



# A FRAMEWORK FOR MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Guidance Document 13  
A Guide to Working with  
Miscellaneous Issues





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## INTRODUCTION TO A GUIDE TO MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

‘A Framework for Major Emergency Management’ (2006) replaces the *Framework for Co-ordinated Response to Major Emergency*, which has underpinned major emergency preparedness and response capability since 1984.

The Framework sets out the arrangements by which the principal response agencies will work together in the management of large-scale incidents.

This *Guide to Miscellaneous Issues* is intended to support the Framework text and to provide additional guidance on particular topics that arise over time. This document will be revised periodically and the version number and date will be altered on each revision

This document is presented as a working draft and as such it is requested that comments and insights that arise during its use are fed back to the national level. Comments should be addressed to:

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Dublin 1.**



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## **1. Introduction**

As the Major Emergency Development Project has been rolled out, issues have arisen which have required the issue of specific guidance from the National Level. Such issues are likely to continue to arise and this Guidance Document is intended as a single reference point for these miscellaneous items of guidance.

The current document (Version 1 - March 2008) includes guidance that was originally issued in December 2007 and January 2008 and also some new guidance that is being presented here for the first time.

## **2. Brief Review of the Risk Assessment Process**

A number of questions have arisen as people have been working through the risk assessment process, subsequent to the workshops. An amalgamated answer to the questions posed is presented below. It is intended that this information will be incorporated into the revision of *A Guide to Risk Assessment in Major Emergency Management* in 2008.

- Risk assessment is undertaken initially within an individual agency, for that agency's functional area, and from the perspective of that agency. Thus, An Garda Síochána will complete a risk assessment for each Division, the HSE for their four Areas and each Local Authority for its functional area. The purpose of this risk assessment is to list all the hazards and complete a hazard record sheet for each one.
- The Principal Response Agencies then meet and undertake the risk assessment for the region. Different regions have approached this in different ways. Some regions have plotted all of the risks and have then chosen the regional risks. Other regions have asked the PRAs around the table to supply their top six. Both approaches can work. The objective is to get an inter-agency perspective on the regional risk assessment. It is expected that different agencies will have plotted similar hazards in different places on the Risk Matrix and that a discussion of the most appropriate positioning of the risk is required.

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- It should be remembered that this risk assessment is not intended as an exact mathematical process, but rather as a basis for realistic planning. The key decisions in the risk assessment process relate to the zones to which each risk belongs - Normal Emergency, Planning and Preparedness, Prevent or Mitigate, or Extendibility. Where an inter-agency group differ on the positioning of a particular hazard between zones, some additional research or consultation with an expert body may be appropriate.
  - When the risk assessment is plotted on the matrix, 6-8 risks should be chosen and scenarios developed based on these. These scenarios should be used to explore the boundaries of realistic planning. The scenarios should be used to ensure that the region has detailed plans for all of the potential elements of response e.g. evacuation, rescue, care and treatment of casualties and survivors, operation of casualty bureau, dealing with mass fatalities etc.
  - The ultimate aim at a later stage of the process is the production of all-hazards Major Emergency Plans that are based on the realistic events that could occur within the region.
  - It is important from two perspectives that a realistic approach is taken to dimensioning the scale of preparedness of the principal response agencies. Firstly, the principal response agency's preparedness should enable it to respond effectively to the scenarios that it is most likely to encounter. Secondly, the emphasis of the Framework is on bringing the full capacity of the principal response agencies to bear effectively on a major emergency situation and extending this where necessary, rather than creating extra capacity for unlikely scenarios.
  - Following the regional risk assessment process, individual agency risk assessments may need to be adjusted to include any issues raised at the regional level that had not been considered or adequately considered.



# **Reports on Major Emergency Exercises**

**Issued December 2007**





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### 3. Reports on Major Emergency Exercises

#### 3.1 Introduction

Major Emergency Management Guidance Document 4: A Guide to Planning and Staging Exercises recommends that an “After Exercise Report” should be compiled in all cases, as soon as practical after the exercise debrief. The purpose of the report is to ensure that lessons learned on inter-agency co-ordination can be disseminated to a wider audience than the organisations participating in the exercise.

#### 3.2 Structure of Report

The after exercise report should be structured as follows:

1. **Introduction**

*This section should outline the background to the exercise, the type of exercise and include the aims and objectives*

2. **The Planning Process**

*A summary of the exercise planning process, including the main participants*

3. **The Scenario**

*An overview of the exercise scenario*

4. **The Event**

*A brief overview of the events of the day(s), including details such as the organisations which took part, numbers of participants, etc.*

5. **Evaluation**

*A brief evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of the exercise with respect to achieving the objectives*

6. **Recommendations**

*This is the most important part of the report, where lessons learned from the exercise are converted into recommendations for definite steps that will result in improved co-ordination.*



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### 3.3 Circulation of Report

When completed by the Team directing the Exercise, the signed report should be sent to the Regional Working Group for forwarding to the Regional Steering Group, and for circulation to all PRA's in the region. When approved, the Report should be sent to the National Steering Group Chair. It is expected that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, an exercise report should reach the National Steering Group within three months of the completion of the exercise.

**Note :** *The report should be brief and the inclusion of long, descriptive passages should be avoided. Recommendations in the report should include a time-frame, where such is considered appropriate. The authors should bear in mind that the report will be circulated widely, unless the opposite is specifically requested.*



## **Guidance on Plans for Regional Level Co-ordination**

*Issued January 2008*





## 4. Guidance on Plans for Regional Level Co-ordination

### 4.1 Plans for Regional Level Co-ordination

“A Framework for Major Emergency Management” (2006) requires, in Section 4.1.4.2, that each principal response agency should participate in the preparation of a Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination, which sets out its arrangements to respond at regional level, and that relevant aspects of this plan should be included within its own Major Emergency Plan.

In Section 5.4.5.4, the Framework provides that the local response to a major emergency may be scaled up to a regional level response, where the nature of the major emergency is such that:

- the resources available in the local area where the incident happens 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 across more than one Local Authority or Division of An Garda Síochána; or
- the incident occurs at or close to a boundary of several of the principal response agencies.

### 4.2 Activation of Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination

During a major emergency which satisfies one or more of the criteria listed above, the chair of the Local Co-ordination Group may declare a regional level emergency and activate the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination. The key impact of a declaration of a regional level emergency is that extra principal response agencies (other than the Garda Division, HSE Area and Local Authority which are initially involved) are brought fully into the response and their Major Emergency Plans are activated.





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The chair of the Local Co-ordination Group, in consultation with the chair of the On-Site Co-ordinating Group and the other members of the Local Co-ordination Group, will decide which extra principal response agencies will be activated, in light of the circumstances prevailing or likely to develop.

**Note:** In many Major Emergency situations, neighbouring Garda Divisions, HSE Areas and Local Authorities will provide support and resources to the Garda Division, HSE Area and Local Authority, which are primarily involved in the response. Such support is not equivalent to the activation of the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination and, in fact, will often precede the activation of the regional plan.

#### **4.2.1 Response Region**

The areas covered by the principal response agencies which are activated under the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination will constitute the response region for the emergency.

**Note:** The response region for a regional level major emergency need not coincide (and in many cases will not coincide) with one of the predetermined Major Emergency Management Regions set out in Appendix F4 of the Framework.

#### **4.2.2 Regional Co-ordination Group**

The chair of the Local Co-ordination Group (having declared the regional level emergency) will convene and chair the meeting of the Regional Co-ordination Group. The Regional Co-ordination Group will, in effect, comprise the Local Co-ordination Group, augmented with representatives from the extra principal response agencies, which have been activated as part of the regional response.

The Regional Co-ordination Group will usually meet in the same Local Co-ordination Centre, where the Local Co-ordination Group is meeting. However, it may, depending on prevailing circumstances, decide to meet at another of the predetermined Local Co-ordination Centres within the response region.



### **4.2.3 Methods of Operation**

When the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination is activated, the methods of operation of the principal response agencies at the site will be those set out for standard major emergencies in the Framework, subject only to the fact that additional principal response agencies will be present.

Likewise, the methods of operation of the Regional Co-ordination Group will be those set out for the Local Co-ordination Group in both the Framework and the relevant Appendices.

### **4.2.4 Wide Area Major Emergencies**

Some major emergency events (eg. severe storms, extensive flooding and/or blizzards) may impact over a wide area and, in such a situation; a number of Local Co-ordination Groups may be activated. Where the chair of a Local Co-ordination Group, which has been activated in response to a major emergency, becomes aware that one or more other Local Co-ordination Groups have also been activated, contact should be made with the other chair(s) with a view to considering the establishment of a Regional Co-ordination Centre.

Such a Regional Co-ordination Centre will normally be located at the Local Co-ordination Centre which, in the view of the chairs, is best positioned (in terms of resources, communications and geography) to co-ordinate the activity of the different Local Co-ordination Groups which are active. In such a situation, these Local Co-ordination Groups will continue to act as per standard arrangements and will communicate with the Regional Co-ordination Centre through their chairs.

**Note:** During a wide area major emergency, each Local Co-ordination Group will be in contact with the lead Government Department (in accordance with Section 5.4.5.5 of the Framework) and, in such a situation, the decision on whether the activities of a number of Local Co-ordination Groups should be co-ordinated via a Regional Co-ordination Centre or via the lead Government Department will be taken in light of the prevailing circumstances.





## 5. Model Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination

### Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination

#### of the .....Major Emergency Management Region

- (i) This is the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination of the . ..... Major Emergency Management Region which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of “A Framework for Major Emergency Management” (2006).
- (ii) This plan was approved by the .....Regional Steering Group on MEM at a meeting on . . . . (date) and became operative on .....(date).

#### 5.1 Introduction

In some situations where a major emergency has been declared and the Major Emergency Plans of the principal response agencies have been activated, it may be appropriate to consider scaling up from a local response to a regional level response. This may occur when:

- the resources available in the local area where the incident has happened 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 across more than one Local Authority or Division of An Garda Síochána; or
- the incident occurs at or close to a boundary of several of the principal response agencies.





## 5.2 Regional Response

### 5.2.1 Decision to Scale up to a Regional Level Response

The decision to scale up from a local to a regional level response will be taken by the chair of the Local Co-ordination Group, in consultation with the chair of the On-Site Co-ordinating Group and the other members of the Local Co-ordination Group. This consultation may occur at a meeting of the Local Co-ordination Group, where such a group is in session or, alternatively, by means of a telephone conference call.

This decision will, by definition, involve specifying those extra principal response agencies which are to be involved in the regional response.

**Note:** In many Major Emergency situations, neighbouring Garda Divisions, HSE Areas and Local Authorities will provide support and resources to the Garda Division, HSE Area and Local Authority, which are primarily involved in the response. Such support is not equivalent to the activation of the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination and, in fact, will often precede the activation of the regional plan.

### 5.2.2 Response Region

The areas covered by the principal response agencies which are activated under the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination will constitute the response region for the emergency.

**Note:** The response region for a regional level major emergency need not coincide (and in many cases will not coincide) with one of the predetermined Major Emergency Management Regions set out in Appendix F4 of the Framework.

### 5.2.3 Activation

Once the decision has been taken, the chair of the Local Co-ordination Group will declare that a regional level emergency exists and will activate the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination by:

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- notifying each of the principal response agencies involved that the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination has been activated;
  - requesting that each of the principal response agencies, which has not already activated its MEM Plan, should do so;
  - delivering an information message to each principal response agency using the mnemonic METHANE; and
  - providing each of the principal response agencies involved with a list of the agencies which are being activated to form the regional response

### **5.3 Command Control and Co-ordination of Response**

#### **5.3.1 Command and Control Arrangements on Site**

The command and control arrangements at the site(s) of a regional major emergency will be the same as those for a standard major emergency including:

- three Controllers of Operation<sup>1</sup>;
- a lead agency determined in accordance with the Framework; and
- an On-Site Co-ordinating Group
- an On-Site Co-ordinator

#### **5.3.2 The Regional Co-ordination Group**

The mobilisation and operation of the Regional Co-ordination Group will be as per the arrangement for Local Co-ordination Groups set out in Section 5.4.5.2 of the Framework.

Regional Co-ordination Group arrangements for

- the mobilisation of other organisations/agencies;
- requesting mutual aid from neighbours;
- requesting national/international assistance where required;
- dealing with multi site or wide area emergencies;
- linkage to national emergency plans;

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<sup>1</sup>In situations where more than one principal response agency from a particular service is represented at the site, Appendix F7 makes it clear that there will be only one Controller of Operations from that service and the unit from which the Controller of Operations will come should be determined in accordance with the guidance provided in Appendix F7

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- links with Government;
  - support for chairs by Information Managers, etc; and
  - communication arrangements with the site, and with other groups

will be as for a Local Co-ordination Group.

#### **5.4 Wide Area Major Emergencies**

Some major emergency events (eg. severe storms, extensive flooding and/or blizzards) may impact over a wide area and, in such a situation, a number of Local Co-ordination Groups may be activated. Where the chair of a Local Co-ordination Group, which has been activated in response to a major emergency, becomes aware that one or more other Local Co-ordination Groups have also been activated, contact should be made with the other chair(s) with a view to considering the establishment of a Regional Co-ordination Centre.

Such a Regional Co-ordination Centre will normally be located at the Local Co-ordination Centre which, in the view of the chairs, is best positioned (in terms of resources, communications and geography) to co-ordinate the activity of the different Local Co-ordination Groups which are active. In such a situation, these Local Co-ordination Groups will continue to act as per standard arrangements and will communicate with the Regional Co-ordination Centre through their chairs.

**Note:** During a wide area major emergency, each Local Co-ordination Group will be in contact with the lead Government Department (in accordance with Section 5.4.5.5 of the Framework) and, in such a situation, the decision on whether the activities of a number of Local Co-ordination Groups should be co-ordinated via a Regional Co-ordination Centre or via the lead Government Department will be taken in light of the prevailing circumstances.



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## 6. Model of Section 9 of PRA Major Emergency Plan

### Section 9 – Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination

#### Introduction

In some situations where a major emergency has been declared and the Major Emergency Plans of the principal response agencies have been activated, it may be appropriate to consider scaling up from a local response to a regional level response. This may occur when:

- the resources available in the local area where the incident has happened 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 across more than one Local Authority or Division of An Garda Síochána; or
- the incident occurs at or close to a boundary of several of the principal response agencies.

#### Regional Response

##### Decision to Scale up to a Regional Level Response

The decision to scale up from a local to a regional level response will be taken by the chair of the Local Co-ordination Group, in consultation with the chair of the On-Site Co-ordinating Group and the other members of the Local Co-ordination Group. This consultation may occur at a meeting of the Local Co-ordination Group, where such a group is in session or, alternatively, by means of a telephone conference call.

This decision will, by definition, involve specifying those extra principal response agencies which are to be involved in the regional response.



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**Note:** In many Major Emergency situations, neighbouring Garda Divisions, HSE Areas and Local Authorities will provide support and resources to the Garda Division, HSE Area and Local Authority, which are primarily involved in the response. Such support is not equivalent to the activation of the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination and, in fact, will often precede the activation of the regional plan.

### **Response Region**

The areas covered by the principal response agencies which are activated under the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination will constitute the response region for the emergency.

**Note:** The response region for a regional level major emergency need not coincide (and in many cases will not coincide) with one of the predetermined Major Emergency Management Regions set out in Appendix F4 of the Framework.

### **Activation**

Once the decision has been taken, the chair of the Local Co-ordination Group will declare that a regional level emergency exists and will activate the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination by:

- notifying each of the principal response agencies involved that the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination has been activated;
- requesting that each of the principal response agencies, which has not already activated its MEM Plan, should do so;
- delivering an information message to each principal response agency using the mnemonic METHANE; and
- providing each of the principal response agencies involved with a list of the agencies which are being activated to form the regional response

## **Command Control and Co-ordination of Response**

### **Command and Control Arrangements on Site**

The command and control arrangements at the site(s) of a regional major emergency will be the same as those for a standard major emergency including:

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- three Controllers of Operation<sup>2</sup>;
  - a lead agency determined in accordance with the Framework; and
  - an On-Site Co-ordinating Group
  - an On-Site Co-ordinator

### **The Regional Co-ordination Group**

The mobilisation and operation of the Regional Co-ordination Group will be as per the arrangement for Local Co-ordination Groups set out in 5.4.5.2.

Regional Co-ordination Group arrangements for

- the mobilisation of other organisations/agencies;
  - requesting mutual aid from neighbours;
  - requesting national/international assistance where required;
  - dealing with multi site or wide area emergencies;
  - linkage to national emergency plans;
  - links with Government;
  - support for chairs by Information Managers, etc; and
  - communication arrangements with the site and with other groups
- will be as for a Local Co-ordination Group.

### **Wide Area Major Emergencies**

Some major emergency events (eg. severe storms, extensive flooding and/or blizzards) may impact over a wide area and, in such a situation, a number of Local Co-ordination Groups may be activated. Where the chair of a Local Co-ordination Group, which has been activated in response to a major emergency, becomes aware that one or more other Local Co-ordination Groups have also been activated, contact should be made with the other chair(s) with a view to considering the establishment of a Regional Co-ordination Centre.

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<sup>2</sup>In situations where more than one principal response agency from a particular service is represented at the site, Appendix F7 makes it clear that there will be only one Controller of Operations from that service and the unit from which the Controller of Operations will come should be determined in accordance with the guidance provided in Appendix F7



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Such a Regional Co-ordination Centre will normally be located at the Local Co-ordination Centre which, in the view of the chairs, is best positioned (in terms of resources, communications and geography) to co-ordinate the activity of the different Local Co-ordination Groups which are active. In such a situation, these Local Co-ordination Groups will continue to act as per standard arrangements and will communicate with the Regional Co-ordination Centre through their chairs.

**Note:** During a wide area major emergency, each Local Co-ordination Group will be in contact with the lead Government Department (in accordance with Section 5.4.5.5 of the Framework) and, in such a situation, the decision on whether the activities of a number of Local Co-ordination Groups should be co-ordinated via a Regional Co-ordination Centre or via the lead Government Department will be taken in light of the prevailing circumstances.



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# **Guidance on Checking of Principal Response Agency Plans**

**Issued March 2008**



## 7. Guidance on Checking of Principal Response Agency Plans

### 7.1 Introduction

“A Framework for Major Emergency Management” (2006) requires, in Section 4.1.2 that:

**Each principal response agency’s individual Major Emergency Plan should be reviewed for inter-operability with the plans of its partner principal response agencies and for consistency with the Framework by the relevant Regional Steering Group on Major Emergency Management.**

Two checklists are provided below to facilitate Regional Steering Groups in the discharge of the above responsibility. The first relates to the consistency of each Principal Response Agency’s plan with the requirement of the Framework and the second relates to the inter-operability of the plans of each Principal Response Agency within the region with the plans of partner Principal Response Agencies.

### 7.2 Consistency with the Framework

The plan of each principal response agency should be checked for consistency with the Framework including the following checks:

1. Does the Plan include all of the section and sub-section headings set out in Section 4.1.2 of the Framework
2. Does each section and sub-section comply, in general, with the requirements of the Framework
3. Is the terminology of the Plan consistent with that used in the Framework (including Appendix F3)

### 7.3 Checking for Inter-Agency Operability

When each principal response agency’s individual Major Emergency Plan has been reviewed for consistency with the Framework, all of the plans within the region must be assessed for inter-operability including a check for consistency in the following areas:

1. Procedure for declaring a Major Emergency

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2. Identify the point of contact for all other agencies and follow agreed activation procedures
  3. The role of the Controller of Operations
  4. The designation of the Lead Agency
  5. Exercising the Co-ordination role at the site
  6. Nomination of Local Co-ordination Centres
  7. Activation of the Local Co-ordination Group
  8. Operation of the Local Co-ordination Group
  9. Activation and operation of the Plan for Regional Level Co-ordination
  10. Arrangements for dealing with the media.

The primary purpose of this process is to facilitate checking for inter-agency operability, as well as ensuring that the common arrangements to facilitate co-operation and co-ordination are included in all Major Emergency Plans.

**Any issues arising from this review should be referred back to the principal response agency for appropriate action. In case of disagreement, which is not resolved by local discussion, the National Steering Group should be consulted and should decide the issue.**

#### **7.4 Review and Validation**

The relevant Regional Steering group engaged in this review process should maintain a record of all plans reviewed and any decisions or comments made. Reviews need to be conducted annually, and or whenever there have been significant changes either to national policy or to the plan itself. Following the successful review and checking of the agency plan the Regional steering group will validate the plan.



## **Guidance on Mitigation**

*Issued March 2008*





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## 8. Guidance on Mitigation

### 8.1 Introduction

“A Framework for Major Emergency Management” (2006), states, in Section 3.1, that mitigation includes any actions which are taken in advance of the occurrence of an emergency to reduce the probability of that event happening or that reduce the loss/damage that might otherwise have been caused if the event does happen.

Section 3.1 makes it clear that the selection of priorities for mitigation efforts should be guided by the risk assessment process and should concentrate on risks which fall into the “Prevent or Mitigate” area of the Risk Matrix, ie those risks which are judged to be in the Likely/ Very Likely and Very Serious/ Catastrophic categories.

Mitigation usually involves taking action with a view to:

- reducing the likelihood that the risk would be realised; or
- reducing the impact should the event happen.

Section 3.2 makes it clear that responsibility for the mitigation of specific hazards lies with the organisations and companies which own and operate the facilities and services where the relevant hazards are found, such as airlines, railway companies, chemical manufacturers, etc. Such organisations are referred to as “risk holders”. There may also be statutory provisions, which provide for regulation/ risk management, and bodies which hold responsibility in this regard are called “risk regulators”.

### 8.2 Mitigation by Principal Response Agencies

Section 3.2 makes it clear that principal response agencies may not be in a position to implement significant mitigation as part of the major emergency management process, although they can be involved in extensive mitigation of potential emergencies through their on-going work in a number of areas including:

- the enforcement of legislation related to road safety and safety in places of assembly (An Garda Síochána);
- monitoring of food and water safety (the Health Service Executive); and

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- control of development through the planning and building control process and the enforcement of fire safety and dangerous substance legislation (the Local Authorities).

Where the local (agency) risk assessment process identifies a risk which is located in the “Prevent or Mitigate” Area of the Risk Matrix, the principal response agency involved may either:

- commence mitigation efforts itself; or
- refer the risk to the Regional Steering Group via the Regional Working Group

The mitigation efforts to be taken by a principal response agency can include some or all of the following:

- mitigating actions which it can take within its own statutory remit;
- requesting mitigating action by another principal response agency;
- contact with the individuals, company or organisation involved with the risk, ie, the “risk holder(s)”; and
- contact with the relevant “risk regulator(s).”

### **8.3 Mitigation by Regional Steering Groups**

Most mitigation measures which are taken as part of the major emergency management process will be taken at Regional Steering Group level.

Where a specific risk has been brought to the attention of the Regional Steering Group by one of its principal response agencies, or where a risk has been identified during the inter-agency risk assessment process in the region, and where this risk is judged to be in the “Prevent or Mitigate” Area of the Risk Matrix, the Regional Steering Group should initiate mitigation efforts which could include some or all of the following:

- mitigating actions within the statutory remit of one or more of the principal response agencies;
- contact with the individuals, company or organisation involved with the risk, ie, the “risk holder(s)”; and

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- 
- contact with the relevant “risk regulator(s)”

#### **8.4 Records**

Any decisions or actions taken under the heading of Mitigation should be clearly documented and a file of all such documents should be maintained by both the individual principal response agencies and the Regional Steering Groups involved.