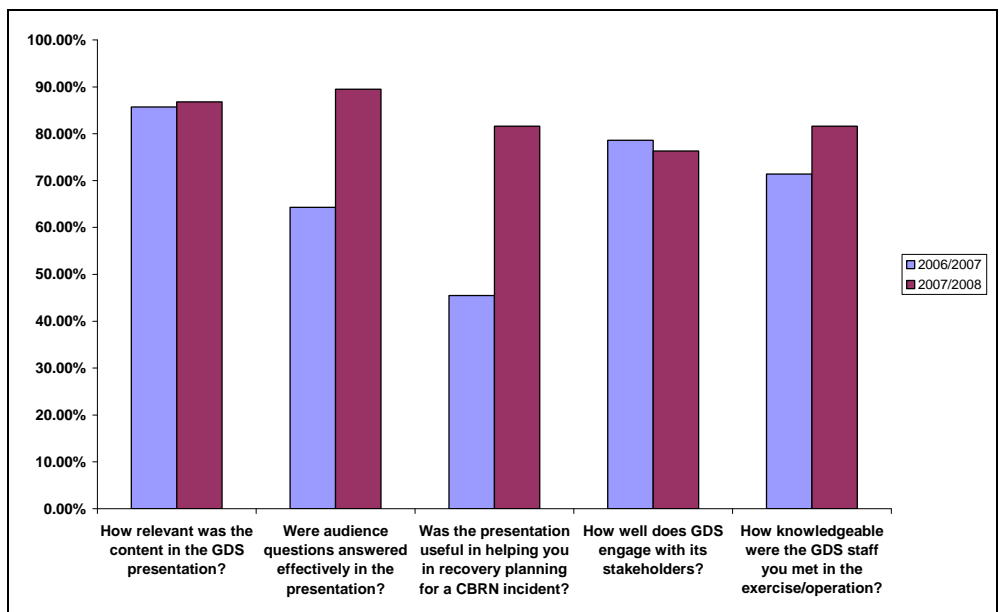
During operational deployments, the team supplies advice to GDS liaison staff and contributes to the scientific knowledge necessary for the incident recovery through the Science and Technical Advice Cell.

The current procurement exercise is a very important part of the science teams work. We are facilitating the scientific assessment of the services being offered by bidders. Of particular interest to us is the ability of a contractor to apply their tried and tested technologies in the CBRN environment.

Stakeholder Survey 2007

Thank you to everyone who completed our survey in October. The results have now been analysed and we are now working towards further improvements. For example the survey highlighted that a number of responders and emergency planning officers had not seen our leaflet. We are now in the process of improving and redesigning our leaflet. The new leaflet should be available in time for London Prepared at London Olympia on 10 March. The leaflet will also be distributed as an Adobe PDF file in March.

The following graph shows the headline results in percentages terms between 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for ratings of "enough to be effective" and "fully effective" combined. This shows some very favourable trends.



We would expect to repeat such a survey later in the year to track our progress.

