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**HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE
The HSE Board**

Corporate exercise on HSE's major incident and civil contingency arrangements

A Paper by Elaine Harbour

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Cleared by Heather Bolton on 7 June 2006

Issue

1. Corporate exercise testing HSE's contingency planning and arrangements in response to major incidents and civil contingencies

Timing

2. Routine - For the meeting on 5 July 2006.

Recommendation

3. The Board is asked to:
 - a. Agree to undertake a corporate exercise to test HSE's response arrangements to major incident and civil contingencies involving FOD, HID and NSD in October 2006
 - b. Agree to the development of a series of annual exercises to be undertaken over the next 3 years

Background

4. At the February Special HSE Board meeting it was agreed that although the incident at Buncefield provided a good live test of the major incident procedures some of the wider HSE activity was only tested in an adhoc way and a test of HSE's contingency arrangements was needed.
5. The Major Incident Response Arrangements Procedure includes criteria for testing the major incident response arrangements. Tests are of either
 - a. The detailed plan implementing the corporate major incident response arrangements in the Directorate/Division; or
 - b. The corporate plan itself.
6. Each Directorate/Division (D/D) should have an annual programme for testing and monitoring their own detailed plans to implement the Corporate Major Incident Response Arrangements. This annual programme should involve simple data verification and detailed incident scenarios testing the procedures, facilities and communication infrastructure. Such tests should be undertaken by the D/D's themselves. Real incidents may be used as alternatives to the planned annual test.

7. A corporate exercise, organised by the Head of OPSD acting on behalf of the Major Incident Progress Group, should entail a planned scenario that covers more than one D/D. The objective is to test the corporate arrangements. Typical success criteria are:
 - a. The arrangements to communicate between D/D's and to a wider network up to the Ministerial Office are in place and operating to performance standards;
 - b. Demonstration that staff are available to respond promptly and the communications network is operational;
 - c. Evidence that staff make decisions in accordance with the Major Incident Response and Investigations Policy;
 - d. The objectives are achieved; and
 - e. Any lessons learnt are incorporated to improve future performance.
8. A corporate exercise should be carried out annually or at intervals agreed by the HSE Executive/Board. According to records the last corporate exercise involving more than one D/D was Exercise THOR in 1998.
9. There have been a desktop exercise built around an avian flu scenario that involved HSE's civil contingency response arrangements but this did not fully test HSE's response as a category 2 responder.

Argument

10. A corporate exercise to test the Major Incident Response Arrangements is overdue. There have been approximately 13 live incidents involving FOD, HID and RI since the last exercise. NSD have a detailed programme of exercises/tests of their own arrangements. These take place at 3 levels, site, regional and national. However, in the main there has been little cross D/D involvement in any exercise or incident.
11. We propose to hold a desktop exercise over the summer months to review and reassure ourselves that the procedures themselves work correctly.
12. We propose a series of corporate exercises testing the Major Incident Response Arrangements and Civil Contingency Procedures involving FOD, HID and NSD over the next 3 years. The objectives being to
 - a. Raise awareness of the procedures; and
 - b. Give clarity to the roles to be discharged
13. There are a number of areas/issues that may be addressed through the exercise, for example
 - a. The duty officer arrangements
 - b. The role of the Secretariat
 - c. The role of the Press Office
 - d. The interface and communication channels between D/D's
 - e. Organisational capacity to deal with more than one incident
 - f. The link to Civil Contingency procedures
 - g. The interface with devolved administrations
 - h. The arrangements and interface with other enforcement bodies/regulatory authorities
 - i. The arrangements and interface with HSL.
14. We expect that following an exercise there will be other issues/areas identified. We therefore propose that a series of annual exercises are planned each testing a number of different areas/issues.

15. We have developed a scenario for this year's exercise that will test some of the issues/areas identified in paragraph 12.
16. Due to the holiday period and NSD's existing commitments to a programme of exercises/tests we propose that the corporate test should be undertaken in early October.
17. The exercise circumstances need to be as realistic and robust as possible to properly test the response arrangements. We therefore propose to advise the HSE Board and all staff of a two-week window in which the exercise will be held. We intend to hold the exercise on one specific day and it is expected to last approximately 4 hours. Recognising the impact on home lives the test will not be held at a weekend.

Consultation

18. Representatives in FOD, HID, NSD and Policy Group have been consulted and involved in preparing the exercise.

Presentation

19. We suggest that the first exercises be held completely in-house with the roles of those external to HSE being played by HSE staff. Subsequent exercises may involve external bodies and a decision will be sought on this during the planning stage.

Financial/Resource Implications

20. Preparation and undertaking of an administrative D/D test is estimated to take approximately 1.5 days x B2, 1.5 days x B3 and 1 week x B5 (Full cost approximately £400). It is reasonable to believe that this probably underestimates the time taken in preparation and getting people up to speed due to lack of prior knowledge of the test process.
21. A corporate exercise is expected to use approximately 1 day x B1, 7 weeks x B2, 1 week x B4, 1 day x B5 and 2 days x B6 in the preparation and undertaking of the exercise (Full costs approximately £9000). All work will be undertaken in-house and involves using HSE staff with exercise/test experience. There is necessarily extra time involved in the design and implementation phase of what is the first exercise held in a number of years.
22. In addition there are the costs of those involved in the half-day exercise (Full costs estimated at approximately £6000).
23. As a comparison resourcing one of NSD's Level 2 emergency arrangement exercises is estimated at approximately £10,000.

Action

24. Subject to Board agreement, the scenario will be developed further and arrangements for the exercise finalised. Following the exercise it is expected that there will be issues arising that need to be addressed either within the procedure or in future exercises. Additionally, work on gaining background information on external bodies and their procedures and exercises will be undertaken with a view to their involvement in future exercises

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