Hertfordshire
Resilience
Emergency Planning in Partnership

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

NHDC

www.north-herts.gov.uk

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity

NHDC Resilience Planning

February 2015

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Section A:

Emergency planning

1. Introduction

Could you cope in severe weather, a widespread power failure, flooding, or a flu crisis?

Hertfordshire is a safe county, but we can still experience situations that disrupt our daily lives. The good news is that there are simple things you can do to make sure you are ready to deal with an emergency, particularly if you think ahead and make some plans.

This booklet outlines the emergency planning arrangements within Hertfordshire and specifically those that have been developed by North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) to respond to an emergency.

There are a number of key messages contained within this booklet, under the Hertfordshire 'Ready for Anything' campaign, with advice on how you can prepare for severe weather, flooding, or pandemic flu, as examples.

This booklet also provides a brief overview of business continuity planning, explaining why it is important, and arrangements that you can put in place now to help yourself and others during any form of business disruption.

2. Emergency planning background

2.1 The Civil Contingencies Act

In the UK, no single organisation is responsible for dealing with major accidents or natural disasters. Following the fuel crisis and severe floods in 2000, the government announced a review of emergency planning arrangements. New legislation was enacted in 2004 that updated outmoded civil defence legislation relating to the cold war threat and put civil protection on a formal basis, with legal requirements at both the planning and emergency response level.

This legislation, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, provides a basic framework, outlining what tasks should be performed and how, thus ensuring greater consistency in civil protection across the UK.

As defined in Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act, an 'emergency' is:

- 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'.

3. Responsibilities in a major incident

3.1 Emergency responders

Under the Civil Contingencies Act, organisations involved in civil protection are divided into two categories known as Category 1 and Category 2 responders.

Category 1 responders (main organisations involved in most emergencies) include:

- Police and British Transport Police
- Fire
- Ambulance
- Local authorities (county, district and borough councils)
- NHS
- Environment Agency

Category 2 responders (likely to be involved in some emergencies) include:

- Utility companies
- Transport services
- Health and Safety Executive

3.2 Duties under the act

As a Local Authority and Category 1 responder, the Civil Contingencies Act places seven duties on NHDC.

The main functions include:

- Risk assessment
- Emergency planning
- Business Continuity Management (BCM)
- Warning and informing the public
- Business continuity advice and assistance to businesses and the voluntary sector

Other general duties include:

- Co-operation; and
- Information sharing

4. Emergency planning in Hertfordshire

In Hertfordshire all the local authorities maintain their own emergency plans and business continuity plans, in case of an emergency or major incident.

A definition of a major incident is:

'Any event or circumstance (happening with or without warning) that causes or threatens death or injury, disruption to the community, or damage to property or to the environment on such a scale that the effects cannot be dealt with by the emergency services, local authorities, and other organisations as part of their day to day activities'.

Dealing with disaster, 3rd edn

4.1 Hertfordshire Resilience

Many organisations would be involved in the response to a major incident and for this reason the development of inter-agency arrangements is widely encouraged in the county. Since 1975 the Hertfordshire Emergency Services Major Incident Committee (HESMIC) provided a forum for the emergency services, local authorities and many other agencies to discuss emergency planning issues.

Following the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act and the new requirement to have a Local Resilience Forum (LRF), the HESMIC structure was reviewed and re-launched as Hertfordshire Resilience.

Hertfordshire Resilience is a partnership made up of over 80 organisations, including the emergency services, local councils, health services, transport and utility companies, and the voluntary sector. We plan, train and respond to emergencies together, as well as establishing and promoting a more resilient county.

4.2 Local risks

The Hertfordshire Community Risk Register is reviewed annually to assist in preparing for major incidents.

The Community Risk Register assesses the risks affecting the county (e.g. severe weather, human health, major transport accidents) and helps to determine local planning priorities for Hertfordshire Resilience. It should be read alongside the Government's National Risk Register.

The Hertfordshire Community Risk Register can be found via the Herts Direct website at:

www.hertsdirect.org/resilience

5. NHDC response to an emergency

5.1 Multi-agency response

It is impossible to predict the exact circumstances of an emergency that would require the involvement of the Council as part of the emergency response. As a result the purpose of NHDC's emergency planning arrangements is to set out a generic framework in which the Council could operate as part of a combined response.

The Council would work alongside many other agencies, such as the emergency services, health agencies, voluntary sector, and transport and utility companies, in an emergency.

5.2 Role of the Council

The role of the Council in a major incident will include:

- Support to the Emergency Services
- Supporting the local community
- Promoting recovery and return to normality
- Maintaining normal services

5.3 NHDC Emergency plan

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 requires all Local Authorities to prepare, test and validate emergency plans.

NHDC has its own confidential staff operational Emergency Plan.

The plan has been developed to help the Council respond to any incident that might occur and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Council during a major incident.

The arrangements and procedures are designed to be flexible; however, there will be key functions which the Council will be called upon to provide in most circumstances.

5.4 Key functions in an emergency

Some of the key functions that the Council has the responsibility for in the event of an emergency include:

Incident Control Centre
There may be a need to set up an Incident Control Centre, where the Council manages and coordinates its response from.

Emergency Assistance Centres
The Council may be asked to set up and staff one or more Reception Centres to support displaced persons.

Liaison Officers
A Council Liaison Officer may be required to attend the site of the incident to help co-ordinate the Council's response with the Emergency Services.

Specialist and professional assistance
The Council may be asked to provide specialist and professional assistance such as:

- **Environmental Health Officers**
  To provide advice on the environmental and public health effects of an incident.

- **Building Control Officers**
  To assess buildings and other structures affected by the incident for their structural safety and to arrange where necessary for buildings to be made safe or demolished.

- **Housing**
  To provide temporary accommodation for people made homeless by an incident and to provide information on housing issues to those affected.

5.5 Provision of emergency assistance centres

Should an emergency arise that requires you to leave your home, it is likely that the police will oversee your evacuation. You will likely be directed to a **NHDC emergency assistance centre** managed and run by staff volunteers.

One of the Council's key roles in an emergency is to set up and run a Reception Centre to provide temporary shelter, food, information and support to people displaced by the emergency. Other types of centre may need to be established depending on the incident, these include:

Family and friends reception centre
A centre set aside to register, interview and provide shelter for the family and friends of missing persons thought to be involved in the incident and to reunite family and friends with survivors.

Survivor reception centre
A temporary secure area set up to provide shelter and first aid for survivors of an incident who do not require emergency medical treatment.

Humanitarian assistance centre
A focal point for information and support for those affected by a major incident. It is likely to be set up following the initial reception centre response. The centre would provide links to practical support and advice following an incident, and can be in place for months after the event.

Section B:
Ready for anything

6. Are you ready for anything?

6.1 Are you prepared?

Have you thought about what would be useful in an emergency at home, in your car, or if you were asked to leave your home for a few hours while the emergency is dealt with?

By preparing for the unexpected you can help protect yourself and your loved ones.

6.2 Evacuation

Depending on the emergency, you could be advised by the Emergency Services to evacuate your home for safety.

If you are asked to leave your home, you may not have time to prepare for the evacuation, so the more you can do in advance to be 'Ready for Anything', the better the experience will likely be for you and your family.

Have you thought about where you could stay if you couldn't stay at home?

In a serious emergency, the Council may arrange somewhere like a community centre or leisure centre where you could stay, but you may be more comfortable with family or friends.

6.3 Prepare an emergency kit

Do you have an emergency kit?

Consider putting together an emergency kit, perhaps in a bag that you can grab quickly and easily in case you need to be evacuated.

To create an emergency kit look at what resources you use daily and what is essential to you and your family.

Make sure everyone knows where the emergency kit is kept.

Think about what you might need if you had to leave home in a hurry.

Your mobile phone charger, emergency contact numbers, keys, glasses, some money, address book and some form of ID might all be useful. Don't forget any medication you might need or things you may need for babies and small children.

Some more things to think about:

- **Have you got a portable radio** so you can listen to the local radio station for the latest advice from the emergency services? Remember to keep some spare batteries handy if it is not a wind-up radio.

- **Keep copies of your important paperwork**, such as insurance documents, passports and financial documents somewhere safe where they can be accessed quickly without putting yourself at risk.

- **Keep a torch** and spare batteries somewhere that is easy to access in a power cut. Also familiarise yourself with the procedures for safely switching off your home's gas, electricity and water supplies.

- **In your car** make sure you have a torch, blanket, food, a bottle of water, first aid kit, and mobile phone or charger. Some spare warm clothing would also be useful during the winter.

- If you are pensionable age, have a disability or long-term ill health your energy supplier or water company can provide you with extra support if supplies are disrupted. **Ask your provider about their 'priority services register'.**

- Store **next of kin contact details** under **ICE (In Case of Emergency)** in your mobile phone address book. This is an easy way for the emergency services to quickly identify who to contact if you are injured and unable to tell them. Keep the information in your wallet or purse if you don't have a mobile phone.

6.4 Stay at home

For some emergencies, it may be safer to stay at home, but always follow the advice of the Emergency Services.

The safety message may be to:

'Go in, Stay in, Tune in'

Actions to consider:

Go in. Bring your family and pets indoors, and stay in. If you have elderly or vulnerable people near you, be prepared to offer assistance.

Stay in an interior room, preferably an upstairs room with the least windows or doors. Close windows, air / heat vents, fireplace chimney vents. Turn off fans and air conditioning units.

Tune in to your local TV, radio station or the internet for advice on the incident. If you have a battery powered or wind-up radio you can continue to listen to your local radio station in the event of a power cut.

Local Radio Stations

BBC Three Counties Radio
95.5, 103.8 and 104.5 FM
www.bbc.co.uk/threecountiesradio

Heart 97.6
97.6FM
www.heartdunstable.co.uk

7. Pets in emergencies

Do you have an emergency kit for your pet? Who would look after them in an emergency?

Think about how you would look after your pets if you had to leave your home in an emergency. Would they be safer at home or could friends or relatives look after them? If you are evacuated and take your pet with you, what else will you need to take?

Make a pet plan now as preparation in advance will help your response should an emergency arise.

7.1 Prepare a pet emergency kit

Consider putting together a Pet Emergency Kit.
What does your pet need?

- Collar and lead.
- Secure and labelled pet carrier.
- Proof of ownership and vaccination documents.
- Microchip details.
- Emergency contact list, to include details for your vet.
- Pet first aid kit.
- A record of any regular pet medication.
- Familiar items e.g. toy or blanket.
  Pet food.
- Sanitation – pet litter and litter box, poop bags.
- For dogs, include a basket muzzle that fits your dog, as even the gentlest of animals can become aggressive when distressed by an emergency situation.

Ensure all your family know where the pet emergency kit is kept.

7.2 Make alternative arrangements

If you have to evacuate, would you be able to go to family or friends to stay instead with your pets?

Plan ahead where you might go should you be evacuated. Consider alternative accommodation for your pets. Ideally this could be a relative or friend, local kennels or catteries, or a pet friendly hotel or bed and breakfast.

7.3 Safer at home

If it is safe to do so, your pets may be happier left at home in a familiar environment. Food, water and litter facilities for several days should be left accessible for your pet.

If your home or garden is at risk of flooding, consider moving your pets to higher ground.

It is the owner's responsibility to ensure that pets are left in a safe and secure place.

8. Severe weather

Could you cope in severe weather, such as snow or storms?

Severe weather can cause significant disruption across the UK. Storms, high winds, torrential rain, snow and ice can affect our daily routines, make driving conditions hazardous, cause flooding to properties, and leave some communities isolated and without power.

To help you prepare and stay informed, weather warnings and alerts are widely available to the public.

Some things to consider:

- Keep a look out for severe weather warnings from the Met Office (www.metoffice.gov.uk) and the Environment Agency (www.environment-agency.gov.uk), particularly during winter months.

- Consider **stocking up on essential food items** if a prolonged cold period is forecast.

- **Check on your neighbours**, particularly the elderly or those that live alone. The cold can put older people at risk of heart and respiratory problems.

- Check online or listen to your local radio station for details of disruption to services, transport and for school closures in your area.

- If you are intending to travel check for disruption first. Make sure you let somebody know of your plans. Use main routes as they are more likely to have been gritted

- Don't forget to make sure your vehicle is prepared for winter and contains your emergency items such as warm clothes and blankets, torch and spare batteries, boots and a first aid kit. See the Highways Agency website for further information. www.highways.gov.uk

8.1 Flooding

Do you live in an area at risk of flooding? Perhaps you live near a river or have experienced flooding before? Some actions you can take to prepare for flooding include:

■   Visit the Environment Agency flood pages at
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

The Environment Agency provides detailed advice on:

- Making an emergency flood plan
- Preparing for a flood guide
- Flood protection equipment
- During a Flood
- After a Flood
- Flood Preparation Guide for Business
- Online flood library

■   **Find out the risk of flooding**

Find out the chance of flooding in your area by using the Environment Agency online Flood Map via their flood pages.

■   **Get a flood warning**

The Environment Agency provides a free flood warning service, **Floodline Warnings Direct**, which provides flood warnings by phone, text or email. If you think you are at risk of flooding contact Floodline to register for the service. Check that any vulnerable neighbours or family members also receive flood warnings.

9. Health

9.1 Pandemic Flu

Pandemic Flu is a type of influenza that spreads rapidly to affect most countries and regions around the world. Unlike the 'ordinary' flu that occurs every winter in the UK, Pandemic Flu can occur at any time of year. Flu pandemics occur infrequently, usually every few decades.

Pandemic Flu is more serious than 'ordinary flu'. The symptoms may be more severe because most people will not have any immunity or protection against the particular virus.

Should a pandemic occur, further public health information would be provided through the Department of Health and the NHS, as with the swine flu (H1N1) pandemic of 2009.

The Flu virus is easily passed from person to person by breathing in air containing the virus produced when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. It can also be spread through hand/face contact after touching an infected person or contaminated surface.

It is important to practise good hygiene measures and follow the advice of local health care providers and the Department of Health.

Section C: Business continuity

10. Planning for the unexpected

Have you thought about what you would do if your business was affected by a fire, flood, or utility failure, for example?

Emergencies not only affect people and personal property but can have a devastating impact on businesses.
We only have to look at the widespread devastation caused by flooding around the UK, or closer to home the impact of the Buncefield explosion, to see how serious the implications can be. Even if your business is not directly affected by an incident, the loss of a key supplier or customers can directly impact upon your business. Fortunately, there are things that can be done to prepare for such instances.

Local authorities, in accordance with the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), have a duty to promote business continuity within the community.

Did you know that nearly one in five businesses suffers a major disruption every year?

How quickly – and painlessly – you manage to get back to 'business as usual' depends on how effectively you can put into action, your own business continuity plans.

Whether or not your business is able to survive an emergency will depend on a number of factors, one of which is whether or not you have planned how you will deal with disruption. The speed at which your company will recover will depend on the planning you have undertaken today.

10.1 What is business continuity?

Business Continuity Management, or BCM as it is more commonly known, is a generic management framework that is valid across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The definition of business continuity is:

"A management process that helps manage the risks to the smooth running of an organisation, or delivery of a service, ensuring it can continue operating to the extent required in the event of a disruption".

(Emergency Preparedness, CCA 2004)

BCM is an ongoing process that will help you anticipate, prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from disruptions, whatever their source and whatever aspect of the business they affect.

Effective BCM is important because it helps build resilience and safeguards the interests of key stakeholders, reputation, brand, profit-creating activities, and service delivery.

11. How resilient is your business to disaster?

11.1 Business disruption

The most common types of business disruption include:

- ■ Loss of IT
- ■ Loss of communications
- ■ Utility failure
- ■ Loss of access
- ■ Flooding
- ■ Fire
- ■ Severe weather
- ■ Loss of staff
- ■ Supply chain disruption
- ■ Industrial action

12. Case studies

12.1 Case study - Buncefield Oil Depot

There are many lessons that we can learn in terms of business continuity by examining incidents from around the country.
A local example of such a major disruption is the fire at the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot in Hemel Hempstead, in December 2005.

The incident caused severe disruption to local businesses in the Maylands Industrial Area adjacent to the site, reportedly the largest business area in the East of England. On the first day of the incident over 600 businesses were unable to enter their premises and 25000 staff were unable to get to work.
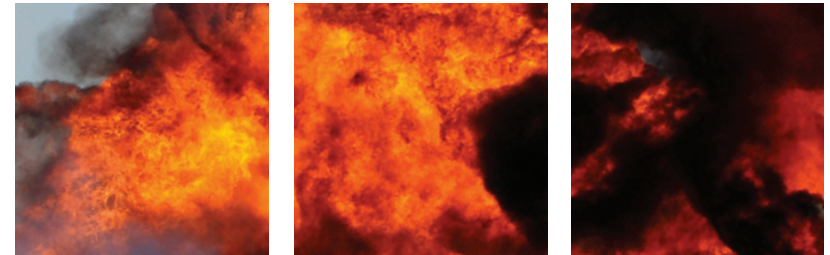
Larger companies such as Northgate Information Solutions had business continuity plans in place which made the process of relocation that much easier, following the loss of the company's Head Office in the explosion. Having sound business continuity arrangements in place successfully enabled the company to rapidly restore services to key customers, which included UK Police Forces, Home Office, Courts Service, and crime and reduction partnerships.

However, many of the smaller businesses did not have plans. Fallout from the blast cost businesses more than £70 million, a study by the East of England Development Agency found, with more than four-fifths of the companies surveyed having to move out of the area to continue trading.

- 370 businesses out of a total of approximately 630 were evacuated during the incident.

- At least 6 buildings were designated for demolition and 30 more required major repairs before they could be reoccupied.

- 290 other businesses were disrupted for up to 3 days due to the emergency response and minor damage.

- 92 businesses employing 9,500 people were displaced from their premises.

- The short-term business recovery costs were estimated as £2.2 million and the longer-term costs as £100 million over 10 years.

"In the age where the unthinkable has become possible and the unlikely commonplace, perhaps the question is not whether a business can afford to implement BCM but whether it can afford not to?"

(Expecting the Unexpected, 2004)

13. Key steps in developing Business Continuity Management (BCM)

To help you to develop business continuity arrangements within your business, consider some of the points outlined below to help make you more resilient.

This advice is based on good practise for use in large, medium and small organisations operating in industrial, commercial, public and voluntary sectors.

13.1 Understanding your business

It is important to have the fullest possible picture of your business; the complex interactions inside your organisation and between you, your customers and suppliers, and where your business is vulnerable.

To be able to develop an appropriate BCM programme you must first understand your organisation and the urgency with which activities and processes need to be resumed if they are disrupted.

13.2 Risk assessment

A risk assessment involves looking at the risks facing your business, how likely they are to happen and what the impact will be on your business.

For instance,

■ What would happen if the electricity supply failed?

■ What if the IT networks went down?

■ What if key documents were destroyed in a fire?

■ What if something happened to the premises and staff could not gain access to the building for days, weeks or even months?

You also need to look at:

■ What functions and people are essential and when?

■ What are the critical services and who can carry these out?

■ When do these services need to be available: within a day, a couple of days, or a week?

14. Writing a business continuity plan

14.1 Who needs a plan?

All businesses, organisations, services and voluntary groups need a plan. The plan does not have to be complicated, especially for small businesses. Prepare for the worst that could realistically happen and identify what would help you survive - being prepared is the key.

14.2 Develop your plan

Your business continuity plan provides the basis for how you will recover from disruption, whatever the cause. Your plans need to be clear and user friendly, providing checklists that can be easily followed.

"I am often asked what single piece of advice I can recommend that would be most helpful to the business community. My answer is a simple, but effective, business continuity plan that is regularly reviewed and tested."

Eliza Manningham-Buller, Director-General, MI5 (UK)

14.3 Contents of the plan

Typically a business continuity plan should consist of the following sections.

These are not considered to be the only headings and each plan should be tailored to suit the individual company and or location.

Part 1 – General/overview

- Introduction
- Aim of Plan
- Objectives

Part 2 – Roles and responsibilities

- Key roles and responsibilities during an incident

Part 3 – Notification, activation and escalation

- Invocation of BCM Plan and escalation process
- Call out procedure and flowchart

Part 4 – Business continuity team

- Details of business continuity team members
- Contact details
- Location and contact details of command centre(s), where the team will be based

Part 5 – Checklists

- Lists of tasks to act as an aide-memoire
- List of 'to do's' immediately following an incident
- List of 'to do's' within the first 2 hours

Part 6 – General information

Guidelines which could be useful as reference during an incident.

- Personnel matters – warning/informing staff during and out of hours
- Fatalities and injuries – procedure for informing next of kin (a suitably trained person)
- Staff welfare and counselling
- Informing/briefing the local community/media
- Health and safety
- Legal/statutory/regulatory obligations
- Help lines – pre-recorded messages

Part 7 – Critical business activities

- List of critical business activities
- Action plan for recovering your critical business activities

Part 8 – Recovery

- Alternative recovery site location / map and floor plan (where applicable) for if your main building is unavailable
- Relocation of staff (may need transport and accommodation)
- Meeting rooms
- Disabled access
- Parking
- Catering facilities
- Security
- Mail

Part 9 – Resources and equipment

- Number of workstations
- Software applications
- Connectivity
- Telecommunications and links
- Backed up data
- Documents – records/evidential for use in proceedings
- General office equipment
- Stationary
- Special Equipment/Services

Contact details

A directory covering those who may need to be contacted, for example:

- Lists of staff - internal/external
- Customers and suppliers
- Insurance
- Specialist services
- Utilities

14.4 Rehearse your plan

Rehearsing your plan is a good way to test that it works as well as identifying any changes or improvements that need to be made. It is also a good opportunity for familiarising staff with it. They may well also require additional training to assist them in fulfilling their specific roles. It is important to have an agreed programme of both staff training, and testing and exercising of the plan.

There are numerous different ways in which to rehearse your plan or even specific elements of the plan:

- **Telephone tests:** these can be done with or without warning and test the cascade arrangements and communications structure laid out in the plan. Do you experience difficulties in contacting people? Are the telephone numbers correct? Do the people listed still work for the company?

- **Paper-based 'tabletop'exercises:** test your plan using a 'what if' written scenario. Tabletop exercises, also known as desktop exercises, are a simple and effective way of ensuring that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities during an incident. Some example scenarios to assist you in running an event can be found on the HertsDirect website. www.hertsdirect.gov.uk

- **Full rehearsal:** a full rehearsal, or live exercise, of the plan will highlight the different elements of the plan and how well these work together as a whole.

14.5 Training of staff

Ensure staff have the opportunity to attend training seminars, courses and workshops regarding Business Continuity Planning.

Ensure that during their induction new employees are instructed in Business Continuity Planning and their role during an incident.

14.6 Maintaining and reviewing your plan

Once developed the plan should continue to be a 'living document' and an agreed schedule of review should be put in place to ensure that it continues to reflect the organisation's structure, personnel and risks faced. Businesses are subject to change, therefore, business continuity plans need to be reviewed and updated regularly to ensure that they remain valid.

The following aspects of plans that should be reviewed are, for example, changes to:

- Personnel details (staff turnover)
- Business restructuring
- Supplier / contractor details
- Risk assessments
- Business processes

14.7 Develop a business continuity culture

Developing a business continuity culture is vital to maintaining enthusiasm, readiness and effective response at all levels. This can be achieved by delivering an effective BCM programme of training and awareness to ensure that all parts of the business are confident and competent concerning the business continuity plan and your arrangements.

A successful culture of business continuity relies on:

- Senior management support
- Training and awareness Information
- Staff involvement - everyone has a role to play Individual awareness

14.8 Insurance

Insurance policies vary considerably and it is always worth checking with your agent or provider the exact extent to which your cover will protect you.

- Understand what it covers and what it doesn't.

- Understand what your deductible arrangements are.

- Meet with your insurance providers to review current coverage for such things as physical losses, flood damage and business interruption. Also discuss business financial losses.

- Plan how you will pay both creditors and employees as well as receive income from your customers.

- Establish which records your insurance provider will want to see after an emergency and store them in a safe place that is accessible.

14.9 Utilities

Your business will probably be dependent on telecommunications, electricity and gas supplies and to a lesser extent on sewerage and water utilities. Ensure that you have contact details for your utility providers and your account reference numbers available and stored in a safe place.

Plan ahead for extended disruptions and establish with providers how alternative supplies can be provided.

It is also worth identifying how you will carry out communications with employees, customers and suppliers should you no longer have your main communications system working.

Section D: Further information

Further information is available via the Emergency Planning pages on North Hertfordshire District Council's website: www.north-herts.gov.uk