



Communications Plan

Author:	Communicate Suffolk
Date of Implementation:	March 2014
Review:	3 Year Review
Version	Issue 1

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT

Freedom of Information Act 2000

This document will be made publicly available through the SRF website. Where content has been redacted under the freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) in the publically available version, the paragraph number will be highlighted to show there has been a redaction and the relevant section of FOI referenced.

Protective Marking

This plan uses the national protective marking system to ensure that any sensitive information within this document is protected according to its degree of sensitivity.

Data Protection Act 1998

This plan does not include personal data that has been shared under the Data Protection Act 1998. It does include data relevant to achieve planning arrangements and identifies how more specific personal data will be used during any emergency.

Statement of Copyright

This document is subject to copyright legislation and no part or parts thereof shall be copied by any means without the approval of the Head of Emergency Planning, Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich IP1 2BX.

Review

This plan will be reviewed by Communicate Suffolk at least every 3 years. Any amendments will be issued by way of replacement page(s). Should significant changes be required, a complete re-issue of the plan will take place.

Distribution

Organisation
National
DCLG RED – Department for Communities and Local Government – Resilience and Emergencies Division
Magnox Ltd
EDF Energy- Nuclear Generation
Essex & Suffolk Water
Anglian Water
RIMNET
Regional
NHS England - East Anglia Area Team
Public Health England – Anglia Public Health Team
Environment Agency -
East of England Ambulance NHS Trust - Emergency Planning & Resilience Manager – Communications Officer also?
Local
Suffolk Constabulary - Contingency Planning Manager and Head of Communications
Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service - Resilience Manager
Ipswich & East Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group - Emergency Planning Manager and Head of Communications
Suffolk County Council - Head of Communications
All Suffolk District and Borough - Head of Communications
JEPU (via Suffolk Resilience Forum (SRF) Website)
Suffolk Resilience Website

GLOSSARY

ABBREVIATION/TERM	DESCRIPTION
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GOLD	The strategic command and control role which sets emergency response policy and strategy for individual responder agencies.
JEPU	Joint Emergency Planning Unit - Local Authorities
'major incident'	any emergency that requires implementation of special arrangements by one or all of the emergency services, the NHS or local authorities to: rescue or treat large numbers of casualties, that directly or indirectly involves large numbers of people, that is likely to generate a large number of enquiries by the public or media or which requires the mobilisation of additional emergency services or supporting services.
RED	Resilience and Emergency Division (part of DCLG)
SCG	Strategic Coordinating Group - part of StratCC. This is where individual agency GOLD's work together.
SRF	Suffolk Resilience Forum
StratCC	Strategic Coordination Centre - local response

[Hyperlink to National Resilience Lexicon](#)

UNCLASSIFIED

AMENDMENT RECORD

Amendment No.	Date	Amended by	Reason

UNCLASSIFIED

Communicate Suffolk: Multi-Agency Major Incident Communications Plan

1. Introduction

This plan is written at a time of great change, when public sector organisations are under increasing pressure to collaborate in order to meet public demands/expectations.

This is reflected in communications, where there are the additional pressures created by a fast-changing communications landscape. There is still immense demand from the “traditional” media of newspapers, television and radio at the same time as the social media revolution requires more and more of our resource to be allocated to these forms of direct communication with local people.

If we are to service these competing demands from existing resources, while meeting public and internal expectations to communicate effectively through all the latest channels, we must work together.

This need for effective, co-ordinated communications is particularly important during times of crisis.

Prior to any emergency we have a **duty** to prepare for how we will collectively work together to effectively warn and inform the public while also keeping our own staff informed.

During any emergency, we have a **duty** to warn and inform the public, so they can take appropriate action to keep themselves safe.

The public have a **right** to expect all public agencies will work together to deal with any major incident. Equally, they have the right to expect that communications professionals will work across organisational boundaries to bring them factual, timely information, which is accurate and consistent, irrespective of which agency is providing it.

Experience shows that within two hours of a major incident occurring, up to 200 journalists will descend on the area affected. How will we facilitate them? What are the logistics required? How will we meet the demand for information from social media channels?

This document is designed to help answer those questions and provide some practical guidance, through a series of appendices, to enable effective communications during a major incident.

The document will require regular review, to ensure that it remains current and fit-for-purpose.

2. Aim

The aim of this document is to provide a practical framework for communications professionals who may be required to support a communications response to an emergency in Suffolk.

The key to this plan's effective implementation is the ethos of collaborative multi-agency working by staff from all partners, to deal honestly and openly with communications issues.

There are two parts to this plan:

- Firstly, on the strategic level, it sets out the rationale and underlying principles necessary for establishing and running an effective multi-agency communications response to a major incident;
- Secondly, at the tactical level, it provides a series of supporting appendices, clearly setting out the roles and responsibilities for key posts, as well as providing generic accommodation plans, templates and contact details. It is worth noting that **Appendix A** provides a 10-Point Communications Checklist which summarises much of the key information contained in this plan.

The plan is relevant for a variety of scenarios, from an incident which involves resources from one or two agencies, to a major incident requiring input from a whole range of organisations. It is written with a major incident in mind and assumes a certain level of resource being available to fulfil a variety of communications roles, listed at **Appendix K**. However, it is accepted that not every incident needs such a level of resource and that only certain roles may be needed.

3. Underlying Principle

***“Our product is life safety and it depends on the successful transfer of information. If we can't make that connection, we have no product.....”
Jim Garrow, Department of Public Health emergency communications manager, Philadelphia.***

All public sector agencies have a duty to communicate with the public in an emergency, often these are supported by private sector businesses especially in relation to hazardous installations.

The role of the communicator is to facilitate the flow of essential, potentially life-saving, accurate information by ensuring that it is disseminated through the correct channels in a timely fashion to key audiences in an accessible format.

This is not just an aspiration but a requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA), which details how we need to engage with the public before, during and after an emergency, and also of The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001(REPPIR), which requires the public to be informed prior to and after any radiation emergency,

and the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 (COMAH), which requires the public to be informed prior to any emergency .

The CCA divides local responders into two categories depending on the extent of their involvement in civil protection work, and places a proportionate set of duties on each.

Category 1 responders are those organisations at the core of emergency response (emergency services, local authorities, Environment Agency & NHS England). Their duties include putting in place **arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency.**

There is also a requirement to **share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination.**

For more information on the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, REPIR and COMAH see **Appendix B.**

The Principles of Co-ordinated Communications

- All agencies need to adopt an open and honest communications approach, which presumes that any useful information for the public will be put out via the appropriate channels at the earliest practical opportunity.
- Agencies will need to ensure that their updates to the media and local communities are accurate and timely. In this way, they will establish themselves as the prime source of credible information. Experience has shown that providing good quality, accurate information is the best way to establish a positive relationship with the media and build trust with local communities.
- Failure to do this will result in the public/media simply consulting other sources, leaving the “official” channels playing catch-up which, ultimately, will result in damage to the reputation of agencies involved and undermine the message.
- Any inaccuracies must be corrected as soon as possible to prevent them gaining the status of fact.
- Regular updates must be put out to prevent an “information vacuum” occurring which will only too easily be filled by other sources with information that is not necessarily accurate or useful for the authorities dealing with the incident. We must also remember that social media networks are playing an increasingly important role in communicating – and require immediate updates in ‘real time.’ As such, to make use of these important communication outlets, updates should be short, timely and regular.
- In dealing with a major incident, it may be necessary for communications professionals from the county’s public agencies to come together to assist each other, for the benefit of the county and its residents. Essentially, communications officers will leave their corporate badges at the door to become members of a collaborated communications team. The strength of this is that all communications officers involved work as a team – and can pool resources such as staff, twitter accounts, intranets or websites.

4. What are we here to do?

4.1 Public awareness (before an incident)

We need to inform and educate the public about the steps they can take to protect themselves in advance of an incident occurring.

For example, this could include information about protecting property from flooding or having a personal plan on how to evacuate a premise in case of fire.

In some cases, the information will be targeted to a very specific audience, such as residents living within a radius of a major industrial premises eg Sizewell or PPG COMAH site at Stowmarket, one of the COMAH sites in Suffolk. In all cases, local agency emergency planners and communicators need to agree on the most appropriate and effective methods for delivering this information, whether it be via a website, social media – or a leaflet drop to postal addresses.

4.2 *Public warning (at the time of an incident)

This involves alerting, by all appropriate means, the members of a community whose safety is at imminent risk. Information needs to be sent out quickly but must be accurate and updated regularly, as the situation develops.

The public needs:

- Basic details of the incident – what, where, when (and who, why and how, if possible)
- To know the implications for health and welfare
- Advice and guidance (e.g. stay indoors, symptoms, preparing for evacuation)
- Reassurance that emergency service and other agencies are dealing with the incident.
- A commitment that information will be released at regular intervals as it becomes available. As already mentioned, social media networks require short, timely and regular updates to be effective.
- Guidance on where to find collected information eg websites.

A sample initial holding statement can be seen at **Appendix C**. This is the start of the communications process.

As time passes, the public will want information about what is being done to resolve the situation and other practical advice such as the effect the incident is having on traffic, power supplies, telephones, water supplies etc. There may be a need to set up a helpline number.

Once the incident has been resolved, the demand for quality information will still be present as communities look to local agencies for guidance on how to bring their lives back to normal. **While this plan deals with communications during the “major incident” phase, it must be emphasised that there will be a continued need for a multi-agency communications effort during the recovery phase – and that adequate arrangements and planning is in place to hand over from response communications to recovery communications.**

The key to the success of communications in these circumstances will be the strength of joined-up reporting arrangements between the emergency services, local authority and other organisations, capable of providing agreed information at speed to the media – and via the web and social media.

5. Major Incident definition

Incidents occur every day – and present agencies with very different demands.

The majority are “business as usual” single agency incidents – but sometimes, these incidents can escalate to involve one or more additional agencies or organisations.

Occasionally, these incidents become major incidents, involving a number of different agencies.

A major incident is when a multi-agency response is required to deal with an incident which is likely to have serious operational and community impact.

During a major incident, one lead agency will be responsible for co-ordinating the efforts of all involved to deal with the situation.

A list of different types of major incident – and the agency that would lead the response on behalf of all organisations dealing with it – is attached at **Appendix D**.

It is worth noting here that the principles of communication listed earlier in this document are applicable to all types of incident, whether they are relatively minor involving a single agency or major involving many agencies.

6. Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG)

When dealing with major incidents, the management structure is made up of “strategic”, “tactical” and “operational” elements.

During a major incident, the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) is comprised of strategic multi-agency officers who co-ordinate the overall response to the incident. The senior communications officer/Head of Communications from the lead agency will be part of this group. Their role will be to advise on

communications matters, develop the communications strategy, agree key messages and, with support, oversee the dissemination of agreed information via the multi-agency media and communications cell.

At the tactical level, multi-agency resources are used to implement the strategy that has been set. Close liaison between communications officers in the multi-agency media and communications cell and agency officers at the tactical level is important to fill in the supplementary detail that may be needed beneath the strategic key messages from the SCG.

At the operational level, 'on the ground' resources directed by the tactical teams do the "hands on" work at the incident site or impacted area. Communications officers may operate at this level to facilitate the media at the scene – and can feedback any gaps in information/unanswered media queries. Importantly, they can also feedback important intelligence about the situation at the scene of the incident.

7. Identification of key audiences

- Individuals and communities directly affected by the incident. This will include survivors/casualties. Initially survivors will get information from the immediate responders. They can also be a source of information for the media, through eye witness accounts etc.
- Those close by who may need to take further action to avoid further harm.
- Those in the area who may be disrupted by the consequences of the emergency and the clear-up process. The numbers of people are likely to be greatest here, and it may be that groups emerge who need targeted information.
- Those who are not affected directly but know, or are related to, those who might be – or need access to the affected area. These people need two way communications to get specific information in the short term – i.e. they will want to ask questions about friends and relatives as well as being provided with information on the situation.
- The general public not affected by the incident but are concerned and want information. This group will get its information through the broadcast media and by visiting websites, social media and by word of mouth.
- The news media which plays an important role in getting information out to the public, but also has its own public interest agendas.
- Officers and staff of agencies involved in dealing with the incident.
- Key stakeholders, including councillors and MPs.

8. Vulnerable groups

There may be some groups of people who will require emergency communications to be produced in a different way in order for them to be effective.

For example, some communities do not have English as their first language. Therefore, in order to ensure that communications in an emergency are easily and quickly understood, we may need to produce information in different languages (see **Appendix E** for language/translation information).

9. The Lead Agency

The lead agency will take on the role of leading the co-ordinated media response on behalf of all the other organisations involved. However, this may change, particular when the incident moves from response to recovery. Responsibilities of the lead agency include:

- Implementing the Multi-Agency Major Incident Communications Plan.

This will include

- disseminating the following information to other agencies:
 - the nature of the incident;
 - the location of the incident;
 - the time the incident occurred;
 - information about any casualties
 - the location of the SCG
 - location of communications co-ordination centre;
 - estimate of communications staff required
 - any contact numbers/e-mail addresses
- Co-ordinating the multi-agency communications response.
- Issuing information, signed off by the SCG
- Organising media conferences
- Providing the lead agency spokesperson to chair media facilities

While it will be the role of the lead agency to make sure these tasks are done, all agencies involved will assist in line with the principles of communication set out earlier in this document.

10. Appointing a spokesperson

Each agency involved in dealing with a major incident should appoint a spokesperson.

If the police are leading, their spokesperson will be the lead spokesperson, and is likely to be of Chief Officer rank. It is important to shape expectation of media demand at an early stage with the SCG. If the incident is sufficiently large, it will

generate huge media interest and demand for information. Media conferences may well have to be regular and, when one-to-one interviews are factored in, may last over two hours. As such, the role of spokesperson is a highly-demanding task.

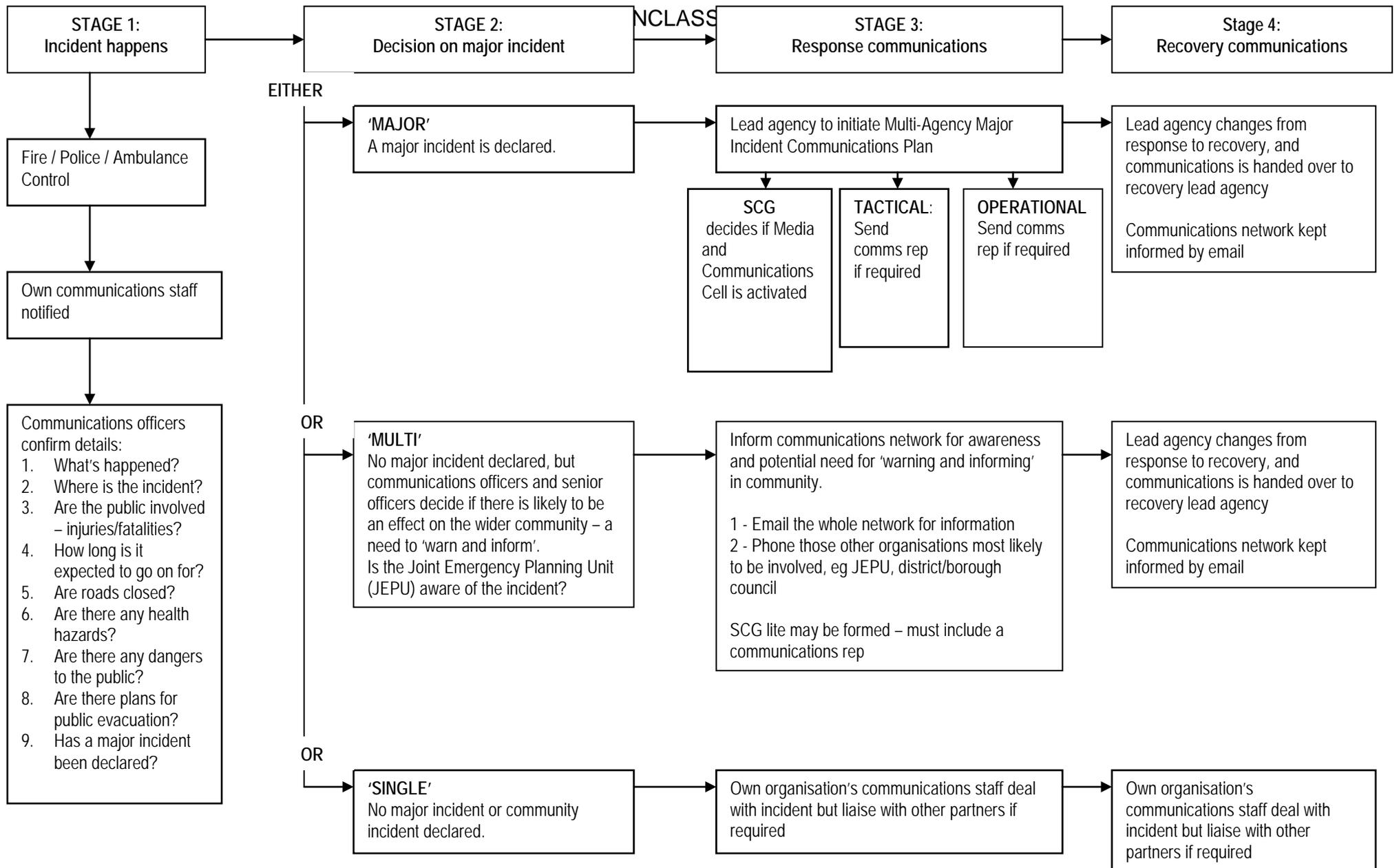
All spokespersons should be chosen with care – and should be confident and engaging: the demeanour of the spokesperson often shapes the public perception of an organisation's ability to cope with a major incident.

They should always be of sufficient rank to emphasise how seriously the incident is being taken – and so that they can speak without having to seek authority for their statements.

Importantly, the spokesman should be dedicated to their role, freeing up other senior operational staff to deal with the incident.

11. Notification and call-out

The plan on the following page explains when to activate this multi-agency communications plan, and how communications will be dealt with, depending on the type of incident declared.



12. How will we do it?

12.1 Consider situation

As mentioned earlier in the document, incidents vary in scale and nature – and so, consequently, do the number of agencies involved. As such, it may not be necessary to implement every element of this plan immediately. The plan is designed to be “scaleable” and senior communications professionals will use their professional judgement to decide which elements are required.

Within a few hours of the declaration of a major incident, there could be some 200 local, national and international media in the county. There will also be huge demand from ‘citizen journalists’ and people using social media.

Dealing with such demand for information is a logistical and professional communications challenge for partners/agencies involved.

In the case of a multi-agency major incident, a Media and Communications Cell will be set up to oversee all communications activity, including media and social media.

Responsibility for setting up the Media and Communications Cell will rest with the lead agency. The centre should be set up near to, but not at, the scene of the incident. As such, it is important to maintain a list of suitable locations across the county. There should be at least one per district. For addresses, please see **Appendix F**.

12.2 Accommodation

The following bullet points provide information on the key accommodation required to provide a full Media and Communications Cell (with Media Briefing Centre) in the event of a major incident. Sample diagrams of room layouts can be found at **Appendices G(i) and G(ii)**.

12.2.1 Media Briefing Centre

- A substantial space, such as a sports hall, with room for news conferences plus space for journalists to work.
- This area needs to become the focal point for media representatives – a place where they know they will receive official updates on a regular basis, as well as interview opportunities in appropriate facilities, where they can work.
- Remember that, for security reasons, accreditation will need to be checked before access is given to the media centre.
- The area needs to be close to toilets and refreshment facilities, which are particularly important in the case of a long-running incident.
- An area of car parking close to the briefing area will need to be reserved for media representatives.

12.2.2 Joint Media Office

- The Joint Media Office will be staffed by communications officers from all agencies involved in dealing with the incident.
- Working together as a team, they will collate accurate information to support key messages prepared at level where questions coming in from the media and the public will also be answered.
- Press releases and statements will be prepared and sent out from this office.
- Social media and agency website updates, based on prepared press releases and statements, will also be dealt with here.

There will be no media access to this office.

12.2.3 Communications Bureau

- This area will have two distinct functions:
 - dealing with media telephone queries
 - monitoring and responding, where appropriate, to social media traffic
- Media telephone queries will be recorded on a form (see **Appendix H**) and passed to the Joint Media Office to research and formulate responses. A significant stock of these forms should be made available, in advance
- These responses will be then be passed back to the bureau, to respond direct to the journalist.
- All responses will need to be recorded for auditing purposes but also to avoid duplication and “mixed messages.”
- Queries received via social media will follow the same path. However, monitoring and responding to social media comment requires its own techniques. Separate guidance can be found at **Appendix I**.
- There will be no media access to this room (should not be a bullet point)

12.2.4 Meeting room

- A private room where briefings or pre-press conference meetings can take place.

The Media and Communications Cell, including the Media Briefing Centre, should be based at the same location as the SCG. In Suffolk, this is likely to be at Suffolk Constabulary Police Headquarters, Martlesham Heath, where the accommodation has been set aside for the Media and Communications Cells. This includes the Assembly Hall for the Media Briefing Centre, meeting rooms for the press office and communications bureau, and a room in the StratCC.

12.3 Equipment

See **Appendix J**

12.4 Roles

Roles required to make a Multi-Agency Communications Cell function include the following:

Lead Communications Officer
Information Co-ordinator
Communications Bureau Manager
News Officers
Communications Bureau Officers
Administration officer
Mutual Aid Co-ordinator

Full job descriptions for all of these roles can be found at **Appendix K**. However, please note the following about several of the key roles:

- The information co-ordinator will act as the information conduit between the communications lead and managers/staff in both the Media Office and Communications Bureau.

He/she will brief the communications lead on issues including:

- Media pressure/angles/questions
- Tone of social media coverage
- Negative coverage/reputational issues
- Emerging themes

By return, it will be the role of the communications lead to raise these issues at the SCG and provide a flow of information in return, which can be cascaded down by the Information Co-ordinator.

- The posts of Communications Bureau Manager should be taken by senior communications officer, ideally with management experience.
- The Administration officer role does not have to be filled by a communications officer. It would be particularly suited to someone with an HR or estates background.

In keeping with the principles of communication set out in the introduction to this document, it is important that all agencies involved in providing the communications response to a major incident accept that their roles may differ from their “day job” – and that everyone is working as one “Communications Team.”

It is important that everyone taking a role within the multi-agency communications team receives a full briefing on the key aspects and scope of their job, to ensure the structure works effectively.

13. How will it work?

13.1 The information flow

Previous plans have been largely focussed on the “traditional” media – and have been based on an information flow from the SCG downwards.

While this model is still valid, it does not fully reflect the communications landscape, which has changed dramatically since the explosion of social media.

Proactive dissemination of information is key, particularly when it involves social media channels – as is constant monitoring of all communications channels whether it be television, radio, Facebook or Twitter.

Monitoring social media channels enables those responding to the incident to understand community concerns direct from people involved in an incident – and use this information to address needs.

Therefore, it is essential that this information flows back up the communications chain (from Communications Bureau to Information Co-ordinator to Lead Communications Officer to SCG) to help those at the strategic level shape response.

At the same time, it also essential that information which responds to the queries and concerns of social media users cascades back down the chain to the SCG. A failure to do this will simply give the impression that those in charge of dealing with the investigation are choosing not to engage with the community – or are unable to answer basic questions.

The result of this is that the agencies dealing with the incident will be excluded from social media conversations. This means they will be unable to get important information out to a key audience, respond to concerns or correct potentially dangerous misinformation.

Social media allows for quick-time conversations to take place. During a major incident, it may not be the agencies dealing with the incident who start or host that conversation – but good monitoring will allow these conversations to be identified. Once found, they can give access to a huge community of people.

The traditional hierarchical process in which all information needs to be authorised by SCG prior to release can be counter-productive when it comes to effective social media engagement.

This plan is written with the knowledge that social media outlets want information nearly instantaneously, as they are working in the realm of minutes, and not hours like traditional news outlets eg hourly radio bulletins. As such, the aim should be to provide frequent, short updates.

Therefore, the SCG communications officer and information co-ordinator should be given the discretion, on behalf of the SCG, to authorise the social media

bureau to respond directly on certain issues, without having to pass information up the hierarchical chain.

This will give the multi-agency communications team the flexibility to ensure that social media is being used appropriately and effectively, for the benefit of both the operational aspect and the community.

13.2 Who will help?

13.2.1 Mutual Aid

As is mentioned earlier in this document, not all incidents will require a multi-agency response or all elements of this plan to be implemented.

However, during a major incident, the communications resources of the lead agency will quickly become depleted – and will be unable to cope, which may result in reputational issues not just for the agency involved but, potentially, the county.

To fill all the posts listed at **Appendix K** would be beyond the capacity of most communications teams – even without the consideration of ensuring that there are two people for each role, to allow for a shift system to work over a prolonged period of days.

As such, it is essential to have a protocol in place which allows any public sector agency facing an unprecedented demand following an incident to request assistance.

In Suffolk, a communications mutual aid policy has existed for some years.

It was developed following the Suffolk murders investigation in 2006, during which the police communications efforts was helped by partner agencies including the county and borough/district councils from across Suffolk.

Following its introduction, it was used successfully during the pandemic flu incident during the winter of 2008/09, when communications officers from both the police and local authorities assisted the communications team at NHS Suffolk.

A revised version of the mutual aid document can be found at **Appendix L**.

It addresses a weakness in the previous document, which had no provision for allocating an officer with a specific responsibility for implementing the protocol and gathering resources from agencies across Suffolk.

It is essential that this officer is drawn from an agency which is not leading on the incident, to allow officers from the lead agency to begin the communications response.

14. Further Information

Further useful information can be found in the following appendices:

- **Appendix M:** Multi-Agency Communications Officers Contacts List, which provides contact details for key communications professional during office hours, out-of-hours and in an emergency.
- **Appendix N:** Media Organisations Contacts List, including out-of-hours numbers.
- **Appendix O:** Internal Communications Briefing Sheet Template, for agencies to share the latest communication updates and key messages.
- **Appendix P:** Supporting Information, including pre-agreed background information/holding statements relevant to particular sites across the county.

15. Plan revision schedule, training and awareness

To ensure this plan remains as useful and as relevant as possible, a review will take place annually. It will:

- Review the text of the plan at least every 3 years
- Facilitate awareness sessions on an on-going basis
- Run an exercise to fully test the plan at least every two years (usually as part of a local resilience forum exercise).

List of Appendices

Appendix A: 10-Point Communications Checklist
Appendix B: Civil Contingencies Act 2004
Appendix C: Draft Holding Statement
Appendix D: Lead Communications Agencies
Appendix E: Translations Information
Appendix F: Designated Premises for Media Communications Cell
Appendix G(i): Media Briefing Centre layout
Appendix G(ii): Media Communications Cell room layout
Appendix H: Enquiry Form Template
Appendix I: Social Media Guidelines
Appendix J: Equipment Checklist
Appendix K: Job Descriptions
Appendix L: Mutual Aid Protocol
Appendix M: Multi-Agency Communications Officers Contacts List
Appendix N: Media Contacts List
Appendix O: Internal Communications Briefing Sheet Template
Appendix P: Supporting Information/Q and As by incident type

Multi-Agency Major Incident: 10-Point Communications Checklist**A.1 Assess the situation**

A.1.1 What type of incident is it?

- single agency
- multi-agency

A.1.2 Who is the lead agency?

A.1.3 Is the SCG being activated - and, if so, where?

A.2 Consider resources

- Ensure you have contact numbers of police/local authority communications officers, including out-of-hours, to hand.
- Have you/will you have enough people to provide an effective communications service for this incident?
- Do you need to call in Local News Officers or colleagues from Suffolk/Norfolk? – Not sure what this means?
- Do you need to call in press officers from neighbouring Counties on mutual aid?
- Should you consider speaking to Heads of Communications from local authorities/police in Norfolk/Suffolk, to further boost resources
- Consider the early appointment of an Admin Officer (see Key Jobs below) to oversee resourcing.

A.3 SCG

Appoint a communications lead to attend the SCG and oversee the creation of a media strategy. This is a full-time role and will usually be the head of communications from the agency chairing the SCG. It is essential that this individual becomes a standing member of the SCG at an early stage, for continuity purposes and to ensure that media strategy is aligned with the SCG's strategy. Media activity may well be focussed at the operational level where the incident is taking place – so there may be a need to have communications staff there to deal directly with the media. Also remember that, once the major incident itself has concluded, there will be a transition to a “recovery” phase which may require its strategic guidance from the Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG). At this stage, it is likely that the communications lead will change – but the requirement for multi-agency staff to fulfil the roles needed to run a communications function may remain.

A.4 Appoint spokespeople

The person selected to act as a spokesperson should be a senior representative of the lead agency. For example, if the police are leading, it will be the Gold Commander or their representative, who should be of Chief Officer rank. The rationale for this is that the spokesperson needs to be able to speak with authority, command respect and build trust. It also demonstrates how seriously agencies view communication with the public.

It is important to shape expectation of media demand at an early stage. If the incident is sufficiently large, it will generate huge media interest and demand for information. As such, press conferences may well have to be regular – and, when one-to-one interviews are factored in – may last over two hours. While the lead agency spokesperson will front the majority of media facilities, it may be appropriate to have supporting key spokespeople from other agencies involved, to help share the workload, give additional perspective – but, importantly, repeat key messages to show that all involved are speaking with the same voice.

A.5 Establish media strategy

Agencies will need to ensure that the information they provide is accurate, timely and delivered through easily accessible channels to both the media and directly to the public. If not, the media will go elsewhere for information, and turn to less reliable sources. This will result in having to correct misinformation and work harder at establishing ourselves as the main source of credible information.

The ultimate strategic aim of communication during an emergency is to ensure that people are kept well-informed and up-to-date with the incident, how it affects them and their communities, what, if any, action they need to take and what, if any, the longer-term impacts and implications will be.

Clearly, a key conduit for information will be the media. As detailed above, it is essential that the media are provided with a quality information service – and this will include ensuring that they fully briefed on the timings and locations of press briefings, to give them reassurance that agencies dealing with the incident are committed to providing a steady flow of information.

A.6 Rooms

Ensure there is adequate accommodation to set up a media/communications operation. The following should be considered:

- Telephone bureau room; for taking calls, noting journalists' queries and then providing responses.
- Communications office; for researching and drafting responses to journalists' queries, monitoring radio/newspaper and television coverage.
- A quiet room for drafting communications messages
- A Media Briefing Centre: to accommodate media representatives and stage press conferences.

It is important that, if the incident is long-running, these facilities are set up and left for use by the communications team for the duration.

Liaison with the Estates/Facilities department is essential, not only for assisting in providing the accommodation list above, but dealing with car parking for the media – and even catering/toilets.

A.7 Equipment

The rooms listed above will require equipment to function. The following list covers the essentials:

- Extra telephones for telephone bureau;
- Clipboards and interview request sheets for communications officers in the media briefing centre;
- Enquiry sheets for telephone bureau staff to note media queries and responses given and times (important for staff who are not Solcara trained);
- Whiteboards for key contacts and “essential to know” information;
- Televisions/recording equipment, for media monitoring; and
- Flip chart paper to record key answers/messages from press conferences to display on the walls of the telephone bureau.

A.8 Key jobs

A8.1 Lead communications officer. This will be the senior communications officer from the lead agency, who will take the leading role on advising on the formulation of a communications strategy, and be part of the SCG meetings.

A8.2 Communications officer. Based in the communications office, the main role will be dealing with media queries, drafting responses and helping run the media briefing centre.

A8.3 Operational communications officer. Based at the scene of the incident, operational communications officers will organise media opportunities, disseminate information from the SCG to local audiences while providing feedback/intel from the location of the incident.

A8.4 Telephone bureau staff. The main role will be to deal with telephone enquiries from the media, noting the requests for information and passing them to the communications office for research before providing callers with responses.

A8.5 Information co-ordinator. Collating information being released and ensuring all official information is fed through to the telephone bureau, communications officers etc. Also responsible for compiling all press releases and ensuring that media output is monitored and recorded.

A8.6 Digital media staff. Responsible for updating social media and web platforms and monitoring social media.

A8.7 Admin officer. Responsible for arranging staffing/shifts/meals and refreshments/overnight accommodation and liaising with facilities/estates over room and equipment allocation.

A.9 Internal/other communications

Don't forget internal communications. This isn't just about sending out messages to the media and public, whether through press releases, tweets etc. It is important to consider messages for our staff, including those not directly involved in the incident, and our partners, on the progress of the incident/investigation.

A.10 Think ahead

Ask some key questions – and revisit the answers regularly.

- How long is the incident likely to last/are there any indications of timescale?
- What implications are there for staffing/resourcing levels?
- What implications are there for “business as usual.”?
- What is the ‘exit strategy’ eg handover from incident to ‘recovery’?

Appendix B**The Civil Contingencies Act 2004**

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places requirements on responding agencies in relation to communicating with the media/public. These are as follows:

- Work with the media.
- Provide assistance to the media during an incident.
- Establish a co-ordinated approach to communications.
- Ensure consistency in public information.
- Arrange for the publication of risk assessments and plans.
- Maintain warning and informing arrangements.
- Develop public awareness and preparedness before an incident.
- Communicate during and after an emergency.
- Exercise and review plans and procedures.

The Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 require:

EDF Energy and Magnox:

- Provide prior information to identifiable groups that could reasonably be affected by a radiation emergency.
- Provide information about the hazard and risks from working with ionising radiation

Suffolk County Council:

- Provide information to any member of the public likely to be affected after a radiation emergency

The Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1999 requires operators of Top Tier sites to:

- Provide prior information to identifiable groups that could reasonably be affected by a radiation emergency.
- Provide information about the hazard and risks from working with ionising radiation (is this correct for COMAH?)

Appendix C

MEDIA HOLDING STATEMENT

Following a major incident, it is important to agree and distribute an initial media holding statement/public message as soon as possible.

The purpose of the statement is to reassure people that emergency services/local agencies are aware of the incident and are dealing with it – as well as give a commitment to keep people informed through further information bulletins.

The statement does not need to be complex or particularly detailed. Here is an example:

At xxx AM/PM today, an incident occurred at (insert premises/location) in Suffolk.

Emergency services are currently at the scene, assessing the situation.

More information will be issued promptly to the public in due course.

In the meantime, residents are advised to tune into local radio, television or monitor local news websites for further information.

Appendix D

MAJOR INCIDENTS: LEAD AGENCY

INCIDENT TYPE	COMMS LEAD AGENCY
Animal Health	County Council
Aviation incident	Fire
Building/bridge collapse	County Council or HA
Biological Release	Fire/Police
Drought	Utilities
Fire/explosion at fuel distribution site or pipeline or other industrial premises	Fire/Police
Food chain contamination	District/Borough council
Influenza pandemic	NHS
Maritime pollution	MCA
Major crime	Police
Nuclear	County Council
Power outages	Utilities
Railway incident	Police (BTP)
Road Collision	Police
Severe weather*	
Tidal/Fluvial flooding	EA/County Council
Toxic Chemical Release	Fire/Police

*dependant on circumstances

Translations Information

As detailed previously, it is important to consider the full range of audiences who will need information during the course of a major incident.

A further consideration is communities/individuals who do not have English as their first language.

In order to facilitate communications with these communities/individuals, it may be necessary to produce information materials in different languages.

Currently, the most common languages used in Suffolk, other than English, are the following:

- Arabic
- Bengali
- Chinese
- Gujarati
- Kurdish
- Polish
- Portuguese

Translations can be organised through:

- Language Line. Telephone 08456 066067
- Translation and Interpreting Service in Ipswich. Telephone 01473 400082 or e-mail tipiscreorguk@bopenworld.com

There are also national translation services which offer on-line translations services, including Absolute Translations at www.absolutetranslations.com

DESIGNATED PREMISES FOR FORWARD MEDIA BRIEFING POINT

While the Media and Communications Cell/Media Briefing Centre will be based at the same location as the SCG, there is likely to be the need for a forward media briefing point (s) at any incident scene.

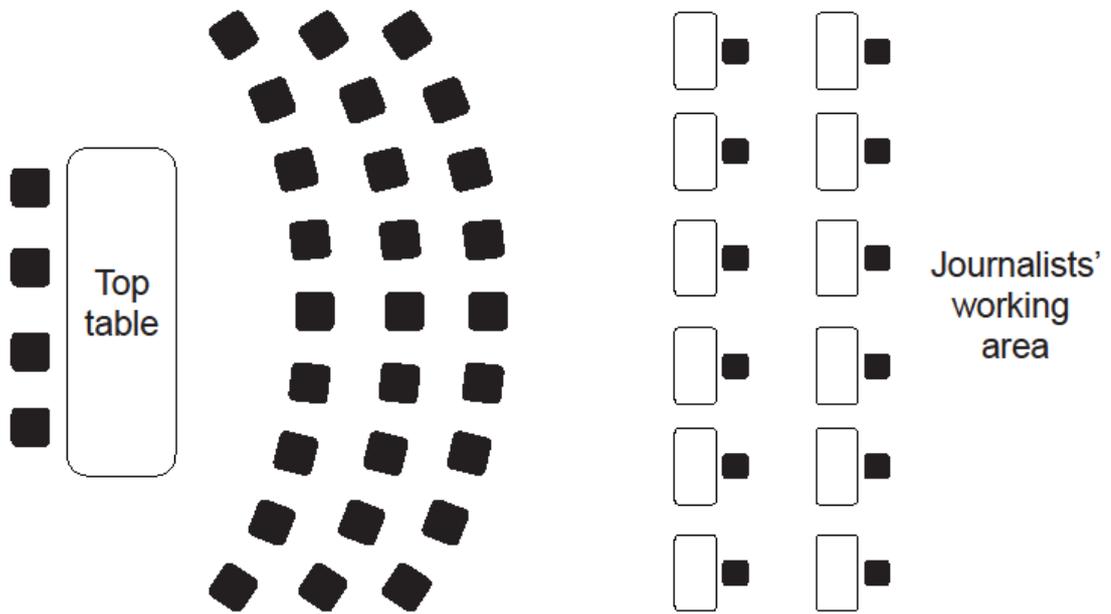
This will certainly be the case if the incident is located some distance from the location where the media cell is based.

The briefing point could be, for example, at a local authority office, schools, sports hall or village hall.

Its location will be decided at the SCG.

Media Briefing Centre

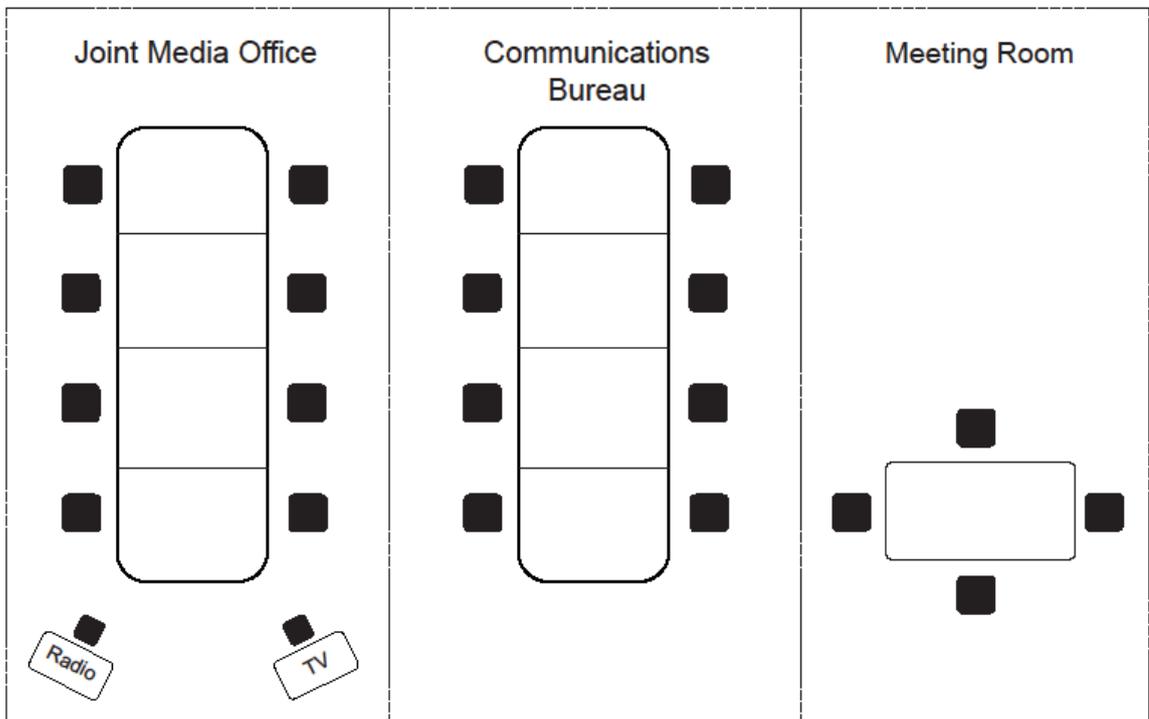
Appendix G (i)



Access to toilets/refreshment facilities

Media and Communications Cell

Appendix G (ii)



MULTI-AGENCY COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

ENQUIRY FORM

Communications Officer:

Enquiry Received from (name of media or twitter user account eg
@Suffolk Police or facebook URL eg
<https://www.facebook.com/suffolkpolice>):

Date: _____ Time: _____

Telephone number: _____

E-mail: _____

Details of Enquiry:

Response Given:

Time of Response: _____

Date of Response: _____

Multi-Agency Communications: Social Media Guidelines

The following guidelines have been drawn up for use in the social media bureau – and give partner agencies guidance to help make the most of their collective social media channels.

It is also aimed at giving guidance on how to respond to different types of social media traffic.

The lead agency will decide hashtag/s to be used on Twitter

The lead agency will decide keywords to be used in Facebook posts and YouTube tags.

The lead agency will broadcast key messages on all social media channels.

Partner agencies should re-tweet appropriate messages, where possible. They should also point the public in the direction of the lead agency's accounts, whenever possible, so they can receive the latest information.

Partner agencies should feed all updates and information they receive from the public, including any community impact/tension or critical tone in message, promptly to the lead agency.

The lead agency should provide all partners with key reassurance message to use when no operational updates are available.

With urgent updates, it is good practice to make these stand out from other updates already circulating via social media, by use of an impactful word in capital letters eg BREAKING or LATEST

Assessment of queries

- If possible, no genuine request for information and/or updates from the public should go without a response.
- , It is acknowledged that time and resources will be stretched. However a holding response at least should always be given – if possible with an idea of when we will have more details.
- If we see that factually-incorrect information is being shared, we should ask the originator to either delete it or update them with the correct information.
- If we have people deliberately sharing misinformation, trying to disrupt official messaging or being offensive, a full assessment should be carried out. Entering into a dialogue with a “troll” can be time-consuming, counter-productive – and gives them the attention they crave. However, if it appears that their messages are gaining attention on social media, the lead agency

should be informed, should make the correct information clear to the public and ask that the account be ignored. Using mainstream media to correct social media misinformation could be a useful tactic to consider here. In extreme circumstances, if it appears that their activities are seriously endangering safety or investigations, it is possible to ask the social networks to disable the account. However this takes time and should only be considered in extreme circumstances.

- If you don't know the answer, don't simply ignore the question. It is always better to say something rather than nothing.

Use a holding response such as:

- We are aware of the situation/reports/possibility etc and will provide an update as soon as we know more.
- We are unable to confirm this, but are looking into it and will provide an update as soon as we know more.
- Thank you for letting us know, we will look into this as soon as possible.
- The key accounts to follow for updates are lead agency on Twitter/Facebook etc

Twitter Alerts

Twitter Alerts allow the authorities to push tweets in case of an emergency to all those who subscribe to the service. This service is available to all police forces in England and Wales, to help publish important and time critical content in the event of an emergency. @norfolkpolice and @suffolkpolice have signed up for this free service.

During a major flood incident the Environment Agency can also support a multi agency response using @EnvAgency

We acknowledge the approach adopted in the Devon and Cornwall Local Resilience Forum's social media communication strategy in producing this appendix.

Appendix J

Equipment/facilities checklist (to be read in conjunction with Appendix A)

Please note that this checklist is meant to give an indication of the type of equipment/facilities which may be required in setting up a full media co-ordination cell, including a media briefing centre. Exact requirements will depend on several factors including nature, scale and duration of incident.

J.1 Media – General

- Car parking facilities (remember that representatives from one television station can take up several spaces with staff cars and satellite trucks)
- Toilets
- Refreshment facilities

J.2 Media Briefing Centre

- Top table, with space for up to six people
- Table covering/cloth
- Top table chairs
- Name plates for top table
- Appropriate backdrops/pull-up screens
- Information boards, for press releases/images
- Dedicated area for one-to-one interviews
- video camera, for recording conferences
- Chairs for media (arranged “theatre style”, with aisle for television cameras)
- Working area for media, with chairs, tables and access to power points at rear of conference room

J.3 Media Co-ordination Cell**Multi-Agency Press Office**

- Tables
- Chairs
- Computers, with access to internet and command and control systems
- Telephones
- Dedicated number NOT for media, for operational calls
- Printers
- Photocopier
- Television
- Hard disc/DVD recorder, with ability to make copies of TV coverage.
- White boards
- Flip charts
- Files, for storing newspaper cuttings
- Paper
- Notepads, pens, marker pens, pencils, scissors
- Press officer tabards

J.4 Communications Bureau

- Tables
- Chairs

- Computers with internet/social media access
- Telephones
- Dedicated bureau telephone number (eg 01473 613999) for media, with “hunt” facility
- Message forms

J.5 Briefing/Breakout Room

- Table
- Chairs
- Flip chart or white board
- Desk with computer, with access to internet and command and control systems

Appendix K

Key Job Descriptions

The type of incident coupled with demand for communications will largely dictate the type of communications roles required – and the number of staff needed to fill them.

The following roles are suggested as a guide and are informed by incidents which have occurred in Suffolk over the last few years.

Please note that not all incidents will require all of these roles – and, in some cases, communications officers may need to fulfil more than one role.

Role 1: Lead Communications Officer

Postholder: Senior communications officer from the lead agency

Aim: Take the lead role in advising on the formulation and implementation of the communications strategy.

Responsibilities:

- To attend the SCG and advise on communications strategy.
- To ensure that the SCG considers communications as a priority.
- To ensure that the SCG is fully briefed of emerging communications issues/key media queries.
- To liaise closely with the Information Co-ordinator/Communications Bureau Manager regularly – and act as the conduit of information between the SCG and the communications cell.
- To brief the lead spokesperson, prior to press conferences and media facilities.
- To liaise with the administration officer, to ensure that arrangements are in place for the smooth running of the media cell and the staff welfare issues are addressed.

Role 2: Mutual Aid Co-ordinator

Postholder: Senior communications or administration officer from agency **not** taking the communications lead.

Aim: Ensure that there is adequate staffing to provide a full multi-agency communications centre.

Responsibilities:

- To liaise with the Lead Communications Officer on staffing requirements.
- To liaise with other public sector organisations, signed up to the Mutual Aid Protocol, to secure additional staff.
- To work with the Administration/Facilities Officer to ensure that staffing levels are adequate to run a 24-hour shift system (if required).

- Increase/reduce staffing as required, liaising with the Lead Communications Officer and partner agencies supplying staff.
- Assist in the overall communications effort, once staffing tasks are fulfilled.

Role 3: Information Co-ordinator

Postholder: Senior admin or communications officer

Aim: Act as the key point of contact for data on information sent out – and for feedback on media/web coverage.

Responsibilities:

- Liaise closely with the lead communications officer, to ensure smooth passage of key information both up and down the command chain.
- Ensure that key messages and information agreed at the SCG is cascaded to all officers making up the different elements of the media cell eg communications bureau staff answering queries from the media.
- Monitoring media output and producing regular reports for the Lead Communications Officer, to inform the SCG. This will include liaising with the Communications Bureau Manager for feedback on the “tone” of media queries and community responses/tensions etc.
- Overseeing the flow of information between the Communications Office and the Communications Bureau eg ensuring that there is a system in place so that queries from the media, received by the bureau, move smoothly to the communications office for research – and that answers come back promptly in the opposite direction.
- Consider and oversee production of multi-agency internal briefing sheet (see **Appendix O**).

Role 4: News Officer

Postholder: Press Officer/Communications Officer working as part of a multi-agency communications office.

Aim: Implement the media strategy set by the SCG and ensure information is co-ordinated, accurate and released in a timely fashion via appropriate channels.

Responsibilities:

- Compile the latest information into press releases.
- Research and provide answers to queries generated through the Communications Bureau.
- Liaise with media representatives based in the Media Briefing Centre and deal with any queries.
- Compile, and facilitate, requests for interviews.
- Liaise with the Information Co-ordinator to ensure that press releases are collated promptly.

Role 5: Operational Communications Officer

Postholder: A senior communications officer with experience of dealing with the media and a good working knowledge of a particular area of the county. District/Borough communications officers with relevant experience would be particularly well-suited to this role.

Aim: To act as a communications focal point, liaising with the media at the scene of an incident.

Responsibilities:

- Dealing with media at the scene, providing media opportunities which help with the overall communications effort.
- Disseminating information from the SCG to local audiences, including local councillors etc.
- Providing feedback to the communications cell on the situation on the ground, as well as areas of particular interest or criticism from the media.
- Assisting in the correction of any inaccurate information being circulated.
- Issuing information from their organisation.

Role 6: Communications Bureau Manager

Postholder: A senior communications officer with experience both of dealing with the media and good working knowledge of social media.

Aim: Oversee the running of the Communications Bureau, providing responses to the media and information direct to the public via social media. When running effectively, the bureau will not only act as an important conduit for information but will also reduce pressure on organisations' public-facing switchboards/call centres, assisting with business continuity.

Responsibilities:

- Ensure the smooth running of the communications bureau, with all queries (whether via telephone from the media or via social media) logged, along with responses given.
- Liaise closely with the Information Co-ordinator to ensure that all staff in the bureau have access to information which is authorised for release (including copies of press releases and key points from press conferences.)
- Update the Information Co-ordinator on the nature of queries received/the tone of questioning. This should include any difficult areas of questioning and emerging themes as well as topics being discussed by the public on social media platforms.
- Monitor efficiency of bureau staff, to ensure that staffing is sufficient to match demand – and that there is the right balance between those staff dealing with media queries, and those dedicated to social media monitoring.
- Work closely with the Administration Officer to ensure that staff welfare is looked after, including breaks/refreshments etc.

Role 7(a): Communications Bureau Officer (telephone);
7(b): Communications Bureau Officer (digital)

Postholder (a): Any member of staff with ability to work under pressure, with a good telephone manner.

Postholder (b): A digital media officer, with ability to work under pressure, monitor multiple digital channels and interpret information.

Aim: Provide the media/public with quality information, authorised through SCG, and pass on new queries for information.

Responsibilities:

- Work, under the direction of the Communications Bureau Supervisor, on dedicated media telephone lines and digital platforms.
- Issue information, from press releases/written briefs provided by the Communications Bureau Supervisor.
- Log all calls/social media queries received.
- Record all queries which cannot be answered from press releases/authorised information and pass on to the Communications Bureau Supervisor.
- Make the Communications Bureau Supervisor aware of any particularly difficult queries (telephone) or conversational trends (digital).
- Remain fully-updated about the latest authorised information.
- Provide a courteous and efficient service.

Role 8: Administration/Facilities Officer

Postholder: A senior officer, not necessarily with a communications background, with strong organisational skills. It is recommended that this officer is familiar with the location where the multi-agency communications centre is located.

Aim: Assist the Lead Communications Officer by setting up the infrastructure to run a full multi-agency communications centre, with required staff.

Responsibilities:

- Establish the communications centre and ensure that all the necessary equipment is in place.
- Liaise regularly with the Lead Communications Officer, Information Co-ordinator and Communications Bureau Supervisor to ensure that all their requirements are met.
- Arrange adequate staffing for all elements of the communications centre, in liaison with the Mutual Aid Co-ordinator (if one is required).
- Brief staff on their role and deploy them to the areas where needed.
- Set up a shift system to ensure 24-hour cover, where necessary.
- Organise refreshments and rest breaks for staff – and overnight accommodation as required.

Appendix L

Mutual Aid Protocol

In the event of a major incident that challenges a partner authority's/organisation's ability to manage significant media and public interest, the chair of the local resilience forum communications group will:

- Liaise with the senior communications officer within the affected authority/organisation and offer mutual aid support.
- Allocate a mutual aid co-ordinator to manage the aid on behalf of the authority/organisation requiring support.
- The authority/organisation leading on the major incident will at all times remain in charge of the media/communications strategy. The mutual aid agreement is in place to provide support, resilience and guidance, as required.
- Authorities/organisations providing mutual aid will make available the most relevant, well-trained and appropriate staff, depending on the circumstances/requirement.
- Any mutual aid agreement will be reviewed at least weekly by the mutual aid co-ordinator to ensure the correct level of support is in place.

This protocol is drawn up on the understanding that public agency communications officers will initially offer their support on a voluntary basis. However, if the incident concerned becomes protracted (more than one week's duration), the mutual aid co-ordinator will facilitate discussion about finance between the lead authority /organisation and the authority/organisation providing the mutual aid support.

The mutual aid co-ordinator will (on the agreement of the authority/organisation concerned):

- scope the likely requirement;
- plan a mutual aid strategy;
- recruit and place mutual aid personnel; and
- plan further contingencies and support as required.

For the purposes of this protocol, 'mutual aid personnel' could refer to:

- SCG media and communications back-up/resilience/support.
- Communications officers and managers.
- Web officers/social media officers/technical support.
- Call handlers.
- Media monitoring staff.
- Admin support.

Multi-Agency Communications Contacts List

The SRF Alerting Directory provides contact details for all responder organisations.

The SRF will issue all heads of comms with a password to access the directory, along with a request to ensure contact details are up-to-date. This will be done at least every six months.

IT IS THE DUTY OF EACH AUTHORITY/AGENCY TO ENSURE THEIR CONTACT DETAILS ARE ACCURATE.

Local authority/agency emergency planning officers also have access to the alerting directory.

CONTACTS LIST – MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

The communications teams from local authorities/agencies in Suffolk will have their own electronic lists of media contacts, which they use on a daily basis.

It is anticipated that in the case of a multi-agency media response to a major incident, these lists would continue to be used as usual.

The contact details below give public facing telephone and e-mail addresses of regional/local media outlets which would need to be updated during a major incident.

This list is not exhaustive and is subject to change – and therefore will need to be reviewed regularly.

Television

*ITV Anglia	0844 881 6900	anglianews@itv.com
*BBC Look East	08457 630630	look.east@bbc.co.uk

Radio

*BBC Radio Suffolk	01473 250000 01473 340707	
*Heart FM	01603 671180	ipswich.newsdesk@heart.co.uk
*Town 102/The Beach	01473 836102	news@town102.com

Newspapers

EADT	01473 324732	news@eadt.co.uk
Ipswich Star	01473 324730	news@eveningstar.co.uk
(email addresses for individual reporters are as follows first name.second name@archant.co.uk)		
Bury Free Press	01284 757857	
Cambridge News	01223 434439	
Lowestoft Journal	01502 525825	
Eastern Daily Press	01603 628311	EDPNewsdesk@archant.co.uk
Diss Express	01379 658010	editorial@dissexpress.co.uk

Haverhill Echo 01440 703456 news@haverhillecho.com

Newmarket Journal 01638 668441

Suffolk Free Press 01787 375271 newsdesk@suffolkfreepress.co.uk

News Agencies

Anglia Press Agency 01284 702421

EA News 01473 221921 newsdesk@eanews.co.uk

Masons 01223 224400 news@masons-news.co.uk

Press Association 0870 120 3200

Appendix O

<i>Suffolk Resilience Forum: Agency Briefing</i>
Incident
Date:
Report No: Time:

Overview of Incident
Current Situation Report
Current Agency Reports:
Police
Fire & Rescue
Ambulance
Local Authorities
Environment Agency
Health
Other

Appendix P

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Pre-prepared information which may be useful to the public in the case of an incident can be found on the Suffolk Resilience Forum website.

Information includes guidance on what to do in a major incident as well as advice for different scenarios, including flooding.

The public can be signposted to this information, which can be found at <http://www.suffolkresilience.com/>