
Westmeath Local Authorities

MAJOR EMERGENCY PLAN

2010

With Title:	Major Emergency Plan
Version:	1.1
Date:	July 2010
Status:	Current
Prepared By:	Colum McDaid
Approved By:	Ray Kenny

Record of Issues and Amendments

Amendment No.	Version No.	Date	Section Amended	Amended By
1.	1.1	July 2010	Major Emergency Plan & Appendices Review.	Ruth Holton
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				
11.				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15.				
16.				
17.				
18.				
19.				
20.				

Contents

Section 1:	Introduction to the Plan.
Section 2:	Westmeath Local Authorities and its functional area.
Section 3:	Risk Assessment for the area.
Section 4:	Resources for Emergency Response.
Section 5:	Preparedness for Major Emergency Response.
Section 6:	The Command, Control and Co-ordination System.
Section 7:	The Common Elements of Response. 7.1 Declaring a Major Emergency. 7.2 Initial Mobilisation. 7.3 Command, Control & Communication Centres. 7.4 Co-ordination Centres. 7.5 Communications Facilities. 7.6 Exercising the Lead Agency Co-ordination Role. 7.7 Public Information. 7.8 The Media. 7.9 Site Management Arrangements. 7.10 Mobilising Additional Resources. 7.11 Casualty and Survivor Arrangements. 7.12 Emergencies Involving Hazardous Materials. 7.13 Protecting Threatened Populations. 7.14 Early and Public Warning Systems. 7.15 Emergencies Arising on Inland Waterways. 7.16 Safety, Health and Welfare Considerations. 7.17 Logistical Issues / Protracted Incidents. 7.18 Investigations. 7.19 Community / VIP's / Observers. 7.20 Standing Down the Major Emergency.
Section 8:	Agency Specific Elements and Sub-Plans.
Section 9:	Plan for Regional Level Coordination.
Section 10:	Links with National Emergency Plans.
Section 11:	Severe Weather / Flooding Response Plans.
Section 12:	Site and Event-Specific Arrangements and Plans.
Section 13:	The Recovery Phase.
Section 14:	Review of the Major Emergency Plan.
Section 15:	Appendices.

Appendices.

1. Lead Agency Determination Procedure.
2. Declaration Procedure.
3. Action Plans.
4. Tables.
5. Roles/ Mandates of Decision Making Local Authority Groups.
6. Roles/ Mandates of Other PRAs.
7. Identification of Personnel at Major Emergency Site.
8. Idealised Scene Management Arrangements.
9. Contact Details – Officers in Fire Service, An Garda Siochana & Ambulance Service.
10. Westmeath Local Authorities Engineering Areas & Services Contact Details.
11. Neighbouring Local Authorities Contact Details.
12. Mobilising Defence Forces.
13. Westmeath Civil Defence.
14. Voluntary Organisations.
15. Utilities Contact Details.
16. Available Plant, Equipment & Supplies from Private Suppliers, Contractors and other Agencies.
17. Government Bodies & Media.
18. Emergency Rest Centres available in case of Evacuation.
19. Available Plant, Equipment & Supplies from Westmeath Local Authorities.
20. Religious Support.
21. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms.
22. Railway Access Points.
23. County Profile.
24. Staff Welfare Programme.
25. Risk Assessments.

Foreword.

The importance of an effectively managed and co-ordinated response when dealing with a Major Emergency cannot be over emphasised.

The development of the Plan for Westmeath has been the focus of the Major Emergency Development Committee within Westmeath since September 2006. The primary objective of Westmeath's Major Emergency Plan is to ensure that the organisation responds in an efficient and effective manner to any major emergency which may occur within its operational area. It is also important to recognise the need for effective inter-agency cooperation during the response and this is also catered for in the new plan.

The plan for Westmeath Local Authorities recognises the responsibilities of all sections and personnel within the local authorities' structure in responding to a major emergency and providing relief to the effected local community. It has been produced to ensure that we can continue with business "as usual" and with the confidence that measures are in place within Westmeath Local Authorities to minimise the risks and impacts associated with a major emergency.

The plan will be continually reviewed to keep pace with the changing and dynamic times we live in and to ensure we learn from other events in Ireland and overseas.

Daniel McLoughlin

County Manager,
Westmeath County Council

Section 1

Introduction to Plan

1.1 General Introduction.

The Major Emergency Plan for Westmeath replaces the previous plan that was prepared under the Framework for Co-Ordinated Response to Major Emergency (November 1984). This new plan for Westmeath has been prepared under the new framework for Emergency Management (2006). The Framework for Emergency Management (2006) was prepared under the aegis of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Major Emergencies and has been approved by Government decision of 30th May 2006.

1.2 Background to the Major Emergency Plan.

In 2006 the government approved a two-year Major Emergency Development Programme 2006-2008 (MEDP) to allow for the structured migration from current arrangements to an enhanced level of preparedness via the new emergency management process. The purpose of this plan is to put in place arrangements that will enable the three principle response agencies, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Local Authorities to co-ordinate their efforts whenever a major emergency occurs.

The systems approach to Major Emergency Management involves a continuous cycle of activity. The principal elements of the systems approach are:

- Hazard Analysis/ Risk Assessment;
- Mitigation/ Risk Management;
- Planning and Preparedness;
- Co-ordinated Response; and
- Recovery.



Fig 1.1: Five Stage Emergency Management Paradigm

This Major Emergency Plan for Westmeath Local Authorities has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Government issued document 'A Framework for Major Emergency Management' (2006).

1.3 The objectives of the Major Emergency Plan.

The objective of this Plan is to protect life and property, to minimize disruption to the area, and to provide immediate support for those affected. To achieve this aim the Plan sets out the basis for a coordinated response to a major emergency and the different roles and functions to be performed by the various agencies of Westmeath Local Authorities. The fact that procedures have been specified in the Plan should not restrict the use of initiative or common sense by individual officers in the light of prevailing circumstances in a particular emergency. The objectives of Westmeath Local Authorities (WLA) response in an emergency are;

- Protection and care of the public at times of vulnerability.
- Clear leadership in times of crisis.
- Early and appropriate response.

- Efficient, coordinated operations.
- Realistic and rational approach, capable of being delivered.
- Transparent systems, with accountability.
- Harnessing community spirit.
- The ethos of self-protection.
- Maintenance of essential services.
- Safe working.

1.4 The Scope of the Major Emergency Plan.

The Plan provides for a coordinated response to major emergencies arising, for example, from fires, explosions, gas releases, transportation accidents, incidents involving dangerous substances, flooding, landslides, environmental contamination and any other emergencies that are beyond the normal capabilities of Westmeath Local Authorities, HSE or the Garda Síochána.

The types of emergency normally resulting from oil supply crises, E.S.B. blackouts, industrial disputes etc. are of a different nature and are not catered for in this Plan. It is recognised, however, that such emergencies could result in a situation, requiring activation of the Major Emergency Plan.

This plan shall consist of **two** distinct parts;

1. The plan proper which provides uniform procedures in relation to those matters which can be standardised nationally e.g. activation of plan, control of operations, allocation of functions etc.;
2. The appendices to the plan which are attached to this plan are specific to Westmeath Local Authorities and contain information relevant to their functional areas and the operation of the plan.

1.5 The relationship / inter-operability of the Major Emergency Plan with other emergency plans.

It is the responsibility of Westmeath Local Authorities in conjunction with the HSE and Garda Síochána to respond and deal effectively with a major emergency within Westmeath. Each Principal Response Agency has developed Major Emergency Plans and these plans are fully interoperable with each other.

The Plan sets out arrangements which will facilitate the principal emergency services in scaling-up the response required, so as to utilise the full resources of the principal response agencies, and to work together in the management of large-scale incidents.

In certain circumstances, the local response to a major emergency may be scaled up to a regional level, activating the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination.

The Framework also provides mechanisms for linking the work of the principal response agencies with those at other levels of Government.

1.6 The language / terminology of the Plan.

In situations where different organisations are working together, there is a need for common vocabulary to enable them to communicate effectively.

Differences in terminologies and nomenclatures used by responders from various agencies or diverse technical disciplines can seriously impede the achievement of coordinated and safe emergency management. Therefore a full set of relevant terms and acronyms are provided in Appendix 21, which should be used by **all** agencies.

1.7 The distribution of the Plan.

The distribution list is given below and a full set of names and addresses is provided in various Appendices. The plan and appendices will be available to all Westmeath Local Authorities staff on the intranet.

Westmeath Local Authorities MEP Distribution List:

Name / Organisation

Westmeath Local Authorities

- County Manager
- Town Clerks
- Director of Services
- Chief Fire Officer
- Civil Defence Officer
- Crisis Management Team

Neighbouring Local Authorities

- County Manager, Offaly
- County Manager, Longford
- County Manager, Laois
- County Manager, Roscommon

An Garda Síochána

- Longford/Westmeath Division
- Laois /Offaly Division

Health Service Executive – Chief Major Emergency Officer Midland Region

Defence Forces - Operations Officer 4 Western Brigade

Utility Companies

- ESB
- Eircom
- Bord Gáis
- Iarnród Éireann

1.8 The status of the Plan and when and how it will be reviewed / updated.

The Major Emergency Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. If deemed necessary, the plan may be updated/ reviewed after each Major Emergency Exercise has been carried out and after its activation in a real emergency.

1.9 Public access to the Plan.

The plan will be available in hard copy to the public at Reception Desk, County Buildings Mullingar, Civic Offices Athlone and at each Area Office. A copy of the Plan will be available to the public on the Council website at www.westmeathcoco.ie

Section 2

Westmeath County Council and its Functional Area

2.1 Westmeath Local Authorities Functions in Emergency Management, and Response Capability.

The functional area of this plan is the administrative county of Westmeath County Council **and** the Town Council Area of Athlone Town and will be referred to as Westmeath Local Authorities in this plan. In the event of a major emergency within that area the role of Westmeath Local Authorities is to ensure life safety by providing an effective and coordinated emergency response within the structures laid down in the Major Emergency Plan.

Westmeath Local Authorities will ensure that danger areas are made safe in order to permit other agencies to undertake their recovery and rehabilitation operations. In the immediate aftermath of an incident principal concern for Westmeath Local Authorities includes support for the other emergency services, support and care for the local and wider community, using its resources to mitigate the effects of the emergency and co-ordination of the voluntary organisations under its control.

In the 'recovery' phase Westmeath Local Authorities will be responsible for leading and co-ordinating the rehabilitation of the community and the restoration of the environment.

2.2 Characteristics of the functional area of Westmeath Local Authorities.

Westmeath is located geographically in the centre of Ireland and stretches from Lough Ree in the west to the shores of Lough Sheelin in the northeast and southwards to Kinnegad and the Royal Canal. Westmeath has borders with five counties –Meath, Roscommon, Longford, Offaly, Cavan, and has an area of 1840 square kilometres.

Two main arterial routes the N4/M4 and N6/M6 traverse the county. See Appendix 23 Map 3.

Westmeath has a population of almost 80,000 people with approximately 80% of the population living in the environs of the two major towns Athlone and Mullingar. See Appendix 23 Map 2.

2.3 Partner principal response agencies.

Other Principle Response Agencies responsible for Emergency Services in this area are:

- An Garda Síochána - Longford/Westmeath Division.
- Health Service Executive (Dublin/Mid Leinster Region).

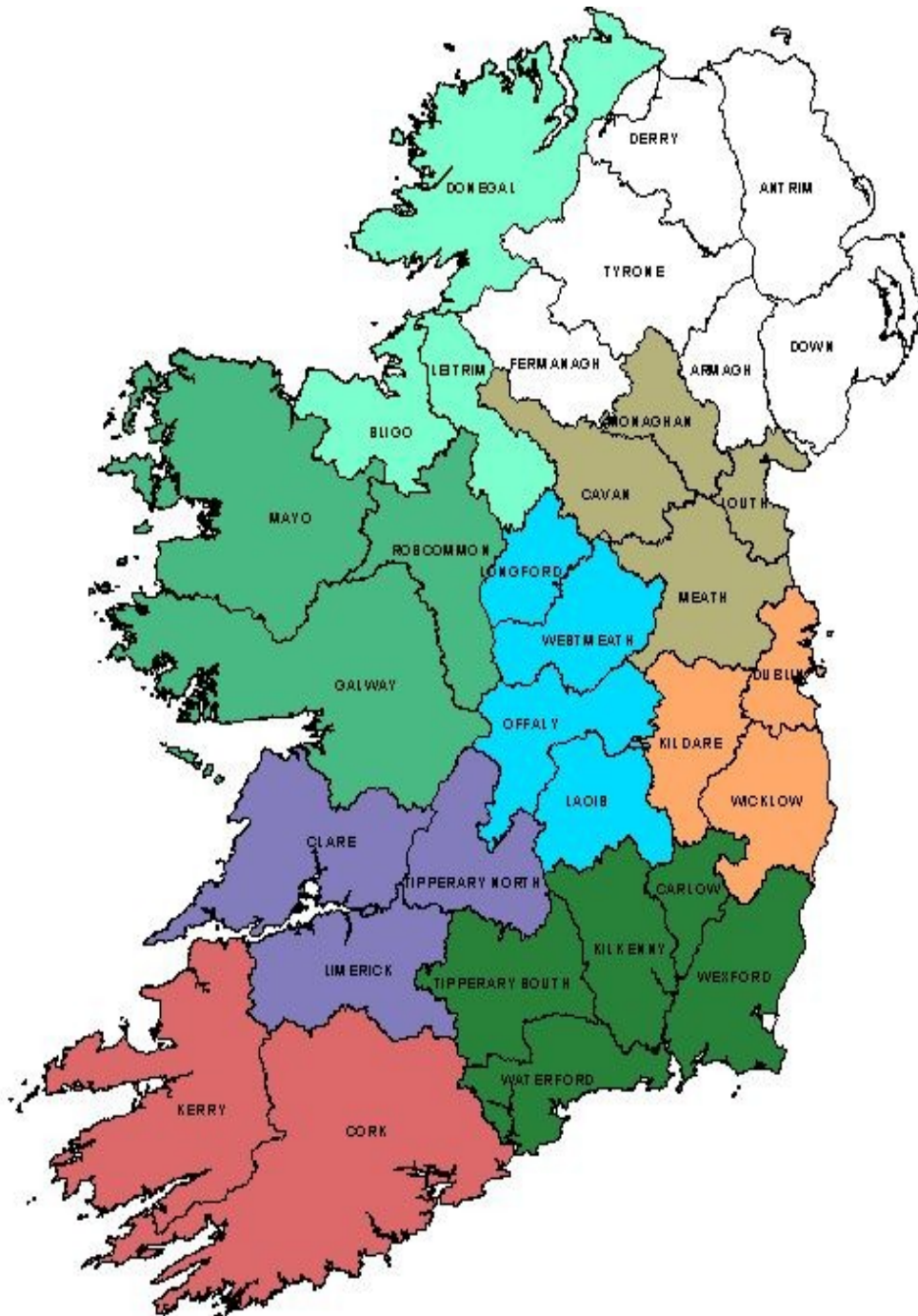
2.4 Midlands Region and Regional Preparedness.

Under certain specific circumstances regional level major emergencies may be declared, with a Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination activated. This will provide for mutual aid, support and co-ordination facilities to be activated in a region, the boundaries of which are determined to suit the exigencies of the particular emergency. There are eight regions in total that have been created for Major Emergency purposes. Westmeath Local Authorities belong to the Midlands region. This region incorporates the following counties;

- Westmeath
- Longford

- Offaly
- Laois.

The Map on the following page shows the eight regions and Westmeaths place in the Midlands Region. An inter-agency Regional Steering Group and Regional Working Group have been formed for the Midlands Region and a Regional Plan has been prepared to deal with Regional Level Emergencies.



Map of Regional Areas

Section 3

Risk Assessment for the Area

3.1 History of area in terms of emergency events.

Westmeath Local Authorities has recorded only one recent event that necessitated the activation of the Major Emergency Plan. This event occurred in 2008 and involved a peat land fire on Ballyhealy Bog in the North East of the county.

3.2 The general and specific risks that may be faced locally and regionally.

A review of all particular risks to the public within Westmeath was conducted prior to the writing of this document. The Westmeath Local Authorities All Hazard Risk Assessment Process and the Midland Regional Major Emergency Planning Group recorded the general and specific risks that may be faced in County Westmeath and within the Midland region. These Risk Assessments are used as a basis for the development of the major emergency plan. A comprehensive list of these risk assessments is available in Appendix 22.

3.3 A list of the scenarios selected as exemplars on which preparedness is based.

The Westmeath Local Authorities All Hazard Risk Assessment Process did not highlight any specific risks to the operations of the organisation that required an immediate preventative or mitigation response.

The process of completing the All Hazard Risk Assessment identified several potential hazards presenting similar risks within the county on which preparedness is based:

Urban Flooding.

Aircraft Collision / Loss.

Water Contamination.

Fire/ Major Crowd Safety and Civil Disorder.

Major RTA/ Hazmat.

Natural Gas Explosion along the main Galway-Dublin Gas Line.

Loss of Critical IT Infrastructure.

Major Chemical incidents at Elan or Soltec.

3.4 Reference to risk management / mitigation / risk reduction strategies, including contacts with risk holders and risk regulators.

The All Hazard Risk Assessment process identified a schedule of Hazards and the following Risk management / mitigation / reduction strategies were examined where their elimination is not feasible;

- Reduce the risk that the hazard will be realized (likelihood);
- Reduce the immediate impact of any emergency on the communities, regions or facilities threatened;
- Reduce the risk that the event will result in an escalating emergency.

This process identified the organizations with the responsibility for the mitigation of specific hazards within their care (“risk holders”) as well as the bodies with the function of regulating such companies through statutory provisions or self-regulation (“risk regulators”).

The risk mitigation measures that are either in place or are required are recorded in Parts 5 and 6 of the Risk Assessment process for each Hazard considered.

3.5 Site / event specific emergency plans that exist or are required.

The Westmeath Local Authorities Risk Assessment process recorded some examples of existing site-specific emergency plans for facilities in the county. These include;

- On-Site emergency Plans for Elan in Athlone and Soltec in Mullingar
- Event Management Plan developed for Golden Island Park, Athlone
By Athlone Town FC and Football Association of Ireland;
- Event Management Plan developed for Cusack Park, Mullingar by Westmeath GAA County Board;
- Event Management Plan developed for Dubarry Park ,Athlone by Buccaneers RFC and Irish Rugby Football Union;
- Business Continuity Plans for all four Engineering Areas within Westmeath Local Authorities
 - Mullingar
 - Athlone
 - Kilbeggan
 - Coole

(See Business Continuity Plans for all areas available at area offices.)

Westmeath County Council will review site- and event-specific emergency plans frequently for consistency with its Major Emergency Plan, in conjunction with site and/or event emergency plan owners and appropriate regulatory bodies.

This Westmeath Local Authorities Major Emergency Plan will take supremacy over any other existing emergency plans.

Section 4

Resources for Emergency Response

4.1 The structure / resources / services of the Council.

Westmeath Local Authorities comprises Westmeath County Council and Athlone Town Council. The operational structure can be divided into two parts; firstly the Elected Members of which there are 23, and secondly, the County Manager and his staff. There are four Directorates in Westmeath County Council which are;

- Housing, Water Services, Environment and Fire and Emergency.
- Transport, Planning, Legal and Enforcement, Athlone & Kilbeggan Areas.
- Corporate Services, Community and Enterprise, ICT, Mullingar & Coole Areas.
- Finance, Risk Management, Health & Safety, Asset Management and Belvedere.

Each section of the Council may be called upon to respond in the event of a Major Emergency. Each Director is responsible to ensure that plans are in place to deal with emergencies that may affect the operations under his/her control.

4.2 Special staffing arrangements during a Major Emergency.

The majority of Westmeath Local Authorities staff requested to carry out functions in relation to a Major Emergency will be acting on a voluntary basis with the exception of specific Local Authorities staff such as the rostered Senior Fire Officers, Fire Fighters and some rostered Road Overseers. In addition the Civil Defence, under the Authorities of Westmeath County Council operate on a call out system - see Appendix 13.

4.3 How resources of the Council are matched to the functions assigned to it.

Westmeath Local Authorities has identified, matched and formally nominated competent individuals and alternates to key roles to enable the agency to function in accordance with the common arrangements set out in the plan.

Support teams have also been put in place for key roles and operational functions. Protocols (Action Plans) set out the arrangements which will enable the agency's support teams to be mobilized and how they will function in accordance with the arrangements set out in the plan.

Assignment of key roles and how those roles are to be delivered are documented in Appendices 3 & 5.

4.4 Other organisations / agencies that may be mobilised to assist the Local Authorities.

There are a number of organisations, agencies and individuals that may be called upon to assist the principle response agencies in responding to major emergencies in addition to specialist national and local organisations. Some examples of these are-

- Defence Forces-See Appendix 12.
- Civil Defence-See Appendix 13.
- The Irish Red Cross-See Appendix 14.
- Voluntary Emergency Services - See Appendix 14.

- Community Volunteers.
- Utility companies (ESB, Bord Gáis, Bus Éireann etc) -See Appendix 15.
- Private Contractors-See Appendix 16.

4.5 How mutual-aid will be sought from neighbours.

In the event that resources within Westmeath Local Authorities are not sufficient to bring a situation under control, or the duration of an incident is extended such that additional resources are required, then support may be obtained via mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring counties. Local Authorities will support each other on a mutual aid basis. Support is most likely to be requested from-

- Offaly County Council.
- Roscommon County Council.
- Longford County Council.
- Cavan County Council.
- Meath County Council.

Contact details for neighbouring Local Authorities are contained in Appendix 11.

4.6 Regional level of co-ordinated response.

Westmeath Local Authorities is one of four authorities in the Midland Region who make up the Midland Regional Major Emergency Group, see section 2.4. In certain circumstances, the local response to a major emergency may need to be scaled up to a regional level. This may occur where the nature of an emergency is such that:

- The resources available in the local area where the incident occurs do not appear to be sufficient to bring the situation under control in an expeditious and efficient manner; or,
- The consequences of the emergency are likely to impact significantly outside of the local area; or,
- The incident(s) is spread over the area of more than one Local Authority or Division of An Garda Síochána; or,
- The incident occurs at or close to a boundary of more than one of the principal response agencies functional areas.

The Chair of the Local Co-ordination Group may declare that a regional level major emergency exists and activate the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination. The key provision for ensuring co-ordination of the extended response is the activation of a Regional Co-ordination Group. The primary function of the Regional Co-ordination Group is to maintain co-ordination of the principal response agencies involved from the extended “response region”. The boundaries of the actual “region” for response purposes should be determined by the lead agency, which has declared the regional level emergency, in light of the circumstances prevailing, or likely to develop. The regions for response purposes need not necessarily coincide with the designated regions for preparedness.

The lead agency that has declared the regional level emergency will convene and chair the Regional Co-ordination Group.

The method of operation of a Regional Co-ordination Centre will be similar to that of the Local Co-ordination Centre.

4.7 National / International assistance where required.

In the event that the scale of the emergency becomes too large, complex or long in duration a request may be made to seek assistance from neighbouring or other regions of the country, or from outside the state. This decision should be made by the lead agency in consultation with the other principle response agencies at the Regional Co-

ordination Centre. The Midland Regional Co-ordination Group should identify and dimension the level/type of assistance likely to be required and its duration. It should also seek to identify the possible options for sourcing such assistance, be that from neighbouring Regions, elsewhere in the state, the United Kingdom or from other EU member states.

Section 5

Preparedness for Major Emergency Response

5.1 The incorporation of major emergency management into the Council's business planning process.

In developing its corporate business plan Westmeath Local Authorities has taken into account the requirement to fully support the Major Emergency Plan.

A major emergency development programme has been initiated which ensures that it has all necessary arrangements; systems, people and resources in place to discharge the functions assigned to it by the Framework and set out in its Major Emergency Plan. This programme includes a pre-emergency preparation programme and also involves acquisition of resources and all training of personnel into the Major Emergency Planning and Response process.

The Westmeath Local Authorities business plan also takes into account the continuance of normal day-to-day functions and activities during the major emergency and this requirement is included in the plan.

5.2 The assigning of responsibility for leading preparedness, both within the Council and inter-agency.

The County Manager is responsible for all Major Emergency Management arrangements and preparedness, as well as for the effectiveness of the agency's response to any major emergency which occurs in its functional area.

Within Westmeath

Within the Westmeath Local Authorities the Director of Services for Community and Enterprise & Emergency Services is tasked with ensuring the overall preparedness of the Local Authorities in response to a major emergency. He has appointed an Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) with specific responsibility for Major Emergency Management (MEM) who works under the Chief Fire Officer. This person is responsible for drawing up and updating major emergency plans.

Inter Agency

In respect of the inter-agency preparedness it is the responsibility of the Director of Services, Environment and Emergency Services in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officer, to ensure that Westmeath Local Authorities plans are interoperable with the other Principal Response Agencies.

5.3 Major Emergency Development Programme.

Progress on the Major Emergency Development Programme will be reviewed regularly at Westmeath Local Authorities Management Team meetings and a formal arrangement is in place for the Westmeath Local Authorities Emergency Management Committee to report to the Management Team on the progress with the rollout of the programme. Westmeath County Council will prepare quarterly progress reports for submission to the National Steering Group.

5.4 The nomination of competent individuals and alternates to the key roles identified in the Major Emergency Plan.

Westmeath County Local Authorities has nominated competent individuals and alternates to the key roles to enable the agency to function in accordance with the common arrangements set out in its Major Emergency Plan (See Appendices 3 & 4).

5.5 Support teams for Key Role appointment holders.

Support teams have been nominated and selected to support and assist individuals in key roles in carrying their functions. Operational Protocols setting out the arrangements which will enable the agency's support teams to be mobilized and function are set out in the appendices to this Major Emergency Plan (See Appendices 3 & 4).

5.6 The implementation of a staff development programme.

Major Emergency Management arrangements involve a significant level of development activity, both within Westmeath Local Authorities and jointly with our regional partners. In parallel with risk assessment and mitigation processes and the preparation of the Major Emergency Plan, Westmeath Local Authorities will initiate an internal programme to develop its level of preparedness, so that in a major emergency it will be in a position to respond in an efficient and effective manner. This programme involves staff training programmes, in particular, which begins in 2008 and will continue each year. This training will be specifically designed to develop their skills and abilities with regard to their individual roles for Major Emergency Management.

5.7 Training of staff holding key roles and staff that will make a contribution via support teams.

Training is a key element in the development of preparedness for Westmeath Local Authorities, to ensure the provision of an effective, co-ordinated response to major emergencies when required. There are many levels of training, ranging from general awareness of the major emergency management arrangements to equipping people with knowledge and skills to perform key roles. The key areas for training are identified in the Project Initiation Document along with a timeframe for delivery. They include:

- Risk Assessment Training,
- Staff Development Training,
- Inter Agency Training,
- Training in the Appraisal Process.

5.8 Exercise Programme.

The ability to work effectively and efficiently within the response system laid down in the Major Emergency Plan will be a critical factor in the success in managing a Major Emergency. In light of this a training and exercise programme has been put in place to ensure all personnel and resources are trained and tested in their ability to operate effectively in a major emergency environment.

Internal exercises will be used to raise awareness, educate individuals on their roles and the roles of others and promote co-ordination and cooperation, as well as validating plans, systems and procedures.

5.9 Joint / Inter-agency training and exercise programme.

Interoperability with other Principal Response Agencies in a Major Emergency will be a key tenet in effective Major Emergency Response. All personnel involved in the Major Emergency Plan Organisation will be required to participate in inter-agency training and exercises in order to ensure effective co-operation between agencies during a Major Emergency. This training will be organised and controlled by the Regional Steering Group in association with all three PRAs.

Joint/Inter Agency training and exercises will follow on from the Local Authorities training and exercise plan mentioned in para. 5.6

5.10 The allocation of specific resources including a budget for preparedness.

The County Manager through the Director of Service for Environment will allocate a budget for resources for Major Emergency Management.

The Regional Steering Group shall also provide a budget for major emergency preparedness, which reflects the expenditure required to meet the costs of implementing the agency's internal preparedness, as well as the agency's contribution to the regional level inter-agency preparedness.

5.11 The arrangements to authorize procurement and use of resources (including engaging third parties) to assist in response to major emergencies.

The authorisation for the procurement and use of resources is established under the decision making mandates of the Local Authorities for the Controller of Operations, On-Site Co-ordinator, Chair of Local Co-ordination Group, Local Co-ordination Group. Local Government Act 2001 states in Part 12 Section 104 states:

“Nothing in this section shall prevent a manager from incurring additional expenditure where he/she is of the opinion that such expenditure is necessary to avert or minimize a threat to public health, public safety, property or the environment.”

Arrangements have been put in with local suppliers to supply urgent goods when required and issue purchase orders the following day in the event of an emergency.

5.12 Annual Appraisal of Preparedness.

The Major Emergency Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be revised and updated as required.

Section 6

The Command, Control and Co-ordination System

6.1 Command arrangements.

The County Manager of Westmeath Local Authorities is responsible for the Local Authorities major emergency management arrangements and preparedness, as well as for the effectiveness of the agency's response to any major emergency that occurs in its functional area.

6.2 Command arrangements within individual services belonging to the Council.

Westmeath Local Authorities will exercise command over its own services in accordance with its normal command structure. At the site of an emergency, it will also exercise control over not only its own services but also any additional services (other than the principle response agencies) that Westmeath Local Authorities mobilises to the site. The Controller of Operations shall exercise control of Westmeath Local Authorities services at the site of the Emergency.

6.3 Control arrangements.

Westmeath Local Authorities will appoint a Controller of Operations at the site (or at each site) of the emergency. The officer in command of the initial response of each principal emergency service should be the principle response agency's Controller of Operations until relieved through the agency's pre-determined process. In the case of a multiple agency response there should be only one Controller of Operations for each of the three principal response agencies.

6.4 Control of all services / sections of the Council which respond.

The activation of the Plan will ensure that the Fire Service Pre-Determined Attendance will be activated together with any Pre-Determined Attendance of other Local Authorities departments.

In addition to the Controller of Operations mentioned in 6.2 above a Crisis Management Team will also be established at Local Co-ordination level to provide assistance for the Local (and Regional if required) Co-ordination Group. The members of the Crisis Management Team are the Senior Managers of the Local Authorities, who will meet at the designated Headquarters of Westmeath County Council. The Crisis Management Team will coordinate all Local Authorities personnel that respond to the emergency. See Appendix 3.

6.5 Control of external organisations / agencies mobilised to assist the Council during the response.

There are a number of organisations and agencies, which may be called on to assist the principal response agencies in responding to major emergencies. The arrangements for this assistance should be agreed with each agency.

At the site of an emergency, Westmeath Local Authorities will exercise control over not only its own services but also any additional services (other than the principle response agencies) that the Local Authorities mobilises to the site.

6.6 Support arrangements for the Control function.

The back-up staff detailed in Appendices 3 & 4 will support the Westmeath Local Authorities key role personnel in carrying out all tasks required of them during the emergency.

6.7 Co-ordination Arrangements.

The co-ordination of the efforts of all services is recognised as a vital element in successful response to major emergencies, so that the combined result is greater than the sum of their individual efforts.

The concept of the Lead Agency is accepted as the method for establishing which Agency has initial responsibility for Coordination of all Services on the site of a Major Emergency.

Responsibility for leading coordination then rests with the lead agency once that has been decided. The mechanism for determination of Lead Agency is laid down in Appendix 1.

6.8 How mutual aid and regional level co-ordination will operate.

Each Controller of Operations should ensure that, where the resources of his/her individual principal response agency do not appear to be sufficient to bring a situation under control, or the duration of an incident is extended, support is obtained via mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring principal response agencies/Local Authorities. As they are national organisations, the Crisis Management Teams of the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána should arrange to provide the additional support when requested. Local Authorities will support each other on a mutual aid basis.

6.9 How incidents occurring on the Council boundaries are to be dealt with.

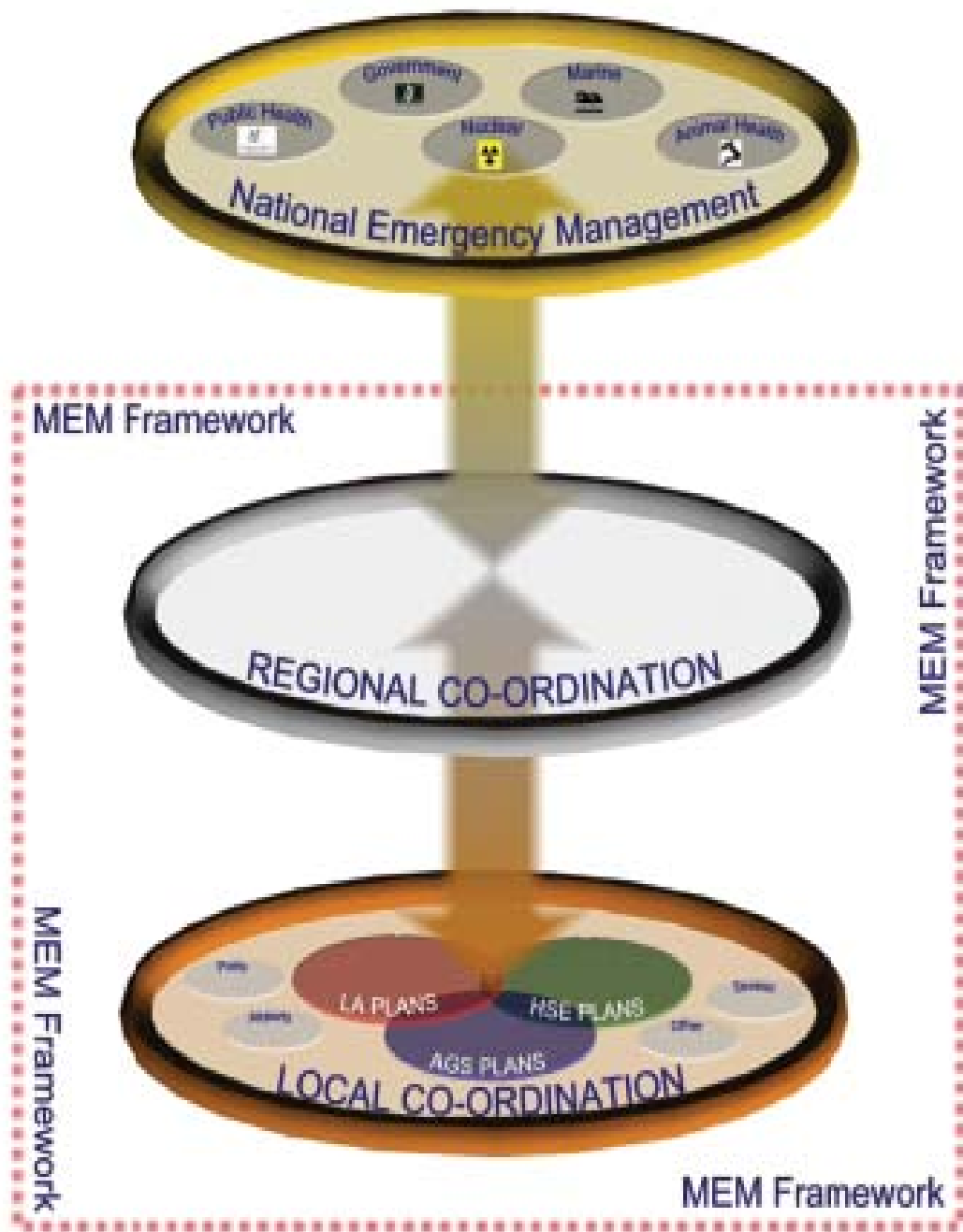
Where incidents occur at, or close to, the County boundary, where the Local Authorities is determined as the Lead Agency, the Controller of Operations of each Local Authorities involved shall convene to determine who will assume control of the incident.

6.10 How multi-site or wide area emergencies are to be dealt with.

Where the emergency involves a number of sites or where by its nature the geographical extent is large, it would be recommended that the operation be sectorised and that Sector Commanders be appointed. The Lead Agency Controller of Operations will determine the Sector areas and the Sector Commanders who will report directly to the Controller of Operations.

6.11 How links with National Emergency Plans will operate.

Westmeath Local Authorities will respond to and activate the appropriate aspect of its Major Emergency Plan in response to requests from the national body following an emergency incident that affects the population on a National Level.



Linking Major Emergency Plans with National Plans and Other Plans

Section 7

The Common Elements of Response

- 7.1 Declaration of a Major Emergency.
- 7.2 Initial Mobilisation.
- 7.3 Command, Control and Communication Centre(s), which will be used to Mobilise, Support and Monitor Westmeath Local Authorities Response.
- 7.4 Co-ordination Centres.
- 7.5 Communications Facilities.
- 7.6 Exercising the Lead Agency's Co-ordination Roles.
- 7.7 Public Information.
- 7.8 The Media.
- 7.9 Site Management Arrangements.
- 7.10 Mobilising Additional Resources.
- 7.11 Casualty and Survivor Arrangements.
- 7.12 Emergencies involving Hazardous Materials.
- 7.13 Protecting Threatened Populations.
- 7.14 Early and Public Warning Systems.
- 7.15 Emergencies arising on Inland Waterways.
- 7.16 Safety, Health and Welfare Considerations.
- 7.17 Logistical Issues/ Protracted Incidents.
- 7.18 Investigations.
- 7.19 Community/ VIPs/ Observers.
- 7.20 Standing-Down the Major Emergency.

7.1 Declaration of a Major Emergency.

The Major Emergency Plan will be activated by whichever of the following agencies first becomes aware of the major emergency:-

- a. Westmeath Local Authorities
- b. An Garda Síochána
- c. Health Service Executive

The message to declare a major emergency will be in the following format:

**This is (Name, rank and service)
A Major Emergency has occurred/is imminent at (Location)
As an authorised officer I declare that a major emergency exists.
Please activate the mobilisation arrangements in the (Agency)
Major Emergency Plan.**

After the declaration is made the Officer should then use the mnemonic **METHANE** to structure and deliver an information message.

- | | |
|---|--|
| M | Major Emergency Declared. |
| E | Exact location of the emergency. |
| T | Type of Emergency (Transport, Chemical, etc.). |
| H | Hazards, present and potential. |
| A | Access / egress routes/Rendezvous Point. |
| N | Number and type of Casualties. |
| E | Emergency service present and required. |

7.2 Initial Mobilisation.

Westmeath Local Authorities Major Emergency Mobilisation Procedure will be implemented immediately on notification of the declaration of a major emergency. The initial mobilisation will be facilitated through Camp East. When this Plan has been activated, all Local Authority services shall respond in accordance with pre-determined arrangements (Action Plans), see Appendix 2.

In some situations, there may be an early warning of an impending emergency. Mobilisation within Westmeath Local Authorities may include moving to a standby/alert stage for some of its services or specific individuals, until the situation becomes clearer.

There may also be circumstances where the resources or expertise of agencies other than the principal response agencies will be required. In these situations the relevant arrangements outlined in the Major Emergency Plan will be invoked. No third party should respond to the site of a major emergency unless mobilised by one of the principal response agencies through an agreed procedure.

7.3 Command, Control and Communication Centre(s), which will be used to Mobilise, Support and Monitor Westmeath Local Authorities Response.

Initially Camp East will be the control centre tasked with mobilisation and monitoring the immediate response to the major emergency. CAMP East is also responsible for the Local Co-ordination Centre mobilisation procedures laid down in Appendix 3. Once the Local Co-Ordination Centre is set up by the Lead Agency Controller of

Operations CAMP East will be notified and control and monitoring of the incident will pass to the Local Co-Ordination Centre.

7.4 Co-ordination Centres.

An on-site co-ordination center will be deployed in the event of a major emergency for on-site operational support and command. This will be a dedicated vehicle, tent or an adjacent building that will accommodate all Principle Reponses Agencies operation controllers.

In the event that an Incident Command Vehicle is available for deployment then the Rostered Senior Fire Officer will be responsible for ensuring that this vehicle will be deployed to the Emergency Site. This vehicle will act as the On-Site headquarters for the On-Site Coordination team who will mobilise, support and monitor the principle emergency services and other services of the local Authorities from here.

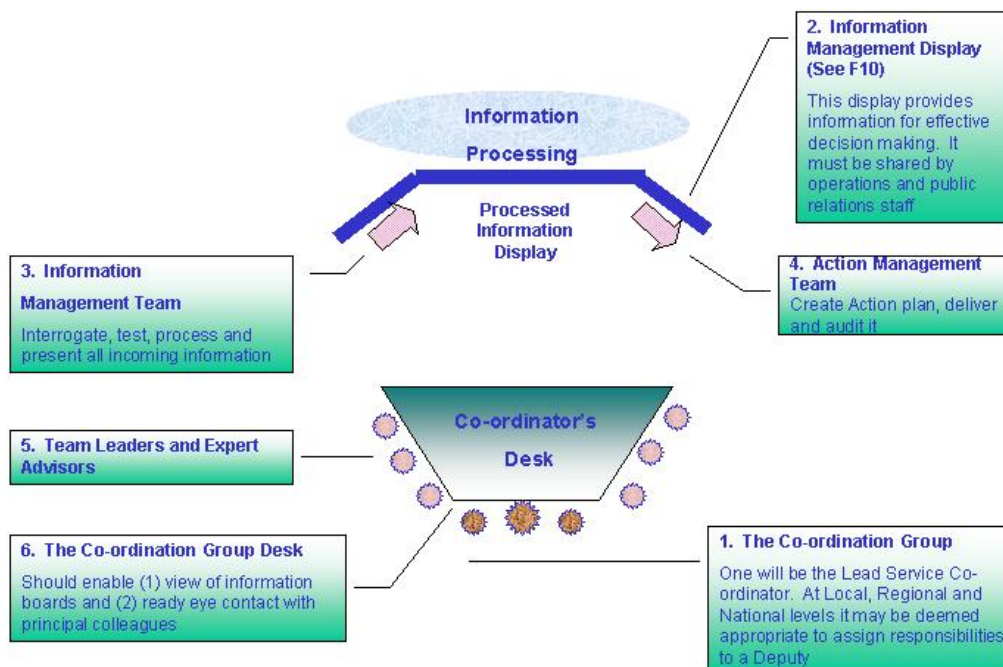
The **Crisis Management Team (CMT)** and **Local (Off-site) Coordination Group** will mobilise to the County Buildings, Mullingar that is laid out to act as an off-site centre. Once the Local Coordination centre is established this will become the inter agency coordination centre for the three Primary Response Agencies.

Alternative venues for CMT and Off-Site Coordination will be Town Council Offices Athlone and the fire stations within the county.

It has been decided that in the event of a major emergency in Westmeath the following locations will be used as **Local Co-ordination Centre** -

- County Council Chambers in Mount Street, Mullingar.
- Alternative Co-ordination Centre will be located at the Town Council Offices, Athlone in the event that County Buildings is inaccessible due to the nature and location of the major emergency.
- All fire stations within the county will also be available in the event that the venues listed above are not available.

All Co-ordination Centres will follow a generic model of operation as below:



© Octo 2006

Figure 7.1 a schematic of a Local Authorities Generic Co-ordination Centre.

In the event of a **Regional Major Emergency** being declared the chair of the Local Co-Ordination group will decide where the Regional Co-Ordination Centre will be located, this will usually be at the most conveniently located Local Co-Ordination Centre. The Regional Co-Ordination Centre will be staffed by the pre-determined personnel of that County's Major Emergency support team.

The purpose of **Information Management** in a major emergency is to facilitate decision-making. Decision-makers in major emergency situations should have access to accurate and timely information on which to make critical decisions. Thus great efforts should be made to generate information for decision-makers that is as timely, accurate and as clear as possible.

Westmeath Local Authorities has trained Information Management Officers that will be dispatched to the scene and to co-ordination centres to support the work of the On-site Co-ordinator and the chairs of the Local and Regional Co-ordination Groups.

Please refer to Appendices 3 & 4 - Information Management Team for details regarding the personnel required to perform information management functions at the scene and at the Local Co-ordination Centre and Crisis Management Team.

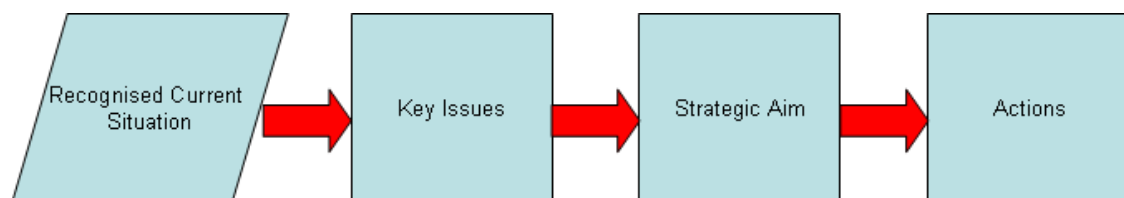


Figure 7.2 A schematic of Generic Information Management System that will be incorporated by Westmeath Local Authorities.

7.5 Communications Facilities.

Westmeath Local Authorities rely on technical communication facilities to enable it to function and for different units to communicate, both at the site and between the site and its command, control or communications centre during a major emergency. Radio and other communications facilities are vital tools for the Westmeath Local Authorities.

Fire Service -

All front line appliances are equipped with radios and have the ability to communicate with each other and all fire stations within the functional area of Westmeath County Council. Also the fire service has hand held UHF radios available on all its appliances which will be used on site for internal fire service communications.

Civil Defence -

Communication equipment can also be supplied by the Civil Defence. The Civil Defence uses both private mobile radio (VHF) for communication between vehicles and communication centres and hand-portable radio (UHF) for communication on site.

Local Authorities Engineering -

Area Engineering vehicles are equipped with radios and have the ability to communicate within the functional area of Westmeath Local Authorities. This will provide the engineering department will internal communication network during the emergency.

An onsite co-ordination centre will be deployed in the event of a major emergency for onsite operational support and command. This may be a dedicated vehicle, tent or an adjacent building that will accommodate all Principle Responses Agencies.

It is critical that robust arrangements for **inter-agency communication on site(s)** are provided for this purpose. The fire service will also bring a set of hand-portable radios, dedicated specifically to inter-agency communication.

Communications between the site and the co-ordination centre will be facilitated by way of satellite telephones, which will be supplied by Westmeath Local Authorities to the three PRAs. All communication between On-site Co-ordination and the Local Co-ordination shall pass between the Controller of Operations / On-site Co-ordinator to the Crisis Management Team, supported by the work of trained Information Management Officers at the scene and at the co-ordination centres.

7.6 Exercising the Lead Agency's Co-ordination Roles.

There are two mechanisms for determining and designating the lead agency, which are to be applied in sequence by the three Controllers of Operations at the Site. They are as follows:

- a. Pre-nomination in accordance with the table provided in Appendix 1. This method pre-nominates the lead agency for various types of incident and this should be the primary method of determination for the lead agency.
- b. In the event that the emergency does not fall into the categorisations of the table in Appendix 1 then the lead agency by 'default' is Westmeath Local Authorities.
- c. Rapid determination of the lead agency is essential as this in turn determines which of the three Controllers of Operations is to act as the On-Site Co-ordinator.

The lead agency role may change over time, to reflect the changing circumstances of the major emergency. **Ownership of the lead agency mantle should be reviewed at appropriate stages of the major emergency.** All changes in lead agency designation emanating from the site, and the timing thereof, will be by agreement of the three Controllers of Operations, and should be recorded and communicated as per the initial determination. As the emphasis of operations may shift from the site to other areas, the Local Co-ordination Group may review the issue and determine a change in the lead agency, as appropriate.

In the event of Westmeath Local Authorities been assigned the Lead Agency role, it will be assigned the responsibility for the co-ordination function (in addition to its own functions) and it should lead all the co-ordination activity associated with the emergency both on-site and off-site, and make every effort to achieve a high level of co-ordination. The function of the lead agency for any emergency includes ensuring:

- coordination of the three PRA's and their principal emergency services in information sharing on the developing emergency situation;
- recruitment and coordination of non PRA organisations who may be requested to respond;
- that mandated co-ordination decisions are made promptly and communicated to all involved;
- that site management issues are addressed and decided;
- that public information messages and media briefings are co-ordinated and implemented;
- that pre-arranged communications (technical) links are put in place and operating;
- that information management systems are put into action ;
- that ownership of the lead agency role is reviewed, and modified as appropriate;

- that all aspects of the management of the incident are dealt with before the response is stood down;
- that a report on the co-ordination function is prepared in respect of the emergency after it is closed down, and circulated (first as a draft) to the other services which attended.

7.7 Public Information.

In certain situations, it may be crucial for Westmeath Local Authorities to provide timely and accurate information directly to the public in an emerging or active emergency situation. Members of the public may perceive themselves and their families to be at risk and will be seeking information on actions that they can take to protect themselves and their families.

The Local Co-ordination Group will manage the task of co-ordinating the provision of information to the public as soon as it meets through the Media Liaison Office.

Early warning and special public notices shall be relayed in the event of an emergency. The Public will be kept informed by use of the following;

- National/Local broadcasters
- Emergency helpline service
- Internet service

On a national level the public shall be informed by use of the following;

- Television and Radio – arrangements exist whereby emergency announcements will be made on RTÉ television and radio channels.
- Television Text Services –will be used to provide more information than would be communicable by emergency calls or broadcasts.
- ◆ The appointed Media Liaison Officer shall make arrangements to publicise the emergency telephone numbers and/or the location of public information offices.

See Appendix 17 for Media Contact details.

7.8 The Media

It is important to realise that the Media will respond very quickly to any incident and this media presence may extend to days and even weeks. It is the responsibility of the lead agency to establish a Media Centre at or near the site of the emergency for use by the principal response agencies in dealing with the media at the site.

Each principal response agency will designate a Media Liaison Officer at the site and at the Local Coordination Centre and the activities of the Media Liaison Officers will be co-ordinated by the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency in both locations.

There shall be a **Media Liaison Officer** for Westmeath Local Authorities appointed at both the **On-site and Off-site Co-ordination Centres**.

The Media Liaison Officers must keep accurate and timely information on the emergency so that:

- He/She can be the point of contact for all media enquiries.
- He/She can answer information queries from the general public.
- He/She can obtain and provide information from/to Rest Centres, other agencies, press officers, local radio, press etc.
- He/She will be responsible for setting up an information helpline.
- He/She will liaise with the Media Liaison Officers from the other two PRA's.

The Local/Regional Co-ordination Group should take the lead in terms of **working with the media, away from the site**, during a major emergency. As with arrangements at the

site, each principal response agency should designate a Media Liaison Officer at the Local Coordination Centre and the activities of the Media Liaison Officers should be co-ordinated by the Media Liaison Officer of the lead agency. All statements to the media at this level should be cleared with the chair of the Local/Regional Co-ordination Group. This media liaison group will be allocated a room in which to work and liaise with the media at the Local Coordination Centre.

In these situations the Media Liaison Officer will in conjunction with the Media Liaison Officers of the Health Services Executive and An Garda Síochána respectively make suitable **arrangements for the media at all locations associated with the emergency.**

7.9 Site Management Arrangements.

Westmeath Local Authorities shall appoint a Controller of Operations at the site (or at each site) of the emergency, see section 6.2 of this document. The initial important task of the Controller of Operations in association with the other two Controllers is the development of a Site Management Plan. Once agreed, the resulting site plan should be implemented and disseminated to all responding groups.

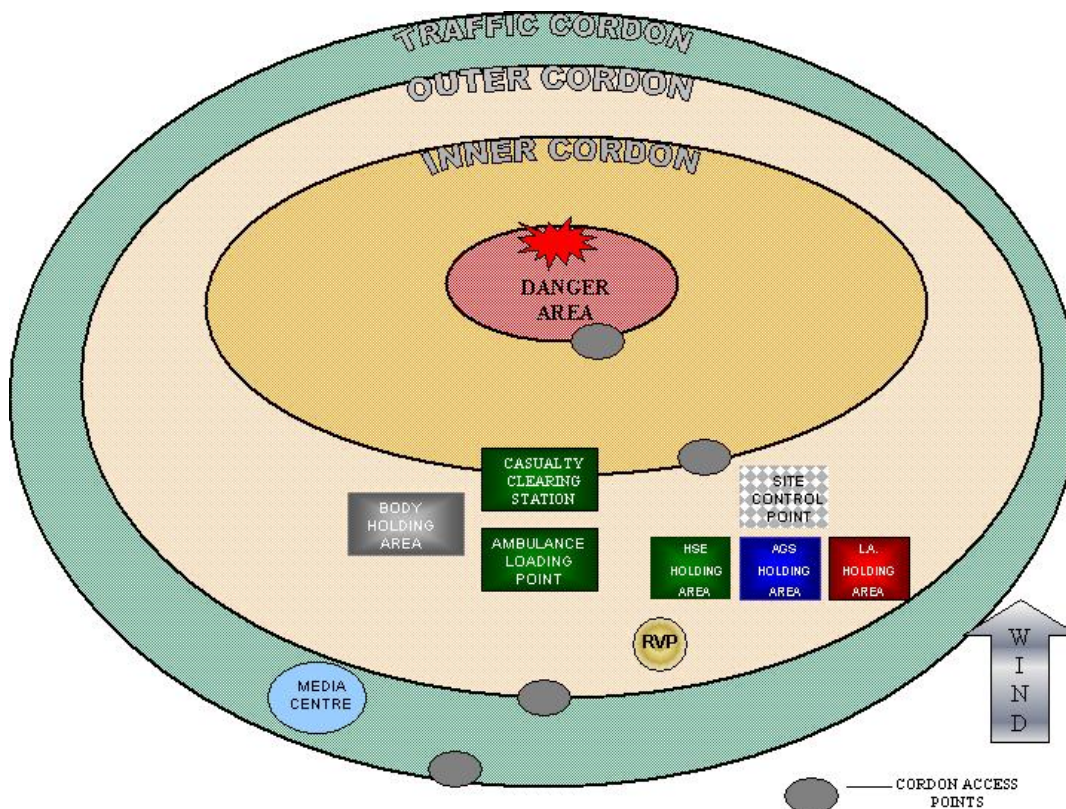


Figure 7.1: Idealised Scene Management Arrangements

The main components of a typical Site Plan should contain some or all of the following:

- Inner, Outer and Traffic Cordons;
- A Danger Area, if appropriate;
- Cordon and Danger Area Access Points;
- Rendezvous Point;
- Site Access Routes;
- Holding Areas for the Different Services;
- Principal Response Agency Control Points;
- On-Site Co-ordination Centre;

- Survivor Reception Centre;
- Friends and Relative;
- Reception Centre;
- Media Centre.
- Ambulance Loading Area;
- Casualty Clearing Station;
- Site Control Point.

In order to facilitate an effective and efficient response to an emergency it is important to **control access to the site** as quickly as possible.

Three cordons will be established. An Inner, Outer and Traffic Cordon, along with access cordon points see Appendix 8 for detailed information. An Garda Síochána will carry out this task after a decision by and agreement with the On-site Co-Ordination Group.

A Danger Area may also be declared where there is a definite risk to rescue personnel, over and above that which would normally pertain at emergency operations. See Scene Management Arrangement diagram above.

Identification of Personnel at the Site of a Major Emergency -

All uniformed personnel, responding to the site of a major emergency, should wear their prescribed uniform, including high visibility and safety clothing, issued by their agency. The service markings on this clothing will be made known in advance to the other organisations that may be involved in the response.

Senior personnel who are acting in key roles, such as the On-Site Co-ordinator and the Controllers of Operations, should wear bibs designed and coordinated as laid down in Appendix 7. (See examples below)

Non-uniformed personnel from Westmeath Local Authorities should attend the scene in high visibility jacket issued by Westmeath Local Authorities and their job function clearly displayed.

When the lead agency has been determined, the On-Site Coordinator should don a distinctive bib with the words On-Site Coordinator clearly visible front and back.

Senior personnel who are acting in key roles, such as the On-Site Coordinator and the Controllers of Operations, will wear bibs as indicated in the table below;

Organisation	Bib Colour	Wording
Health Service Executive	Green and White Chequer	HSE Controller
Local Authorities	Red and White Chequer	Local Authorities Controller
An Garda Síochána	Blue and White Chequer	Garda Controller



When the lead agency has been determined, the On-Site Co-ordinator should don a distinctive bib with the words On-Site Co-ordinator clearly visible front and back. Below is an example of how the bibs should look for each of the responding agencies.

Where the principal response agencies consider it appropriate and beneficial, the On-Site Co-ordinator may request, through An Garda Síochána, that the Irish Aviation Authorities declare an **Air Exclusion Zone** around the emergency site. When a

restricted zone above and around the site is declared, it is promulgated by means of a “Notice to Airmen” - NOTAM - from the Irish Aviation Authorities.

7.10 Mobilising Additional Resources.

The Voluntary Emergency Services sector can provide additional support, personnel and equipment in the event of a major emergency. Details of some of the local Voluntary Emergency Services, the resources they can provide and their mobilisation procedure are outlined in Appendix 14.

Voluntary Emergency Services will link to one of the Principal Response Agencies and some of the more common ones are shown in the Table below.

Principal Response Agency	Linked Voluntary Emergency Service
An Garda Síochána	Irish Mountain Rescue Association Irish Cave Rescue Association Search and Rescue Dogs Sub-Aqua Teams River Rescue
Health Service Executive	Irish Red Cross Order of Malta Ambulance Corps St. John’s Ambulance
Local Authorities	Civil Defence

Each Principal Response Agency with a linked Voluntary Emergency Services is responsible for the mobilisation of that service and their integration into the overall response. The internal command of volunteer organisations resides within its own organisation.

Mobilisation of Civil Defence –

The Civil Defence will play an important role in the event of an major emergency being declared within the functional area of Co. Westmeath. The Civil Defence will provide essential emergency services which are an important resource for use in major incidents in support to the Principle Response Agencies. The Civil Defence in Co. Westmeath is an organisation comprising almost entirely of volunteers. All requests for Civil Defence assistance will be channeled through Westmeath Local Authorities Controller of Operations. The Civil Defence Officer will be alerted who in turn will mobilise the Civil Defence via SMS text system.

See Appendix 13 for more detail.

Mobilisation of Defence Forces -

In the event of a major emergency, the Defence Forces will operate under the provisions of the Defence Acts 1954 to 1998, as amended, and in accordance with agreed Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs). See Appendix 12.

Mobilisation of the Irish Red Cross -

The main relationship for the Red Cross with the principle response agencies in major emergency response is an auxiliary resource to the ambulance service.

Please refer to section 4.4 of this document, details also given in Appendix 14.

Mobilisation of Utilities – ESB, Eircom, etc -

Utilities are frequently involved in the response to emergencies, usually to assist the principal response agencies in making situations safe. They may also be directly involved in restoring their own services, for example, electricity supply in the aftermath of a storm.

Utilities operate under their own legislative and regulatory frameworks but, during the response to an emergency, it is important that they are involved in the co-ordination arrangements. Utilities may be requested to provide representatives and/or experts to the On-Site Co-ordination Group, the Local Coordination Group and/or the Regional Co-ordination Group, as appropriate. A list of utilities and their emergency/out of hours contact arrangements are listed in Appendix 15.

Mobilisation of Private Sector -

Private sector representatives and/or experts may be requested to support the work of the On-Site Co-ordination Group, the Local Co-ordination Group and/or the Regional Co-ordination Group, as appropriate. A list of experts and equipment within the private sector is detailed in Appendix 16.

Arrangements for identifying and mobilising additional organisations that it may be appropriate to mobilize -

The Westmeath Local Authorities Controller of Operations should ensure that, where the resources of the Authorities do not appear to be sufficient to bring a situation under control, or the duration of an incident is expected to be extended, the levels, types and duration of assistance/ support are identified, and that the request for support is passed to either the Crisis Management Team or the Local Co-ordination Centre who will arrange to obtain the support via mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring authorities. Where resources that are held at a national level are required as part of the management of the incident, requests for those resources should be directed by the lead agency to the Lead Government Department through the Local Co-ordination Group.

Arrangements for liaison with utilities -

Utility companies are frequently involved in the response to emergencies, usually to assist the Principal Response Agencies in making situations safe. Requests for assistance from various utility companies will be made by the lead agency Controller of Operations. See Appendix 15 for utility company contact details.

Arrangements for integration of casual volunteers as appropriate -

Where the On-Site Co-ordinator determines that casual volunteers may be engaged within the cordons of the emergency site, they will be issued with orange armbands emblazoned with the word 'Volunteer' or suitable abbreviation, e.g. 'VOL', by Civil Defence, with whom they will be offered a temporary volunteer status.

Arrangements for Command, Control, Co-ordination and Demobilisation of Organisations Mobilised to the Site -

Command, control and coordination of any organisation at the site rests with the PRA responsible for their initial mobilisation. All organizations mobilised to the site will only be demobilized through the PRA responsible for their initial mobilization.

Operation of Mutual Aid Arrangements -

Westmeath Local Authorities Controller of Operations should ensure that, where the resources of the authority do not appear to be sufficient to bring a situation under control, or the duration of an incident is expected to be extended, the levels, types and duration of assistance/ support are identified, and that the request for support is passed to either the authority's Crisis Management Team or the Local Co-ordination Centre who will arrange to obtain the support via mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring authorities. See Appendix 11.

Requests for Out-of-Region Assistance -

Where resources that are held at a national level are required as part of the management of the incident, requests for those resources should be directed by the lead agency to the Lead Government Department.

The European Community has also established a Community Mechanism to facilitate the provision of assistance between the member states in the event of major emergencies. The decision to seek assistance from outside the region will be made by the lead agency, in association with the other principal response agencies, at the Local/Regional Coordination Centre. The Local/Regional Co-ordination Group should identify and dimension the level/type of assistance likely to be required and its duration. It should also seek to identify the possible options for sourcing such assistance, be that from neighbouring regions, elsewhere in the state, from Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom or from other EU member states.

7.11 Casualty & Survivor Arrangements.

The primary objective of any response by Westmeath Local Authorities to a major emergency is to provide effective arrangements for the rescue, care, treatment and rehabilitation of all of the individuals who are affected by the emergency.

Arrangements for the Rescue and Care of all Casualties and Survivors and the Councils role in this -

The On-Site Co-ordinator, in association with the other Controllers, will need to make an early assessment of the casualty situation and identify if there are particular aspects which may impact on casualty management, such as, significant numbers of disabled, sick or immobile persons involved, and take action accordingly.

Individuals may be divided into two main categories as follows:

- Casualties, including persons who are killed or injured,
- Survivors. These include all those individuals who are caught up in an emergency but not injured, such as, uninjured passengers from a transport accident or evacuees.

Injured People -

At the site of a major emergency, the priorities of the principal response services are to save life, prevent further injury, rescue those who are trapped or in danger, triage casualties, provide them with appropriate treatment and transport them to the appropriate hospital(s) where necessary.

Ambulance paramedics and technicians need to be able to administer the appropriate pre-hospital treatment before the patients are taken to the receiving hospitals. Westmeath Local Authorities's response will assist in achievement of these priorities as listed above.

Arrangements for the Triage, Treatment and Transport to Hospital, where necessary, of all Injured Persons and the Councils Role in this -

Once injured casualties have been rescued or found, they will be assessed or triaged as quickly as possible. Triage is a process of casualty assessment that quickly sorts out casualties into priority groups. Triage is set up and run by the Health Service Executive representative on the ground and Westmeath Local Authorities will provide any possible assistance.

Arrangements for transporting Lightly Injured and Uninjured Persons from the Site and the Councils Role in this -

It should be noted that while some casualties will be transported to the Receiving Hospital(s) by the Ambulance Service, some casualties may leave the site by other means and may arrive at the designated Receiving Hospital(s), or other hospitals, in cars, buses, etc.

Westmeath Local Authorities has a list of available Private Business Operators who can provide transport in emergency situation when required. These Private operators are listed in Appendix 16.

Arrangements for a Casualty Clearing Station, Ambulance Loading Point, the Designation of Receiving Hospitals and the Distribution of Injured Casualties are all the Responsibility of the Health Services Executive (HSE) -

The Ambulance Service, of the HSE, will establish the **Casualty Clearing Station**. At this location the casualties are collected, further triaged, treated, as necessary, and prepared for transport to hospital. The HSE Controller will, in consultation with the Site Medical Officer and the designated receiving hospitals, decide on the hospital destination of casualties.

Fatalities -

The bodies of casualties, which have been triaged as dead, should not be moved from the incident site unless this is necessary to affect the rescue of other casualties. The only other circumstance where bodies should be moved, before the Garda evidence collection process is complete, is if they are likely to be lost or damaged due to their location or the nature of the incident.

Bodies to be moved should be photographed first and their original position clearly marked and recorded. The recovery of the dead and human remains is part of an evidence recovery process and, as such, is the responsibility of An Garda Síochána acting as agents of the Coroner. Westmeath Local Authorities can assist An Garda Síochána in this function.

Specify the Coroners Role and how the Council Supports this -

The Coroner is an independent judicial officer, who has responsibility for investigating all sudden, unexplained, violent or unnatural deaths. It is the task of the Coroner to establish the 'who, when, where and how' of unexplained death. All such deaths in Ireland are investigated under the Coroners' Act, 1962.

An Garda Síochána are responsible for mobilising the coroner to the emergency site when required.

The Coroner, with the assistance of An Garda Síochána, has overall responsibility for the identification of bodies and remains and s/he is entitled to exclusive possession and control of a deceased person until the facts about their death have been established. A full post-mortem and forensic examination will be carried out on every body from a major emergency and each death will be the subject of an Inquest. A Pathologist, who acts as the 'Coroners Agent' for this purpose, carries out the post-mortem.

Specify Arrangements for Dealing with Fatalities, both On and Off-Site including Body Holding Areas and Temporary Mortuaries and the Councils Role in this -

The On-Site Co-ordinator, in association with the other Controllers, will decide if it is necessary to establish a Body Holding Area at the site. The Body Holding Area, if established, should be situated close to the Casualty Clearing Station. Members of An Garda Síochána will staff this area and they will maintain the necessary logs to ensure the continuity of evidence.

It should be noted that the Body Holding Area is not the appropriate place for the prolonged storage of the dead and appropriate arrangements should be made to ensure minimal delay in moving bodies to a mortuary (temporary or otherwise).

Survivor Reception Centre -

A Survivor Reception Centre should be designated and established at the earliest possible opportunity. The On-Site Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the other Controllers, should determine if such a centre is to be established, and its location in the site management plan. It is the responsibility of Westmeath Local Authorities to establish and run this centre.

Westmeath Local Authorities has identified the following as suitable types of buildings for setting up a survivor centre;

- Recreation Centres
- Parish Halls
- Local Churches
- Local Schools
- Any other building that is large enough to accommodate large amounts of people.

A list of suitable locations within Westmeath is listed in Appendix 18.

Casualty information -

Dedicated telephone help lines should be established to facilitate the dissemination of casualty Information to concerned friends or relatives of those involved in the major emergency. See below.

The Casualty Bureau will be Operated by An Garda Síochána -

In the event of a major emergency involving significant numbers of casualties, An Garda Síochána will establish a Casualty Bureau to collect and collate the details (including condition and location) of all casualties and survivors.

To facilitate establishment of the Casualty Bureau, a liaison/casualty officer will normally be sent by An Garda Síochána to each hospital where casualties are being treated. Westmeath Local Authorities may assist in the collection and collation of casualty data. This information may then be used to provide to family and friends. Any information collected on any casualty is transferred via An Garda Síochána to the Casualty Bureau, who will generally set up an information hot line, in order that concerned family and friend may inquire about 'loved ones'.

Friends and Relatives Reception Centres -

The purpose of a reception centre is to provide a comfortable area where friends and relatives of those involved in the incident (primarily the casualties and survivors) can be directed for information. The Local Co-ordination Group will determine the need for and arrange for the designation and operation/staffing of such centres.

A building used as a Friends' and Relatives' Reception Centre should be secure from media intrusion and contain sufficient room to afford privacy to families receiving information about relatives. There will also be a need for a reliable process to establish the credentials of friends and relatives.

Non-National Casualties -

In some incidents an emergency may involve significant numbers of casualties from other jurisdictions. In such circumstances the Local Co-ordination Centre should notify the relevant embassy if the nationality of the victims is known. The Department of Justice through An Garda Síochána should be approached if assistance is required in obtaining interpreters from private sector providers. Generally the local Garda Station will have a list of approved interpreters which may be call upon in the event of an emergency. The Department of Foreign Affairs (which operates an out of hours Duty Officer System) should also be approached for appropriate assistance and liaison purposes (see Appendix 17).

Pastoral & Psycho-Social Care -

The On-Site Co-ordinator needs to ensure that, where appropriate, pastoral services are mobilised to the site and facilitated by the principal response agencies in their work with casualties and survivors. Similarly, individual services should make arrangements for necessary pastoral services at any other locations associated with the emergency, such as hospitals and reception centres, see Appendix 20.

7.12 Emergencies Involving Hazardous Materials.

Councils Role in Dealing with Major Hazardous Materials -

Westmeath Local Authorities is the lead agency for response to hazardous materials incidents which happen within the boundaries of Westmeath, with the exception of those involving biological agents.

Where terrorist involvement is suspected, An Garda Síochána will act as the lead agency. In these instances, The Defence Forces, when requested, will assist An Garda Síochána in an Aid to the Civil Power role with Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams.

Councils Role in Dealing with CCBRN Incidents -

Details of specific actions to be taken in the event of a CCBRN (CCBRN meaning terrorist incidents involving C - conventional explosives; C - chemical substances; B - biological agents; R - radiological and N - nuclear material) incident are detailed in the Protocol for Multi-Agency Response to Suspect Chemical and Biological Agents. These protocols deal with a range of matters relevant to managing such incidents, including the identification of the materials involved. They also provide for involvement of the National Poisons Information Centre and the National Virus Reference Laboratory. The protocol is available on www.mem.ie.

The Defence Forces when mobilized by An Garda Síochána will assist in accordance with current Service Level Agreements in dealing with incidents of a CCBRN nature.

Sub-Plan/ Protocol/ Code Instruction for Dealing with Biological Incidents (such as the suspected Anthrax Incidents of 2001) -

Details of specific actions to be taken in the event of a biological incident are detailed in the Protocol for Multi-Agency Response to Suspect Chemical and Biological Agents issued by DOEHLG and available on their web site www.mem.ie.

Linking the Major Emergency Plan with the Sub-Plan on response to activation of the National Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Plan -

For infectious diseases such as Avian Flu, Pandemic Flu, Foot and Mouth there will be a link to the National Plan as outlined by the government. Westmeath Local Authorities will provide assistance under the command of the lead government department.

Linking the Major Emergency Plan with the Sub-Plan on response to Activation of the National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents -

Details of specific actions to be taken in the event of a local radiological emergency or the activation of the National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents are detailed in the Protocol for Multi-Agency Response to Radiological/ Nuclear Emergencies (in Draft) issued by DOEHLG and available on their web site www.mem.ie.

Arrangements for Clinical, Personnel and Mass Decontamination and the Councils Role in each -

The On-Site Co-ordinator, in association with the other Controllers of Operations, will establish the need for decontamination.

- ◆ Where emergency decontamination of the public is required, Westmeath Fire Service will deploy its fire-fighter decontamination facilities, based in Mullingar to facilitate decontamination.
- ◆ Where it is decided that persons should undergo decontamination it should be carried out under the guidance of medical personnel.
- ◆ It should be noted that emergency decontamination carries risks for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and the injured. It may be more appropriate in certain circumstances for outer clothing to be removed and blankets provided as a temporary measure to alleviate potential harm through surface contact with contaminants.

The Health Service Executive has responsibility for providing clinical decontamination and medical treatment to casualties affected by hazardous materials at the site.

7.13 Protecting Threatened Populations.

The On-Site Co-ordinator will take the decision on how best to protect a threatened population, after consultation with the other Controllers of Operations. This protection is usually achieved by moving people temporarily to a safe area, by evacuation where appropriate or feasible, or by advising affected individuals to take shelter in an appropriate place.

Evacuation Arrangements including Evacuee Reception Centres, Accommodation and Welfare Arrangements -

Evacuation is usually undertaken on the advice of the Fire Service or Health Service Executive. Where decided upon, An Garda Síochána will undertake the process of evacuation, with the assistance of the other services. In some circumstances, personnel from all services may have to assist in carrying it out. A suitable evacuation assembly point will need to be established and rest centres set up by the Westmeath Local Authorities. See 7.11 above.

Personnel from Westmeath Authorities and from voluntary agencies will staff rest centres. The centres will provide security, welfare, communication, catering and medical facilities. Evacuees should be documented and details passed on to the Casualty Bureau which is manned and controlled by An Garda Síochána.

Westmeath Civil Defence will provide assistance in administration of these facilities.

7.14 Early & Public Warning Systems.

How the Council Monitors Potentially Hazardous Situations and Decides when to Issue Warnings and how these Warnings are to be Created -

All public warnings are to be issued via the designated Media Liaison Officer.

Met Éireann operates a "Public Service Severe Weather Warning" system whereby they notify Local Authorities where weather conditions are forecast to meet specified criteria. AA Roadwatch also provides effective early warning information through the media for traffic situations.

In certain situations where the forecast weather is sufficiently severe the members of the Crisis Management Team are to be notified.

In addition Emergency Broadcasts may be required for:

- Hazard Warnings to the Community
- Road Traffic Control

How Warnings are to be Disseminated -

Warnings may be disseminated to the public by use of some or all of the following mediums:

- Door to Door
- Radio and T.V. broadcasting
- Local helpline / information line
- Web services and internet services
- Automated Text services

7.15 Emergencies Arising on Inland Waterways.

Local Arrangements for Liaison with the Irish Coast Guard -

The Framework provides that An Garda Síochána should be the principal response agency to undertake initial co-ordination at inland waterway emergencies. After the initial response, this role may be re-assigned, following consultation between the Irish Coast Guard and An Garda Síochána.

Irish Coast Guard Responsibility in relation to Inland Waterway Emergencies -

The Irish Coast Guard has responsibility for receiving 999/112 calls and the mobilising of resources to Inland Waterway emergencies. Civil Defence may be requested to provide

support to the Coast Guard in the carrying out of its functions in respect of emergencies arising on Inland Waterways

7.16 Safety, Health & Welfare Considerations.

Responsibility for Safety, Health & Welfare of Staff and Safety Management Procedures and Preparedness -

Westmeath Local Authorities is responsible for the Safety, Health and Welfare of its staff responding to emergencies and operate its own safety, health and welfare management procedures in relation to meeting its statutory requirements under Section 20 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. These procedures are laid down in the Westmeath Co Co Safety Statement which lays down the detailed arrangements for achieving the objective of employee safety. All employees are made aware of and have access to the Safety Statement and should make themselves familiar with the requirements of the Safety Statement in the conduct of their work.

Command Support Arrangements at the Scene of the Emergency and Responsibility for the Oversight and Management of the Safety of the Councils Rescue Personnel -

When working in the environment of a Major Emergency the On-Site Co-ordinator will apply incident and safety management arrangements. A 'Safety Officer' will be appointed and will have responsibility for the oversight and management of the safety of the Council's rescue personnel. All officers who hold a Command and Control function will be vigilant with regard to the Health and Safety of their own personnel working in the area.

Danger Area Procedures -

The On-site Coordinator should ensure that the safety and health of the Local Authorities staff is not in danger. The On-Site Coordinator must define a Danger Area as part of site management arrangements. Where it is necessary that services continue to operate in a Danger Area, it will apply their normal incident and safety management arrangements, and relevant officers will continue to exercise command over their own personnel working in a Danger Area.

Each service should establish from the On-Site Coordinator if a Danger Area has been defined as part of site management arrangements and, if so, what particular safety provisions may apply.

Procedures and Evacuation Signal for the 'Danger Area' -

Where a situation deteriorates to a point where the officer in charge of the Danger Area decides that it is necessary to withdraw response personnel from a Danger Area, a signal, comprising repeated sounding of a siren for ten seconds on, ten seconds off, will be given. All personnel should withdraw on hearing this signal to a pre-determined safe zone.

Physical Welfare of Responders -

Westmeath County Council will ensure that appropriate rest and refreshment facilities are provided for response personnel at the site. The off-site coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that these facilities are provided and will coordinate all arrangements with Civil Defence. These facilities will include the provision of food and drink, rest facilities and sanitary facilities.

Westmeath Local Authorities has special outdoor staff welfare units available on request.

How the Council will Provide Appropriate Psycho-Social Support for its own Personnel -

Personnel who are particularly traumatized by the Events of a Major Emergency will require skilled professional counselling help to enable full recovery. At present a psycho-

social support consultancy firm “Staffcare”, are available to all front line emergency services for this purpose. This service is currently provided by Westmeath Local Authorities to the fire service. These facilities will be made available to all support staff, even if they are not directly involved at the scene, e.g. administration staff, drivers and communications staff. Currently a ‘Careline’ exists which enables employees to access confidential advice and support 24 hours a day 365 days a year. This type of service ensures confidentiality and overcomes the cultural resistance in the emergency services to such a step.

7.17 Logistical Issues / Protracted Incidents.

Arrangements for Rotation of Front Line Rescue / Field Staff -

In the event that an incident becomes protracted and long Westmeath Local Authorities staff will be relieved in accordance with agreements for rest and recuperation.

Fire crews from neighbouring local authorities in the midlands region may be called upon by Westmeath Fire Service to assist and support an emergency which has become long and protracted.

Specify Arrangements for re-organising normal emergency and other services cover in areas depleted by commitments to the major emergency -

Staff welfare arrangements need to be given a high priority at all times and especially in the recovery stage of an incident. This will ensure that the needs of all staff, both emergency response teams and general staff (including management), are adequately catered for at all times.

Effective post incident welfare arrangements will ensure that a speedy return to normal working will be possible and In addition, the needs of staff that are not directly involved in responding to the incident should also be considered. Those members of staff who continue in their normal work are supporting colleagues involved in the emergency response and may be taking on additional work in the process. They can be as critical to the organisation’s response as those involved at the ‘coalface’.

Arrangements for Initial and Ongoing Welfare for Field Staff -

The Westmeath Local Authorities Controller should ensure that appropriate rest and refreshment facilities are provided for response personnel at the site, as well as for survivors.

Welfare facilities such as toilets etc may also be required and in that event will be supplied by Westmeath Local Authorities. Meals will be provided at all meal times to field staff or every 4/5 hours during an incident. Civil Defence will be the main source of staffing and administration of such needs.

7.18 Investigations.

Site Control and Leading Investigations arising from the Emergency -

The scene of any incident is considered a suspected crime scene by An Garda Síochána and will be preserved until they have made a complete and thorough examination. Once risk to life and other hazards are removed then the scene will be taken over by An Garda Síochána who will need to obtain evidence of the highest possible standard and will require that all evidence is left in situ, unless a threat to life or health prevents this. Statements may be required from the members of Local Authorities staff on their involvement. The decision to hand over the scene to An Garda Síochána will be made by the On-Site Coordinator in consultation with the other controller of operations.

Preservation of Evidence -

The preservation of the site of a major emergency, which results from criminal action, is of paramount importance and should receive a priority rating from the outset by all PRA’s

including Westmeath Local Authorities. The first member(s) of An Garda Síochána to arrive at the site of a major emergency where a suspected crime has been committed automatically incurs the responsibility of preserving the site. While the priority is the protection of life, the provisions of the Framework are intended to assist An Garda Síochána's investigative role.

Other Parties with Statutory Investigation Roles -

Depending on the nature of the Major Emergency, agencies other than An Garda Síochána may require access to the site for the purposes of carrying out an investigation. Some of these agencies include the Health and Safety Authorities (HSA), the Air Accident Investigation Unit (AAIU) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). An Garda Síochána is responsible for carrying out criminal investigations.

Any agency including Westmeath Local Authorities, with an investigative mandate should liaise in the first instance with the On-Site Co-ordinator, who will direct them to the Controller of Operations of An Garda Síochána.

7.19 Community / VIPs / Observers.

How Links are to be established with communities affected by an Emergency -

Where communities are affected by a major emergency every effort should be made to establish contacts/links with the community. Established links such as Community Groups, Public Representative and Community Liaison Officers should be availed of within in the community.

Arrangements for Receiving VIPs who wish to visit -

Public representatives and other dignitaries may wish to attend the site of the emergency, as well as associated facilities, such as hospitals, to express sympathy on behalf of the public to the injured and bereaved, and to support the emergency response workers. All requests for visits to the site or facilities associated with it should be referred to the Local Co-ordination Group.

Visits by dignitaries will usually require security arrangements and liaison with the media. It is important that the organisation of such visits does not distract from the response effort.

As a general rule, VIPs should be advised not to visit sites where dangers still exist or where ongoing rescues are in progress.

Arrangements for National/ International Observers -

National and International observers may request to attend the incident. The presence of experts from other regions or jurisdictions, who wish to act as observers at an incident, can greatly enhance the operational debriefings and facilitate the process of learning lessons from the emergency. The Local Co-ordination Group should control attendance of and make arrangements for any such observers.

7.20 Standing-Down the Major Emergency.

A decision to stand down the major emergency status of the incident at the site should be taken by the On-Site Co-ordinator, in consultation with the other Controllers of Operations at the site and the Local Co-ordination Group.

Agencies which have been mobilised by Westmeath Local Authorities during the response will only be informed of the decision to stand them down by the Controller of Operations of the Westmeath Local Authorities.

It is important to realise that a great deal of activity may continue at the site and at locations other than the site (such as the hospitals, temporary mortuary, etc.) after the major emergency is stood down and Co-ordination Groups may need to continue their work after activities at the site have ceased.

Operation Briefing -

1. When the incident has ended, each agency of Westmeath Local Authorities will debrief the members of its own particular service that were involved in the emergency. This debrief will be done within a week of the end of the major emergency
2. The Chair of the Local Coordination Group will conduct an inter-service debrief within Westmeath Local Authorities to have a coordinated review of the response of all services of Westmeath Local Authorities. This debrief will be conducted within two weeks of the end of the emergency. This debrief will include a review the inter-agency co-ordination aspects of the response from a Westmeath Local Authorities perspective.
3. The Lead Agency for the emergency will ensure that a multi-agency debrief will be held and any lessons learned will be incorporated into a revised Major Emergency Plan within one month of the end of the emergency. This review will also need to involve all non-PRA response services that were part of the response.

Multi-agency debriefs should consider the contribution provided by other, non-emergency service agencies to expand the knowledge and learning process that debriefs should collate. This is notwithstanding the potential conflict of interest that may result in later investigations. This aspect should be considered when inviting agencies other than emergency services to the debrief.

Operational debriefs should identify areas for improvement in procedures, equipment and systems. They should not be forums for criticising the performance of others.

Debriefs should not interfere with or comment on investigations into the incident carried out by investigative or judicial authorities.

Section 8

Agency Specific Elements and Sub-Plans

When planning and preparing for a major emergency it is important that the Major Emergency Plan ties in with existing plans and procedures that are in place within the various Sections of Westmeath County Council Authorities. Some of the Sub-plans included are as follows:

- Business Continuity Plan
- Severe Weather Plans
- Flooding response plan

All such Sub Plans are been updated at present will be attached in an Appendix to this plan when finally approved.

An Event Management plan will be drawn up for each outdoor event within Westmeath Local Authorities area and will be fully inter-operable with this Major Emergency Plan.

- The three national sporting organizations have put in place event management plans for all major events held under their umbrella within the operational area of Westmeath.
- All major cultural events such as music festivals, agricultural shows etc. will be required to put in place an event management plan to cater for unexpected difficulties which may arise.

Section 9

Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination

9.1 How a Regional Level Co-ordination will be declared.

A local response to a major emergency may be scaled up to a regional level where the nature of an emergency requires. The Chair of the Local Co-ordination Group may then declare a regional level emergency and activate the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination. The key provision in ensuring co-ordination of the extended response is the activation of a "Regional Coordination Group".

9.2 Regional Co-ordination Group.

The primary function of the Regional Co-ordination Group is to maintain co-ordination of the principal response agencies involved from the extended "response region". The lead agency which has declared the regional level emergency will convene and chair the Regional Co-ordination Group.

The regional co-ordination centre will become a key information management node, with links to each local co-ordination centre and onward to the lead Government Department and/or National Emergency Co-ordination Centre as appropriate.

The methods of operation of the regional co-ordination centre are similar to those for a Local Co-Ordination Centre.

The Midlands Regional Major Emergency Plan has been reviewed and is available westmeathcoco.ie.

Section 10

Links with National Emergency Plans

10.1 National Emergency Plans.

In the event that a National Emergency Plan is activated the Westmeath Local Authorities Major Emergency Plan may be activated to support it.

There are a number of potential emergencies which if they occur are most likely to be on a national scale some examples are:

- a. Nuclear accidents,
- b. Infectious disease outbreaks (e.g. smallpox, influenza pandemic) or
- c. Outbreaks of animal disease (e.g. foot and mouth, avian flu).

In contrast with major emergencies, the characteristics of these emergencies may include being non-site specific and occurring over an extended time period. In these situations the relevant national emergency plan will be activated by the Lead Government Department or the appropriate national body.

National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents -

Details of specific actions to be taken in the event of a local radiological emergency or the activation of the National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents will be available in the Protocol for Multi-Agency Response to Radiological/ Nuclear Emergencies which will be issued by DOEHLG and available on www.mem.ie

National Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Plan -

Details of specific actions to be taken in the event of an activation of the National Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Plan will be detailed in the Protocol for Multi-Agency Response to Emergencies arising from Infectious Diseases Pandemics which will be issued by DOEHLG and available on [www.mem.ie/](http://www.mem.ie)

Animal Health Plan -

For infectious diseases such as Avian Flu, The Department of Agriculture and Food has an emergency plan designed to contain outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza in poultry should the disease arrive in this country. In the event of an outbreak on a national level of a disease such as the Pandemic Flu, or Foot and Mouth there will be a link to the National Plan as outlined by the government. Westmeath Local Authorities will provide all possible assistance under the command of the lead government department. The Major Emergency Plan may be activated in support of the National Response Plan for such circumstances.

Activation of the Plan in Support of the Irish Coast Guard -

The Westmeath Local Authorities Major Emergency Plan may be activated in response to a request from the Irish Coast Guard, following a threatened or actual emergency in the Irish Maritime Search and Rescue Region. This activation will be initiated by the Department for the Marine through the Department for the Environment Heritage and Local Government.

Activation on Request from a Minister of Government in light of an Emergency/ Crisis Situation -

The Major Emergency Plans of the principal response agencies may be activated in response to a request from a Minister of Government in light of an emergency/crisis situation.

Section 11

Severe Weather/Flooding Response Plans.

11.1 Severe Weather Plan

Severe weather emergencies may involve significant threats to infrastructure and support may be required for vulnerable sections of the community. It has been pre-determined that Westmeath Local Authorities are the lead agency for co-ordinating the response to severe weather events occurring within its operational area.

Arrangements have also been put in place by Met Éireann to issue public service severe weather warnings to Westmeath Local Authorities. The target time for the issuing of a warning is 24 hours before the start of the event, but a warning may be issued up to 48 hours in advance when confidence is high. On Fridays before a holiday period it may be appropriate to issue a preliminary warning or weather watch to Local Authorities.

Roads section of the Westmeath Local Authorities has developed, in draft form, an action plan to deal with severe weather conditions. This will be added to the Major Emergency Plan once a final draft has been approved.

11.2 Flooding Emergencies.

In the event of a flooding emergency within Westmeath the risk assessment process has identified that the areas under most threat are Athlone environs and some parts of Mullingar. Flooding Response Plan is currently being developed for the Athlone Area with a view to adapting and applying this plan to remaining areas within Westmeath.

Section 12

Site and Event Specific Arrangements and Plans

12.1 Reference to the specific plans for the sites / events.

There are both legislative and procedural arrangements, which require that emergency plans be prepared for specific sites or events (e.g. SEVESO sites, airports, ports, major sports events, etc.). Arising from the risk assessment process described in Section 3, Westmeath Local Authorities' Major Emergency Plan has identified sites/events where specific plans/ arrangements need to exist for responding to emergencies. Section 8 makes reference to some of the events in question which will be required to produce these event management plans.

12.2 Seveso sites.

There are currently no sites which fall within the scope of the Seveso Regulations in County Westmeath. It is relevant to note that the pharmaceutical company Élan have a lower tier Seveso facility in Athlone but within Roscommon county boundary. In light of this a response plan is in place by Élan for an incident within its facility which may affect the population of Athlone and a copy of this is retained at Fire Service Headquarters both in Mullingar and Athlone.

Section 13

The Recovery Phase

13.1 Support for Individuals and Communities.

The recovery phase is the process of restoring and rebuilding the local community in the aftermath of an emergency. This process requires a co-ordinated approach from all of the agencies involved.

In particular, it is the function of the Local Co-ordination Group to provide strategic level management for the immediate, medium and long term consequences of an incident. Consequently, at the point when the issues on the agendas of the Co-ordination Groups are largely immediate recovery focused, it may be appropriate for the Local Co-ordination Group to appoint a Recovery Working Group to plan ahead.

The specific requirements for the Local Authorities in the recovery phase are as follows;

- Clean-up
- Rebuilding the Community and infrastructure
- Supporting the recovery of affected communities
- Responding to community welfare needs (e.g. housing, water)
- Restoration of services.

The recovery phase can typically include:

- Assisting the physical and emotional recovery of victims;
- Providing support and services to persons affected by the emergency;
- Clean-up of damaged areas;
- Restoration of infrastructure and public services;
- Supporting the recovery of affected communities;
- Planning and managing community events related to the emergency;
- Investigations/inquiries into the events and/or the response;
- Restoring normal functioning to the principal response agencies; and
- Managing economic consequences.

A structured transition from response to recovery is critical for agencies, both collectively and individually. The recovery stage may be as demanding on the Local Authorities resources and staff of the individual agencies as the emergency itself, as work may extend for a considerable time after the incident.

How public Appeals and External Aid are to be Organised and Managed -

The Local Co-ordination Group and supporting Crisis Management Team will monitor, review and make decisions on all public appeals and external aid requests as required. The final decision on these issues will rest with the Chair of the Local Coordination Group.

13.2 Clean-Up

In the aftermath of an emergency the clean-up operation will be the responsibility of Westmeath Local Authorities. The removal of debris and contaminated waste will be one of the principal concerns. In consultation with the EPA and specialist companies the Local Authorities will commence clean up of a site as soon as possible but without hindering the investigation process. Careful consideration must be provided for the removal of decontaminated debris to locations that will not affect communities.

Environment Section of Westmeath Local Authorities will have a list of companies who can assist in the clean phase of the incident as part of its business continuity plan.

Westmeath Local Authorities will undertake the following functions arising from and in response to a major emergency with respect to Clean up of the area/s affected by the incident;

- Arrange and oversee the clean-up of the affected area/s
- Engage any specialist contractors required to assist with the recovery operations (Environment Section).
- Arrange for the site clearance, demolition, clear up operations, removal and disposal of debris.

13.3 Restoration of Infrastructure and Services.

Restoration of Infrastructure and Services will be a key responsibility of Westmeath Local Authorities Local Coordination Group in the recovery phase of the major emergency. It may be appropriate for the Local Co-ordination Group to appoint a Recovery Working Group to plan ahead during the response phase but in the recovery phase this task will fall to the Crisis Management Team.

Procedures and Arrangements for Monitoring the Situation -

The Crisis Management Team will continue to function until the issues arising in the response phase are more appropriately dealt with by Westmeath Local Authorities' normal management processes. It will be their responsibility to monitor the situation and mobilize senior staff to deal with the crisis as required until the issues arising in the response phase are appropriately dealt with.

In this way, the objectives of prioritising and managing of a protracted crisis can be dealt with effectively, while keeping the day- to-day business running of the Authorities.

Procedures for Liaison with Utilities -

The utility companies may need to be mobilised in the recovery phase in order to provide essential services such as gas, water and electrical supplies and communications facilities. The Crisis Management Team will establish contact with all relevant utilities with regards to restoration/maintenance/or enhancing services to persons affected by the emergency.

How the Order of Priorities are to be Determined -

It is the responsibility of the Local Co-ordination Group together with the Recovery Working Group and/or The Crisis Management Team to priorities events during the recovery phase.

It should be noted that staff welfare arrangements need to be given some priority in the recovery stage of an incident, so that the needs of all staff, both emergency response teams and general staff (including management), are catered for. In addition, the needs of staff that are not directly involved in responding to the incident should also be considered. Those members of staff who continue in their normal work are supporting colleagues in the emergency response and may be taking on additional work in the process. They can be as critical to the organisation's response as those involved at the 'coalface'.

Protection Measures against Continuing Hazards -

Westmeath Local Authorities Local Co-ordination Group and Crisis Management Team will ensure that adequate resources are deployed and managed to prevent further escalation of the emergency while restoring normality to the site or persons affected.

Section 14

Review of the Major Emergency Plan

14.1 Annual review of this plan internally.

An internal review of the Major Emergency Plan will be undertaken by Westmeath Local Authorities on an annual basis.

The review should include;

- Updating the roles of individuals that hold key positions in the Major Emergency plan
- Updating the risk holders within the functional area of Westmeath Local Authorities.
- Update names and numbers of utility companies, private companies etc.
- Review current risk assessments and update as required.

14.2 Annual review of this plan externally at Regional level.

Westmeath Local Authorities' plan will be reviewed externally at Regional Major Emergency Steering & Working Group levels. This review should also take place annually and will include a review of interoperability with plans within the region from the other two principle response agencies the Health Service Executive and An Garda Síochána.

14.3 Review by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

In addition to Westmeath Local Authorities' Major Emergency Plan being reviewed locally and regionally on an annual basis it must also be reviewed and validated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Any issues arising from the review should be referred back to Westmeath Local Authorities for appropriate action.

14.5 After every Live Activation or Exercise Activation, the Major Emergency Plan should be Reviewed and Reported upon.

After every declaration of a major emergency, whether live or exercise and activation of the plan a complete review of the plan will be conducted. In addition to all issues mentioned in part 14.1 above the following aspects are to be reviewed and reported upon:

- The performance of Westmeath Local Authorities in carrying out its functions.
- The performance of the plan as an aid to the response personnel.