



Emergency Planning

How will emergency planning be impacted by climate change?

Our climate is changing. We each need to understand our role in addressing this challenge and work together to increase the resilience of our organisations and society. Cutting carbon emissions is vital as we must reduce the severity of climate change. However, it is equally important to begin preparing for the increase in extreme weather which we are already experiencing, and which is projected to increase substantially in intensity and frequency in the coming decades. We call this act of preparation 'Climate Adaptation.'

Local councils will play a pivotal role in the implementation of any measures, and so require a collaborative approach from different service areas in order to address the impacts of climate change. Every service has something to offer to increase resilience for the council and communities it represents, from overall strategies to daily decisions and management.

This brief is not designed to provide a comprehensive overview, but rather to initiate discussion on the role of emergency planning in addressing climate change impacts as part of a wider suite of documents for other services.

What are the climate risks posed to emergency planning?

Local governments are often in the front line of dealing with extreme weather impacts (such as flooding and storm damage). Extreme weather events, including excess cold weather, hot weather, rainfall, snow and fog are expected to become more frequent and more intense. The following challenges will require increased consideration by emergency planning teams:

- Disruption and damage to public infrastructure, local council services and utilities from extreme weather and gradual climatic changes.
- Increased costs and pressure on resources to plan and respond to extreme weather events.
- Increased costs and pressure on resources and council staff for repair, recovery and replacement of services.
- Disruption to production of goods, supply chains and distribution networks i.e. food shortages.

- Increasing risk to public health and safety if adequate welfare and humanitarian assistance assets are inaccessible, damaged or under resourced.

What actions could you take?

Having a more coordinated and integrated approach to addressing climate change impacts will be beneficial to emergency planning. You could take action by getting involved with your council's adaptation planning process, which should identify short and long-term climate impacts, implications and recommended actions. Emergency planning adaptation actions may include:

- Considering climate hazards as part of council contingency procedures, to enable up-to-date and necessary action.
- Work across the council, within the Emergency Planning Implementation Groups structures to ensure any actions taken are shared to inform good practice and have the most effective outcome.
- Ensure the council is represented at a senior level within the Emergency Preparedness Structures across NI, to ensure a coordinated approach to planning and response.
- Use data evidence from up-to-date and reliable resources, such as data from UKCP18 and NI Flood Maps, Spatial NI Emergency Planning Viewer & Editor.
- Implement regular climate risks screening (every two to five years) to ensure all plans, procedures, and equipment are continually updated.
- Use the products produced by the Regional Community Resilience Group to collaborate with local businesses and communities, on a risk priority basis to support their resilience plans.

Additional Resources

Template for Community Emergency Plan, NI Direct. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Template-for-community-emergency-plan.docx>

How to protect your home against flooding, NI Direct. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-protect-your-home-against-flooding>