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

BE PREPARED!

10 STEPS

TO COMPLETE YOUR

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN

Community Emergency Plan Toolkit

Have you ever asked yourself: "Would I, and my community, survive the first 48 hours of a serious emergency such as the floods in Cumbria in November 2009?" If so this toolkit may be for you. It is not a rigid template for a local emergency plan, instead it describes a method that you can follow to help you prepare for an emergency in a way that fits the particular needs of your community. It will help you identify the key tools that you will need; local people, local knowledge and local resources.

Working with the Emergency Services

The professional emergency services including the police, fire and rescue, local authorities, health service and similar organisations, have tried and tested plans that are activated when an emergency occurs. However, Cumbria is a huge and sparsely populated county and it is impossible for these services 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 toolkit, can make sure that your local response is as effective as possible and that your community can recover speedily from an emergency.

In an emergency the professional services have a well organised command structure:

Gold Command	**Silver Command**	**Bronze Command**
Strategic	Tactical	Operational

The plan you prepare will make an important contribution to the resources that Silver Command can call upon and to the operational response that takes place within you community. As you prepare your plan make sure that you inform and involve representatives of the professional services so that they are aware of your capacity, skills and resources and how to call upon these when needed.

Preparing a Community Emergency Plan will also:

- Raise local awareness of the risks that may affect residents
- Encourage local people to adapt and use their existing skills, knowledge and resources to deal with an emergency
- Build local commitment to working in partnership with the Emergency Services

Remember:

- If producing a complete community emergency plan appears to be a daunting task, any preparation that you and your neighbours can do will be worthwhile, perhaps focusing your efforts on Step 4 – Identifying Skills and Resources.
- Do not try to make detailed plans for specific emergencies, instead identify the people, resources and facilities that you might need and be prepared to use these flexibly as a situation changes.
- Any activity should complement, and not replace, the County and District emergency teams and Emergency Services. Keep in close touch with them as you work, agree how you will work together and provide them with copies of your completed plan.

For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01228 817224 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

Preparing a Community Emergency Plan will require voluntary input from across the community, and the harnessing of local knowledge and resources. Remember you are the local experts.

An Open Meeting

One way to start this process is to call an open meeting, working with neighbours and the parish council, to encourage wider consideration of the key question that we opened with – *"How could we better survive the first 48 hours of an emergency?"*

An open meeting can take a variety of formats from an informal "drop in" where small numbers of people can view and discuss information about emergency planning, such as this toolkit, to a full scale public meeting in the village hall.

In either case you need to think about how you might publicise the event, where it will take place, what information and materials you may need and who you should invite.

Community Emergency Planning Event (Photo: ACT)

The emergency services and the County Emergency Planning Team may be able to help with information while support organisations such as ACT can advise on organising your event and may be able to help you run it on the day.

Whatever the format you decide upon you can use the event to talk about your shared concerns, review this toolkit and decide whether there is support for the preparation of an emergency plan.

This is also a great opportunity to identify potential members of a Community Emergency Group, a set of volunteers prepared to work together to develop a local plan.

> **"After the devastating floods in 2009, we knew we had to be better prepared. Talking to ACT and holding an open meeting was an essential first step"**
>
> Penny Poole, Coordinator, Melbreak Communities (Lorton, Loweswater, Blindbothel, Buttermere)

Who should you involve?
- **Friends, neighbours, parish councilors, potential volunteers**
- **Emergency services (Police, Fire & Rescue, etc), County and District emergency team**

What should you discuss?
- **How your community would cope in an emergency, and the benefits of planning ahead**
- **How this toolkit can help, who is willing to help prepare a plan**

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- **ACRE: Preparing for your future event (available only from ACT)**
- **Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 3**
- **Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Page 6**

Essential to seeing through the preparation of a Community Emergency Plan is the effective coordination of the work involved and the championing of the use of the Plan once it is completed.

The Community Emergency Group

Coordination is the role of a Community Emergency Group. It should comprise a number of volunteers with a good range of local knowledge. The group should be led by, or appoint, a Community Emergency Coordinator and deputies with the time and ability to guide the work of the Group, and the development of the Emergency Plan.

You should think about how you will involve the Parish Council and local representatives of the Emergency Services, including any local search and rescue team there may be.

Media liaison

A further function of the Group, the importance of which has been highlighted by past experience, should be liaising with the media. Identify someone to lead in this role who communicates well, can manage questions and stay focussed under pressure. Work together to agree what key messages the community wishes to communicate and work with media representatives to help the flow of information.

Group meetings

The Community Emergency Group will be the lead organisation in the community for working through the 10 step process and for leading the community's response should an emergency arise. It will probably need to meet on a number of occasions in order to work through the steps in a comprehensive and structured way.

You may therefore need to think about where the Group should meet, and prepare an agenda or programme for its meetings so that all the necessary ground is covered. Also essential is that the meetings of the Group are properly recorded and that good written records are kept of its work and the information that it produces as it works through the 10 Steps – who will do this?

You will see that Step 10 in our planning process involves regularly reviewing and testing the Community Emergency Plan, this and its responsibility for directing local action in an emergency means that the Group has important responsibilities that extend beyond the drafting of the Emergency Plan itself.

Making sure it happens 1
- Set up a Community Emergency Group and appoint Community Emergency Coordinators
- Involve your Parish Council and representatives of the emergency services

Making sure it happens 2
- Plan to work with the media
- Keep good records of your meetings and the information that you gather

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 4
- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to Developing a Community Emergency Plan, Pages 6 - 7

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLANNING
3 - Knowing the Unknowns

Each community will face emergency risks from a range of differing sources. What creates an emergency is the unpredictability of these. A key task is to think about the types of event that are most likely to occur in your area.

Assessing the risks

A key task for the Community Emergency Group is not to try and second guess every possibility but to think about the types of event that are most likely to occur, giving some context for the Group's work in emergency planning.

A good starting point for this is the Community Risk Register that has been prepared by the Cumbria Resilience Group (see web link below).

This handy document reviews a wide range of possible causes of an emergency and will give you ideas about what the greatest risks for your community may be.

> "We are pre-responders working with and helping the emergency services and aware of our limitations.
>
> We do not want to end up being rescued ourselves"
>
> Graham Thompson , Keswick Volunteer Lead, Keswick Flood Action Group

Consider various types of risks

You should also consult local representatives of the Emergency Services and begin to use the local knowledge of your group members and other volunteers. For example you should think about and record:

- **Social Risks** - Particular groups of local people who may be vulnerable in the face of an emergency (elderly people, holiday makers, travellers)

- **Environmental Risks** - Areas that flood regularly, vulnerable sites of heritage or environmental interest

- **Infrastructure Risks** - Major traffic routes, bridges, industrial sites that are possible sources of emergency problems

It is important that you do not try to plan in detail for each specific risk as this will limit your flexibility to respond to very different situations.

Instead focus on identifying the people resources and facilities that you have and which you can utilise flexibly as a situation arises and changes.

What things might trigger an emergency?
- Consult the Community Risk Register
- www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/Content/Internet/535/4077812276.pdf

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Talk to key informants
- Representatives of the Emergency Services
- Local people involved in previous emergency situations

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit Pages 4-6
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Template, Page 4
- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Page 7

4 - Identifying Skills and Resources

At the heart of your plan will be a comprehensive register of the local resources that can be called upon by the Community Emergency Group in the event that an emergency does arise.

Your community's assets

Every community has access to a range of local skills, knowledge, physical resources and support organisations that can be mobilised in the event of an emergency. The key to acting promptly and effectively in an emergency is having identified these in advance.

There are three main topics to research:

- **Who is good at what?** - Each community has people who have been known to help in the past or who have skills that would be particularly useful. These will include local farmers, health professionals, First Responders, builders, electricians, search and rescue team members and others with specialist skills and training.

- **What resources do we have?** - There are likely to be a variety of vehicles, tools, machinery, equipment, and sources of food, water and construction materials.

- **How will we communicate?** - Where in the community are there good telephone communications and a strong mobile phone signal. How might these be affected in an emergency and may you need alternatives?

Having identified the skills and resources that you may be able to call upon make sure that you record the relevant information in an easily accessible form. You will need contact details for all concerned and an understanding of the terms on which you might be able to utilise equipment and materials. Think about how you will use your volunteers, perhaps identifying teams to:

- Staff your local control centre

- Assist with a rest centre

- Become local wardens to 'door knock' particular parts of your community should an emergency arise

Consider whether you need to put in place agreements with the individuals and organisations concerned, relating to their availability in an emergency. If you identify the need to acquire special equipment (e.g. 2-way radios, first aid materials, blankets, battery radios, torches, grit), you will need to think about where these can be stored securely but be accessible when needed. You will also need to think about who is to be responsible for their security and maintenance.

Who is good at what?
- **People with useful or specialist skills e.g. farmers, contractors, health professionals, First responders, search and rescue team members**

What equipment do we have?
- **Tools, machinery, communications equipment, vehicles**
- **Sources of food, water, construction materials**

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Pages 7-8
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Template, Page 5

The use of resources in an emergency may raise a range of legal and financial issues. Thinking about these in advance and putting in place any necessary agreements can minimise any difficulties.

Resolving legal issues in advance

The use of resources, especially buildings and vehicles, in an emergency may not be covered by their present insurance.

Similarly, there may be health and safety concerns about the use by volunteers of unfamiliar equipment. You may incur costs for premises hire, materials, etc that will need to be paid.

These issues cannot be left until the emergency takes place because they may result in real constraints on what you and other community members can actually do.

Issues to Consider

Planning ahead will help to minimise any problems of this type. There are a number of practical things that you should be able to do:

Buildings and Equipment Insurance

Liaise with the owners of buildings and vehicles about any constraints that may arise from their insurance and see if it is possible to remove these, perhaps by notifying the insurer.

Equipment Use

Think about the types of equipment that might be used by volunteers, and the circumstances in which they will do this.

Prepare a risk assessment of the activity to help you identify any training or ways of working that will minimise the risks that you identify.

Insurance for Volunteers

Consider whether you need insurance for local volunteers, it is possible that an existing local organisation (e.g. your Parish Council), or an organisation of which the volunteer is a member (e.g. Red Cross, Lions), already has appropriate cover.

Costs

Consider how the costs of any emergency action that you take, e.g. room hire, materials, etc may be paid.

In the first instance make contact with the emergency officer nominated by your Borough or District Council and seek their advice.

Buildings and equipment
- **Agreements with owners and insurance to cover usage**
- **Arrangements for paying any costs incurred**

Working with volunteers
- **Personal liability insurance**
- **Safe working arrangements**

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- **Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 8**
- **Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Page 9**
- **Website of the Association of British Insurers: www.abi.org.uk**

6 - Organising Key Facilities

Think in advance about the facilities that you may need in order to effectively manage an emergency situation and to support local people who are affected.

Facilities needed

Effectively managing an emergency is likely to require some facilities. You will need to think about these in advance and have plans in place for suitable buildings or locations to meet the needs you identify.

Facilities that are most often found necessary include:

- **Local Control Centre** – Somewhere where the Community Emergency Group and representatives of the Emergency Services can meet to review the situation and plan and coordinate their actions. This may simply be a good sized room where a dozen people can get round a table to talk. Remember that good communications are at the heart of responding to an emergency situation so reliable telephone communications is a must.
- **Rest Centre** – A place to which people can be moved, spend the night and be fed if they have to leave their own homes. A village or school hall may provide what you need: space for people to sit, secure storage for their belongings, toilets, a kitchen and sufficient space for people to sleep. Again, good communications are essential.

Issues to consider

In both cases check the county emergency plan to see whether this has already identified suitable premises in your community. If not, try to pick locations that are unlikely to be directly affected by an emergency (e.g. unlikely to flood) but which are readily accessible to as much of the community as possible.

Think also about the possible need for "reserve" facilities in the event that those you first identify are not available when needed and how you would manage in your selected premises if mains services are not available. You might, for example, need a generator. Talk to those responsible for the buildings you identify, secure their agreement in principal to their use and have plans in place for just how you will use them should an emergency arise.

Rest Centre - Coniston Mountain Rescue Centre

What facilities might we need?
- Local Control Centre - accessible, good communications, room for meetings
- Rest Centre - warm, accessible, cooking facilities, room for beds, etc

Other things to think about?
- Facilities identified by Emergency Services
- Managing without mains services

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 9
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Template, Page 6
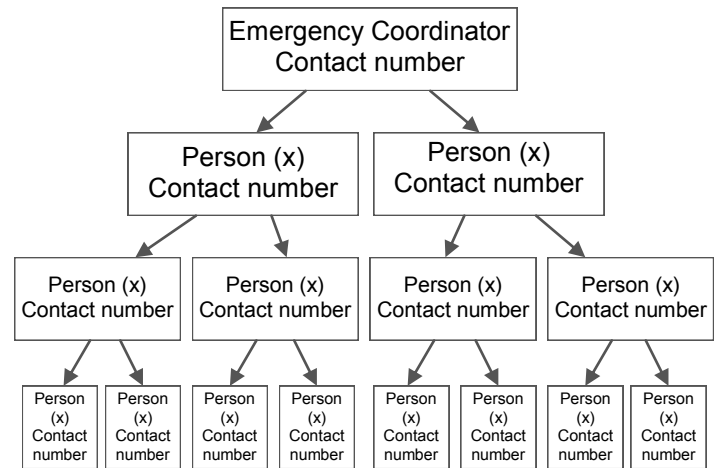- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Page 10

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In developing your Community Emergency Plan you will have identified key people and groups that you may need to contact and mobilise should an emergency arise. Effective communications with these people is essential.

Identify key people

In developing your plans you will have identified a significant number of people who will be important in your response; people with significant resources, skills or knowledge, local volunteers and professional advisers.

It is essential that you record the contact details of all these people. Be comprehensive and make sure that the information is readily accessible by key people such as the members of the Community Emergency Group and the Emergency Services.

Telephone Tree / Cascade

Importantly, you should also plan how you will mobilise these people when an emergency occurs. This is usually achieved using a telephone 'tree' or cascade in which each person telephones two or three others.

In designing your cascade you may want to divide it into several teams (e.g. Control Team, Rest Centre Team, Local Action Teams) so that you can mobilise only those people who are needed at the time.

You will need to back your communications plan with a plan "B" that can operate should any of the key people in the tree not be available.

Data protection

In preparing your records you will need to consider whether you are subject to the provisions of Data Protection legislation and, if so, how you may best comply with these. You may perhaps register with the Data Protection Commissioner and have procedures in place to restrict the access to your information to specific individuals and for specific purposes.

Whose comprehensive contact information will we need?
- Emergency Services, County/District Emergency Planning Teams
- Your volunteers, owners of buildings, equipment and vehicles

How will we mobilise our contacts?
- Use a pre-prepared telephone contact 'tree' or cascade
- Consider alternative communications in the case of telephones not working

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 9
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Template, Pages 6-7
- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Pgs 10-11

8 - Activating Your Emergency Plan

With all of the main components of your plan in place, people, skills and resources, you next need to think about how your plan will be put into action when a real emergency arises.

Know the triggers

Following the preceding steps you have established an emergency group, identified likely causes of an emergency, listed the key people, resources and facilities that you have available, and agreed how you will communicate and mobilise these.

Your next task is to think about how you will know when to put these plans into practice, that is, how will you know when an emergency has occurred?

It is valuable for the Community Emergency Group to have thought about this in advance and to have agreed, in so far as is possible, the types of event that will trigger local action.

Members of the Group should consider who is to be responsible for monitoring these as a possible emergency approaches. Give some thought to the point at which the Community Emergency Group may need to apply its arrangements for mobilising local resources, the communications cascade and first meeting.

Examples of the types of "trigger" you might identify could well include:

- Warnings / requests from the Emergency Services
- Environment Agency warnings
- Substantial changes in local river levels
- Locally recognised hot spots and early indicators for flooding
- Media messages
- Severe wet weather warnings from the Met Office
- Cumbria Community Messaging www.cumbriacommunitymessaging.co.uk

Wall marker, Keswick (Photo: Lynne Jones)

Agree key sources of information and advice e.g.
- Emergency Services, Environment Agency, Met Office
- Cumbria Community Messaging service, local radio

Agree local signs that will alert you to a possible emergency e.g.
- Substantial changes in local river levels, other early indicator 'hot spots'
- Environment Agency website, media messages

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 10
- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Pgs 11- 12

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When an emergency actually happens and you begin to activate your plans you will need to coordinate what happens next. There are some key things that you can do to help this process run smoothly.

Prepare to Take Control

Firstly, have a prepared checklist for actions that the Community Emergency Planning Group and/or Coordinators will need to take.

One of these, in fact a critical first step in the process, will be to hold a meeting of the key people involved. So the second piece of advance preparation you can do is to have pre-prepared plans for this meeting.

To ensure that this important meeting covers all of the necessary issues and drives an appropriate local response, prepare an agenda for such a meeting in advance. Make it sufficiently flexible to work effectively whatever the emergency that has arisen.

You also need to consider:

- **Where the meeting will take place** - perhaps your Local Control Centre

- **Who should attend** – The Community Emergency Group, Parish Councillors, local volunteers, representatives of Emergency Services (if available)

Over the page is an example agenda for a first emergency meeting that you might use as a basis for your own.

Your first meeting, of course, is just the first step in developing a local response to an emergency and it may take some time for the full extent of the challenge to become apparent and for you to implement the plans that you have prepared.

You may therefore need to arrange to meet regularly over a period of time. Arrangements for follow-up meetings should be put in place and communicated clearly to everyone who needs to be involved. Meeting frequently, at fixed times, can help individuals organise their activities and ensure their attendance.

> "The emergency plan should help us to feel more in control in an emergency, to manage the situation as best we can and help us to recover from it more quickly."
>
> Caroline Langdon, Coniston Parish Council

How can we coordinate our actions?
- Put plans in place for a first Community Emergency meeting
- Agree where this should be, who should attend and what you will need to discuss

REMEMBER
- You will need to maintain regular contact with the official Emergency Services so that what you do supports and complements their actions.

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 11
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Template, Page 10
- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Pgs 11-12

First Emergency Meeting Agenda

Date:

Time:

Location:

Attendees:

1. **What is the current situation?**
   - Type of emergency
   - Is there a threat to life
   - Is the emergency near a school; a vulnerable area; a main access route
   - Has electricity, gas, or water been affected?

2. **Are there any vulnerable people involved?**
   - Elderly
   - Families with children
   - Non-English speaking people

3. **What resources do we need?**
   - Food
   - Vehicles
   - Blankets
   - Shelter

4. **What is the effect on our community?**

5. **Establishing contact with the emergency services**

6. **How can we support the Emergency Services?**

7. **What actions can be safely taken?**

8. **Who is going to take the lead for the agreed actions?**

9. **Arrangements for future meetings?**

10. **Any other issues?**

![ACTion with communities in cumbria logo]

Having thought through and prepared an Emergency Plan for your community it is important to test the arrangements that you have put in place to make sure that they work. Identifying possible problems and resolving these will ensure things go smoothly when you do it for real.

Checks and Trials

If you have followed all of the steps described you will have: harnessed local voluntary support; set up a group to coordinate actions; identified key people; resources and places that you may need; thought about communications and prepared arrangements to be implemented should a real emergency take place. Well done!

However, it is very important that you test your arrangements. Regular testing will help to ensure that your plans remain up to date and effective. There will inevitably be changes as people come and go, resources change etc.

The main reasons for doing this are to:
- Involve outside agencies
- Train participants
- Test your procedures

Routine checks might include:
- Contact lists: ring every 3 months
- Communications equipment: regular checks
- Activation Process: trial annually
- Facilities set-up: Trial annually

Trial Exercise Options

There are several types of exercise that you can use to test your arrangements and train participants, these include:

- **Discussion based** - Cheap and easy to prepare, useful as a talk through of your plan and a handy tool for training.

- **Table Top** - A scenario-based simulation of an emergency which can help validate your plans but requires a significant amount of prior preparation.

- **Live Play** - A great tool for testing and building confidence in your arrangements, such as the setting up of your control centre and rest centre, however the process needs careful preparation and can be costly.

Testing Coniston Emergency Plan (Photo: ACT)

How will we know our plans work?
- Organise an annual "practice" to test your arrangements and train your volunteers
- Be prepared to make changes if things don't work

Advice available on how to test arrangements effectively:
- Advice, and materials to help you plan your exercise, is available from the County Emergency Planning Team

For more ideas see back page for links to the following:
- Cabinet Office: Community Emergency Planning Toolkit, Page 12
- Cumbria County Council: A Guide to developing a Community Emergency Plan, Pgs 12-13
- Support from Cumbria County Council Emergency Planning Team

The Cabinet Office guidance referred to in this document can be accessed at: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/community-resilience-resources-and-tools.

The Cumbria County Council publication referred to in the toolkit can be accessed at: www.cumbria.gov.uk/emergency/voluntary/default.asp

Advice and Support in Cumbria

ACTion with Communities in Cumbria
Tel: 01228 817224
www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service
Tel: 01768 800350
www.cumbriacvs.org.uk

Council Emergency Planning Contacts
Cumbria County Council Emergency Planning Team: www.cumbria.gov.uk/planning-environment/emergencyplanning.asp

Check your local district council for details: www.cumbria.gov.uk/council-democracy/organisations/districts/default.asp

Cumbria Community Risk Register
www.cumbria.gov.uk/eLibrary/view.asp?ID=43685

Cumbria Police
Contact your local policing team
www.cumbria.police.uk

Cumbria Fire and Rescue
www.cumbriafire.gov.uk

Cumbria Association of Local Councils
www.calc.org.uk

Environment Agency
Tel: 0843 2615248
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Other Relevant resources

Preparing for Emergencies
www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies

National Risk Register
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register

British Red Cross
www.redcross.org.uk

WRVS
www.wrvs.org.uk

St. John's Ambulance
www.sja.org.uk

RSPCA
www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/international/emergencyresponse

Informed.Prepared.Together
www.informedprepared.eu

Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET)
www.raynet-uk.net

For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01228 817224 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

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