



Incident Management Part 2

Procedures and planning for Community
Emergency Volunteers



Environment
Agency



Cornwall Community
Flood ForumTM



Business training solutions

THE CORNWALL COLLEGE GROUP



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks



THE PRINCE'S
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Introduction

This module provides tips and guidance on how to go about setting up your Community Emergency Volunteer group. Whether your group chooses to undertake a single role in your community such as flood volunteers, or trains for multiple roles, the advice contained in this booklet will assist your team in setting up procedures to cope with a variety of scenarios.

This guidance is based on experience gained from community emergency volunteer groups who have dealt with a variety of emergencies, as well as standard operating procedures for all emergency services.

Aims and objectives

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Know the general roles of Community Emergency Volunteers before, during and after an emergency
- Appreciate the need for a community emergency plan
- Understand the importance of 3C's (Command, Control & Communications)
- Implement a basic command structure for your group
- Implement a basic CEV incident control system
- Undertake dynamic risk assessments
- Know how to work in buddy pairs
- Understand how to use communication equipment & procedures

This module deliberately uses the type of language and terms employed by members of the emergency services, or blue lights, so you, as a volunteer, will be better prepared to provide support when needed.

Will I be held liable?

Often people can be prevented from assisting in an emergency due to concerns about whether they can be held liable due to the unintended consequences of their actions. Due to this the Government introduced a new Act of Parliament to give confidence to those who do intervene a level of protection within the courts.

Social Action, Responsibility, Heroism (SARAH) Act 2015

The SARAH Act provides guidances to courts in cases brought against people due to the results of their actions. Introduced to reassure those who intervene that so long as their actions were undertaken responsibly with due regard to safety, for the benefit of society or during an act of heroism the courts will take this into consideration when making any judgement.

The SARAH Act does not provide a 'blank cheque' for individuals or organisations to do anything in the name of benefiting society however. If you or your group can be proved to be negligent then you will still be held liable for your actions and so your group should retain public liability insurance to cover any negligence claims. However if you can prove that what you did was carried out as safely as possible, with the best of intentions, or as an act of 'heroism' during an emergency then the courts will weigh that in your favour.

By setting up an organised community emergency volunteer group, undertaking a programme of training, equipping your volunteers suitably and exercising your team, you will go a long way to proving due diligence and you will leave yourself less liable to erroneous claims made against your efforts to make your community more resilient.

Getting started

It can be a daunting process starting any community group, with lots to think about from training and building relationships with partners, to the administrative tasks of fundraising, purchasing the right equipment, and getting your group insured. *Communities Prepared* is here to help make this process as easy for you as possible by highlighting best practice, making links with organisations you might want to talk to, providing relevant training materials, and supporting you through the process of making your community more resilient.

Appointing a CEV Coordinator

It's important to have someone who can champion your group in the local community and act as a point of contact for agency partners. They will also act as the leader of your group during an emergency so need to be prepared to manage a team of volunteers as well as report and respond to the Incident Commander from the emergency services.

Recruiting volunteers

When you are first looking to recruit volunteers it may be best to hold a community meeting that explores what your group seeks to achieve. Potential volunteers may have been personally affected by an emergency and may have good insights when planning your response, although they might be busy elsewhere during an event.

There might be people in your community with specific skills or equipment that you might wish to recruit, such as ex-forces & emergency personnel, or local farmers. When setting up your group consider how the way you set up your group might affect who would wish to volunteer (e.g. training during the day may not be open to those of working age).

Get your Parish or Town Council involved

Often setting up a group under the auspices of the Town or Parish Council greatly helps with managing funding and insurance. Consider suggesting to your local council that they set up an emergency planning sub-committee to support the group. It's important that as a group you have public liability insurance in place to cover your activities.

Sustaining interest

One of the most difficult parts of running a CEV group after setting it up is sustaining the interest of your volunteers. Without planning how to keep your volunteers interested all your initial hard work might fade away and when the next emergency takes place your group may not be in a position to assist.

There could be various ways to maintain interest and support in your group:

- Undertake additional emergency response roles so your team will be able to respond to additional events (e.g. flood, snow, utilities failure).
- Assist at local community and charity events as crowd marshalls to help test procedures and build teamworking or set up a recruitment stall.
- Undertake regular training evenings and invite speakers from the emergency services to speak to build trust and understanding.

How do you think your community could sustain interest?



The community emergency plan

A community emergency plan (also sometimes known as a community flood plan) is a useful way to set out your community's procedures and priorities when planning for emergencies and acts as an 'aide-mémoire' during an emergency event. There are plenty of templates and examples available online and your local authority emergency planning officer can help you in its preparation. Visit our online hub for more details.

The most important thing to remember is to keep your emergency plan short and to the point using bullet points and plain English. You do not want to be reading a book during an emergency!

The role of an affiliated Town or Parish Council CEV group is to implement the procedures set out in your Town or Parish Community Emergency Plan if there is one. If your local council does not have one it is strongly suggested that you consider producing one.

Producing a community emergency plan can have many benefits. It can:

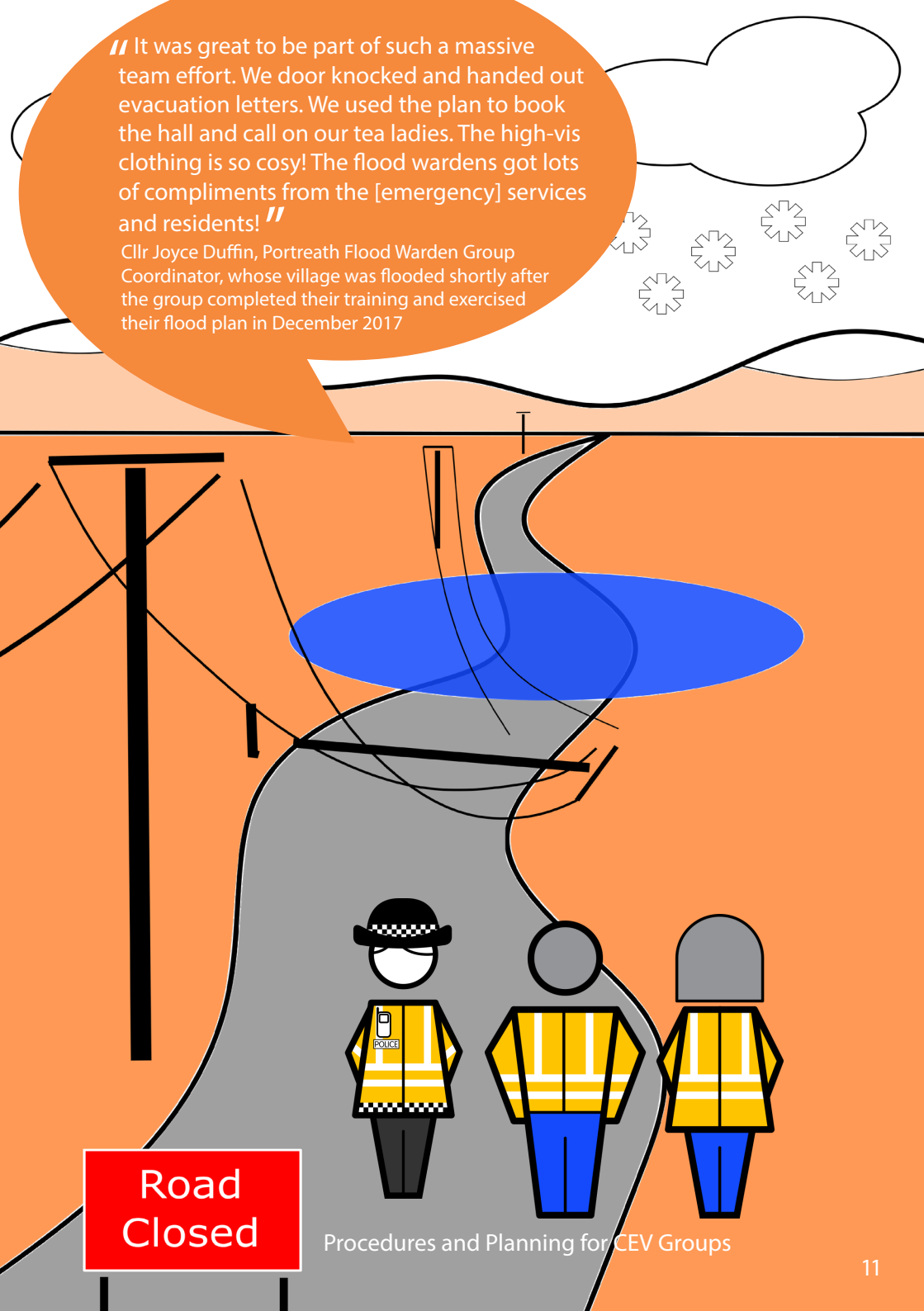
- Provide coordination , support and guidance to the community ahead of the arrival of the emergency services
- Help share local knowledge during an emergency to assist the emergency services
- Help relay local knowledge, concerns and issues to relevant authorities and utilities before and following a flood

Communities Prepared can provide you with additional assistance in preparing your Community Emergency Plan.

Go to communitiesprepared.org.uk for more details.

// It was great to be part of such a massive team effort. We door knocked and handed out evacuation letters. We used the plan to book the hall and call on our tea ladies. The high-vis clothing is so cosy! The flood wardens got lots of compliments from the [emergency] services and residents! //

Cllr Joyce Duffin, Portreath Flood Warden Group Coordinator, whose village was flooded shortly after the group completed their training and exercised their flood plan in December 2017



Role of the Community Emergency Volunteer

Community Emergency Volunteers have an important role to play before, during and after an emergency. More specific guidance on your roles during a particular incident such as snow or flooding will be set out in the role training modules (e.g. flood or snow volunteer) you decide to undertake, and this booklet should be read in conjunction with that specific training.

Your role as a volunteer is to enhance the resilience of the community where you live, to be able to cope better with natural and man-made emergencies.

What is community resilience?

Community resilience is about communities using local resources and knowledge to help themselves during an emergency in a way that complements the local emergency services.

Your community will be better prepared to cope during and after an emergency when everyone works together using their local knowledge. Things like understanding what requirements the most vulnerable residents may have in an emergency can make a real difference.

Being prepared and able to respond to an emergency can often help people recover more quickly. This illustrates how successful community resilience can be and why many communities are already engaged in this planning.

Command, control & communications

Having simple, practical, and agreed methods of working will be crucial in ensuring your group is effective in an emergency. Having the 3C's in place will ensure you:

- Work safely together as a group
- Work effectively with other emergency responders
- Can get public liability insurance for your group.



This booklet provides some simple to use systems that you might consider implementing for your group if you don't already have these in place.

As a group your first consideration must always be for your own safety and that of your fellow volunteers. A simple system to manage your volunteers assists you in doing that.

Only by having an effective system of managing yourselves can you effectively assist the other agencies you wish to work with. It also builds trust between your group and the professional agencies that you can be relied on to do what you have been asked to do.

Insurers will not insure groups or extend Public Liability cover to Parish and Council groups that cannot prove they can manage their volunteers effectively and safely.

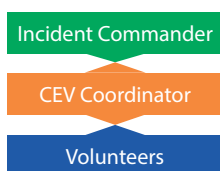
Command structure

When deciding on a command structure for your group the most important element is to keep it simple. During an emergency your group will need one person to take charge of the volunteers as a Coordinator. The other volunteers in the group must abide by the instructions and directions that the Coordinator might give.

The CEV Coordinator

There are separate training resources in this series that deal in detail with the role of the CEV Coordinator. However, these are the main points to consider when first setting up your group:

- The CEV Coordinator will act as the link between the responder agencies and your group during an emergency.
- If you have a group with over five members you might wish to appoint more than one Coordinator (consider how your group might function if your only Coordinator might be away on holiday).
- It's important to choose the right person. Ensure your Coordinator will not be distracted during an emergency event (e.g. possibly someone whose house or business is prone to flooding and might be needed elsewhere).
- Don't overload your Coordinator - 8 volunteers is enough to manage on the ground during an emergency event.
- Don't let your Coordinator get dragged in to doing lots of small things. Their role is to manage and monitor the safety of the volunteers and not get distracted.



CEV incident management

In order to manage your group efficiently during an emergency you will need a set of procedures that allows you to warn your group that they might be required, calling out your volunteer group, and letting them know when they are no longer required. In order not to waste your volunteers' time and efforts you should have agreed 'triggers' for each procedure. The following is a suggested structure you might wish to adopt:



Muster point

A muster point is an agreed location where all the volunteers from your group will meet when being called out or stood down, or can return to during an emergency. This is best placed where your equipment is stored so volunteers can be equipped as they are signed on and briefed.

Care must be taken in the location of your muster point to ensure safe access and egress for your volunteers during an emergency and that you can be easily located by the emergency services.

The buddy system

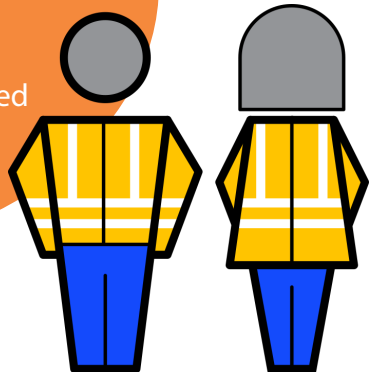
Volunteers must always work in pairs in order to:

- Assess risk and decide actions together
- Swap tasks so they don't become too repetitive or tiring
- Provide safeguarding confidence to the public and each other
- Remind each other of their training
- Alert their 'buddy' to danger
- Plus it's more fun working together!

The CEV Coordinator should buddy up volunteers at the muster point on call out, therefore it's always a good idea to call out an even number of volunteers.

Buddy Golden Rules

- Always **listen and act** on your buddy's concerns about danger and risk.
- Never go **out of sight** of your buddy, and try to be within talking (not shouting) distance all of the time.
- Always **speak up** if you are concerned about your buddy's actions and decisions.



Safety equipment

Your health and safety should be your main priority at all times.

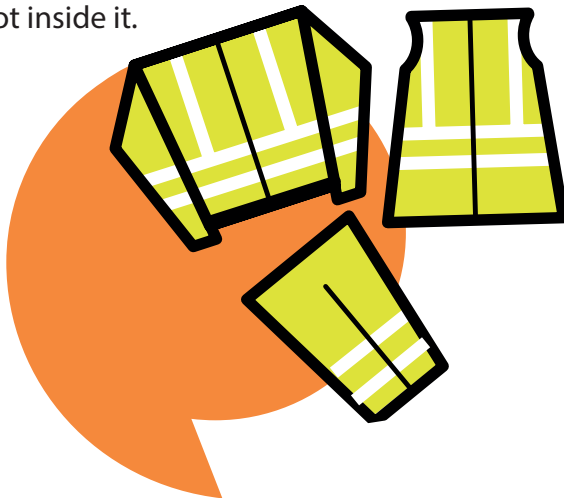
When undertaking any outdoor activities as a community emergency volunteer you should wear a high visibility jacket (or a suitable equivalent, e.g. a high visibility vest) at all times, day or night.

Wear your high visibility jacket on the outside of your clothing, securely fasten it at the front to prevent it from flapping in the wind or catching on anything and placing you at risk.

Remember to ensure you are visible to others at all times and use a torch when working in the dark or low light conditions.

Whilst there are many different colours of 'Hi-Viz' vests available, note that only predominantly orange or yellow vests meet the correct international standard for working outside near roads. When purchasing check that your Hi-Viz clothing is ISO 20471 compliant.

Whilst you also want your Hi-Viz clothing to be water-proof to protect you from the elements, as you could be wearing it for many hours it's also a good idea to ensure that it's made of breathable fabric so you don't get too hot inside it.



Other equipment

As well as 'Hi-Viz' clothing you should also consider purchasing other items of personal protective equipment or PPE.

- Gloves - especially when picking anything up or handling materials. Make sure they are waterproof and provide good grip.
- Boots - steel toe-capped wellington boots will protect your volunteers' feet from getting wet and the toecap protects your feet from falling objects. The better grip stops you from sliding around in muddy or snowy conditions.
- Sanitiser - if you do get flood water on your hands a pocket sized bottle of hand sanitiser is very useful to quickly clean your hands when out and about.
- Glasses - if you are using salt/grit as part of a snow volunteer scheme then you need to wear safety glasses to protect your eyes from this potential irritant.
- Torch - you may need to carry out your duties at night away from street lights. Head torches are a good way of giving volunteers lighting whilst keeping their hands free to undertake tasks.

Maintaining your equipment

Always keep your equipment clean and easily accessible. Having clean, well looked after equipment gives a good impression to both the general public and the emergency services. If any equipment gets broken replace it straight away. It's a good idea to have a dry, secure and central location to store your equipment close to your agreed Muster Point (see page 15).

Communications

Heavy rain and flooding can be accompanied by strong winds and may well occur at night. In these conditions signal strengths for mobile phones may be weak and in some instances you may not receive a signal at all. For these reasons you should not rely solely on your mobile phone as a primary source of communication, instead you should:

- Maintain visual contact with another community emergency volunteer or member of the emergency services at all times (having branded Hi Viz tabards and jackets helps you be seen).
- Inform someone else where you are and what you will be doing before you start your activities (generally the CEV Coordinator).



A mobile phone can be useful for calling out volunteers and taking photos of an incident.



A 2 way radio system can be more reliable where mobile coverage is poor.



A whistle can provide a cheap and simple way of communicating in an emergency.



Clearly marked Hi Viz clothing shows others who you are and what your role is.



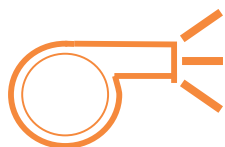
A notebook (preferably waterproof) helps you keep a record of what happens.

Whistles

Whistles are the cheapest and most basic form of emergency communication equipment and you should consider purchasing one for every volunteer. Sometimes if you are standing near busy traffic or rushing water it can be difficult to gain your buddy's attention even when they are just a few metres away just with your voice so a whistle can prove very helpful.

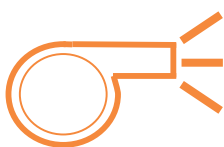
There are certain agreed codes to using an emergency whistle which are good to understand and practice. This can ensure that other responders can understand you better and respond to your signals more quickly.

UK flood water teams also use a standard whistle system based on the agreed code. The code is based on the number of short blasts you blow:



1 short blast

Stop or attention towards signaller



2 short blasts

Attention to upstream or move upstream (flood water teams)



3 short blasts

Attention to downstream or move downstream (flood water teams)

3 short blasts repeated

Emergency / help me

2 way radio exercise

If you do purchase 2 way radios test them regularly and keep their batteries charged. You need to be familiar with how to use them and their potential limitations before deploying in an emergency. Be aware that the cheaper handsets use radio frequencies that only travel limited distances (0.5-1 mile). More powerful handsets may well require an Ofcom license which can be obtained from <https://secure.ofcom.org.uk/busrad/>

Choose someone to be a volunteer and someone to be the Coordinator. Make sure both are familiar with how to use the equipment:



- Send the volunteer out to an adjacent room or outside the building and ask them to report back when they have got there using the radio
- When the volunteer has reported being at that location ask them to report on something in that location (the weather state / whether the lights are working / etc)
- Call the volunteer back to the meeting room
- When using radios keep your messages short and to the point using 'plain' English
- State first who you want to speak to & then who is speaking before starting your message
- When you have finished your message say 'over'

- Always undertake a radio check at the muster point
- Make sure everyone knows which channel is being used

Mobile phone exercise

This is something for your group to practice in order to get used to sending and receiving text message call outs during an emergency. It's good to be familiar with how to call out your group before an emergency occurs so you can quickly respond.

Choose someone to be a volunteer and someone to be the Coordinator. Make sure they both have each other's mobile phone numbers:

- The CEV Coordinator sends the Text "EXERCISE CEV Flood Stand To availability from ??:??hrs DD/MM/YY" (Note to use 24hr clock so there is no confusion as to what time is meant)
- The volunteer sends a text back "I'm available from ??:??hrs"
- The CEV Coordinator can then send a text saying "EXERCISE CEV flood Call Out please come to the muster point at ??:??hrs"
- The CEV Coordinator can send a final text "EXERCISE CEV Flood Stand Down"

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- You can send text messages to multiple mobile phones, allowing you to call out your group with a single text
 - Familiarise yourself with how your phone works
 - Make sure your volunteers put their phones on charge on a 'stand to'

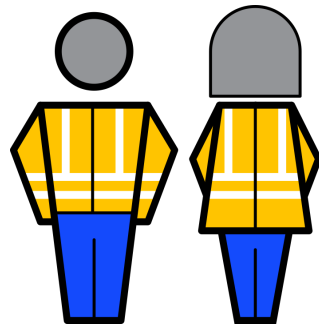


Summary

- Appoint at least one CEV Coordinator
- Think of how you can keep your members engaged to keep the group going over the long term
- Draw up a Community Emergency Plan, bearing in mind the roles that your group has identified
- Practice your incident control and dynamic risk assessment procedures so you are comfortable doing them
- Know your limits and take regular breaks
- Always buddy up your volunteers
- Purchase the minimum necessary equipment to help you complete your role(s), and practice using it

What next?

Now you should arrange further training in the roles you have set out for your group. You can either contact the *Communities Prepared* team or a local partner agency to assist you with this, or download the training resources from our hub. Go to communitiesprepared.org.uk for more details.



Notes

Notes

Notes

This guide provides helpful tips and suggestions on setting up your group and the sorts of procedures you might wish to put in place to ensure your volunteers are effective and safe.

This information pack is intended as a guide only. Whilst the information it contains is believed to be correct, we can take no responsibility for actions taken based on the information contained in this pack.

Other booklets in this series include:



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