

Why Plan for Emergencies

Most of us plan for emergencies, whether by installing a fire extinguisher or carrying a first aid kit. On a much larger scale, Government, Local Authorities, businesses and organisations make plans for unexpected incidents. These procedures are in place to protect the organisation, its employees, its customers, members of the public and shareholders. Plans are also made for legal, financial and moral reasons too.

Emergency Services, Local Authorities and other responding organisations plan and train together to improve communication and co-ordination of their efforts, improving both the management of the scene and the post disaster recovery process. Contingency planning has developed over the years with the introduction of Acts of Parliament, Statutory Duties and a duty of care obligation.

Resources and procedures can be used to eradicate or alleviate the effects of a major incident, whatever its cause. Local Authorities, in addition, have duties placed upon them by specific statutory duties and powers including European Directives dealing with hazardous materials and sites, the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH), the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances (NIHHS), the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996 and the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001.

Civil Contingencies Act

The Civil Contingencies Act passed as an Act of Parliament and became law in April 2005. It has resulted from an earlier review of emergency planning following incidents such as flooding, fuel crisis and the foot and mouth outbreak of 2000. The Act replaces the outdated Civil Defence legislation that dates back to 1948 and has emergency planning on a proper statutory basis.

The Civil Contingencies Act is a framework that places several duties on local authorities to:

- **Assess the risk of an emergency occurring**
- **Maintain plans to make sure we can respond effectively to an emergency and continue to provide our services**
- **Establish business contingency arrangements**
- **Publish risk assessments and plans**
- **Warn and inform the public**
- **Promote business continuity**
- **Co-operate with other local responders**
- **Share information**