



# Incident Management Guidance for Members

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Version:	04	
Approved by:	Civil Contingencies Working Group	Date: 20 Aug 2013
Issue Date:	September 2013	
Last updated:	September 2013	

## **Foreword**

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) and its accompanying Civil Contingency Planning Regulations 2005 sets out a number of statutory obligations for responders. Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council is categorised as a Category 1 Responder and as such is subject to all the obligations under the CCA<sup>1</sup>.

A Major Incident or Emergency may occur at any time of day or night. It is vital that Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council is prepared and can respond at short notice; often, (but not exclusively), in support of the Fire, Police and Ambulance Services, providing a co-ordinated range of services to those involved, including victims, relatives, friends and our own staff.

The Council has established and approved an Incident Response Guide complimented by a Response and Recovery Handbook, Business Continuity Plans and other supporting plans.

The Incident Response Guide is designed for use by responding officers during an incident and contains a series of action cards, aide memoirs, templates and other information designed to assist the response. The Response and Recovery Handbook outlines how NBC address their Civil Contingencies responsibilities and arrangements for response. It is intended to be read slow-time (i.e. not during an incident). The two documents together, replace the previous Major Incident Plan.

This guidance document is based on the aforementioned documents, and provides elected Members with a summary of how incidents are managed, and how Members can assist in the Council's overall response. It should ideally be read in conjunction with the Staffordshire Prepared Multi-Agency Major Incident Handbook (available from Staffordshire Prepared website (<http://www.staffordshireprepared.gov.uk/Home/Organisation.aspx>) or on the borough council's intranet in the Civil Contingencies section), and the borough council's Response and Recovery Handbook (also available on the council's intranet).

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of Responders and their corresponding Category, please see the borough council's Response and Recovery Handbook, section 1.

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Major Incident / Emergency

This is defined by the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 as:

‘An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK’.

1.2 Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is designated as a Category 1 responder. Category 1 responders include:

- Local Authorities;
- Emergency Services (Police Forces, British Transport Police, Fire Authorities, Ambulance Services);
- National Health Service bodies (NHS England, Public Health England, Acute Trusts); and
- Government Agencies (The Environment Agency)

Further information on Major Incidents, Emergencies and terminology can be found in the borough council’s Response and Recovery Handbook

1.3 The Civil Contingencies Act places a number of duties on all Category 1 (and Category 2) Responders. Category 1 Responders are to:

- Assess local risks and use this to inform emergency planning;
- Put in place emergency plans;
- Put in place business continuity management arrangements;
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and,
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only).

1.4 To meet its obligations as a Category 1 responder under the Act, the borough council has:

- entered into a partnership arrangement with the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies Unit , along with all other Category 1 Responders;
- embedded its response & recovery arrangements into the overall response & recovery structure across Staffordshire;
- in conjunction with the Civil Contingencies Unit, developed a number of key documents, which detail the borough council’s roles and responsibilities in preparing for, responding to and recovering from an incident;
- instigated a Civil Contingencies Working Group within the borough council, consisting of key officers in order to oversee the work of the borough council in meeting its Civil Contingencies responsibilities; and
- nominated officers to undertake the incident response roles defined in the key documents.

## 2.0 Role of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council in an incident

2.1 A more comprehensive outline of the roles and responsibilities of Category 1 and 2 Responders under the CCA can be found in the Staffordshire Prepared Multi-Agency Major Incident Handbook, however, in the event of a Major Incident being declared, the role of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is primarily to:-

- (i) support the emergency services in their response to the incident
- (ii) lead the recovery process where it is the lead Local Authority<sup>2</sup> enabling a restoration to normality.
- (iii) maintain essential council services as far as is practicable.

It is also good practice to begin to consider the recovery process as early as practicable during an incident, and this will be initiated by the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), which is the multi-agency group at “gold” or Chief Executive level where the overall strategic direction for the incident response would take place. There will then come a point at which the Lead Responder during the Response Phase will hand over the overall lead to the Lead Local Authority. However, in certain circumstances (such as some flooding events) a Local Authority may take the overall lead role from the very start.

2.2 In practice, the response of the borough council is likely to consist of one or more of the following elements:

- To establish the appropriate teams and resources to manage the Council’s response to, and recovery from, the incident
- To establish the appropriate liaisons with other responders, both at the incident site(s) and with command centres, as required
- Participation in the Strategic Co-ordinating Group and Tactical Co-ordinating Group as necessary
- To alert and work with other Local Authorities as necessary
- Alerting voluntary organisations as necessary (via the Civil Contingencies Unit), and co-ordinating their response
- Liaising with Government Departments, public utilities and other organisations, as appropriate
- Co-ordinating / providing required services for affected people, such as rest centres, transportation (for evacuation) and emergency feeding.
- Providing any operational support at the scene (e.g. drainage or cleansing in flooding or Environmental Health advice)
- Requesting military assistance in support of the Council, where necessary
- Liaising with media officers from all other responding agencies to ensure a co-ordinated release of information to the media and information and advice to

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<sup>2</sup> In the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Recovery Plan, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council are named as being the more likely lead Local Authorities during a Major Incident, however, this is flexible and it may be more appropriate for a District/Borough to lead the Recovery Phase, with support from the County Council. This depends on the scale and nature of the incident and the decision would be made at the Strategic Co-ordinating Group by consensus.

the public, as laid out in the Staffordshire Prepared Emergency Media and Communications Plan

- Taking the lead role in the long term recovery and restoration of the affected area(s), where it is the lead Local Authority for recovery
- By the implementation of the Councils Business Continuity Plans maintain as far as is practicable, a normal service to the community whilst also ensuring the safety and well being of Council personnel

It should be noted that the above will vary according to whether the borough council is the lead Local Authority or is providing support to another Local Authority.

### 2.3 Incident Response Structure:

Although the borough council has arrangements for responding to Major Incidents, any part of these can, and would, also be employed as appropriate in any incident which requires a response by the borough council, but which may not necessarily be declared as a Major Incident. These arrangements are outlined in the borough council's Incident Response Guide.

2.4 Within the borough council's Incident Response Guide, the incident management structure is designed to be similar to that of other key organisations, as well as mirroring the multi-agency arrangements. The structure therefore consists of Gold, Silver and Bronze teams to manage its responses as follows:

- **Gold Team** – This team provides the guidance and **strategic** direction that the Council's response will take. The core membership of this team is the Council's Executive Management Team, with the addition of the Head of Communications where appropriate. Because of its role, in providing strategic direction, it is unlikely that this team will need to be "in session" for extended periods.
- **Silver Team – 'Incident Management Team'** – This team manages the council's **tactical** response to a incident. The team is made up of borough council senior officers, each contributing expertise in a key discipline. It is this team that will be based in the council's Emergency Control Centre and, where necessary, it will operate 24 hours a day. To provide for possible 24 hour cover, each key discipline has a trained lead officer and trained deputies. This team will also co-ordinate any cross-Service or corporate-level Business Continuity management in response to an incident affecting the council's ability to continue its essential services.
- **Bronze Teams** – There may be one, several or many Bronze teams involved in any particular incident, each managing one particular **operational** aspect of the response. An example of this could be a Rest Centre team, or even a Service Area Business Continuity Team. These teams provide the immediate 'hands on' work undertaken in relation to the incident.

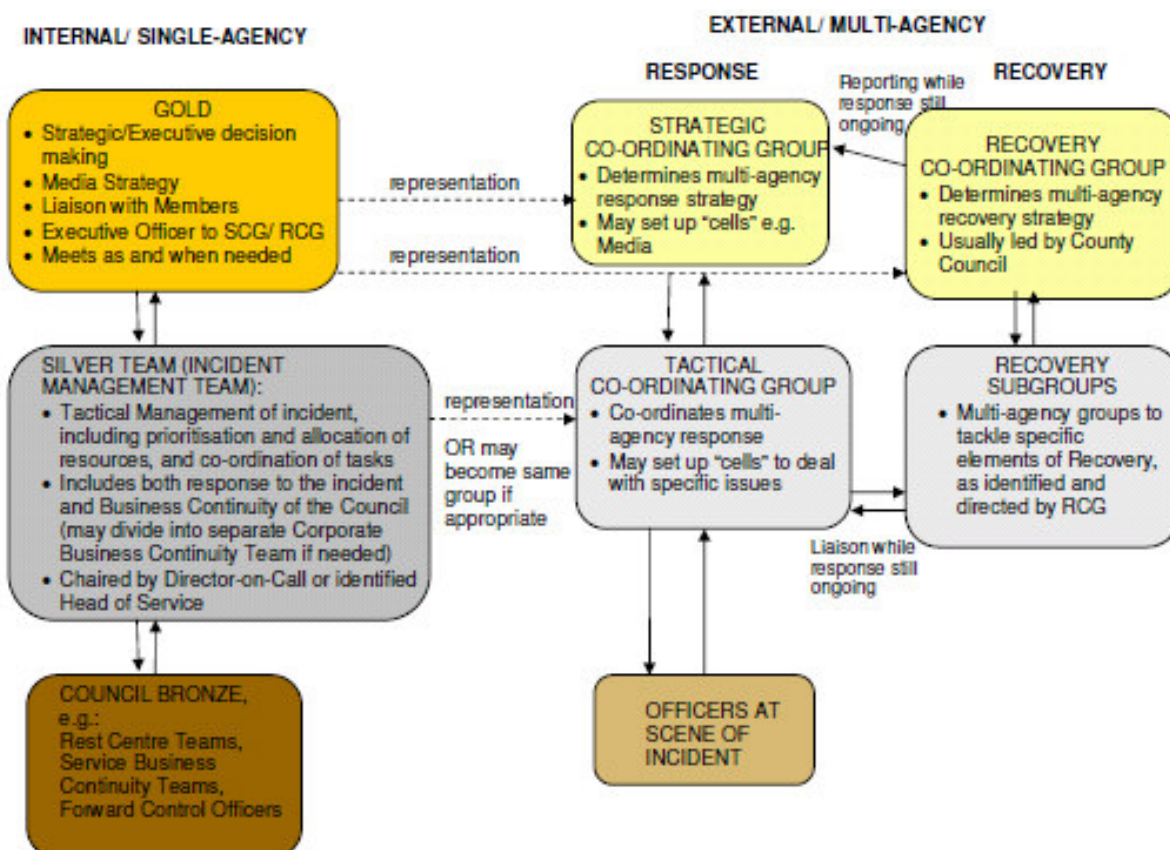
2.5 The Multi-Agency equivalent to this would be:

- Gold – Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG)
- Silver – Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG)
- Bronze – any incident response activity at, or near to, the scene(s).

For further information on this multi-agency structure, please see the Multi-Agency Major Incident Handbook.

2.6 Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council, along with other key responders (Police, Fire & Rescue, Ambulance, Health Authorities, other Local Authorities, Environment Agency), would attend the SCG. The Council will, as and when required, send a senior representative (usually the Chief Executive or a member of the Executive Management Team, who must have authority to make executive decisions on behalf of the Council) to sit on the Strategic Coordinating Group. Likewise, the borough council will also send a representative as necessary to be located at the TCG.

2.7 The diagram below shows the Incident Response Structure as it directly relates to Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council:



### **3.0 Management of a Major Incident/ Incident**

- 3.1 Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council may become aware of a developing incident in a number of ways both directly or indirectly. The Council has developed a Director- on-call system (a rota system that ensures a member of EMT is available at all times as a single point of contact for the borough council), and who will be notified of any significant incident.
- 3.2 **Director-on-Call:** The Director-on-call will assess the situation and determine what response is required, and what incident response structure or arrangements are appropriate for the scale and nature of the incident. The Director-on-call can also call a Major Incident, if appropriate.
- 3.3 **Incident Management Team and Emergency Control Centre:** The Director On-call will call out the appropriate key officers and arrange for the Emergency Control Centre to be brought into operation, if necessary. Once the Incident Management Team (Silver Team, or IMT) is in place in the Emergency Control Centre (ECC), the Director On-call will ensure that they are properly briefed and, at this point, either continue the management of the incident in the role of Chair of the IMT, or appoint a more appropriate IMT Chair and assume a role within the Council Gold Team if the Gold Team is activated.
- 3.4 The Council has established contingency arrangements to ensure that there are enough trained Support Staff (including the role of Emergency Control Centre Manager) to set up the ECC, and to assist its smooth operation. An alternative location, for the Emergency Control Centre to operate from, has also been identified in case the primary location is inaccessible. In the event of an extended Major Incident, the IMT will implement a shift system as appropriate, to cover a 24/7 response capability.
- 3.5 **Council Gold Team:** Depending on the nature of the Incident, the Director On-call or other senior officer may request the activation of the Council Gold Team. Some incidents may be easily managed at Silver level and, therefore, there may be no need to activate the Gold Team. In these circumstances members of the Gold Team will be notified (for information purposes), but will not be formally called out. The Gold Team may also make their own decision to formally meet.
- 3.6 The IMT will, where appropriate, refer significant prioritisation and resource issues to the Gold Team. These will include requests to exceed the pre-determined expenditure limit that has been set by the Executive Management Team, and any strategic decisions which require direction from this level.
- 3.7 The Gold Team will prioritise the demands of the Silver Team, allocate personnel and resources to meet requirements, and provide direction and guidance, as appropriate. They will also formulate and implement media-handling and public communications plans, in conjunction with the multi-agency strategy and media arrangements.



- 3.8 The Gold Team will also, as part of the arrangements for communications, liaise with Elected Members, and any appropriate Member committees / groups, ensuring that they are kept up to date with regard to the incident.
- 3.9 **Plans and Documents:** Aside from the Incident Response Guide, officers engaged in the response to the incident will also be using a variety of plans and documents, as appropriate to the scale and nature of the incident. These may include multi-agency plans which cover the Staffordshire Resilience Forum area, such as the Staffordshire Emergency Flood Plan, the Mass Transportation Plan or the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Recovery Plan. They may also include plans which are specific to the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, such as the Newcastle Borough Flood Plan, the Newcastle Town Centre Evacuation Plan, or its own council Business Continuity Plans.

## 4.0 Role of Members

### 4.1 General Guidance

- The responding officers will notify Members of an Incident or Major Incident as soon as is practicable. This may be by the Chief Executive/ Council Gold Team directly, or delegated through Member Services as appropriate.
- The Council Gold Team (or, when the Gold Team is not in session, the Chief Executive or acting Chief Executive) has direct responsibility for briefing Members and keeping them up to date with regard to the incident whenever possible. They will also advise Members of any specific roles with which they may be able to assist.
- Members need to be aware of the Incident Response arrangements, as outlined in sections 2 and 3 of this guidance
- Members need to be guided by the trained officers, not act alone
- Patience is vital, as often there is a period of confusion during the early stages of a Major Incident or significant incident, and information is usually limited during this period.
- If Members have any specific skills, which they believe may be of use during the incident, they should advise the Gold Team (or, when the Gold Team is not in session, the Chief Executive or acting Chief Executive)
- Members may be able to assist in liaising with MPs, Ministers etc. The Gold Team will advise accordingly
- If Members perform any role, relating to the incident, they will need to keep detailed records of any actions taken, as these maybe required as part of any investigation / review carried out afterwards. For guidance on this, Members can speak to any member of the Gold Team or IMT. A council Log Sheet template is also available on the council's intranet, e-Voice, under Civil Contingencies/ Emergency Planning section.
- It should also be remembered that, where circumstances permit, the Council will make every effort to maintain its normal day-to-day activities

### 4.2 Roles for Members in whose area(s) the Major Incident/ Incident has occurred

- All Member involvement should be carried out in liaison with Gold Team (or, when the Gold Team is not in session, the Chief Executive or acting Chief Executive)
- Local / specialist knowledge can be invaluable and of great assistance, so this may be called upon by the IMT

- Helping to identify vulnerable people (groups or individuals)
- Liaison with the Council's Communications Team to assist in providing channels of communication to and from the public
- Exercise 'community leadership'
- Possibly helping in Rest Centres and Humanitarian Assistance Centres

#### 4.3 Pitfalls to be avoided

##### **PLEASE DO NOT**

- Get involved, without first liaising with the Gold Team / Chief Executive / acting Chief Executive
- Take on tasks for which you are not trained and may create confusion or be counter productive (e.g. handling stressed people, media management etc.)
- Give out mixed messages / wrong information
- Put yourself and / or others in danger
- Adopt the role of trained officers
- Issue individual / personal press statements without reference to the Communications Team
- Jump to conclusions
- Make statements which imply failure or blame on the part of this or another local authority or any other organisation involved, as this often provides the basis for litigation after the event, which is all too common.

#### 4.4 Lines of Communication and arrangements for lower level incidents

As stated in section 4.1, in cases where the council is already aware of the incident, communication will be made as appropriate to members. However, there may be occasions where members wish to make contact with the council regarding an incident (e.g. if they are the first to know about an incident or it is of such a level that it has not warranted the council's incident response, as outlined above). In these circumstances, members can make contact in the following ways:

- If members wish to report an issue or incident out of hours, they can call the out of hours service on 01782 615599. This emergency call-handling service is provided by Cannock Chase District Council (CCDC) at present and is supported by a network of officers from key disciplines within the Borough Council.
- During office hours, members can report an incident to the Borough Council's Customer Services Centre by calling 01782 717717 or the matter may be raised with an officer within the relevant service area, if known.
- If the incident is of, or escalates to, a sufficient level, the Director-on-Call may be notified via the Contact Centre or EMT (during normal office hours), or the out of hours service provided by CCDC (out of hours).

## **5.0 Summary**

- 5.1 This document is intended for guidance. Every incident will be different and the role of Members will vary accordingly. The key is to be patient and supportive, and to liaise closely with the Executive Management Team / Chief Executive / acting Chief Executive or Incident Management Team as appropriate.
- 5.2 The council recognises Elected Members as having an important role in incident response, and will undertake to work with Members as appropriate to the incident.