



Preparing for Emergencies in the Highlands and Islands

A Guide to
Civil Contingencies and Resilience

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Introduction



In today's world there is an ongoing need to plan for the unpredictable and unexpected. Emergencies are triggered by a variety of causes - like the weather, transport accidents and terrorism, to name just three.

This Guide, produced by the Highlands and Islands Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), provides basic information about what Government does and is doing to protect its population and what you can do to protect yourself and your family in the event of a major emergency. The Guide provides general information and the basic dos and don'ts in simple steps to prepare for such an emergency without unnecessary interruption to day to day activities.

The SCG welcomes this opportunity to inform the public and hopes that the information in this guide provides useful help to improve your ability to respond to any emergency.



Central Government's approach to civil contingency planning is built around the concept of resilience. This is defined as the ability at every relevant level to detect, prevent and, if necessary, to handle and recover from disruptive challenges. The processes which underpin resilience form the fundamental elements of civil protection.

Civil protection or civil contingency planning can be defined as the application of knowledge, measures and practices to anticipate, guard against, prevent, reduce or overcome any risk, harm or loss that may be associated with natural, technological or man-made crises and disasters in peacetime.

The Government is committed to enhancing the resilience of the United Kingdom to disruptive challenge. In recent years, the range of challenges that society faces has broadened as networks have become more complex. We can no longer work on the assumption that disasters in the UK or elsewhere can be localised or occur in isolation. Multiple events can occur at once and - irrespective of malicious intent - can cause effects that demand effective co-ordination and integration of activities.

Resilience is built around several key activities. First, risks of disruptive challenge must, where possible, be identified, either by considering internal weaknesses or scanning the horizon for external threats. Risk assessment allows choices to be made. In some circumstances it is possible to prevent disruptive challenges occurring by taking action at an early stage. In other cases, planning has to take place to prepare to deal with a disruptive challenge. If the disruption does occur it becomes necessary to respond and, once the situation is brought under control, to focus on recovery. This cycle - assessment, prevention, preparation, response and recovery - is at the heart of resilience. It is complemented by review of plans and arrangements based on experience of emergencies and in exercises.



Scottish emergency planning and response is based on the principles of Integrated Emergency Management (IEM). Under IEM both preparation and response to emergencies focus on the effects of events rather than their causes. Preparation and response is undertaken as an extension of a local responder's normal day to day activities, defined as its functions in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. For example, local authority social services look after the needs of people daily and can use their skills and expertise in that function in response to emergencies. The underlying aim of IEM is the development of flexible and adaptable arrangements that will enable effective joint response to any crisis whether foreseen or unforeseen. It is intended to build the resilience of communities in Scotland to deal with any emergency and, where necessary, to make specific arrangements to deal with particular risks.

Civil protection arrangements need to be integrated both within and between organisations. They are an integral part of departmental and organisational planning. Local responders work individually and in collaboration with each other on certain key activities in areas of common interest. This integration is

coordinated and directed by Strategic Co-ordinating Groups, one in each of the eight police force areas in Scotland. Each group's membership is drawn from all four Uniformed Emergency Services, Local Authorities, Health Boards, the Environment Agency and Utility Companies.

The following five activities strengthen an integrated approach:

1 Assessment

Risk assessment is both an integral component of risk management and the first step in the emergency planning process. It is important that local responders have a realistic understanding of the hazards and threats for which they should be prepared. Through their Strategic Co-ordinating Group, all local responders should share their assessment of local risks and integrate their planning for specific risks. Risk assessment is also an important activity during response to an emergency to advise managers on matters such as risk reduction, health and safety and potential secondary effects of the emergency.



2 Prevention

Prevention requires measures to be taken to eliminate, isolate or reduce identified risks as far as is reasonably practicable by carrying out functions in such a way as to prevent an emergency which is about to occur or reduce its impact. For example, public health organisations act to protect people at risk of pandemic flu and work with their partners to prepare for the impacts of an outbreak.

3 Preparation

Preparation for response to emergencies involves planning, training, exercising and informing people. Planning takes place at different levels to provide the basis for an effective integrated response. The key to effective planning depends on the engagement and support of the people who will implement the arrangements. Management arrangements should be simple and enable a co-ordinated response to deal with the effects of any emergency. The framework upon which specific contingency plans are made build upon the generic planning of all responders. Strategic Co-ordinating Groups are expected to establish local emergency management co-ordination structures. Planning ensures that individuals, organisations and groups of organisations can use their skills to meet the urgent needs of communities at times of crisis. Organisations plan to ensure that, when emergency occurs,

they are able to provide critical services for the community, perform their functions in support of the combined response to emergencies and support staff engaged in the response.

Management of activity in response to any emergency should be based on day to day roles. However, the need for rapid decision making and co-ordination across a number and range of organisations requires the establishment of crisis management structures. These structures are planned at a local level through Strategic Co-ordinating Groups: for Scotland through the work of the Scottish Emergency Co-ordinating Committee and for the UK through the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat. There needs to be clear ownership and commitment to contingency planning from the senior management of all organisations with a part to play. Contingency plans are not simply the domain of emergency planners. They should be seen as an integral part of overall management responsibilities and corporate governance.

Nonetheless, personnel will require additional training to prepare them for the special circumstances experienced during an emergency and for any extra dimensions to their role. It is pointless making preparations if people are unaware of them and are not trained to

perform in accordance with them. It is therefore essential to involve those who will have to respond to any emergency in planning, training and awareness raising.

4 Response

The importance and objectives of a combined response to emergencies builds on current arrangements and seeks to ensure a degree of consistency across Scotland. It highlights the need for flexible and adaptable planning. The initial response to an emergency aims to deal principally with immediate effects. Rapid implementation of arrangements for collaboration, co-ordination and communication are vital. With sudden impact emergencies (*explosions, major transport accidents, flooding*) the initial response is normally provided and led by the emergency services, supported by other local public bodies and voluntary organisations. Experience of slower onset or less localised emergencies (*health incidents and outbreaks, fuel protests, foot and mouth disease*) has shown that other organisations may well need to lead even in the early stages.

5 Recovery

Recovery addresses the human, physical, environmental and economic impact of emergencies. Recovery is not a discrete element of emergency preparation and response. It should be an integral part of the combined

response as actions taken at all times can influence the longer term outcomes for communities. Experience of emergencies in Scotland has demonstrated the importance of involving the community in its own recovery. Effective communication and support for self-help activities are important considerations for responders.

Summary

IEM is aligned with the aim of building greater overall resilience in the face of a broad range of disruptive challenges. Certain key features are common to an integrated approach to preparation and response. The core of the initial response will normally be led by the emergency services working in partnership with other local responders. The basic objectives of the integrated response will be similar on most occasions (*saving life, property, protecting the environment, mitigating the impacts of an emergency, etc.*) The same basic management structure will be applicable. Planning based on common features (*roles, responsibilities and management structures*) will assist in the:

- Development of multi-agency emergency plans;
- Response to unforeseen events;
- Extendibility of the planned response to events of a scale that is unforeseen.

Each responder should plan both to perform its functions and to integrate its plans with local joint arrangements for co-ordination and response.

Planning your own Emergency Arrangements



The Emergency Services, your Council and other agencies have written generic plans to cover emergencies that might come our way. You could do the same for your household, workplace or family.

Start by looking around you and make a risk assessment for your home. Are you in an area where there is a risk of flooding or being cut off by adverse weather? Are you under the flight path of an airport? Are there main roads or train lines nearby and could an accident there affect you? Do you live near a chemical or nuclear installation? Don't forget house fires.

- Find out what legislation there is. If you live within the Public Information Zone of a legislated risk site, you will already have a leaflet that will give you valuable advice on how to prepare and what to do in case of an emergency. In such cases your Council makes plans with the Emergency Services and the site operators to keep you safe. You can look them up in your local library.
- Talk to your family about the potential emergencies you identified and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
- Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated.

Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home – in case of fire, perhaps a tree or a telephone pole; the second should be away from your neighbourhood in case you cannot return home; a school, the home of a friend or relation for example.

- Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for household members to call to say they are okay.
- Identify an escape route from each room in your house. Practise a fire drill.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to phone 999.
- Make sure all your insurance policies are up to date and include the risks you identified. It is in your own interest, as you may not be insured otherwise.
- Keep a list of key contact / reference numbers of insurance companies, banks, car registrations etc and store them safely with a friend or relative, in case they are destroyed or inaccessible at your home.
- If you are disabled, keep extra supplies of items you might need, such as extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for guide or hearing dogs etc.
- Those who are able bodied should find out who in their neighbourhood or building is disabled, so they can assist them during emergencies.

How to put together an “Emergency Supply Kit”



In a major emergency covering a widespread area, such as prolonged severe weather, local responders may not be able to reach you immediately. They may need to focus their efforts elsewhere. This means that you may have to survive on your own for several days. This also means having your own water, food and emergency supplies. You may lose power, telephones, both mobile and landline, gas and or water and the toilets may not work. You may have to evacuate your home, office or school at a moment's notice and take essentials with you. You probably won't have the opportunity to shop or search for supplies you'll need. Your household will cope best by preparing for an emergency before it strikes. The following are a few useful tips on what you should store and how. With this checklist, you can put together your disaster kit based on the risks that you have identified.

- Use plastic boxes or backpacks to keep the supplies together. The kit should be kept in a designated place.
- Make sure all household members know where the kit is kept.
- Make a list of all contents and put it outside the kit and/or in a prominent

place in your home. Write all expiry dates on the list and when you will need to change them. Tinned food may last for some time, but bottled water, for example, will have to be replaced every six months. If you do not want to have the hassle of changing some foodstuffs every month, just replace the whole food side of the kit every six months and live off the replaced food for a few days. Throw away any tins that have become corroded, swollen or dented. Don't eat any food past its sell-by date. Do not eat food that might have been in contact with floodwater.

If in doubt, throw it out!

- A normally active person needs at least two litres of water daily just for drinking. Children, nursing mothers and ill people need more. Because you will need water for sanitary purposes and possibly cooking, you should store at least 2.5 litres of water per person per day.
- Food items you might want to put into your Supply Kit are foods that you can readily eat without heating or water, such as ready-to-eat meats or tuna, fruits, vegetables, canned or boxed juices, UHT milk, high energy food like crackers or cereal bars,



vitamins, food for infants or persons on special diets, and also biscuits, boiled sweets, and powdered milk.

- Food, unlike water, may be rationed safely, except for children and pregnant women.
- Keep tinned foods in a dry place where the temperature is fairly cool. To protect boxed food from pests, store food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers.
- Baby food (if appropriate)
- Pet food (if appropriate)

You should also consider the following medical items:

- Home first aid kit, keeping in an easily identifiable watertight box. This

should include: sterile adhesive dressings or plasters in assorted sizes; sterile wound dressings in various sizes; sterile eye pads; roller bandages; triangular bandages; tubular bandages. Other items should include a first aid manual; disposable gloves; pocket mask or face shield; disinfectant wipes; adhesive tape; cleansing wipes/gauze pads; safety pins; scissors and tweezers, rub in hand disinfectant, thermometer.

- It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during an emergency. Be mindful of expiry dates. Keep a list of medication you and your family are on as part of your kit.



- Have the following non-prescription medications in your home first aid kit; pain relief tablets / preparations that you normally use (e.g. aspirin, paracetamol, ibuprofen), anti-diarrhoea medication, laxative, vitamins, and medication for an upset stomach.
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, deodorants, hairbrush, feminine supplies
- Heavy-duty plastic rubbish bags and ties – for personal sanitation uses – and toilet paper
- Medium sized plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant and household bleach
- Consider a small shovel for digging a latrine

Further information on first aid and first aid kits can be found on the Red Cross website: www.redcross.org.uk

Tools and other items you should have at hand:

- A portable battery powered radio plus extra batteries, or a wind-up radio
- A torch plus extra batteries, or a wind-up torch
- Matches in a waterproof, childproof container (keep away from children)
- Whistle
- Fire extinguisher - make sure every member of your family knows how to use them
- Heavy duty gloves
- Needles and thread
- Manual can opener
- A safety knife
- If food must be cooked, small cooking stove and a can of cooking fuel
- Moistened towelettes, soap, hand sanitiser, liquid detergent. Rub in hand disinfectant (not requiring water).

Household documents and contact numbers:

- Personal identification, cash and credit card
- Copies of important documents, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, wills and deeds, insurance papers and immunisation records. Store these in watertight containers.
- Emergency contact lists
- Extra set of house and car keys

Special items:

- One complete change of clothing and footwear (sturdy)
- Waterproof clothing, hat and gloves
- Sunglasses
- Blanket or sleeping bag for each member of the household
- Emergency foil blankets/survival bags
- Entertainment items e.g. books and board games



Evacuations are more common than you might realise. A gas leak might lead the Emergency Services to evacuate a street. Flooding may require you to leave your house or workplace. Not all evacuations are long term, sometimes you can return after a few hours once the emergency is over. However, just think about a chemical incident. Your house might not be habitable and you might have to be re-housed while decontamination is carried out. It is therefore prudent to prepare for an evacuation.

- Find out from our local emergency planners about your Major Incident Plan.
- Talk with your family about the possibility of an evacuation. Plan where you would go, if you had to leave your house or even your town. Plan how you would get there. Remember to allow for traffic congestion, as you are unlikely to be the only person being evacuated.
- If the Emergency Services advise you to shelter, do not self-evacuate. Follow the “Go in, Stay in, Tune in” message and listen out for advice from the Emergency Services or experts whom they will have asked to advise you. If the Emergency Services need you to evacuate, they will inform you and tell you how to do it and where to go.
- Always follow the advice of the Emergency Services. If they tell you to evacuate, do so. Do not enter restricted areas or closed roads.
- Plan a place to meet members of your household in case you are separated from one another during a disaster. Ask a friend outside your town to be the “checkpoint” so that everyone in your family can call that person to say that they are safe.
- Find out where children will be sent if schools are evacuated. Remember that this can change at a moment's notice, if the allocated evacuation point cannot be used as it may be in harms way.
- Assemble a supply kit with items from the “emergency supply kit” checklist that you would need in a Reception Centre - prescription medicine, specific baby items, toiletries and phone lists.
- Know how to shut off your home's electricity, gas and water supplies at main switches and valves.
- If a hard freeze is likely during your absence, take action to prevent damage to water pipes by the freezing weather, such as:
 - Turn off water mains
 - Drain taps
 - Turn off inside valves for external taps and drain outside taps
 - Leave your loft door open to allow warm air to circulate the tank and pipes
 - Close and lock windows
 - Lock your house when you leave





Photo: Cornwall County Fire Brigade



Taking shelter is often a critical element in protecting yourself and your household in times of emergency. If there is an airborne risk from a chemical spill or similar event, sheltering is your best form of protection.

You will be advised to:

GO IN - STAY IN - TUNE IN

In other words, sheltering means that you go indoors and stay there until told by the Police or via television and radio that it is safe to go outside again. You should tune in to your local radio stations to receive news and advice about the emergency.

- When told to do so by the Emergency Services, go inside and close all windows, shut and lock doors, switch off any fans, air conditioning units, venting and heat ducting that draw air in from outside.
- **Go In** to a room as far away from the hazard as possible. The best room would be on the highest level with the least openings to the outside and preferably on the downwind side.
- **Stay In** and do not go back outside until told it is safe for you to do so.
- Take your radio, some snacks and water with you into the room.
- **Pets:** If you have pets, do not go outside to look for them; wait until they come to the door, let them in and keep them in a room separate from those that were inside at the time of the emergency. If they were outside at the time of the emergency, you may put yourself and others with you at risk if you let them in.
- **Tune In** to local radio and or television stations for updates on what to do.
- Avoid eating uncovered food that may have been exposed to any contaminated air in the emergency. Packaged food should not be affected. The Food Standards Agency will issue advice about agricultural produce and milk.
- Avoid using the telephone, especially your mobile phone, unless it is essential as the Emergency Services will need to use the limited number of lines available.
- The Police and education authorities will ensure that children attending any schools affected by the emergency are properly looked after.
- Should you be out walking when the sheltering advice comes, go into a shop or other public building and wait for further instructions.



- Follow the advice of the Emergency Services. You are much safer sheltering than self-evacuating. If evacuation becomes necessary, the Emergency Services will inform you. If it is a matter of life and death, call the Emergency Services on 999. **DO NOT** call 999 just to seek information; you may be compromising a genuine emergency call.
- **DO NOT** go and get your children. They will be quite safe inside the school, nursery or with their child minder and you will only do yourself harm in going outside. Your children will be safely looked after inside the school, nursery or by the child minder until the sheltering order has been lifted. Should evacuation be necessary, your children will be taken to a safe rest centre from where you can pick them up, or where they will be looked after until you can leave your own sheltering area.
- If you were outside during the emergency, when it is practical to do so, you should change your clothes and shower. Place the discarded clothes inside a bin liner; tie the bag and then place that bag into another bin liner. Put the bag to one side until its contents can be checked. Shower in the normal manner avoiding swallowing any water. Pay particular attention to washing your eyes and any open cuts or scratches.
- If you have any concerns, call the health advice contact number that will be broadcast on local television and radio. **DO NOT** leave the shelter you are in.
- If you are in a sheltering area and rely on a Home Care Assistant, they will not be able to come to you. Your local authority will inform Social Services, who will try to contact you by phone. An evacuation might have to be considered. If you are in immediate danger only, please call the Emergency Services on 999.

Local Television Stations

BBC Scotland
STV

Local Radio Stations

BBC Scotland (Highland)
92.4 – 94.7 FM; 810 MW

Moray Firth Radio
97.4 FM; 102.5 VHF and 1107 KHZ

Take SHELTER upwind above
ground level if possible

**GO IN
STAY IN
TUNE IN**



Some areas of the Highlands and Islands have had periods of flooding in the last few years and often people know that they live within a flood risk area. No-one can stop flooding altogether, but we can be prepared to take precautions. Your Council has information and advice on what to do if a flood occurs if you live or work in a flood risk area. Copies can be obtained from your Council. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency also has information that will help you before, during and after a flood.

Please note that homeowners are required to protect their own property – and NOT the local authority.

Here are some dos and don'ts:

DO ...

- Stay calm. Don't panic.
 - Check that neighbours or any vulnerable members of your community know about any flood warnings issued.
 - Listen to the local radio for up-to-date news on the flood. Have a battery-powered or wind-up radio in your Emergency Supply or Flood Kit.
 - Have a few sandbags or floodboards prepared to block doorways and airbricks.
- You should not rely on your local Council to provide sandbags.**
- Your insurance company may encourage you to invest in one of the many ranges of DIY flood protection equipment, conditional on maintaining insurance cover. (Remember to unblock vents and airbricks before switching everything back on.)
 - Assume that floodwater contains sewage and adopt good hygiene practices.
 - Ensure that you wear plastic/rubber gloves when handling affected items.
 - Make up a specific Flood Kit, including a torch, blankets, waterproof and warm clothing, wellingtons, a portable radio and batteries, first aid kit, rubber gloves, food and pet food and key personal documents. Keep it upstairs, if possible.
 - Talk about possible flooding with your family or those you live with.
 - Switch off gas, water and electricity if you get flooded.
 - Find a place to move pets to if a flood is on the way.
 - If road conditions permit and it is safe to do so, remove vehicles to areas unaffected by flooding; ask friends and relatives for the use of their parking facilities.





- Store valuable or sentimental personal belongings upstairs or in a high place downstairs.
- Think about medication. In the event of a flood, if you use it you will still need to take it.
- If you need to be evacuated because of severe flooding or damage, contact the Police or dial 999.
- If you live in a bungalow, caravan, prefab or any other dwelling without access to a second storey and you find yourself in difficulty, alert the Emergency Services so you can be evacuated. If you are able to self-evacuate and stay with family or friends, inform the Emergency Services so your location is known.
- If flooding traps you, stay by a window and try to attract attention.
- Obey road closures or advisory notices that are put out for your safety.
- Don't use food that has been in contact with floodwater.
- Don't use contaminated water to drink, wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash or prepare food or make ice.
- Don't dispose of damaged goods until your insurers have had a chance to inspect them.
- Don't trust bogus traders. Always get a written quotation; your insurer will require one. Make sure that it is on letter headed paper with landline contact numbers and an address you know exists. Never pay in advance and only pay when the work is done to your satisfaction. Always get a receipt.
- In the event of evacuating private motor vehicles to a place of safety, do NOT block access roads above the water level. Do not lift drain or manhole covers or grills.
- Do not use 'Closed Roads'.

DON'T ...

- Don't allow children to play in floodwater areas. Wash children's hands frequently. Disinfect floodwater infected toys before allowing them to be used.
- Avoid moving water. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep adults off their feet.
- Don't throw rubbish into watercourses or leave debris on the banks – it can add to the flooding problem.
- Don't use electrical circuits or equipment exposed to floodwater until checked by a qualified electrician.

For first aid advice: Refer to the Water Rescue, Drowning and Hypothermia sections of the First Aid Manual.
www.redcross.org.uk

Winter Storms and Extreme Cold



Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilise an entire region. Major snowstorms or extreme cold can hit at any time. There are extreme dangers if you are caught in your own car during a snowstorm. Imagine if you were stuck on your own, without anybody knowing where you are, or if you are missing. You can protect yourself, your car and your household from the many hazards of winter, by thinking and planning ahead.

Winter Driving

Each winter your Council plans which roads will be gritted when ice and snow are forecast.

In cold conditions always drive with extra care and never assume that a road has been salted even if ice or snow has been forecast. No road can ever be guaranteed to be free of ice or snow.

- Ask the question 'Is my journey necessary?'. If not, then don't travel.
- Find out if you can get to your destination using public transport.
- Always check the weather forecast before starting your trip.
- Plan your journey.
- Allow extra time for your journey.
- Run your car engine for a few minutes before starting your trip to

help clear the windscreen.

- Ensure your vehicle has suitable anti-freeze added to its radiator and low-freezing screen-wash to the washer bottle.
- Ensure that your vehicle is in good working order – wash all lights and indicators frequently.
- Tune into your local radio station for regular travel news updates.
- Use dipped headlights when driving during periods of rain, fog or snow.
- Ensure you have enough fuel for the journey.
- Have an emergency supply kit in your car, in case you break down or get stuck:
 - Warm coat, extra hat and mittens
 - Suitable winter footwear
 - Blanket or sleeping bag
 - Torch and extra batteries, or wind up torch
 - Shovel
 - Windscreen scraper
 - Battery-powered radio and extra batteries, or wind-up radio
 - Water and snacks
 - Tow chain or rope
 - Jump leads
 - Mobile phone

Carry a First Aid Kit in your car in an easily identifiable watertight box.

If you get stuck in a winter storm in a remote area, you should do the following:

- Pull off the road. Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio aerial or window.
- Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Only leave the car if buildings are nearby where you know you can take shelter. Distances are distorted by blowing snow. A building may seem close but may be too far to walk in deep snow.
- Run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm.

When the engine is running, open a window slightly for ventilation to protect you from carbon monoxide poisoning. Periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe.

- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid over-exertion. Huddle with passengers and use your coat as a blanket.
- Take turns sleeping, so you see the rescue crews.
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Don't waste battery power, but at night if rescuers are nearby **turn on the inside light** so rescuers can see you.
- Invest in a high intensity pocket strobe light to attract attention.



Make your home safe for winter

Prepare to survive in your home on your own, without outside help, for at least three days. Assemble a supply kit and be sure to include winter specific items such as rock salt to melt ice and sand to improve traction, snow shovels or other snow removal equipment. Keep a stock of food and extra drinking water.

See the chapter - "How to put together an Emergency Supply Kit" for more information.

If your house could be isolated, here is some useful advice:

- Have sufficient heating fuel, as regular fuel sources may be cut off, as well as emergency heating equipment plus sufficient fuel for it in case electricity is cut off, such as a portable gas fire, a wood burning stove, a fireplace or a kerosene heater. Keep all heaters at least three feet from flammable objects. Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid a build-up of toxic fumes and always refuel outside. Keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. Never burn charcoal indoors.
 - Make sure that your walls and attics
- are well insulated before winter.
 - During a storm, listen to the local radio or television for weather reports and emergency information.
 - Eat regularly and drink ample fluids, but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
 - Dress for the season with several layers of loose fitting, lightweight warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer layer should be water repellent. Mittens are warmer than gloves. Always wear a hat, most body heat is lost through the top of your head.
 - Don't over-exert yourself when shovelling snow.
 - Watch for signs of frostbite: loss of feeling and white or pale appearance in extremities. If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
 - Watch for signs of hypothermia: uncontrollable shivering, memory loss, disorientation, incoherence, slurred speech, drowsiness and apparent exhaustion. If symptoms are detected, get the person to a warm location, remove any wet clothing, warm the centre of the body first, and give warm non-alcoholic beverage if victim is conscious. Get medical help as soon as possible.



Extreme cold can kill. Extreme heat can do just the same, by pushing the human body beyond its limits. Most heat disorders occur because the victim has been overexposed to heat or has over-exercised for his or her age and physical condition. The elderly, young children and those who are sick or overweight are more likely to succumb to extremes of heat. This is what you can do to counter the effects:

- Stay indoors as much as possible
- Remember that electric fans do not cool. They just blow hot air around.
- Eat well-balanced, light and regular meals. Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by your doctor.
- Drink plenty of water regularly even if you do not feel thirsty. (If you have epilepsy or heart, kidney or liver

disease, are on fluid-restrictive diets or have a problem with fluid retention, you should consult a doctor before increasing liquid intake).

- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages. Alcohol causes dehydration.
- NEVER leave children or pets alone in closed vehicles.
- Dress in loose fitting clothes that cover as much skin as possible.
- Protect face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat.
- Avoid too much sunshine. Use sunscreen, SPF 15 or higher.
- Regularly check on family and friends who are vulnerable, such as the elderly.

How to treat heat exhaustion - refer to the Heat Exhaustion section of the First Aid Manual.





What is influenza (flu)?

Flu is caused by a virus. The viruses change constantly which is why even when you have had flu once you may not be immune when it comes round next time. A pandemic is when large numbers of people across the UK and in other countries are infected at the same time, but it is very difficult to predict when this may happen. Children are more susceptible than adults. By virtue of their age they have had less time to be exposed to the virus and to develop immunity. Older people are at greater risk of complications such as bronchitis and pneumonia.

How is flu spread?

The virus is very infectious and can easily be passed on by breathing in the tiny droplets from the breath of infected people, for example when they cough or sneeze. The incubation period (that is the time between picking up the infection and the start of symptoms) is usually two to three days.

How do I know if I have flu?

Flu makes people feel much worse than an ordinary cold, which is caused by different viruses. Cold symptoms include a runny nose, sneezing, watery eyes and throat irritation. Cold symptoms usually come on gradually, whereas flu starts suddenly.

Symptoms of flu are:

- Sudden onset of fever
- Shivering
- Headache
- Dry cough
- Aching muscles and joints

You may feel ill and have a temperature for up to a week. You could also feel weak and in low spirits for several weeks longer.

What should I do if I get flu?

The most important treatment is:

- Rest. Stay at home, keep warm and rest – this will help you recover more quickly in the long run.
- Fluids. Drink plenty of non-alcoholic drinks to replace the fluid lost by sweating.
- Analgesia. Take pain killers such as paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin. NB aspirin must not be given to children and adolescents under 16 years. People with asthma, stomach problems or taking other medication should seek advice from a pharmacist before taking aspirin or ibuprofen.
- Pharmacists are also able to give advice on the control of your symptoms. They can be contacted by phoning your local chemist.

If you live alone tell a relative, friend or neighbour that you are ill so that they

can check on you, bring in some food or do essential shopping.

Should I contact my doctor?

This is usually only necessary if the symptoms become severe or last more than one week. People in high-risk groups with chest or heart problems or whose immune system does not work properly are more vulnerable to infections and may need to consult their doctor earlier. If you develop another infection on top of flu then you may need an antibiotic. (Antibiotics are not effective in treating flu).

Can I avoid getting flu?

It is difficult to avoid getting flu if there is an epidemic. Keeping away from crowded places may help. Good standards of personal hygiene will help to prevent passing the virus on:

- Use paper tissues to blow your nose, and put them in a bin straight after use.
- Whenever practicable wash your hands after sneezing and using tissues.

Unless essential, if you have flu don't visit elderly people or others in the high risk groups.

Should I be vaccinated?

You should receive a flu immunisation every year in the autumn if you have:

- A chronic heart complaint
- A chronic chest complaint including

asthma

- Diabetes
- Lowered immunity due to disease or treatment such as steroid medication or cancer treatment
- Any other serious medical condition – check with your doctor if you are unsure.

In addition, it is recommended that everyone over the age of 65 and all those living in nursing or residential homes are immunised.

What about helping others?

If you know there is flu about, be a good neighbour!

- Watch out for signs that a neighbour may be ill – for example, bottles of milk left on the doorstep or curtains closed during the day.
- Offer to make drinks or do the shopping for a sick neighbour if they live alone or if you think they may not be able to cope.

What about the “new” drugs for flu?

There may be benefit in using some of the new anti-flu drugs during an epidemic, for people in high-risk groups. However, they are neither beneficial nor recommended for people who are otherwise healthy. These new drugs are certainly not a cure, though in some people they may slightly shorten the length of illness.

Incidents with Hazardous Materials



From industrial chemicals to household detergents and air fresheners, hazardous materials are part of our everyday lives. Hazardous materials are substances that, because of their chemical nature, pose a potential risk to the environment if they are released. Hazards can exist during production, storage, transportation, use or disposal. All these situations are covered by assorted Health and Safety regulations. In the Highlands and Islands, there are a number of regulated facilities in addition to the major national transport road and rail routes that cross the area. Usually, there is nothing to worry about but, just in case, you should know what to do if a hazardous incident occurs.

- If you witness (or smell) a hazardous materials accident, call 999 as soon as safely possible. Please remember NOT to switch on your mobile phone if you think you are standing near flammable gas.
- Stay away from the incident site to minimise the risk of contamination.
- If you are in a car, stop and seek shelter in a permanent building if possible. If you must remain in your car, keep car windows and vents closed and shut off the air conditioner and heater.



- If asked to evacuate your home, do so immediately. See chapter "Evacuation". Always follow the advice of the Emergency Services. If evacuation is going to be necessary after shelter, the Emergency Services and local authority will organise it for you.
- If requested to shelter, do so. See chapter "Shelter". If you live in the public information zone around a regulated site read the information provided to you.

Toxic chemical or radiation release

If you were very near a possible radiation or toxic chemical release and you think you may have become contaminated - WAIT for the Emergency Services. They will provide decontamination facilities. This will include asking you to remove any contaminated clothing and showering in portable shower units. Replacement clean/dry clothing will then be provided.

DON'T leave the scene or take yourself to hospital if you think you are contaminated. WAIT for specialist advice.



Fire is by far the biggest risk for a disaster in your home. 3 out of every 4 Scots believe their home isn't at risk from fire, but most house fires start by accident and are preventable.

Highlands & Islands Fire and Rescue Service offers Free Home Fire Safety checks aimed at helping you minimise the risk of a fire affecting your life or property.

Here are a few useful tips to keep you and your family safe at home:

Prevention

- Do not leave cooking unattended
- Do not smoke in bed. Carelessness with smoking materials leads to fire.
- Never leave candles unattended.
- Don't leave high powered electrical apparatus on at night i.e. TVs, washing machines etc.
- Alcohol is fuel for a fire. It is a major contributory factor towards a domestic fire when cooking or smoking.

Detection

- Have Smoke Alarms! The best place to put a smoke alarm is on the ceiling, as near to the centre of the room as possible. The smoke alarm

should be placed at least 30 centimetres away from any light or wall. Don't fit smoke alarms in the kitchen or bathroom where they can be accidentally triggered. Make sure you have at least one smoke alarm per level. The hallway and the landing are ideal locations. Test your alarm once a week. Change the battery once a year (unless it is a 10-year alarm). Replace your smoke alarm unit every 10 years.

Escape

- Plan your escape route now.
- Try to identify two routes of escape out of every room. Take a few minutes to practice escaping with your family.
- Keep these escape routes clear of obstructions.
- Know where door and window keys are kept. Check that everyone knows how to operate the locks.
- Close all doors at night especially kitchen and lounge doors. This will protect the escape route should fire occur.

If your escape way is blocked:

- Get everyone into one room
- Close the door and put bedding or towels along the bottom to seal the gap.



- Open the window for fresh air.
- Phone the Fire and Rescue Service or shout for help and get someone else to make the call.
- If you are on the ground or first floor, you may be able to escape through the window.
- Throw some bedding, clothing or soft furnishings out.
- Don't jump; lower yourself down at arm's length and drop into the soft pile.
- Think about the best order to go down if you have children or older people with you.
- If you have to break a window, cover the jagged edges with any available soft materials.

REMEMBER IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE:

- **GET OUT** - Get everyone together and get out. If there is a lot of

smoke, crawl along the floor where the air is cleaner.

- **STAY OUT** - Don't go back in your house, not even to collect valuables or pets.
- **CALL OUT** - Dial 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Call from a mobile phone, a neighbour's phone or a call box.
- Raise the alarm and shout to wake everyone up; don't look for the fire. Check doors with the *back* of your hand before opening. If it feels warm, don't open it.
- **Stop-Drop-Roll**: If your clothes catch fire, running will only fuel the flames and allow the blaze to spread over your body, producing worse burns. When flames are on your clothes, stop where you are, drop to the ground or the floor, cover your face with your hands and roll back and forth until the flames are extinguished.







- If you must take your pet with you, make sure you have a secure pet carrier or leash for your pet.
- Cater for your pet in your Emergency Supplies Kit. Include pet food, water, medication, veterinary records, litter box, food dishes, first aid kit, toys or other supplies that might not be available in a reception centre.
- Be sure your pet has a proper identification tag securely fastened to the collar (if applicable). A current photo of your pet or a microchip insert will assist identification should it become necessary.
- Pets might not be allowed into a Reception Centre. Be aware that you might have to leave your pets with the SSPCA to be picked up after you are able to return home.
- If you are told to evacuate, leave pets behind where possible. As long as they have a water supply they will be okay for a couple of days.

Large Animals

If you have large animals, such as horses or cattle, evacuation arrangements may be impossible. However, if you have individual or isolated animals, you should make provisions for them in case of an emergency:

- Animal owners must decide whether to move large animals to shelter or turn them outside. This decision should be based on the disaster type, quality and location of shelter and the risks of turning them outside. Ensure all animals can be sheltered. Make sure, however, that enough food and water is available.

Wildlife

Disasters and life-threatening situations will exacerbate the unpredictable nature of wild animals.

- Be careful when approaching wild animals or stray domestic animals during an emergency situation. Do not corner them. Wild or loose animals are likely to feel threatened and may endanger themselves or you if approached.
- If any animal bites you, seek immediate medical attention.
- Rats may become a problem after a disaster, especially floods. Be sure to secure all food supplies and contact your local authority if you should see rats.
- During a flood certain small animals, such as rats or squirrels, might seek refuge in your house. Do not approach them. Open a window and see whether they leave on their own. Otherwise, contact your local authority.



Once the immediate threat is over, the recovery phase begins. You will want to go back to a state of normality, although in most disasters life will change, and “normality” will have to include the effects that the disaster has had on you, your family and community. The local authority will do everything it can to facilitate a speedy recovery to normality.

Call your insurance provider as soon as possible. Take pictures of damages and keep good records of any repair work and cleaning costs. Be aware of bogus traders who will show up after every disaster. Always get a written quotation; your insurer will require this. Make sure that it is on letter headed paper with landline contact numbers and an address you have verified. Never pay in advance and only pay up when the work is done to your satisfaction and obtain a receipt for the payment. To be sure, check with your local authority's Trading Standards Department to get advice.

Coping with disasters

A disaster may well leave you stressed and mentally affected. Don't feel that you have to cope without help. Take special care of your children. They can be more affected than they show and reactions can be delayed.

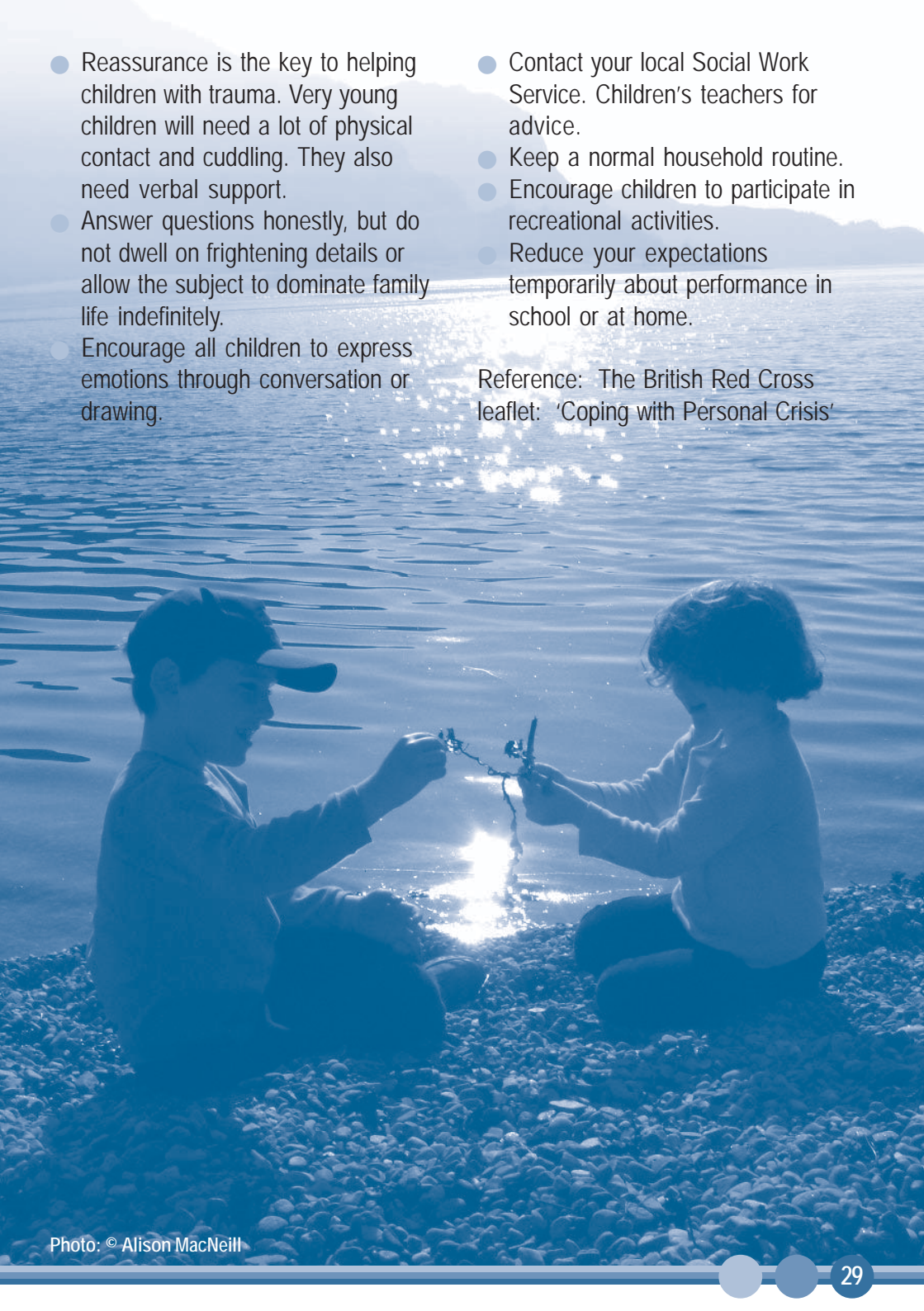
You need to be aware of signs that someone, including yourself, needs help, such as:

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance
- Easily frustrated
- Easily flaring up
- Increased use of alcohol/drugs
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness
- Feeling of hopelessness
- Mood-swings and crying easily
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers and being alone

A disaster can leave people, especially children, feeling frightened, confused and insecure. It is important for parents and teachers to be informed and ready to help if reactions to stress begin to occur.

- Children may have reactions very soon after the event, or be fine for weeks before they show worrisome behaviour.



- 
- Reassurance is the key to helping children with trauma. Very young children will need a lot of physical contact and cuddling. They also need verbal support.
 - Answer questions honestly, but do not dwell on frightening details or allow the subject to dominate family life indefinitely.
 - Encourage all children to express emotions through conversation or drawing.
 - Contact your local Social Work Service. Children's teachers for advice.
 - Keep a normal household routine.
 - Encourage children to participate in recreational activities.
 - Reduce your expectations temporarily about performance in school or at home.

Reference: The British Red Cross leaflet: 'Coping with Personal Crisis'



The Procurator Fiscal is the official responsible for the prosecution of all crime that occurs within his jurisdiction. He or she is also responsible for the investigation of all sudden, unexpected and accidental deaths which occur within that jurisdiction. Accordingly, the Procurator Fiscal may be involved in a major emergency in two ways, firstly, if the emergency is the result of criminal actions by a person or persons and, secondly, if the emergency results in loss of life. Contact details for the Procurator Fiscals within Highlands and Islands are noted below:

OFFICE	FISCAL'S NAME	TELEPHONE NO.	FAX NO.
Dingwall	Roderick Urquhart	Tel : 01349 862122	Fax: 01349 865230
Dornoch	Alistair MacDonald	Tel: 01862 892472	Fax: 01862 892883
Fort William	Alison Wyllie	Tel: 01397 703874	Fax: 01397 701476
Inverness	Gary Aitken	Tel: 01463 224858	Fax: 01463 711187
Kirkwall	Sue Ford	Tel: 01856 873273	Fax: 01856 870505
Lerwick	Duncan MacKenzie	Tel: 01595 693914	Fax: 01595 693340
Portree	Roderick Urquhart	Tel: 01349 862122	Fax: 01349 865230
Tain	Alistair MacDonald	Tel: 01862 892472	Fax: 01862 892883
Western Isles	David Teale	Tel: 01851 703439	Fax: 01851 704296
Wick	Alistair MacDonald	Tel: 01955 602197	Fax: 01955 606507



Useful Contact Numbers and Web Pages

ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE NO.	WEB ADDRESS
Northern Constabulary	Tel: 08456 033 388	www.northern.police.uk
Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service	Tel: 01463 227000	www.hifrs.org
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness	Tel: 01463 704000	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/nhshighland
Caithness General Hospital, Wick	Tel: 01955 605050	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/nhshighland
Belford Hospital, Fort William	Tel: 01397 702481	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/nhshighland
Balfour Hospital, Kirkwall	Tel: 01856 885400	www.ohb.scot.nhs.uk
Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick	Tel: 01595 743000	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/shb/healthcare
Western Isles Hospital	Tel: 01851 704704	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/nhshighland
Scottish Ambulance Service	Tel: 01463 713724	www.scottishambulance.com
SEPA	Tel: 0800 807060 (Pollution Hotline) Tel: 0845 988 1188 (Floodline)	www.sepa.org.uk
Scottish Water	Tel: 0845 600 8855 (emergency) Tel: 0845 601 8855 (customer service)	www.scottishwater.co.uk
Marine & Coastguard Agency	Tel: 01224 592334 (24-hour rescue co-ordination centre) Tel: 01851 702013 (24-hour maritime rescue sub-centre)	www.mcga.gov.uk
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities	Tel: 0131 474 9200	www.cosla.gov.uk
The Met Office	Tel: 0870 900 0100	www.met.gov.uk
Scottish and Southern Energy	Tel: 0800 300999	www.scottish-southern.co.uk
Scotia Gas Networks	Tel: 0800 111 999	www.scotiagasnetworks.co.uk
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	Tel: 01851 703773	www.sne-siar.gov.uk
Orkney Islands Council	Tel: 01856 873535	www.orkney.gov.uk
The Highland Council	Tel: 01463 702000	www.highland.gov.uk
Shetland Islands Council	Tel: 01595 693535	www.shetland.gov.uk
NHS Orkney	Tel: 01856 888000 (local)	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/ohb
NHS Highland	Tel: 01463 704800	www.highlandhealth.org.uk

Useful Contact Numbers and Web Pages

ORGANISATION	TELEPHONE NO.	WEB ADDRESS
● NHS Shetland	Tel: 01595 743060	www.show.scot.nhs.uk/shb
● NHS Western Isles	Tel: 01851 702997	www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk
● Communities Scotland	Tel: 01463 711272	www.communities.scotland.gov.uk
● Scottish Natural Heritage	Tel: 01463 723100	www.snh.org.uk
● Highlands and Islands Enterprise	Tel: 01463 234171	www.hie.co.uk
● National Radiological Protection Board	Tel: 01253 831600	www.hpa.org.uk/radiation
MEDIA OUTLETS		
● BBC Scotland	Tel: 0141 338 2000	www.bbc.co.uk/scotland
● BBC Highland	Tel: 01463 720720	
● BBC Radio Highland	Tel: 01463 720720	
● BBC Radio Nan Gaidheal	Tel: 01851 705000	
● BBC Radio Orkney	Tel: 01856 873939	
● BBC Radio Shetland	Tel: 01595 694747	
● Moray Firth Radio	Tel: 01463 224433	www.mfr.co.uk
● STV Aberdeen	Tel: 01224 848848	www.stv.tv
● STV Inverness	Tel: 01463 242624	
● Shetland Islands Broadcasting Company	Tel: 01595 695299	www.sibc.co.uk
VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS		
● British Red Cross (BRC)	Tel: 01463 231620	www.redcross.org.uk
● Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	Tel: 0870 555 5999	www.rspca.org.uk
● Scottish Ambulance Service	Tel: 01463 713724	www.scottishambulance.com
● SSPCA	Tel: 0131 3390222	www.scottishspca.org
● St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB)	Tel: 0870 010 4950	www.sja.org.uk
● Voluntary Action Orkney (VAO)	Tel: 01856 872897 (local)	www.orkneycommunities.co.uk/VAO
● WRVS - 24hr Emergency Callout	Tel: 07714 698538	www.wrvs.org.uk



First Aid Manual authorised by the UK's leading First Aid providers,
published by Dorling Kindersley

'Preparing for Flooding' *published by SEPA*

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes.



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
The Highland Council
Northern Constabulary
Orkney Islands Council
Shetland Islands Council