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HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE

The HSE Board

**HSE Emergency Response Arrangements**

A Paper by Elaine Harbour

Advisor: Giles Denham

Cleared by Justin McCracken on 27 November 2007

**Issue**

1. Improving and bringing together HSE's arrangements for responding to major incident and/or civil contingency events in FOD and HID. The new arrangements do not apply to nuclear incidents for which separate arrangements apply.

**Timing**

2. Routine.

**Recommendation**

3. Board members are asked to confirm they are content with the new arrangements.

**Background**

4. The HSE Board paper HSE/07/19 in February 2007 outlined measures to improve the resilience of HSE's response to a major incident or civil contingencies event. The Board agreed:
  - a) A proposed concept of operations statement explaining how HSE was able to contribute in an advisory capacity to an emergency event. The statement is aimed at other regulators/government departments. It outlines our 24/7 best endeavours response to any request for information or site attendance, we do not guarantee out of hours attendance but as a minimum we offer telephone support. Additionally, we will proactively contact those leading the response to make them aware of the support we can provide.
  - b) That the major incident and civil contingencies procedures be amalgamated into one "emergency response" procedure.
  - c) That upcoming civil contingencies exercises should be used to further improve and spread the knowledge about civil contingencies across HSE.
5. Since the February Board meeting we have been developing the new HSE response arrangements. HSE's participation in the BERR led civil contingency exercise (Exercise Longshadow) in July 2008 helped inform the contents and presentation of the new emergency response arrangements – as of course has the actual experience of real incidents e.g. Pirbright.

6. A steering group and working group oversaw and developed the work. Both groups were comprised of representatives from OPSD, FOD, HID, ND, Policy Group and HSL. Giles Denham was SRO.

### **Argument**

7. Usually the initial response to an incident will take place at a local or regional level. Information gained from the initial local response and briefings provided will inform whether the incident should be considered a potential major incident or whether the event is likely to be of such significance that COBR may meet.
8. We have therefore developed HSE's response arrangements in two parts
  - a) A Regional Major Incident Response plan for FOD and HID; and
  - b) An HSE Emergency Response plan

### Regional Major Incident Response Plans

9. Typically HID staff will cover more than one FOD region. Therefore, to ensure all plans are consistent, a template of a Regional Major Incident Response plan has been developed, which each region will personalise with their own contact details. HID staff therefore only need one regional plan and one additional annex of contact details for each of the FOD regions they cover.
10. A new role of "Corporate Business Support" has been developed following feedback from recent incidents at festival Fireworks and Pirbright. The role will be resourced by BEU to provide support to the initial phases of an incident where a site and/or investigation HQ is required. If the Mobile Major Incident Room is called upon BEU will deploy a Corporate Business Support individual with the room to manage the setting up arrangements. The role forms part of the Regional Major Incident Response plan recognising that a site or investigation HQ may be needed for an incident that may not be classified as major by the HSE Executive.
11. The plan recognises that a graduated response may be needed according to the incident and authority for invoking the plan lies with Heads of Operations or Divisional/Regional Directors

### The HSE Emergency Response Plan

12. The HSE Emergency Response plan provides information in addition to that provided in the Regional Major Incident Response plans and should be used either
  - a) where an incident is a potential HSE declared major incident; or
  - b) where an incident exceeds the capability of the region; or
  - c) where Civil Contingency arrangements are activated.
13. The HSE plan also caters for when HSE's attendance is requested at COBR without there necessarily being an associated operational response (e.g. this summer's flooding).
14. The HSE Emergency Response plan may be invoked by any Board Member. However, the declaration of a Major Incident (as distinct from invoking the plan for a potential major incident) is a decision for the HSE Executive. In the future, following the merger of the HSC and HSE, it is proposed that this decision is made by the Chief Executive (substantive or acting).
15. As well as the electronic attachment, a hard copy of the HSE Emergency Response plan will be sent to all Board members before 5 December.

### Initial Response Guides

16. Both plans have "Initial Response Guides" which outline the responsibilities of the key roles during the initial phases of any incident. The Initial Response Guides have been produced in a "grab & go" format and can be laminated for use in the field.
17. The plans have been designed and produced in hard copy in response to staff feedback. All operational staff will receive a copy of their appropriate Regional plan and staff at Band 2 and above will receive the HSE Emergency plan.
18. The HSE plan and a template for the regional plan will be placed on the intranet on the Operational Procedures home page. Placing the plans on the intranet involves removing the old procedures and all associated links to other guidance and this means it will be early 2008 before the new plans will be available on the intranet.

### **Consultation**

19. Representatives from OPSD FOD, HID, ND, Policy Group and HSL have been involved in drafting both plans. The regional plans have undergone significant consultation with Heads of Operations/Unit in FOD and HID.

### **Presentation**

20. Regions have been encouraged to hold launch events to introduce the plans to their staff. The NW region is holding their event in December 2007 and other regions will be assessing the event to inform their own plans.
21. In addition to the internal presentation we will also be looking to publicise HSE's Concept of Operations statement now that the necessary infrastructure is in place with the production of the two plans. OPSD and Civil Contingencies Unit will publicise the statement within Whitehall as well as with external stakeholders and other regulators. Additionally, operational staff attending Local and Regional Resilience Fora will be asked to publicise the statement.

### **Costs and Benefits**

22. The cost of developing the plans is essentially HSE staff time. This has not been significant as the work has built on already existing plans. More positively the new plans remove many areas of duplication contained within the old plans.
23. The combined FOD and HID Regional Major Incident Response plan will promote closer working and cooperation between FOD and HID at a regional level.
24. The Regional and HSE response plans underpinning our Concept of Operations statement provide a much clearer and comprehensive corporate response to an incident.

### **Financial/Resource Implications for HSE**

25. N/A.

### **Environmental implications**

26. N/A

### **Action**

27. The Board are asked to agree the new arrangements. OPSD will distribute hard copies of the plans and electronic copies will be available on the Operational Procedures section of the HSE intranet in early 2008.