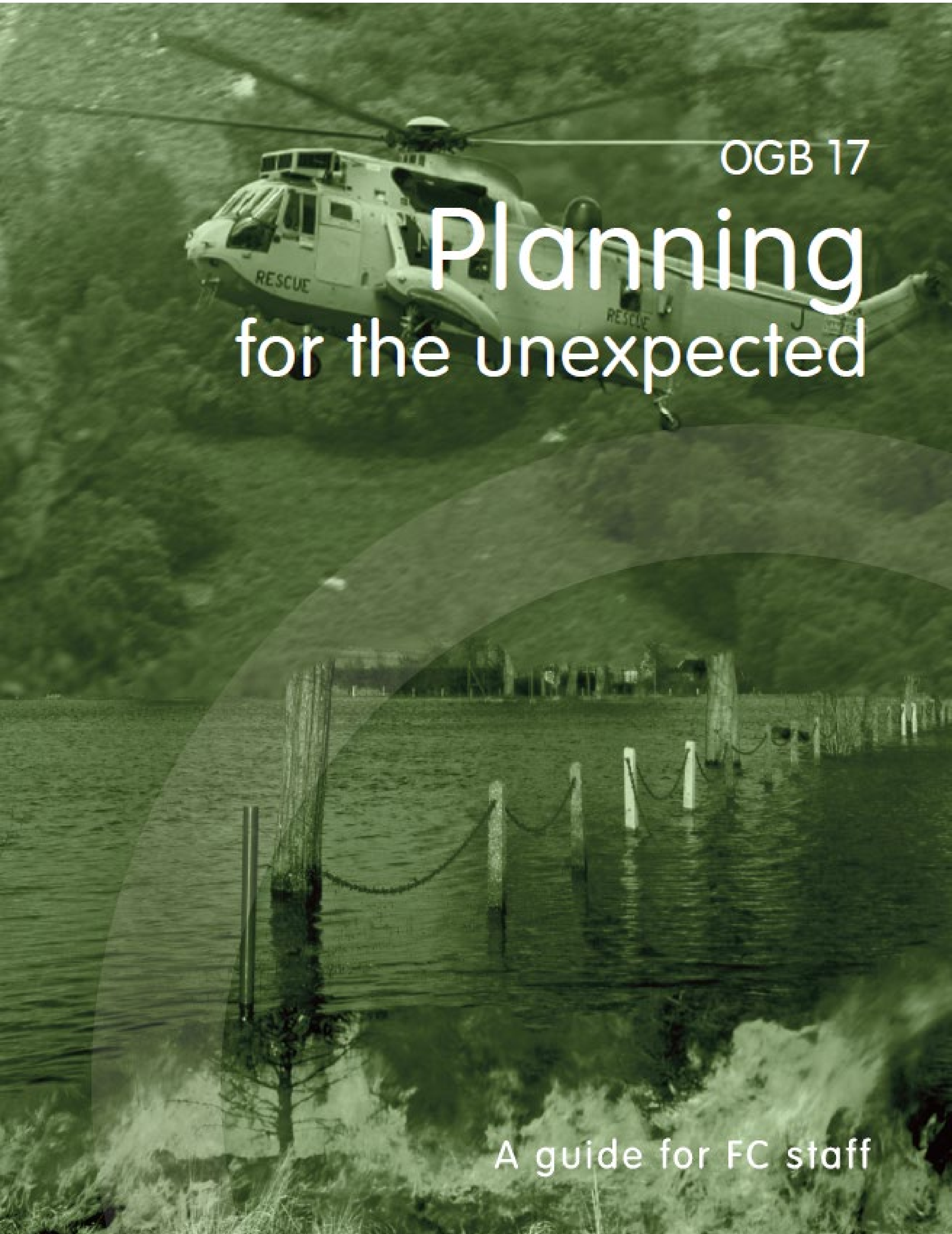
Forestry Commission

Operational Guidance

OGB 17

Planning for the unexpected



A guide for FC staff

The booklets are Forestry Commission (FC) internal guides and are intended for Forestry Commission use only. We make them publicly available for reference and because some of the advice they contain may help others create their own guidance. However, please be aware of the following important points.

- We will not provide support for anyone else using them.
- Anyone outside the FC uses them at their own risk.
- The guidance in the booklets is specific to FC operations.
- Our booklets refer to other internal guidance which is designed solely for FC use.
- We revise our booklets regularly. Please make sure you have the latest version.

Contents

1. Foreword

This Guidance Booklet is one of a series covering aspects of operations in the Forestry Commission. We, the Forest Management Officers (FMO) have written this one, on 'Planning for the Unexpected', to help you, **the staff involved in managing the National Forest Estate**, plan and manage, in a controlled way, any unexpected 'crisis' that might come at you 'out of the blue'!

We would ask you to remember the following.

- Most of this booklet has little or nothing to offer you on 'normal management practices'. It purely handles 'crisis events' that will have an impact on people, the environment or wildlife.
- It provides you with a framework to help you plan for the 'unexpected' whatever that may be. The examples we use will help you understand the process – but may not meet your exact circumstances.
- This booklet will help you deal with the unexpected, but it will not resolve the problem unless you invest some time and effort in developing the strategies that it contains.

We hope you find it useful.

You may also find:

Mandatory elements. These are auditable actions necessary to meet legal requirements or to deliver or report on corporate policy.

Timebound mandatory elements. As above, but to a deadline.

Recommendations. These are auditable actions that you should practise for efficiency and effectiveness. Any variation must be defined and authorised by Unit Managers.

Cautions against certain actions, or things to avoid.

> **Examples, Best Practice and Important Reader Information** are shown in light blue boxes like this.

If you have any comments on this booklet, or any new ways of dealing with this subject, please contact John Ireland.

We will publish updates on the Operational Guidance Intranet site and we will tell you in the Connect Bulletin.

1.1 Moving around in this booklet

We have designed this document for you to read on screen using Adobe Acrobat Reader version 8.0 or later. If you need help with Acrobat Reader please follow this link.

2. What's mandatory and recommended in OGB 17?

2.1 What's mandatory?

Here we summarise for you all the mandatory elements that are in this booklet, with the relevant section for you to refer to.

Each mandatory element is mapped to the UK Forest Standard (UKFS) with the reference and a category for compliance with Section 5 of the Standard. Our legend is:

1. Legal (L) as in UKFS/Guidelines.
2. Best Practice (BP) as in UKFS/Guidelines.
3. FC Policy (P.)
4. Internal Business Process (IBP).

The UKFS uses the following legends which we have used here.

General Forestry Practice

Forests and Biodiversity

Forests and Climate Change

Forests and Historic Environment

Forests and Landscape

Forests and People

Forests and Soil

Forests and Water

2.2 Timebound mandatory elements

No.	Timebound Requirement	OGB Section	UKFS Ref	Category
1.	Unit managers must have regular drills in the office and the field to test emergency planning, fire and pollution plans, and business continuity plans (we suggest every two years) and record these exercises and anything that they need to add or that requires improvement.	5.4	19	BP
2.	Unit managers will prepare a Fire or Emergency Plan with enough content and detail to account for the hazards, risks, and likely occurrence of fires in their cost centre. They will review this every two years.	6.1.1	19	BP

2.3 Mandatory elements

No.	Requirement	OGB Section	UKFS Ref	Category
1.	Unit managers must make sure that all buildings and car parks associated with offices and workshops on the national forest estate are included in emergency plans for fire, flood and pollution incidents.	3.1	19	BP
2.	Managers must refer to the FC's First Aid Policy when assessing first aid provision.	5.1		P
3.	If an FD uses a subjective assessment they must use either the FC FDR system or the Fire Severity Index on the open access website (England and Wales only) retrospectively when completing forms S121 and S122.	6.2.1		IBP
4.	Unit or building managers will: • maintain a Fire Message Record Book; • maintain a Fire Log (S121); • prepare a Fire Report (S122) if necessary; and • update the SCDB within 12 weeks of the fire.	6.4.1		P

2.4 Summary of categories

Legal	Best Practice	FC Policy	Internal Business Process	Owners to review
0	3	2	1	

2.5 What's recommended?

Here we summarise for you all the recommendations that are in this booklet, again with the relevant section for you to refer to.

No.	Recommendation	Reference
1.	Each cost centre should identify in their Fire Plan, Contingency Plan or Emergency Plan how they intend to assess fire danger.	Section 6.2.1
2.	We recommend that unit managers hold a meeting at the start of the fire season for all staff who might be involved in fire fighting to discuss: • communication equipment - 2-way radios, mobile phones, it may also be worth considering buying or hiring a satellite phone to help communications in remote areas; • first aid equipment • risk assessment(s);	Section 6.3.1

No.	Recommendation	Reference
	• site safety rules; and • lines of communications and supervision. We also recommend that key FD staff meet with the local Fire and Rescue Service each year to discuss: • risk assessment(s); refer to AFAG Guide No.803 ‘Fire Fighting’ when you are completing risk assessments; • site safety rules; • lines of communications and supervision; and • FD emergency, fire or contingency plan.	
3.	All staff involved in fire fighting should have refresher training every two years.	Section 6.5
4.	You should obtain all necessary consents from the owners of the body of water you are likely to extract water from for fire fighting.	Section 6.7

3. Introduction

Contingency planning, as this subject is often called, is something that we all do regularly. A common approach for most managers to take is: 'If this happens, then we will do this'. However, this is generally a short-term approach, and is usually the result of a recent emergency action. The real meaning of 'contingency planning' is:

- planning for a future event or condition; or
- a tool to combat a chance occurrence.

This suggests that you need to have planning frameworks and strategies in place to deal with a 'crisis' or 'chance occurrence'.

Our organisation has done a great deal of this work for IT systems and financial accounting, but we have done less to deal with possible or likely impacts on the forest environment and our daily business. A good example was the foot and mouth crisis of 2001 where a great deal was learned very fast by those who were involved.

This guidance booklet will provide you with guidance and information on how to combat crisis management through 'contingency planning.'

When thinking about contingency planning we think about fatal and serious accidents. This tends to be a serious forestry accident involving one or two people, but we also need to consider multiple casualty accidents, for example a falling tree hits a coach on a main road or a fallen tree derails a train.

Our approach to emergency planning should reflect the Civil Contingency Act 2004 – which considers four phases:

1. Preparedness
2. Prevention
3. Response
4. Recovery.

Examples of where we should consider contingency planning are:

- fire;
- fatal or serious accident – see OGB 23 *Accidents and incidents: investigate and report*;
- weather (windblow, flood or landslide);
- disease (tree and animal);
- insect invasion; and
- pollution – see pollution hazards in OGB 35 *Waste Management*.

We will use examples from this list in this booklet as we help you:

- develop a crisis management planning framework;
- develop strategies that can be used to pre-empt crisis management; and
- compile 3rd party networking lists for each crisis category.

We can use 'Murphy's Law' which states that:

'When things go wrong they will do so:

- *in the worst possible way;*
- *at the worst possible time; and*
- *in the worst possible place!'*

These are features of an 'unprogrammed' problem. We only want a 'programmed occurrence.' This is one that we will experience from time to time, and although we might not want it, we would do well to expect it and to have systems in place to deal with it.

Remember, crises do not always happen to others!

You may recognise elements in the chart on Page 10.

3.1 ISO 14001 – Emergency planning and the environment

The FC is working towards full ISO14001 accreditation – this covers the built estate – while UKWAS covers the rural estate. As part of this, the FC needs to determine what detrimental impact its activities could have on the environment and plan to prevent and, or, reduce these impacts with an effective management system.

ISO 14001 is the leading world-wide international standard for Environmental Management Systems (EMS). Within the standard there is a requirement for organisations developing an EMS to manage and maintain systems to prevent adverse environmental impacts from all its activities – see OGB 43 *Business sustainability*. These systems must include roles, responsibilities, training and actions to take to prevent identified potential environmental impacts and the response if it happens. There should be procedures for environmental emergencies in existing FD emergency plans (for example fire, pollution and business continuity plans) and these must show what will happen if there is an environmental emergency. The plans should also set out when and how they will be reviewed and tested.

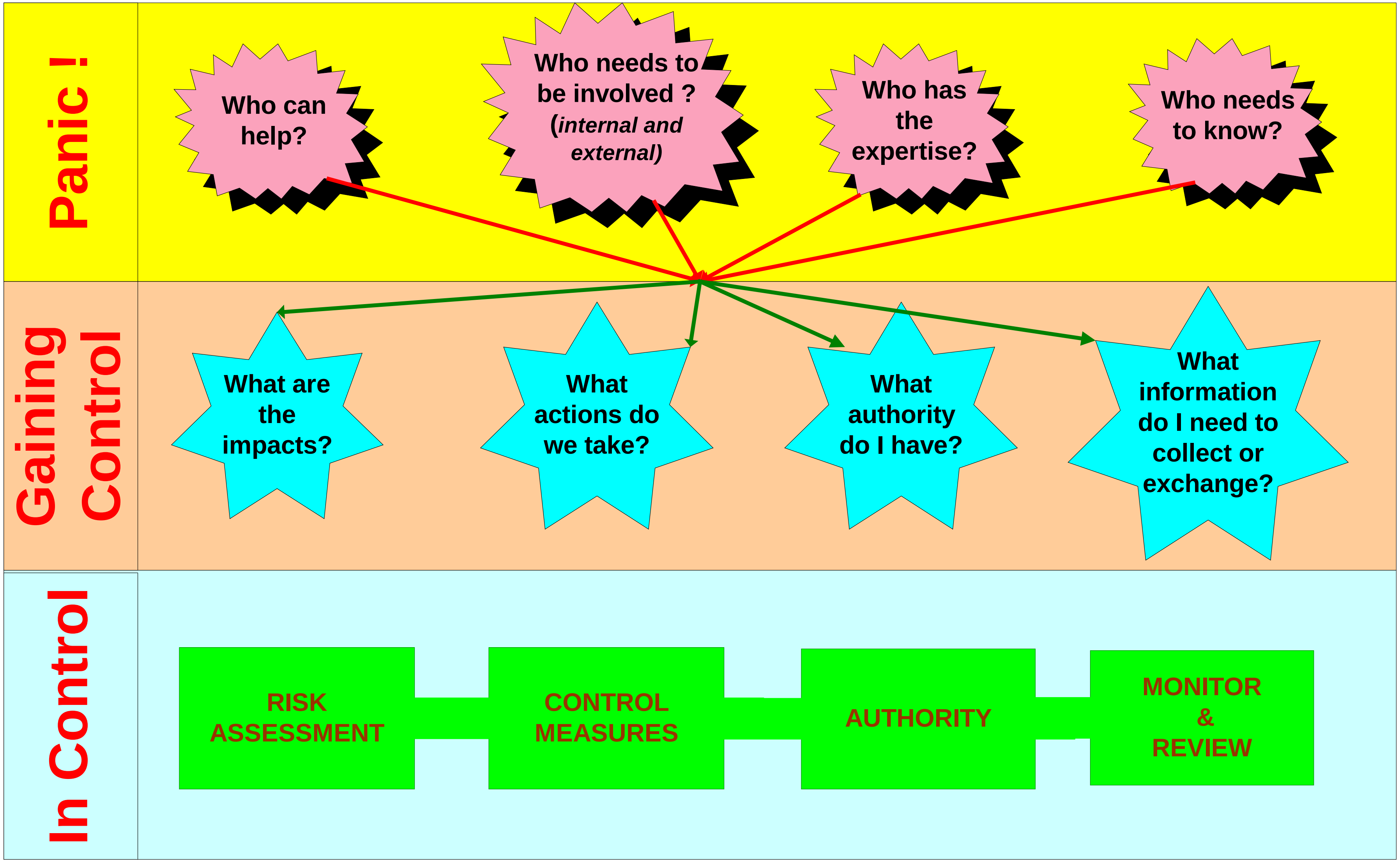
By implementing OGB 17 in forest districts, the emergency planning requirements of ISO 14001 will be satisfied in these management units. To avoid any doubt:

Unit managers must make sure that all buildings and car parks associated with offices and workshops on the national forest estate are included in emergency plans for fire, flood and pollution incidents.

All staff who may have to deal with such an environmental incident should be familiar with these plans.

Non-operational sites such as conservancies, national offices and Forest Research must follow the guidance on emergency planning that the Business Sustainability team have provided.

Unexpected Problem? - What Usually Happens?



We will never eliminate the 'PANIC', but we can alleviate it by putting in place a framework that allows us to quickly be 'IN CONTROL'.

4. Contingency planning

Remember crises have characteristics that are easy to define. They:

- are unexpected;
- are fast-moving;
- lack information;
- take up disproportionate resources;
- need immediate attention; and
- affect people.

You may want to consider the last point carefully. The more people who are affected then the bigger the impact, the bigger the resource drain and the bigger the story, from a media point of view. We need to plan to reduce the risk and impact of any crisis. Many organisations fail to take this subject seriously in the mistaken belief that 'it couldn't happen here!'

IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

Like beauty, crises are very much in the eye of the beholder: what to the world at large looks like a minor incident might potentially sink your business. The key is to be prepared for when things go 'pear-shaped' so that you can manage not only the crisis itself but also the interest it will undoubtedly stir up.

'Seriously consider having a contingency plan.'

So our first step is planning; a vital and essential part of the process. Remember that 'no plan survives first contact with the enemy!' While the unexpected nature of a situation may call for you to make a radical reappraisal and take swift action, there are great benefits from going through the planning process and creating your emergency response.

The first steps are fairly straight forward, but it is important for you to approach the issue positively. Initial desktop planning will cost you in time, but may reward you tenfold during a crisis. *'Planning for the Unexpected'* will take you through a process of finding answers to questions.

1. The aim of an emergency action plan is to provide contingency planning. Here are some examples of major incidents:
   - fatal or serious accident;
   - weather (wind blow, flood or landslide);
   - disease (tree and animal);
   - insect invasion;
   - pollution; and
   - fire.
2. You should consider each major type of incident or event that you think could happen within your cost centre separately under the following headings:

Preparedness

- Identify the potential risks and hazards that could lead to an emergency occurring.

Prevention

- Describe how the cost centre is prepared for each potential risk and the ways in which the district is protecting itself against emergency events.

Response

- Describe the resources at the cost centre's disposal that could be used in the event of an emergency.

Recovery

- Detail the procedures that will be followed in response to an emergency.

The questions that you are likely to ask yourself are listed in Section 4.1.

4.1 The questions to ask yourself

What are the likely significant risks that could affect the FC?

Play 'what if?' and try to predict likely incidents:

- fire – office or forest;
- fatal or very serious accident;
- landslide;
- pollution;
- forest disease or pest;
- high value thefts;
- storm – flood or wind;
- terrorist attack;
- bomb – parcel or letter; or
- scandal – business or staff related.

Who is affected?

This can be an interesting and thought-provoking exercise. Where does our organisation touch the public, the environment, the local community? It is best to start with:

- staff;
- emergency services;
- friends and families of staff;

- local community;
- neighbouring businesses;
- pressure groups;
- competitors;
- trade associations;
- trade unions; or
- politicians.

Where is a major incident most likely to occur?

The HSE define a 'major incident' as:

"A major incident is defined as a significant event, which demands a response beyond the routine, resulting from uncontrolled developments in the course of the operation of any establishment or transient work activity.

The event may either cause, or have the potential to cause, either:

- *multiple serious injuries;*
- *cases of ill-health (either immediate or delayed);*
- *loss of life;*
- *serious disruption; or*
- *extensive damage to property, inside or outside the establishment."*

Where is a major incident most likely to occur? Not an easy question when our business is spread across Great Britain, in offices, the forest, on agency work and while travelling. But consider these more detailed questions to help you answer the main one.

- You need to ask how much of your business is conducted away from your office?
- Do any of your vehicles carry significant amounts of hazardous substances, such as chemicals?
- Do your drivers use the same routes regularly?
- Are they in regular contact?
- How quickly could you get support to an 'off-site' incident?
- Where would you control it from?
- What communication equipment do you have?
- Will it do the job?
- Are your teams trained in its use?

Are there times when our organisation is very vulnerable?

- Which seasons are the most vulnerable for:
  - fire;
  - chemical spill – spraying season; or

  - adverse weather conditions, for example flood or landslip?
- Do you have particularly vulnerable areas, such as water catchments?
- Do holiday shutdowns make you vulnerable?
- What is the key staffing policy in your unit?
- Are parts of your forest susceptible to:
  - windblow
  - flood; or
  - landslip?

What resources are available to you?

We touched on this when we asked 'Where might a disaster happen?' but it is an important consideration. All crises will require extra resources:

- people with adequate training;
- money;
- equipment:
  - transport;
  - communication;
  - first aid kits and equipment;
  - spillage kits;
  - fire fighting;
  - pumps for floods; and
  - cameras for photo evidence.
- What external resources can you call on?
- Which ones are reliable and fast?
- What other resources might you need?
  - Environment Agency?
  - Scottish Environment Protection Agency?
  - Police?
  - Fire and Rescue Service?
  - Mountain Rescue?
  - Ambulance or paramedics?
  - Emergency catering?
  - Utilities?
  - Accommodation?
  - Support and counseling services after a crisis?
- Do you need on-site specialist facilities?

- Who will you ask for advice?

Could a crisis that affects our customers or suppliers have a knock-on impact on our business?

If you rely on just one big customer, the answer is 'yes'. Some simple analysis will help you identify your most vulnerable areas and put a meaningful plan in place by allocating the necessary resources effectively.

4.2 Putting the questions into practice – an example?

We have posed many questions that may seem like a long and rather intimidating list, so in this Section we will put the questions into a context by giving an example of an expected crisis in the FC.

'The Western edge of the main A82 trunk road is prone to landslides – see Fig.1. It is bounded by FC land for nearly 18 miles. We have dealt with minor landslides effectively, but we (local forest district staff) cannot help but think that a major landslide would be a very much more difficult event to deal with if or when it occurs.'

Fig.1 Major landslide on A82 – the road surface is under the rock and earth!

This road is a main artery to the north past Loch Lomond and is a very busy important geographical link in West Scotland. The district has already taken significant preventative measures where it can using steel mesh fences – see Fig 2 – and rock nets, but there are areas where this type of safeguard cannot be used, particularly where forested land slopes to the road edge. Forest design plans have also accounted for work adjacent to the A82.

Fig.2 Steel protective fences erected to protect against rock falls and other debris.

We will use their concern about a major crisis to ask the questions in Section 4.1 and provide some answers.

We can already dispense with:

- what risk; and;
- where?

Landslide; and the A82 where it passes by FC land.

Map the area and risk-assess it based on likelihood and importance.

The other questions are.

Who is affected?

- All who use the A82, including:
  - o the public;
  - o emergency services;
  - o transport services;
  - o business – domestic and foreign; and
  - o staff.

How will they be affected?

- Killed and injured by landslide.
- No through route.
- Knowing someone hurt or killed by landslide.
- Having to attend to the hurt and injured.
- The stress and shock after the event.

When are you most vulnerable?

- At night.
- After heavy rain.
- During a thaw.
- During the tourist season.
- After clearfelling adjacent areas.

What resources are available to you?

- The emergency services.
- Highways dept and council.
- Staff.
- Money.
- Contractors with plant and machinery:
  - o earth moving;
  - o tree felling and processing; and
  - o haulage of both.
- Paramedics or trained first aiders.
- Trained support and counselling staff.

- On-site facilities:
  - toilets;
  - office;
  - communication;
  - power;
  - light if it is likely to be dark; and
  - cameras for evidence and record.

Who, that is not involved, needs to know what has happened?

- Your FDM.
- Safety, Health and Environment Officer (SHEO).
- Country Office.
- Silvan House.
- The Media – we cover this element in Section 5.5 – but remember:
  - you have a Country Press Officer – see Section 10;
  - the usefulness of a friendly local reporter;
  - give them a scoop; and
  - set up a press briefing for a major crisis.

Are these resources aware of your needs and available at little or no notice?

- All your 'hoped for' resources must be pre-briefed and aware of the work they may be called on to do in very difficult circumstances.
- List them.
- Meet and discuss with them.
- Make sure all staff have a list of the agreed contacts and phone numbers where they can be contacted 24 hours a day.
- Make sure that each member of staff or team has allocated duties and that they are clear on what they will be expected to do.
- Have an 'on-site' training and practice session with everyone together so they can meet. You might be grateful for it even if it seems 'over the top' at the moment!

Fig.3. Make sure the people who are most likely to help you in a crisis are aware of the terrain they may be dealing with. Steep, rocky, tree covered, probably in the wet at night. Not everyone is ready for this – show them; brief them; talk to them.

Examples

There are many examples that you can use, but we wanted to illustrate how this booklet sets the scene and gives you a framework to work with for any 'unexpected event'. You don't necessarily need a plan for each one – planning for one event will address the 'unexpected'. Your contact lists will vary for different incidents and you will already have plans in place for the regulars like 'pollution'.

- Example of a Fire an Incident Response Plan (Lochaber FD)
- Example of an Emergency Plan for a Reservoir
- Emergency Plan for Landslips (Scotland Example)
- Wales pollution plan – example.
- Business Continuity Plan Llanymddyfri – example.
- South England FD Emergency Action Plan – example.

5. Resources - an essential factor in your planning

The questions we asked in the last Section (4), although easy to ask, are very serious and have a common theme – resources.

- Do you have what you need?
- Where is it?
- If you haven't, where can you get them?
- What are your sources of information?
    - Contact lists?
    - Contract and neighbour databases?
    - Other plans?

When you are allocating resources think of people first: **response teams** will be essential.

It may be that in places where there are few staff, only one person may be responsible for dealing with elements of a crisis, but the principles used for 'team' remain the same.

Remember, the teams do not work in isolation – they must have good internal communications, and **all** communications must give accurate and timely information!

5.1 First aid provision

An essential resource will be what you provide for first aid. People, wherever they work in our industry, can be injured or taken ill. It is essential that we provide first aid so that we can give them immediate attention and call an ambulance if needed. The FC has a First Aid Policy for Staff that covers what you need to do to make sure this can happen.

The policy provides guidance for managers about the numbers and types of first aiders that you need for specific examples. It also describes the types of suitable training courses as well as types of first aid kits and where on worksites you should find them.

Managers must refer to the FC's First Aid Policy when assessing first aid provision.

5.2 Calling the emergency services

When calling the emergency services, police, fire and rescue and ambulance, you should be aware of two things:

1. They will respond if you phone 999 or 112 (the European-wide emergency number).
2. When you need to call from a mobile phone and your phone is showing no signal from your network, as long as there is signal on another network you will still be able to call 999 or 112.

Here is a document giving you more guidance on calling the emergency services Guidance on when and how to call emergency services.

5.3 Response teams

The Incident Team – will be responsible for managing the incident and dealing with the operational aspects of the crisis – see Section 5.4.

The Communications Team – should manage the communication needed in any incident. Seek advice from your Press Officer – see Sections 5.5 and 10 – they are professionally trained and will be willing to help you wherever the press are involved. You will also need effective communication with internal and external audiences.

The Rest – will handle the 'business-as-usual' elements, they are not involved in the incident but will need to be kept informed of progress, particularly if it impacts on their daily work. Normal business must continue in other areas of our work – see *Incident Management Document* *(draft)*.

You will need to make some hard choices through all aspects of planning: none more difficult than allocating people to roles.

Make sure all your experienced and senior people are spread through your teams, not all in one.

5.4 The Incident Team

This team, while important – see *Incident Management Document* *(draft)*, must not be viewed as 'elite' – without all the teams working in harmony, crises will be more difficult to deal with than if you had no plans at all! Just remember they are the ones who will have to deal with:

- the first shock of the incident;
- the injuries;
- fatalities;
- the conditions:
  - weather;
  - dark; and
  - panic;
- the stress.

Make sure this team has:

- the authority to get on with it;
- the training and protective equipment available for the incident;
- the awareness to assess all situations before 'entering;'
- all the information they will need to deal with any crisis that you have listed and any you have missed – see Section 10;
- clear lines of communication;
- enough trained, willing and briefed people;
- lists of contacts who will help you;
- lists of plant and machinery operators to help;

- full backup from the unit; and
- practised with simulated training sessions.

In the next section we show you an 'Incident Response Card' that is used by the emergency services and the armed forces, and an 'Incident Response Plan' that you can use as a template – it is not exhaustive, but hopefully it will give you some ideas.

5.4.1 Incident response card

This card is used by the emergency services and the armed forces to help their officers remember the logical order and priority when they are faced with an incident. It is also used by the control centres to find out what has happened when you call in for support. We think that our control centres should use the same card to make sure they gather the right information to help anyone who is first on the scene of an incident. Remember, the adrenalin is flowing and you do not know what to expect, and it may be traumatic! Any help to keep you focused will be very welcome.

The card uses two mnemonics (pattern of letters) to help you remember the steps. SAD and CHALETS.

Forestry Commission

Incident Response Card

Rapid Incident Assessment - **Three steps**

1. Do not attempt Rescue.
2. Survey, Assess and Disseminate (SAD).
3. Send CHALETS report to emergency services, then FD Office.

CHALETS

C asuaties -	How many fatalities, injured and not in jured?
H azards -	Present and potential - include fuel spills, gases, chemicals, powerlines, danger of explosion, debris, weather conditions and terrain.
A ccess -	Best routes for emergency vehicles, park ing, turning points, routes blocked and a rendezvous point.
L ocation -	Where is the incident, is it easily indentifi able? Pinpoint landmarks, road junctions to easily find the site.
E mergency Services -	Present? Required?
T ype of incident -	Give brief details of types and numbers of vehicles, buildings, aircraft or other facilities involved.
S tart a log-	Log all actions.

Work with emergency services and in-cident officers - keep your control of-fice informed at all times.

Use this card to remind you what to do whenever you are the first at an incident. The same pattern of letters is used by all the emergency services and the armed forces.

The response charts linked from Section 10 now start with a shortened version of this card. The card is also in the same section and on the intranet. The card and some of the charts are designed to fit on A5 paper for easy reference.

5.4.2 An incident response plan layout

Item No.	Elements and Contacts	Name	phone	✓ or ✖ Planned?
1.	Team Leader – the controller of the incident management team: In support Other appointed people: a) Emergency services co-ordinator b) Equipment co-ordinator c) On site facilities co-ordinator d) Country communication officer e) Name and phone of safety officer			
2.	Contact Numbers			
	Emergency Services 999 or 112			
	Police (Contact mountain Rescue Via police)Local station number Fire Brigade Local stations Hospitals Local numbers Doctors List all your various local doctors			
	Services and Councils Electricity Wayleaves and Emergencies Council/Local Authority contacts Roads Department (Council /Local authority Relevant Road management companies e.g. Transerve, BEAR			
	Other Organisations: e.g. Natural England, SNH,EA, SEPA. Hotels List the local hotels at strategic locations:			
	Grocery Stores: Local shops at strategic locations.			
	Other Catering:			

Item No.	Elements and Contacts	Name	phone	✓ or ✖ Planned?
3.	Companies available: a). Plant b). Harvesting c). Haulage d). Catering e). Lighting f). Shelter g). Counselling			
4.	FC Stores and location: a). Chemical spill equipment. b). Fuel spill equipment. c). Emergency protective equipment. d). Signs, barriers and tape.			
5.	Training: a). All staff had relevant training. b). All contacts briefed. c). All contacts been in simulations. d). All contacts and staff correctly equipped.			
6.	Action to take: a). Prepare a risk assessment. b). Mobilise the relevant resources. c). Brief staff. d). Make sure effective controls are in place. e). Everything else you have planned!			
7.	At site: a). Assess the situation; b). Make it safe if you can; c). Delegate to appointed individuals and trust them to do it; d). Call emergency services as necessary; e). Give 1st Aid as trained; f). When site safe inform unit and others as needed (see *charts using links in Section 10);* g). Arrange for good communications; h). Give precise details of what has happened and any help needed not already noted; i). Take photos for the record and evidence; j). Do not move machinery unless life is threatened; k). Bring in other services/facilities as needed; l). Bring in all necessary equipment; m). Inform Media Team if needed.			

On this link you will find an example emergency plan: Emergency Plan for Landslips (Scotland).

5.5 Working with your Communications Team

Communications and media handling is a vital element of your Emergency Response Plan. In a 24-hour-a-day media world, the appetite for coverage during and following an incident can be insatiable and relentless. Even if the Forestry Commission manages an incident effectively, poor communications can diminish support from our stakeholders, confuse or mislead the public, and damage our reputation. Work closely with your national and local communications teams from the start of any incident. For example, never make statements or commitments to the press before you have spoken to a press officer. Best of all, plan for the unexpected by following the simple checklist below.

5.5.1 Planning checklist

1. Familiarise yourself with the Forestry Commission's Issues Management toolkit as this contains a number of helpful analysis and mapping tools to help you deal with an issue or crisis.
2. Prepare a draft incident response plan for a number of possible scenarios using the Issues Management Toolkit to map out audiences and stakeholders as part of a wider stakeholder engagement plan.
3. Be clear about the Forestry Commission's role in a particular situation, and the role of other government departments or agencies in dealing with a situation. Check with your manager if necessary.
4. Agree team roles and responsibilities for national, area and district teams – primarily spokespeople, stakeholder 'account' leads and a communications co-ordinator.
5. Make sure spokespeople have attended the nationally co-ordinated media training course.
6. If there is a communications toolkit or template for a particular issue, refer to this for:
   - key messages and core script;
   - external stakeholder briefings;
   - question and answer documents; and
   - communication tools available, such as the internet, leaflets and apps.

5.5.2 Response checklist

1. Notify the national communications team or business partner of the local incident or issues immediately. The national lead or business partner will help to secure support from the national team to support the local communications lead.
2. Use the issues management toolkit – Section 3 – to draw together your communications response plan. The toolkit includes the tools to help you draw together the plan.
3. Analyse the situation:
   - consider using an analysis tool to take stock of the situation, for example SWOT analysis; and
   - liaise with the national policy team leading on the issue or situation.
4. Establish roles and responsibilities under the following headings.

Internally

1. Identify who are the key internal contacts – how are they going to get information?
2. Identify the lead policy and operations contacts.
3. Identify the communications lead (and what your role is working with them).
4. Confirm the lead in the National Press Office and what information they want or need from you. Do they know who is available to speak to the media?
5. Establish what and when are the key meetings that will set the priorities for the incident.
6. Agree the sign-off procedure for internal and external briefings about the incident.
7. What is the role of public enquiries? Are contact-line operators briefed?
8. Who else can help? Even if you do not need help straight away, it may be sensible to put colleagues on standby so they are prepared to help when needed.
9. Develop a rota for those in key roles to avoid fatigue.

Externally

1. Double-check you are clear on our role in this incident, and this is set out in a straightforward manner, for use by others.
2. Map your stakeholders or audiences and how they could be affected to help your engagement plan.
3. Identify the best channels for getting messages to audiences or stakeholders and whether they require direct contact or other forms, such as email.
4. Identify who will lead on that contact and report back findings.
5. Prepare external stakeholder briefings and make these available to staff on the ground and on the intranet.
6. Keep stakeholders up to date as the situation develops.
7. Use intermediaries, stakeholders or partners as a way of spreading messages or briefings to a wider audience.
8. Establish and monitor what information you have available already.
9. Concentrate on key current facts and straightforward explanations of the incident and its implications.
10. Establish who the information keeper will be – you need a central library of information with a list of briefings and key messages.
11. Gather, collate and distribute information about the current incident (refer to Communication Tools in Section 4 of the Issues Management toolkit).
12. In an incident, a lot of information will be generated by a number of people who will be trying to gather and analyse and collate it. Identify fast and reliable sources of information and try not to create or duplicate work.
13. Generate new briefings, and update current ones in response to the incident.
14. Check with the area or district(s) what information they have already produced or are communicating. Keep the areas or district(s) informed of any national information you are preparing to avoid duplication or mixed messages.

15. Establish who needs to know this information and how will you get it to them? Do you have established channels or do we need to create a new way?

Media

1. Work closely with your national and local communications teams from the start of any incident. For example, never make statements or commitments to the press before you have spoken to a press officer.
2. Refer to the [Issues Management toolkit]() – Section 4 'Communication Tools' – for advice on working with the media.
3. Help your communications lead prepare or update Question and Answer documents with clear, factual information.
4. Be clear what is and what is not in the public domain.
5. Agree a rota of spokespeople with your communications lead. If this is a high profile incident, the spokesperson's role can be a full time commitment.

Social media

1. Working with your communications lead or the digital communications officer in the national team, consider using social media channels, such as Twitter to get information out quickly.
2. Do not personally use social media without first speaking to your communications lead or the digital communications officer in the national team. The Forestry Commission's main Facebook and Twitter feeds are already known, easy to find, have an established following, and will carry messages consistent with other communications.
3. Bring any adverse social media comment to the communications team's attention as quickly as possible.
4. Photographs or film taken on handheld devices can be very useful, but only do so if it is safe and will not hinder management of the incident management.
5. See Section 5.5.4 for more information.

Spokespeople

1. All spokespeople should have attended media training.
2. Make sure spokespeople are equipped with the latest messages, question and answer documents, and are if necessary supported directly by a press officer.
3. Create a rota of spokespeople if you need to.
4. Refer to the [Issues Management toolkit]() – Section 5 – 'Interview Techniques'.

Public enquiries

1. Identify a rota for managing the telephones and dealing with enquiries.
2. Provide the public enquiries line with a question and answer or briefing document and update when necessary.

Website

Work with your national communications team to update content on the website and keep this up to date as the situation develops. This is a 24-hour channel that needs to reflect new developments.

Images

Collect images, including photographs and video footage to convey the 'story' or give messages, and where possible, make it available for streaming online.

Internal

1. Brief all staff, especially operational staff, so they are equipped to deal with external stakeholder engagement and public enquiries.
2. Update the intranet with live information.
3. Use the appropriate internal communication channels to get information to staff. Work with the internal communications team nationally.
4. Senior management, at the appropriate level, should issue a note as the situation develops.

5.5.3 Aftermath

1. Organise follow-up events with stakeholders to support local awareness and management in the aftermath. Event materials may include a standard presentation, banners and advice leaflets.
2. It may be appropriate to hold formal or informal consultations with national or local stakeholders to agree a way forward or change in regulation. Work with your communications lead on a plan to support this process.
3. Consider communications advising of any funding available to deal with the aftermath of an incident.
4. Work with your national communications team to update content on the website, including advice and support.
5. Hold a wash-up session and communicate findings more widely to aid planning for, or responding to, any future incidents.
6. Develop case studies to demonstrate the handling of incidents, during and afterwards, and the outcomes.
7. Understand the geographical area to help future planning for similar incidents.
8. Monitor the situation and plan ahead for any future incidents using different scenarios. Talk to partners or stakeholders as appropriate.
9. Getting back to 'normal' – write your evaluation report and share lessons with other colleagues.
10. Use 'business as usual' channels, including meetings and newsletters to keep stakeholders or customers up to date on findings or reports on the aftermath.

5.5.4 Guidance for using social media

If you want to comment on social media sites or create your own social media network in your capacity as a Forestry Commission member of staff, you should speak to your local or national communications team first. You should also apply the social media guidelines below.

You are free to use social media in a personal capacity outside working hours and on your own computers. However, we advise you to avoid infringing the Data Protection Act 1998 in any way by including information that refers to an identifiable individual or could lead to the identification of an individual (employee, customer, contractor or member of the public). You should also make sure you don't refer to other sensitive or confidential information.

Once content is posted online it can be very difficult to remove. Therefore do not say or post anything that you are not 100% comfortable with being in the public domain. A test is to ask yourself, "Could the message be considered to be obscene, offensive, derogatory or of a sexual nature, whether in word, image or audio formats"?

Also, you should not post any content that is embargoed, commercially sensitive, private, copyrighted to another organisation or inappropriate. If you are uncertain about whether the message may be deemed inappropriate, **Don't Post It**; speak to a member of the national or regional communications team.

There are some common principles shared across all forms of social media. Knowing these basic 'rules of engagement' will help you whether you are running an online community or simply contributing:

- **Be accessible**. Remember that your audience may not understand abbreviations, scientific jargon and technical terms. Use plain English and short sentences.
- **Be helpful**. If you can't answer questions, reply saying that you will come back shortly with more information. Find the answer or point the enquirer in the direction of more information.
- **Be yourself**. Don't be afraid to empathise, use examples of your own experiences and thoughts. This will make you more approachable.
- **Be considerate**. Think about who might be reading what you write – not just now – but in the future. Don't say anything that could be deemed offensive or insensitive. Apply the 'pub rule' – if you wouldn't say it to a stranger in the pub – don't say it.
- **Be credible**. Be transparent, fair, accurate and thorough. Do not say anything that you do not know to be factually correct. If you are unsure, check first.
- **Be responsive**. Respond to questions and enquiries whenever possible. But if you're unsure how to reply to a difficult question, please contact your communications team.
- **Be engaging**. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
- **Be professional.** Be cordial, honest and professional at all times.
- **And... listen**. Engage with your audience by listening to what they are saying and respond accordingly. Not only will this make sure that you're heard, it will also enable you to judge the tone of your response.

You should take part in the same way you would with other media or public forums, such as speaking at conferences: say you are a representative of the Forestry Commission, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a potential threat to personal security. However, never give out personal details, such as your home address or phone numbers.

Always remember that communicating online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being re-published in other media. Stay within the legal framework and be aware that libel, defamation, copyright and data protection laws apply.

If you need more information, please read the Government's Social Media Guidelines on how to use social media within your profession.

5.6 Working in partnership

In the 'Incident Response Plan' in Section 5.4.2 we gave you titles for those who can help us and where we can get help. This element of your planning will give you and those who work with you greater confidence that you are also a service to them for their Emergency Plans.

It is sensible for you to take the time and make the effort in this area of your planning by allocating and obtaining resources that will help you.

To do this you will need a list of all those agencies that can help, and we have put an example list from Dumfries and Galloway Emergency Plan in Section 10. Please bear in mind that Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) Council have considerable experience of dealing with the 'unexpected' you will remember some of the 'disasters' they have had to handle.

- Lockerbie – Pan-Am crash
- Foot and Mouth 2000
- Hurricane 1999
- Severe Snow in 1998 (1.2metres deep).

We have already emphasised the value of experience – let's use it when it is offered.

In the D&G plan, each agency is identified and a plan of what each can offer is drawn up, clearly detailing the roles and responsibilities of what are termed 'Partners'. To help further we have taken a direct extract from their plan:

5.6.1 Non-emergency service roles

Non-emergency services will support the Emergency Services and community in major emergencies. Their role is to:

- provide total support for the emergency services and those engaged in the response;
- provide a wide range of support services for the community;
- lead the recovery and return to normality; and
- maintain normal services at the right level.

5.6.2 Responsibilities common to all partners

All Partners are to:

- identify and encourage its officers, or managers, to take part in the emergency planning process and join appropriate groups and teams active in the Major Emergency Scheme, both in the preparation and response;
- support the Major Emergency Scheme by taking part in training, testing and exercises;

- release identified managers and **delegate to them the authority to act on their behalf** in the initial stages of an emergency;
- make sure that internal arrangements are made to:
    - complement those of the Major Emergency Scheme;
    - accommodate the withdrawal of key staff on emergency duties;
    - support staff in their emergency roles; and
    - maintain normal work at the appropriate levels.
- support the response, by making available to others involved in the emergency, and where surplus to their own emergency requirements:
    - staff;
    - equipment;
    - supplies; and
    - plant;
- take part in the debriefing and analysis of response to emergencies for the benefit of future emergency planning; and
- Partners may have a role in helping the emergency services in 'routine' emergencies.

Where managers are called to routine emergencies they must make sure that their unit is aware of their involvement and can cover for their activity should a major emergency occur.

You will also need to consider 'Liaison Officers' who can be the single contact point for changes to plans, updates or discussions with outside agencies.

5.7 Testing your plans

It is very important that all your staff have confidence in emergency procedures and are clear about their roles. Testing and rehearsing procedures can provide this for your teams. Rehearsing is essential and need not be very complicated. You should carry out a fully co-ordinated test of all elements of emergency response at least once a year. You ought to consider involving outside agencies too.

Make sure that if the Emergency Services are not involved, that they are aware of the test!

In some industries, regular planned incident rehearsals are mandatory, but even if they are not required officially, a rehearsal can be quite simple to organise and be very helpful. You can run exercises at a range of levels, from desktop and telephone, to call-ins and simulations involving the emergency services. Create a training cycle that builds in scope for changing practices and people within the FC. Allow for the right training to be provided for essential individuals and assess its effectiveness. By conducting regular exercises at a variety of levels you can judge whether there are any gaps in terms of:

- people;
- processes;
- resources;
- information; and

- training.

Periodic testing of emergency plans Fire, Pollution and Business Continuity Plans is a mandatory requirement under ISO 14001.

Unit managers must have regular drills in the office and the field to test emergency planning, fire and pollution plans, and business continuity plans (we suggest every two years) and record these exercises and anything that they need to add or that requires improvement.

6. Fire

In this section we will look at:

- fire protection;
- fire fighting;
- after a fire;
- staff responsibilities; and
- how to record and report fires.

6.1 FC policy

P Forestry Commission policy, agreed across all three countries, is to prevent fires and reduce losses in the most cost-effective way.

Each Fire and Rescue Service has a statutory responsibility for dealing with all uncontrolled fires in its area. However, the performance of each service will depend upon its resources, which may not relate to the amount of forest in its area. All owners of property are expected to take sensible precautions to prevent fire and to help control fires if they occur. FC fire protection measures are undertaken to fulfil this responsibility, but we will rely on the Fire and Rescue Service's involvement in extinguishing forest fires.

6.1.1 Fire prevention and fire fighting strategy

Contingency planning for fire is normally contained within a Forest District's Fire or Emergency Plan. There are no templates for these as there is a wide variation in approach; ranging from full fire fighting teams and equipment; to total reliance on the Fire and Rescue Service.

Unit managers will prepare a Fire or Emergency Plan with enough content and detail to account for the hazards, risks, and likely occurrence of fires in their cost centre. They will review this every two years.

There are some essential elements that you must consider:

- preparing and maintaining accurate up-to-date fire plans;
- effective liaison with the Fire and Rescue Service (including Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP) and Community Fire Safety);
- clear communication between the FC and the Fire and Rescue Service;
- preventative measures;
- detection and deterrents;
- emergency procedures for direct fire fighting;
- rapid response fire suppression techniques;
- watching and damping-down fires;
- recording and logging fires; and
- staff training and experience.

6.2 Fire danger rating

6.2.1 Fire Danger Rating (FDR)

Each cost centre should identify in their Fire Plan, Contingency Plan or Emergency Plan how they intend to assess fire danger.

The systems you can use for assessing the fire danger rating are:

1. FC FDR System shown using Section 10.
2. English and Welsh FDs can use the Fire Severity Index on the Open Access web site. http://www.openaccess.gov.uk/wps/portal/home/welcome
3. A subjective assessment based on local knowledge.

Remember that with large forest districts you will need more than one reading in one place to make sure you assess the risk for each area which could be affected.

If an FD uses a subjective assessment they must use either the FC FDR system or the Fire Severity Index on the open access website (England and Wales only) retrospectively when completing forms S121 and S122.

6.3 Fire fighting

6.3.1 Responsibilities

Under the various Fire and Rescue Acts in England, Wales and Scotland, the Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for extinguishing all fires in its area and to protect 'life' and 'property'. Secondly, the Fire and Rescue Service have the power to respond to events, such as forest fires, that may harm the environment, including plants and animals,.

The Fire and Rescue Service will take control of any fire they are called to. The 'Fire Officer' in charge of a fire is called the 'Incident Commander' or 'IC'. The Incident Commander is in charge of all health and safety, and Forestry Commission staff at an incident are under their authority.

FC Staff, contractors, occupiers of neighbouring property and other organisations may be able to supply labour and other fire fighting resources, but remember that all personnel used for fire fighting must be:

- identified in the FD fire plan or contingency plan;
- adequately equipped; and
- properly trained.

We recommend that FDMs hold a meeting at the start of the fire season for all staff who might be involved in fire fighting to discuss:

- risk assessment(s) please refer to *FISA Guide No.803 'Fire Fighting'* when you are completing risk assessments;
- site safety rules; and
- communication and supervision.

R We also recommend that key FD staff meet with the local Fire and Rescue Service each year to discuss:

- risk assessment(s);
- site safety rules;
- communication and supervision; and
- FD emergency, fire or contingency plans.

6.3.2 Risk assessments

You can see an example risk assessment using the link in Section 10. Where necessary, FDMs should draw up a joint risk assessment for flying operations with their helicopter provider. They should also provide maps showing constraints and hazards, such as power lines.

6.3.3 Military assistance

The Armed Services will loan personnel and equipment to help fight major forest fires under the arrangements for Military Aid to the Civil Community (MACC). Please note that help from the armed services is unlikely for most forest fires as they will need reasonable notice to mobilise forces.

Where needed, FDMs should talk to their local military contact and agree what they need for military assistance. This must be included in your fire plan showing costs, risk assessment, site safety rules, equipment, training, communication and supervision.

6.3.4 Role of FC staff

FC staff and contractors are not professional fire fighters. We advise you to only use them to:

- be a presence to patrol and spot fires;
- act as a back-up to damp-down after the site has been made safe and the fire brigade has withdrawn;
- provide support to the fire brigade with specialist equipment, such as fire bowsers;
- be at fire sites to liaise with the Fire and Rescue Service; and
- extinguish fires with beaters or water if available if they or contractors are first to arrive on site and the fire is small and manageable.

FDMs must consider the training, experience, health and fitness, and equipment available before deciding on the role the FC will take in fighting forest fires.

When you deploy staff, advise them to return if they cannot communicate with the 'control centre'.

Rest periods

The Fire and Rescue Service will often rotate their crews every three hours (though that is often extended to four hours). The forester in charge is responsible for resting individuals to make sure that they are not overworked, or working in a state that impacts on their, or anybody else's, health, safety or welfare.

Fire-fighting at night

Due to the nature of wild fires you will have to constantly reassess the situation and the risk, and adjust activities to suit.

If nightfall means that the risk is increased, so that the risks to personnel are greater than the benefits of fighting the fire, then withdraw. You should take advice from fire service personnel present on the ground.

6.3.5 Equipment

List the equipment available for fire fighting in your Fire Plan.

This may include.

- Communication equipment - 2-way radios, mobile phones, it may also be worth considering the purchase or hire of a satellite phone to allow for communications in remote areas.
- Fire beaters.
- Water bowsers with pumps and couplings. All bowsers and pumps need to be checked and maintained regularly. During the fire season they should not be used for anything else.
- Helicopter – in extreme conditions, you can hire helicopters to help with fire fighting and surveillance operations. Details for calling out a helicopter should be in the FD Fire Plan or Contingency Plan.
- All staff should have access to a 1:50,000 map showing the Fire Report Points.
- All staff should receive a copy of the FD Fire Plan or contingency plan if appropriate.
- First Aid Equipment – A specialised burn first-aid kit should be available on the site, and each person should carry a personal first aid kit for non-burn injuries.
- Personal Protective Equipment.

All the safety equipment, identified in the risk assessment, must be issued to field staff as required. For example this will include:

- brightly coloured flame-resistant boiler suits or high-visibility waistcoats if you are not close to the fire front (most high-visibility waistcoats are made from polyester and can melt if close to heat);
- helmet with polycarbonate flexi-glass visors (as used for strimming);
- goggles;
- flame-resistant, heat-resistant gloves;
- close-lacing work boots;
- heat-proof hood;

- particle masks; and
- torch.

Click here to go to the Central Procurement Contracts

6.4 After a fire

Unit managers:

- investigate the cause of the fire, in liaison with the police if they suspect deliberate fire starting, or if a prosecution or claim is possible; and
- recommend to the Country Operations Director or Country Land Agent if a claim or prosecution might be successful.

Successful prosecutions increase the chances of the FC recovering damages.

6.4.1 Fire reporting and data collection

Unit or building managers will:

1. maintain a Fire Message Record Book;
2. maintain a Fire Log (S121) for low impact fires;
3. prepare a Fire Report (S122) if necessary; and
4. for high impact fires, update the SCDB within 12 weeks of the fire.

When and what?

1. Maintain a Fire Message Record Book to record all verbal messages relating to fires, this will include controlled burning by our neighbours.
2. Maintain a Fire Log (S121) for all fires that happen in their FD, and those that pose a risk to FC property. This log will help:
   - the FDM in planning for fire protection;
   - auditing of fire protection processes;
   - record woodland losses;
   - record damage to grassland, heath and moorland; and
   - provide data for analysis at a number of levels.

You can find Form S121 using Section 10.

Use the S121 forms to record the details and upload it in to the Accident and Incident Reporting System (AIRs) – see AIRs User Manual for detail on how to do this.

3. Prepare a Fire Report (S122) for all fires where:
   - a prosecution is considered;
   - a claim is possible;
   - significant resources (£5K +) were used, losses were great, or important lessons were learnt;
   - there was a serious threat to FC property from a neighbouring fire.

The completed form will be uploaded to AIRs within seven days of the fire.

You can find the Fire Report (S122 using Section 10).

4. Update the sub-compartment database.
   - The Land Use code for the components will need to be updated, please refer to the Survey Handbook – Section 4.3.1 for the land use code.
   - The SCDB must be updated within 12 weeks of the fire, please refer to the Survey Handbook – Section 11.12.4 for more information.
   - By carrying out the above, you can provide information to help improve the accuracy of summary statistics each year.

6.5 Training

P All staff involved in fire fighting must have adequate training and undertake refresher training every two years.

Learning and Development (L&D) run the two courses shown here.

1. Using Helicopters (3.29)

Designed for anyone who acts as a ground controller in helicopter operations. Includes:

- entering and leaving the helicopter; and
- ground control operations.

The ½ day course can be amalgamated with 4.74.

2. Control of Forest Fires (4.74)

Designed for staff who are required to fight forest fires. Includes:

- understanding procedures and protocols required for fighting forest fire safely; and
- understanding the most effective deployment of available resources for fire fighting.

The ½ day course can be amalgamated with 3.29.

This might mean that you will have to stop over-enthusiastic people becoming involved on the day of a fire if they have not been trained.

Where available, we encourage you to take part in joint training exercises with your local Fire and Rescue Service.

The following three documents are also available and cover both fire fighting and controlled burning.

- FISA Guide 803 – Fire Fighting – Link.
- Planning Controlled Burning Operations in Forestry – Link.
- Forest and Moorland Fire Suppression – Link.

6.6 Controlled burning

If you are doing controlled burning, please consider the following.

Is burning the best option to dispose of woody material from operations to widen rides and tracks and create glades for amenity and conservation purposes? Consider:

- leaving residues;
- mulching; and
- chipping residues.

If burning is best, then remember this.

- To reduce the intensity and duration of individual fires, make many small piles rather than a few large piles. Place them as far off tracks and paths as practicable. Assess and monitor the wind and fuel conditions.
- If you leave smouldering embers overnight, or when burning is finished, make sure your risk assessment covers the risk of injury to visitors, including children.

Consider the controls to deal with identified risks.

- Light fires Monday to Thursday so that there is less chance of them remaining hot over the weekend when more people may be about. If necessary spread ashes to help them to cool more quickly. *Note: embers can take many days to cool.*
- Cordon off the fire or smouldering embers. Use orange high visibility barrier fence or, if this is not available, at least two rows of barrier tape and posts.
- Place signs that clearly warn the public that the ashes may still be hot.

Signs should include:

- on-site explanatory notices to alert the public to the presence of fires and fire sites;
- yellow triangle warning signs; and
- red circle prohibition signs.

Signs, fence or tape should stay in place until the fire is completely cooled.

General:

- consider closing or diverting paths during the work;
- monitor all safeguards to make sure that controls remain in place;
- remove them when the fire is cold; and
- consider informing the fire brigade of planned controlled burning – although there is no legal obligation, we recommend this for areas that are close to houses.

6.6.1 Controlled burning legislation

The laws that restrict the burning of heath and moorland to winter each year to help nature conservation.

England

The Heather and Grass etc Burning (England) Regulations 2007 regulate the burning of heather and rough grass in England. The main provisions are that unless a licence has been issued, burning is lawful only:

- in relation to land which is within an upland area, from 1st October in one year to 15th April in the following year, both dates inclusive; and
- in relation to land which is not within an upland area, from 1st November in one year to 31st March in the following year, both dates inclusive;

You can apply for a licence to burn outside these dates, but please note that licences are issued only for exceptional circumstances.

If you need more information please click on this DEFRA link:

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs Heather and Grass Burning

Natural England also publishes a Heather and Grass Burning Code and Best Practice Guides at the following link: http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/burning/default.aspx

It is an offence to:

- burn outside the statutory burning season;
- start to burn between sunset and sunrise;
- burn without enough people and equipment to control the burning;
- not take all reasonable precautions against damage to adjacent land; and
- carry out burning on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) without consent from Natural England if burning has been notified as an 'operation likely to damage'.

Any notice that you need to give to commoners, or those having similar rights, must be clearly displayed on that common land.

Wales

The Heather and Grass etc. Burning (Wales) Regulations 2008 regulate the burning of heather and rough grass in Wales. The main provisions are that unless a licence has been issued, burning is lawful only:

- in relation to land which is within an upland area, from 1 October in one year to 31 March in the following year, both dates inclusive; and
- in relation to land which is not within an upland area, from 1 November in one year to 15 March in the following year, both dates inclusive;

You can apply for a licence to burn outside these dates, but please note that licences are issued only for exceptional circumstances.

If you need more information please click here.

It is an offence to:

- burn outside the statutory burning season;
- start to burn between sunset and sunrise;
- burn without enough people and equipment to control the burning;
- not take all reasonable precautions against damage to adjacent land; and

Any notice that you need to give to commoners, or those having similar rights, must be clearly displayed on that common land.

Scotland

The Hill Farming Act 1946 governs the making of 'muirburn' in Scotland. We have given you the main provision here.

In Scotland, muirburn is permitted only between,

- 1 October and 15 April inclusive at all altitudes.

Generally, the Scottish Government does not encourage burning after the 15th of April. A muirburn licence may be granted to allow burning outside the muirburn season for the following purposes only: conserving, restoring, enhancing or managing the natural environment; research; or public safety.

Unlike in England and Wales, there are no provisions for extensions before or after these dates by either the proprietor or the Scottish Executive.

It is an offence to:

- burn outside the statutory burning season;
- burning at night, between one hour after sunset and one hour before sunrise;
- leave a fire unattended;
- be unable to control a fire or not provide proper control;
- cause damage to any woodland, neighbour's property, or scheduled ancient monument;
- carry out burning on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, without consent from Scottish Natural Heritage, if burning has been notified as a 'potentially damaging operation';
- not give the landlord and adjoining proprietors at least 24 hours written notice of the date, place and extent of intended muirburn;
- light a fire, or allow a fire to spread, within 30 metres of a road so as to damage the road or endanger traffic on it, without authority or reasonable excuse; and
- create smoke that is a nuisance to inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

You can find more information if you use this link: The Muirburn Code

Breaches of the law that endanger or destroy FC property should be reported promptly with supporting information, to the right authority.

Where the FC propose to make a claim for damage and, or, the costs of putting out a fire, they should persuade the relevant authority to prosecute. The circumstances should be discussed with the investigating officer, who should be told which Regulations and Sections of the Act appear to have been contravened.

Straw and Stubble

In England and Wales, straw and stubble burning is prohibited under the Crop Residues (Restrictions on Burning) Regulations 1991.

In Scotland, the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 gives powers to Local Authorities to regulate straw and stubble burning. The Farmers' Unions have also issued Codes of Practice.

You can find a copy of the Prevention of Environmental Pollution from Agricultural Activity Code of Practice on this link:

Prevention of Environmental Pollution from Agricultural Activity

Where straw and stubble burning could endanger FC property, the unit manager should contact the farmer to try to make sure that they comply with the legislation. Where breaches of the legislation seriously endanger or destroy FC property the FDM should ask the relevant authority to prosecute.

Where there is no legislation, but breaches of the code seriously endanger or destroy FC property, you should inform SEERAD and the local Farmers' Union Secretary.

6.6.2 Burning heath and moorland on adjoining property

When a unit manager receives written notice of a neighbour's intention to burn, they must make sure that their forest is adequately protected.

If the unit manager considers that conditions are dangerous they should try to dissuade the neighbour from burning by explaining to them, in the presence of a witness, the dangers involved. They must make it quite clear that if the burning is carried out, the neighbour will be responsible for any damage to the forest, irrespective of any action they may take to protect it.

If the neighbour insists on burning, the unit manager will advise the Fire and Rescue Service and take all necessary steps to prevent the fire from endangering the forest, even to the extent of extinguishing it. Submit a full report to the Country Operations Managers without delay.

Do not allow a neighbour to believe that verbal notice of intention to burn will be accepted instead of written notice. Neighbours should be told that if they wish to burn, but have failed to give the necessary written notice, they should seek FC consent. This may be given on the clear understanding that it is without prejudice to the rights of other interested parties.

If only verbal notice is given, you should remind the neighbour that written notice is a statutory requirement and that we cannot accept a verbal notice, but that we would consider a request for consent. If the conditions are unsuitable for burning, or if FC staff are not available for any necessary protection measures, the neighbour must be told, in the presence of a witness, that we cannot give consent and that if they proceed with the burning it will be reported.

If, however, the conditions are suitable for burning and staff are available for any necessary protection measures, give your consent subject to the normal proviso that the neighbour will be held responsible for any damage. In this case, if the burning gets out of control, we would not seek to prosecute if there was no written notice.

The unit manager should respond positively to requests from neighbours for assistance to burn protective fire breaks or lines on their property against FC boundaries provided that the burning can be done safely.

Before you give any help, brief all staff on:

- risk assessment(s);
- site safety rules;
- communication; and
- supervision.

All staff must be:

- adequately trained; and
- equipped.

6.6.3 Trains and fires

During periods of high fire danger rating it is advisable that you contact rail companies who are likely to be running steam trains and advise them that it is a high fire danger period.

'Under the Railway Fires Act 1905, subject to paying compensation, railway companies operating under statutory powers, may enter onto any adjoining plantation, wood or orchard to take any precautions reasonably necessary to prevent or diminish the risk of fire caused by sparks or cinders from a locomotive. This implies that railway companies should undertake such precautions which would include fire breaks and lines and that they should do so on adjoining property when their own property is not suitable. If they do not do so they will have difficulty in denying negligence if such a fire is caused.'

The FC will not give formal (written) advice on fire prevention measures to railway companies. The railway companies bear the responsibility and must not be relieved of any part of it. This does not preclude technical discussion provided that you make it very clear that responsibility for decisions rests entirely with the rail company.

6.7 Water supplies and legislation

A few points of legislation.

1. The Environment Agency, covering England and Wales, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, covering Scotland have the responsibility, among others, for the conservation of natural resources including water.
2. The Water Act 2003 deals with, among other matters, the abstraction and impounding of water. A licence is normally required to impound water and therefore you must seek the approval of the Environment Agency for any proposal to construct a dam or weir or to divert the flow of water for fire protection. It may also be necessary to obtain the prior agreement of neighbours and riparian owners. The Water Act 2003 applies to England and Wales only; there is no parallel legislation in Scotland.
3. A licence under the 2003 Act is not required to abstract water from any source for fire-fighting or for testing fire-fighting equipment or for training in fire-fighting.

R You should obtain all necessary consents from the owners of the body of water you are likely to extract water from for fire-fighting.

6.8 Claims

Country Head Offices will make claims in close liaison with Finance and Accounting Services (FAS).

1. Claims will be calculated for both plantation loss and extinguishing costs.
2. Plantation loss valuations will be calculated as the open market value of the woodland excluding land value.
3. Extinguishing costs will be calculated as prescribed for the Fire Report, Form S122.
4. Country Directors have delegated authority to waive or reduce claims not above £2,000. Except with the approval of FAS, all other claims will be made in full. Where a valid claim is abandoned or reduced, you will need to complete an A263 'write-off' declaration.
5. Many people, even those of only very limited means, will be insured against such claims, and all people should be. However, wherever a claim could cause personal distress you should deliver it by hand and advise the person receiving it to seek advice, in the first place, from their insurers.
6. The lawyers or insurers acting for the other party will usually challenge firstly the legal basis for the claim and then the financial amount. FAS will liaise with the FC Solicitor and Treasury and determine whether the case should be taken to court, settled out of court, or abandoned. It is essential that all the relevant facts are collected as soon as possible after the fire and recorded in the Accident and Incident Reporting System.

7. Tree health and plant bio-security

With increasing discoveries of new pests and diseases, it is clear that Britain's trees are facing unprecedented threats. Our science indicates that climate change will create the conditions for even more pest and disease activity. These heightened threats require us to take a more strategic approach to forest and tree health.

For more information please read Tree Health (OGB2).

7.1 Additional information

- Contingency Plan for Serious Pest outbreaks in British Trees
- Tree health-and plant bio security Action Plan
- The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain
- Phytophthera ramorum – case study.
- *Chalara fraxinea (C. fraxinea).*

8. If the worst happens?

This is where your 'Incident Team' proves your planning and testing. The main thing you need to remember is: don't try to do it all yourself. You will need to delegate to your team and they will all share the responsibility of a wide variety of tasks. You may wish to refer back to the example used in Section 4.2.

Actions to take

- Prepare a risk assessment.
- Mobilise the relevant resources.
- Brief staff.
- Make sure effective controls are in place.
- *Everything else you have planned!*

Points to bear in mind

- Remember it is probably not your fault, so get rid of any feelings of guilt!
- A crisis, whatever it might be, is going to take all your attention – *clear your desk and your mind!*
- Check that your team has the capacity to cover a rolling 24-hour period for a serious incident. To be at your best you need rest.
- Be calm and present a controlled appearance, even if you don't feel it! If the incident involves the media – don't forget that it is how you project yourself in pictures and words that will show others how well you are dealing with the situation.
- Expect to be challenged by others; both your position and actions. Many, including the media will see this as their job: *never lose your temper!*
- Be confident – you are the expert and need to show it. It gives you a mandate to communicate what you consider are the important elements of the situation.
- Be clear, concise and keep it simple.
- Think before you speak. Frame responses into short, simple and clear messages.
- Have an agenda. Don't try to blind people with science or prove your expertise by talking in jargon. Make sure everyone understands you.
- *Tell the truth!* The Police and Health and Safety Inspectors have considerable powers and can interview '*under caution*'. Reporters have well-tuned instincts for a good story.
- *Be positive.* Be in charge of the situation and drive the agenda. Give yourself all the tools to achieve a successful outcome.

If your planning and testing have worked, you will be in a better position to handle whatever is thrown at you. Like a No.49 bus, you might wait a long time for a crisis before three turn up in quick succession. Crisis management is not an exact science, but planning by which you can anticipate several scenarios is the most effective form of dealing with the unexpected.

To help further we have drawn up some 'Action Charts' and 'Incident Cards' which you can find using Section 10. These are for several types of incident that you may have the misfortune to experience in the FC. They do not replace the need for you to plan, but they will identify areas in which you may need to do more planning or to make sure you have enough resources to handle the incident effectively. The charts are also available on the Intranet site for your downloading and tailoring. We hope you find them useful.

8.1 Business as usual?

Probably won't feel like it! Often other staff want to watch or 'get involved'. This is where the discipline of trained staff or teams comes in – do your own job!
Others will continue the 'Business as Usual', not an easy task, particularly if the premises you usually work in are no longer available. You must have considered this in your planning.

'Our aim with all this work and planning is not to be caught out!'

In addition, you may have your resources committed to clearing up the 'aftermath' not just dealing with the event. While we look at 'Business as Usual' consider carefully that it can take a long time and a lot of work for a community or business to recover after a crisis and our expertise may be needed – we cannot walk away because the crisis is over.

8.2 Learning from experience

'The power of hindsight'!

Our management is about reducing the risk of unplanned and unexpected events. However, we need to be alive to the fact that whatever management systems we put in place, none will be perfect, and there is always a chance that a crisis will arise. Consequently there is great benefit if you have asked and been able to answer all the questions in this OGB – see Section 4.1.

When the dust has settled after a crisis take time to review.

- What happened?
- Was it preventable?
- Was it foreseeable?
- What was our preparation for it?
- Was it enough?
- Did we have the resources:
    - in place?
    - available?
    - in time?
- Were they the right resources – see Section 4.2?
- Did our partners do what was agreed?
- Did our staff do what was agreed?
- Were communications good enough?
- Were communications and information accurate?
- What would we do next time to improve our plans?
- Update your plans to fit the change of need.
- *Do it now! Don't wait! Remember it is like the No 49 Bus!*

9. Bibliography

Our thanks to:

- The Health and Safety Executive for extracts from their website - http://www.hse.gov.uk/
- The Dumfries and Galloway Council Information Service for extracts from its Major Emergency Scheme.
- John Boddy of 'Television and Radio Techniques' for allowing us to use extracts from his article on '*Disaster Management*' in 'Safety and Health Practitioner' (May 2002).
- Those forest districts who agreed to us using their photos in examples of sites, accidents, incidents and example forms.

You may be aware that an internal paper was written by the FC on windblow entitled*: Scottish Windblow Contingency Plan*

10. Supporting documents

We have placed all the documents shown below on the Operational Guidance Intranet as separate documents. Please download them if you want to. We hope you will find them useful.

The following documents are on our intranet page.

- S121 Fire Log.
- Draft S121 for use in AIRs
- Draft S122 for Use in AIRs
- S122 Fire Report.
- FDR System and notes on completing it.
- FDR Recording Sheet.
- Fire Example Risk Assessment.
- Incident Response Card.
- Incident Response Plan.
- Fire Response Chart.
- Pollution Incident Chart.
- Pollution Incident Plan
- Pollution Card.
- Accident Chart.
- Organisations that can help.
- Press Officers
- First Aid Policy for Staff

Note, Forms S121 and S122 are now 'fill-in' forms and contain the guidance you need to help you complete them and have been adapted to fit in with AIRs.