

Appendix C Communications Actions

Background:

The OSMC reported specifically recommended 2 main actions in relation to Communications as set out below:

OSMC Recommendation No: 7

The Head of Strategic Support should develop and implement a flood communication strategy to ensure that the right information is delivered to the right people at the right time. It should include elements to address the provision of information to residents and businesses on:

1. Whether their property is in a flood zone and the specific risks that they face.
2. Their roles in protecting their own premises before flooding occurs and examples of permanent and temporary measures that the public can take to protect their property.
3. The roles and responsibilities of flood risk agencies and the help and advice they can expect from agencies during incidents.
4. The causes of flooding and level of flood risk.
5. The responsibilities of riparian owners
6. Flood incident health and safety.
7. The Council's culvert policy.
8. The limitations of sandbags as a flood defence measure)
9. Health and safety risks associated with surface water, river and sewer flooding.
10. The communications channels (e.g. emails, face to face, websites, 'flood bus', text, social and broadcast media etc) to be used during flooding incidents and how they might be exploited to best effect.
11. How best to work with other agencies to develop triggers and activation processes for the establishment of communications cells within the multi-agency Tactical Co-ordination Centre.
12. The joining-up of agencies' telephony and internet channels to provide a single point of contact for residents that gives the information and they need, regardless of provider.
13. The triggers and activation processes for the establishment of communications cells within the Emergency Operations Centre.

OSMC Recommendation No: 8

The Communications strategy should include: Operation of 24/7 cover and ability to operate all communication options and details of support by way of mutual aid

Progress Update:

In order to address these recommendations 2 major pieces of work are being undertaken – development of a communications strategy and promotional communications activities relating to floods.

Communications Strategy: A small group of officers have been developing the strategy. Some of the key points considered have been:

- Whilst the focus of the recommendation was in relation to a flood communications strategy on consideration it was agreed that the communications strategy should cover all emergencies, whether major incidents or not.
- There was a need for a multi-agency approach to the strategy in order to ensure the joint approach in a multi-agency incident.

In addition to the work West Berkshire Council was doing in this area the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum were also embarking on the revision of the Communications Strategy as a result of issues highlighted in the multi-agency debrief. Therefore in order to ensure the two plans dovetail together the Council is now developing their Strategy in line with the Thames Valley Strategy. These strategies are now in the first draft phase with a view to them both being fully in place by December 15 ready for training and exercising to following in 2016.

Promotional communications: In relation to the promotional activities the Council is working with the Met Office and Environment Agency in relation to promoting the National Get Ready for Winter Campaign. Whilst the focus will be on flooding with a drip feed of information and activities for residents and businesses to do it will also be tailored according to the weather risks at the time. A detailed community resilience programme is being developed across Berkshire in a multi-agency partnership for launch in 2016/17.