WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM

EXTREME WEATHER PROTOCOL

Prepared by the LRF Information, Communication and Technology Sub Group

CONTENTS

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This document should be read in conjunction with the following existing information:

NHS Heatwave Plan for England
NHS Supporting Vulnerable People Before and During a Heatwave
LRF Major Incident Joint Procedures Guide
LRF Communications Strategy
(including the LRF Media Guide and LRF Warning and Informing Protocol)
LRF Mass Fatalities and Emergency Mortuary Guide
Wiltshire County Council Weather Emergency Guide
Wiltshire County and District Flood Plans
Wiltshire County Council Rest Centre Plan
Swindon Borough Council Flood Plan
Swindon Borough Rest Centre Plan
Wiltshire County Council Multi-Faith Guide

During very severe weather incidents this protocol should be used in conjunction with individual organisation's Major Incident Plans.

This document has been written incorporating examples of good practices identified through previous extreme weather events.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ARCC	**Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre, RAF Kinloss**
CCA	**Civil Contingencies Act**
DEFRA	**Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**
DH	**Department of Health**
EA	**Environment Agency**
GWAS	**Great Western Ambulance Service**
HM Coroner	**Her Majesty's Coroner**
HPA	**Health Protection Agency**
LRF	**Local Resilience Forum**
NHS	**National Health Service**
PCT	**Primary Care Trust**
RAYNET	**Radio Amateur Network**
RSPCA	**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**
SVS	**State Veterinary Service**
WILSAR	**Wiltshire Search and Rescue**
WOMAD	**World of Music, Arts and Dance Festival**
WRVS	**(formerly known as Women's Royal Voluntary Service)**

SECTION 1 - OVERVIEW

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum (LRF) has in place plans and procedures to enable it to fulfil its obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 in planning for and responding to incidents caused by extreme weather. This document is not a plan and should not be used such. The response to any extreme weather event contained within this protocol must be as laid down in the LRF Major Incident Joint Procedures Guide.

For the purposes of this document the term 'extreme weather' has been used to encompass all natural events including those most severe and rare events such as tornadoes, earth tremors and other incidents which are thought of as 'acts of god'.

Extreme weather is identified within the Wiltshire and Swindon LRF Community Risk Register and in particular the resulting effects of flooding, high winds, snow, drought or any prolonged periods of extreme hot or cold.

This protocol outlines the various consequences of these events and details the roles and responsibilities of the local responding organisations for different types of extreme weather. For ease of use this document has therefore been split into the following sections:

- Heat
- Cold
- Heavy Rainfall and Flooding
- Other Extreme Weather and Natural Incidents

It is acknowledged that the information contained within the sections of this protocol is replicated in many areas. However, in the event of an extreme weather incident reference should be made to the relevant section of the document only.

1.2   WHY THIS PROTOCOL IS NEEDED

Recent changes in climate has meant that cases of extreme weather are becoming more prevalent throughout the UK and incidences such as 'heatwaves' for example are predicted to become more common.

In Northern France in August 2003, unprecedented high day and night-time temperatures for a period of two weeks resulted in 15,000 excess deaths.

Incidences of extreme weather such as the hurricane force winds that battered the south of England in 1987, and the more recent Birmingham Tornado (2006) and Kent earth tremors (2007) have demonstrated that wide scale damage and the threat to life and property is a very real risk requiring a major response with often a protracted recovery period.

SECTION 2 – HEAT

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The risk of a heatwave in England as severe as that experienced in Northern France in 2003 is very low at present, less than 0.1%[1]. However, with the impact of Climate Change the situation is predicted to become progressively worse over the coming years and even during relatively mild heatwaves, death rates can significantly, but avoidably, rise. Timely preventive measures can help to reduce these excess rates. In contrast to deaths associated with cold snaps in winter, the rise in mortality as a result of very warm weather follows very sharply – within one or two days of the temperature rising. This means that by the time a heatwave starts the window of opportunity for effective action is very short and proper preparedness is of the essence.

2.2   HEATWAVE ALERT LEVELS

The National Health Service (NHS) in England has published a national 'Heat Health Watch' plan which operates from 1 June to 15 September each year. During, this period, the Met Office may forecast severe heatwaves, as defined by day and night-time temperatures and duration. The threshold temperatures for the Southwest are 30°C during the day and 15°C overnight.

> **Level 1 Awareness** – This is the minimum state of vigilance. Both before and during this period, preparedness must be enhanced and maintained by the measures set out in the heatwave plan.
>
> **Level 2 Alert** – This is triggered as soon as the Met Office forecasts threshold temperatures for at least three days ahead in any one region, or that there is an 80% chance of temperatures being high enough on a least two consecutive days to have significant effects on health.
>
> **Level 3 Heatwave** – This is triggered as soon as the Met office confirms that threshold temperatures have been reached in any one region or more.
>
> **Level 4 Emergency** – This is reached when a heatwave is so severe and/or prolonged that its effects extend outside health and social care, such as power or water shortages, and/or where the integrity of health and social care systems is threatened.

2.3   ALERT CASCADES

It is recognised that a number of category 1 organisations receive severe weather alerts directly from the Met Office.

Although it is incumbent upon any individual organisation who receive this information to distribute it accordingly, the Major Incident Planning Officer (or his/her representative) at Wiltshire Police will seek to engage with external organisations at an early opportunity regarding severe weather alerts.

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[1] Statistic derived from NHS Heatwave Plan for England 2007

It will be important to maintain close liaison between the Police, Local Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and any other relevant agencies as required to ensure that any necessary actions or response is undertaken.

2.4   RISKS

2.4.1 Public Health

Extreme heat is dangerous to everyone. When the ambient temperature is higher than skin temperature, the only effective heat-loss mechanism is sweating. Therefore, any factor hat reduces the effectiveness of sweating such as dehydration, lack of breeze, tight-fitting clothes or certain medications can cause the body to overheat. Additionally, thermoregulation, which is controlled by the hypothalamus, can be impaired in the elderly and the chronically ill, and potentially in those taking certain medications, rendering the body more vulnerable to overheating. Young children produce more metabolic heat, have a decreased ability to sweat and have core temperatures that rise faster during dehydration.

Heat Related Illnesses

- **Heat cramps** – caused by dehydration and loss of electrolytes, often following exercise.
- **Heat rash** – small, red, itchy papules.
- **Heat oedema** – mainly in the ankles, due to vasodilation and retention of fluid.
- **Heat syncope** – dizziness and fainting due to dehydration, vasodilation, cardiovascular disease and certain medications.
- **Heat exhaustion** – is more common. It occurs as a result of water or sodium depletion, with non-specific features of malaise, vomiting and circulatory collapse, and is present when the core temperature is between 37 and 40°C. Left untreated, heat exhaustion may evolve into heatstroke.
- **Heatstroke** - can become a point of no return whereby the body's thermoregulation mechanism fails. This leads to a medical emergency, with symptoms of confusion, disorientation, convulsions, unconsciousness; hot dry skin; and core temperature exceeding 40°C for between 45 minutes and eight hours. It can result in cell death, organ failure, brain damage or death. Heatstroke can be either classical or exertional (e.g. in athletes).

Whatever the underlying cause of heat-related symptoms, the treatment is always the same – move the person to somewhere cooler and cool them down.

Although the above describe the main effects of overheating on the body the main cause of death during a heatwave are respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Part of this rise in mortality may be due to air pollution, which makes respiratory symptoms worse; the other main contributor is the effect of heat on the cardiovascular system. In order to keep cool, large amounts of extra blood are circulated to the skin. This causes strain on the heart, which for elderly people and those with chronic health problems can be enough to precipitate a cardiac event.

2.4.2 Vulnerable People

There are certain factors that increase an individual's risk during a heatwave. These include:

- **Older age** – especially in women over 75 years old, those living on their own, or in a care home.
- **Chronic and severe illness** – including heart conditions, diabetes, respiratory or renal insufficiently, Parkinson's disease or severe mental illness. Medications that potentially affect renal function, sweating, thermoregulation or electrolyte balance can make this group more vulnerable to the effects of heat.
- **Inability to adapt behaviour to keep cool** – having Alzheimer's, a disability, being bed-bound, too much alcohol, babies and the very young.
- **Environmental factors and overexposure** – living in a top floor flat, being homeless, activities or jobs that are in hot places or outdoors and include high levels of physical exertion.

In a moderate heatwave, it is mainly the above high-risk groups that are affected. However during an extreme heatwave normally fit and healthy people can also be affected.

2.4.3 Excess Deaths

In one hot spell in London in August 2003, deaths among people aged over 75 rose by 60 per cent.   It is therefore reasonable to assume heatwave type conditions will cause a rise in sudden and excess deaths.

The risks arising from increase in deaths due to a heatwave would include:

- Increase in sudden deaths at home and those who have not received recent medical attention. This will increase the need for post mortems, sudden death investigations and a time delay in holding inquests.
- Crisis with body storage capacity as hospital mortuaries and under-taking storage facilities become full.
- Back log of funeral, burial and cremation services together with capacity issues of dealing with large numbers.

2.4.4 Transport

Extreme heat can have a physical effect on the transport infrastructure such as buckling or rails, melting of tarmac and over-heating of vehicles.

If a serious or major incident were to occur within the local transport network, i.e. a fatal collision on the M4 motorway causing major tailbacks over several miles with large numbers of people effectively trapped in their vehicles. This situation would be further exacerbated by high temperatures resulting in dehydration, ill health and increased risk of death.

The provision of humanitarian response to those above would be the responsibility of the Highways Agency and Local Authority.

Emergency Response and rescue of broken down vehicles may be delayed due to the nature of the incident.

This needs to be checked against and cross-referenced with Highways Agency Document/British Transport Police (Railway).

2.4.5 Fire

In any heatwave event the risk of fire from a number of causes increases, for example: forest fires, vehicle fires and spontaneous combustion of certain types of material.

2.4.6 Impact on Pre-Planned Events

When organising a pre-planned event during the spring or summer period the possibility of extreme hot weather should be considered and risk assessed according to the scale and nature of the event.

For example, when planning for the Summer Solstice in June or the WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance) Festival in July consideration is given to areas of shade available, the provision of water, the length and time of event and producing relevant advice for attendees on health and safety requirements in hot weather. The importance and repercussions of hot weather should always be identified and properly planned for by any event management team or group.

Weather patterns should be monitored prior to any pre-planned event and appropriate measures put in place, as highlighted above, if extreme or heat wave conditions are expected.

2.4.7 Animal Welfare

The welfare of animals in heat wave conditions must be considered at all times. Individuals are responsible for their own animals; however, liaison between emergency services, the local authority and the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals (RSPCA) would take place in order to raise public awareness of the dangers of animals being left in vehicles and animals having access to water and shade.

Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the State Veterinary Service (SVS) are likely to be the lead agency in the provision of advice to farmers on the welfare of live stock.

2.4.8 Business Continuity

Under the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 all category one responders are required to have in place Business Continuity Plans which should include maintaining service levels and where necessary providing advice to external organisations during hot weather.

As a matter of good practice all organisations should have some form of business continuity arrangements in place.

2.5   WARNING AND INFORMING

The Wiltshire and Swindon LRF have a Warning and Informing Protocol together with a joint Media Guide which contain information on engaging with the public and managing the media in the pre, during and post event phases of an incident.

Relevant advice and information to the public would include the following:

- Keep curtains closed and open windows later at night.
- Stay out of the sun, especially between the hours of 11.00am and 3.00pm.
- Stay in the shade, wear hats, use sunscreen and wear light clothing,
- Reduce levels of physical exertion.
- Take cool showers or baths.
- Splash cool water on your face and the back of your neck.
- Eat cold food, particularly salads and fruit with high water content.
- Drink regularly, preferable water or fruit juice, but avoid alcohol and caffeine.
- Tune in to local TV and radio services for further updates and information.

2.6   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.6.1 Police

The primary areas of Wiltshire Police responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life in conjunction with other emergency services
- To co-ordinate the responding emergency agencies and other supporting organisations.
- To protect and preserve property.
- To investigate incidents and secure evidence.
- To collate and distribute casualty information.
- To identify the dead on behalf of Her Majesty's (HM) Coroner.
- To prevent crime.
- To ensure short term measures to restore normality after all necessary actions have been taken.

The Police would perform a co-ordinating role of behalf of the other emergency services in response to a heatwave event and co-ordinate any local media messages and the activation of the LRF Warning and Informing Protocol.

2.6.2 Fire and Rescue Service

The primary areas of Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service responsibility in incident situations are:

- To life-save through search and rescue.
- To fight fires and fire prevention.
- To render humanitarian services.
- To provide safety management within the inner cordon of an incident.
- To provide and/or obtain specialist advice and assistance in the management of hazardous materials.

- To protect and consider all environmental issues.
- To conduct salvage and damage control.
- To conduct, in conjunction with the Ambulance, decontamination procedures if required.

The Fire and Rescue Service have no specific procedures in place for heatwave events other than increased awareness and educational fire prevention advice. The service would react to individual incidents as required using their existing mobilisation plans as appropriate.

For large scale pre-planned events the Fire and Rescue Service may consider deployment of resources at the scene where there is an increased risk of fire.

2.6.3 Health Services

<u>Primary Care Trust (PCT)</u>

The primary areas of Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs responsibility in incident situations are:

- To assess the impact on the health of the population and on the delivery of the health services to those affected and to the general public.
- To initiate and support the public health response.
- To mobilise our community resources.
- To assist the acute hospitals with decanting patients into the community
- To provide a primary care response to an incident involving evacuation or sheltering.
- To take the lead, with Social Services, in relation to social and psychological support.
- To undertake epidemiological follow up.

As laid out in the NHS Heatwave for Plan for England the PCTs will ensure that healthcare providers are aware of all the guidance on minimising and coping with heat-related risks. They will also, in conjunction with local social services, support the community and primary care staff in:

- Identifying individuals who are at particular risk from extreme heat. These people are likely to be already receiving care.
- Identifying any changes to individual care plans for those in high risk groups, including those with chronic illness or severe mental illness, which might be necessary in the event of a heatwave, including initiating daily visits by formal or informal carers to check on people living in their own home.
- Working with the families and informal carers or at-risk individuals to ensure awareness of the dangers of heat and how to keep cool and to put simple protective measures in place, such as installing proper ventilation and ensuring that fans and fridges are available and in working order.
- Reviewing surge capacity and the need for, and availability of, staff support in the event of a heatwave, especially if it lasts for more than a few days.

NHS Trusts and Care, Nursing and Residential Homes

Staff awareness will be raised about the very significant heat-related health risks.

Additionally, the following preparations will be made:

- Indoor thermometers should be installed in each room that vulnerable individuals spend substantial time in (bedrooms, living areas and eating areas) and, during a heatwave, indoor temperatures should be monitored at least four times a day.
- Cool rooms or cool areas should be created. High-risk groups who are vulnerable to the effects of heat are physiologically unable to cool themselves efficiently once temperatures rise above 26°C. Therefore, ever care, nursing and residential home should be able to provide a room or area that maintains a temperature of 26°C or below. Hospitals should ensure that temperatures throughout the hospital do not exceed 26°C.
- If temperatures exceed 26°C, high-risk individuals should be moved to a cool area that is 26°C or below.
- Cool areas can be developed with appropriate indoor and outdoor shading, ventilation, plants and if necessary air conditioning.
- During summer months sufficient staff must be available to that appropriate action can be taken in the event of a heatwave.
- Due to the additional risk of psychiatric medications affecting thermoregulation and sweating, mental health trusts and teams need to ensure that hospital environments have a cool room (26°C or below) and that heatwave considerations are included within an individual's care programme approach.
- All care, residential and nursing homes should provide an email address to local authority/NHS emergency planning officers, to facilitate the transfer of emergency information.

Ambulance Service

The primary areas of Great Western Ambulance Service (GWAS) responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life together with other emergency services.
- To provide treatment, stabilisation and care of those injured.
- To arrange the most appropriate means of transporting those injured to the receiving and specialist hospitals.
- To provide appropriate transport for medical, staff and equipment.
- To establish effective triage systems and determine the priority of those injured for treatment.
- To provide a focal point for NHS services and other medical resources.
- To lead and provide communication facilities for NHS resources, with direct radio links to hospitals, control facilities and other agencies as required.
- To maintain emergency cover throughout the GWAS area and return to state of normality.

- To inform Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs of potential major incidents.
- To maintain the health and safety of personnel.
- To conduct, in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Service, decontamination procedures if required.

Health Protection Agency (HPA)

The HPA, in collaboration with NHS Direct will refine mechanisms for the surveillance of increased heat-related illness with the aim of being able to provide daily real-time reports to the Department of Health (DH). These will provide a source of intelligence on how severe the effects are and how well services are responding.

2.6.4 Local Authority

The Local Authority areas of responsibility in incident situations are:

- To support the emergency services and those agencies engaged in the response to an incident.
- To be prepared to lead in incidents, for example, incidents involving schools.
- To provide a co-ordinated response for all Local Authority resources.
- To maintain services and ensure a return to normality as soon as possible.
- To activate and co-ordinate the response of the voluntary agencies, utilities and other supporting agencies.
- To provide transportation and suitable temporary accommodation for survivors, evacuees, friends and relatives etc.
- To assist with the provision of suitable premises for use as emergency mortuaries (see LRF Mass Fatalities Guide).
- To provide, on request, a media centre.
- To provide emergency catering.
- To provide, on request, engineering, highways, environmental health, communication and specialist support.

The LA and in particular Social Services will work in close collaboration with health services in heatwave conditions. Local Authorities are also be responsible for raising awareness among care home managers and staff about the very significant heat-related health risks, and will encourage additional staff training.

2.6.5 Environment Agency (EA)

The EA respond when notified or requested by the emergency services or Local Authority to any incident where there is a threat of harm to the environment. The primary responsibilities are:

- To ensure the source of pollution is traced and stopped.
- To ensure remedial action is being taken to prevent situation worsening.
- To take samples from polluted watercourses and analyse where necessary.
- To advise on decontamination methods and disposal of contaminated waste arising from decontamination.

- To investigate the incident and obtain and secure evidence in conjunction with other investigative bodies where applicable.
- To advise and authorise where appropriate on disposal of waste arising from the incidents and clean up operations.

2.6.6 Voluntary Organisation

In Wiltshire and Swindon the LRF Voluntary Agencies Sub Group is well supported by a large number of local voluntary organisations who may be available to act in support of emergency services and other agencies, in particular by providing humanitarian assistance services.

The Local Authority can organise the deployment and co-ordination of the following voluntary organisations:

- British Red Cross
- St John Ambulance Brigade
- WRVS
- Salvation Army
- RSPCA
- Inter-faith, Churches Together and Clergy
- RAYNET
- Wiltshire Search and Rescue (WILSAR)
- Wiltshire 4x4
- Rotary
- Skywatch

2.7   COMMAND AND CONTROL

In any heatwave event the recognised levels of command and control (Strategic, Tactical and Operational) would be implemented as appropriate.

Careful monitoring of the NHS Heatwave Alert levels and the resulting effects on the local population would indicate the level of response required.

Where the effects of a heatwave exceed the normal capabilities of any one organisation they made declare a Major Incident using the normal procedure as laid in the LRF Joint Procedures Guide.

SECTION 3 – COLD

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Similar to the effects of a heatwave, an extreme period of cold weather will create its own implications and hazards and lead to an increased death rate, particularly in the elderly.

The transport infrastructure and the provision of services can all be affected, particularly where the weather includes heavy snowfall or extreme icy conditions.

There is likely to be an increase in injuries sustained from road traffic collisions and slips and falls due to icy surfaces.

3.2   ALERT CASCADE

It is recognised that a number of category 1 organisations receive alerts severe weather alerts directly from the Met Office.

Although it is incumbent upon any individual organisation who receive this information to distribute it accordingly, the Major Incident Planning Officer at Wiltshire Police will seek to engage with external organisations at an early opportunity regarding severe weather alerts.

It will be important to maintain close liaison between the Police, Local Authorities and PCTs to ensure that any necessary actions or required response is undertaken.

Severe weather warnings will include such information as: likelihood and depth of snowfall, areas which are likely to be affected and the risk of reduced visibility due to freezing fog conditions.

The Local Authority and Highways Agency are responsible for maintaining the road infrastructure and will undertake spreading of salt on key road networks in line with the severe weather warnings.

3.3   RISKS

3.3.1 Public Health

Seasonal risks to the population include:

- Injuries sustained through trips and falls.
- Injuries sustained from road traffic collisions.
- Hypothermia.
- Normal experienced winter pressures in the NHS such as seasonal cold and flu symptoms.

3.3.2 Vulnerable People

The identified risks above are exacerbated in the case of vulnerable people, such as the elderly, the very young and those suffering from chronic or acute health conditions.

Maintaining service provision wherever possible to those receiving home-based care is an essential consideration for heath and social care services and must be included in relevant Business Continuity Plans.

3.3.3 Excess Deaths

An increase in death rates would normally be expected during the winter months; however, an extreme period of cold weather may see a further marked increase stretching capabilities of the health service, mortuaries and HM Coroner.

The risks arising from an above seasonal increase in deaths would include:

- Increase in sudden deaths at home and those who have not received recent medical attention.   This will increase the need for post mortems, sudden death investigations and a time delay in holding inquests.
- Crisis with body storage capacity as hospital mortuaries and under-taking storage facilities become full.
- Back log of funeral, burial and cremation services together with capacity issues of dealing with large numbers.

One of the consequences of excess deaths, particularly amongst the elderly and those living alone, is that discovery of a dead bodies may go undetected for an increased period of time.

3.3.4 Transport

Transport is likely to affected, particularly where heavy snowfall, extreme ice or dense fog is present. This may lead to road closures due to the conditions, or through road traffic collisions and may see a reduction in the provision of public transport.

The provision of good public advice will assist in reducing the impact from the above effects.

3.3.5 Search and Rescue

There is likely to be an increased demand on the emergency services, particularly the Fire and Rescue Service to remove trapped casualties and those who become trapped through road closures or other activities caused by the extreme cold weather.

There may also be an increased demand for the rescue of farm animals which become isolated or trapped.

An increase of search and rescue requests in extreme weather increases the likelihood of the emergency services approaching other external organisations such as Wiltshire Search and Rescue (WILSAR) and/or the Military for assistance.   Military Search and Rescue helicopters, deployed by the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC) at RAF Kinloss may be essential when there is a requirement to reach isolated areas.

3.3.6 Impact on Pre-Planned Events

When organising a pre-planned event during the late Autumn or Winter period the possibility of extreme cold weather should be considered and risk assessed according to the scale and nature of the event.

Consideration should be given to the length and time of event, ground conditions and producing relevant advice for attendees on health and safety requirements in cold weather. The importance and repercussions of cold weather should always be identified and properly planned for by any event management team or group.

Weather patterns should be monitored prior to any pre-planned event and appropriate measures put in place, as highlighted above, or cancellation of the entire event if extreme cold conditions are expected.

3.3.7 Animal Welfare

DEFRA and the SVS are likely to be the lead agencies in the provision of advice to farmers on the welfare of live stock. The RSPCA would be a source of information in respect of advice regarding domestic animals.

3.3.8 Business Continuity

Under the provisions of the CCA 2004 all category one responders are required to have in place Business Continuity Plans which should include maintaining service levels and where necessary providing advice to external organisations during periods of extreme cold weather.

As a matter of good practice all organisations should have some form of business continuity arrangements in place.

During periods of extreme cold weather there may be a shortage of basic essential items such as bread, milk, fuel which may result in panic buying.

Losses of power, heating and telephony failures could also be expected and should be planned for accordingly as this will increase the risks for vulnerable people.

3.4   WARNING & INFORMING

The Wiltshire and Swindon LRF have a Warning and Informing Protocol together with a joint Media Guide which contain information on engaging with the public and managing the media in the pre, during and post event phases of an incident.

Relevant advice and information to the public would include the following:

• Encourage increased community engagement and neighbours to 'look out for each other' especially visits to the elderly and those living alone.

- Encourage the population to make sensible preparations for the bad weather, recommending they maintain adequate levels of basic supplies but with a message not to panic buy.
- Advice travellers to check on conditions before leaving home allow plenty of time and only make journeys if absolutely necessary.
- Where journeys are essential ensure you are properly prepared i.e. carry with you a hot drink, shovel, blankets, torch, mobile phone and sufficient fuel for the journey.
- Tune in to local TV and radio services for further updates and information.

3.5   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.5.1 Police

The primary areas of Wiltshire Police responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life in conjunction with other emergency services
- To co-ordinate the responding emergency agencies and other supporting organisations.
- To protect and preserve property.
- To investigate incidents and secure evidence.
- To collate and distribute casualty information.
- To identify the dead on behalf of HM Coroner.
- To prevent crime.
- To ensure short term measures to restore normality after all necessary actions have been taken.

The Police would perform a co-ordinating role of behalf of the other emergency services in response to extreme cold weather event and co-ordinate any local media messages and the activation of the LRF Warning and Informing Protocol.

3.5.2 Fire and Rescue Service

The primary areas of Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service responsibility in incident situations are:

- To life-save through search and rescue.
- To fight fires and fire prevention.
- To render humanitarian services.
- To provide safety management within the inner cordon of an incident.
- To provide and/or obtain specialist advice and assistance in the management of hazardous materials.
- To protect and consider all environmental issues.
- To conduct salvage and damage control.
- To conduct, in conjunction with the Ambulance, decontamination procedures if required.

The Fire and Rescue Service have no specific procedures in place for extreme cold weather other than increased awareness and the service would react to individual incidents as required using their existing mobilisation plans as appropriate.

3.5.3 Health Services

Primary Care Trust (PCT)

The primary areas of Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs responsibility in incident situations are:

- To assess the impact on the health of the population and on the delivery of the health services to those affected and to the general public.
- To initiate and support the public health response.
- To mobilise our community resources.
- To assist the acute hospitals with decanting patients into the community
- To provide a primary care response to an incident involving evacuation or sheltering.
- To take the lead, with Social Services, in relation to social and psychological support.
- To undertake epidemiological follow up.

In cases of extreme prolonged cold weather the PCTs will also, in conjunction with local social services, support the community and primary care staff in:

- Identifying individuals who are at particular risk from extreme cold. These people are likely to be already receiving care.
- Identifying any changes to individual care plans for those in high risk groups, including those with chronic illness or severe mental illness, including initiating daily visits by formal or informal carers to check on people living in their own home.
- Working with the families and informal carers or at-risk individuals and to put simple protective measures in place as required.
- Reviewing surge capacity and the need for, and availability of, staff especially if the weather is forecast to last for a prolonged period of time.

Ambulance Service

The primary areas of GWAS responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life together with other emergency services.
- To provide treatment, stabilisation and care of those injured.
- To arrange the most appropriate means of transporting those injured to the receiving and specialist hospitals.
- To provide appropriate transport for medical, staff and equipment.
- To establish effective triage systems and determine the priority of those injured for treatment.
- To provide a focal point for NHS services and other medical resources.
- To lead and provide communication facilities for NHS resources, with direct radio links to hospitals, control facilities and other agencies as required.
- To maintain emergency cover throughout the GWAS area and return to state of normality
- To inform the Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs of potential major incidents.

- To maintain the health and safety of personnel.

- To conduct, in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Service, decontamination procedures if required.

Health Protection Agency (HPA)

In extreme circumstances the HPA, in collaboration with NHS Direct may be asked to refine mechanisms for the surveillance of increased cold-related illness with the aim of being able to provide real-time reports to the DH. These will provide a source of intelligence on how severe the effects are and how well services are responding.

3.5.4 Local Authority

The Local Authority areas of responsibility in incident situations are:

- To support the emergency services and those agencies engaged in the response to an incident.
- To be prepared to lead in incidents, for example, incidents involving schools.
- To provide a co-ordinated response for all Local Authority resources.
- To maintain services and ensure a return to normality as soon as possible.
- To activate and co-ordinate the response of the voluntary agencies, utilities and other supporting agencies.
- To provide transportation and suitable temporary accommodation for survivors, evacuees, friends and relatives etc.
- To assist with the provision of suitable premises for use as emergency mortuaries (see LRF Mass Fatalities Guide).
- To provide, on request, a media centre.
- To provide emergency catering.
- To provide, on request, engineering, highways, environmental health, communication and specialist support.

The Local Authority and in particular Social Services will work in close collaboration with health services in extreme cold weather conditions.

3.5.5 Environment Agency

The EA respond when notified or requested by the emergency services or Local Authority to any incident where there is a threat of harm to the environment. The primary responsibilities are:

- To ensure the source of pollution is traced and stopped.
- To ensure remedial action is being taken to prevent situation worsening.
- To take samples from polluted watercourses and analyse where necessary.
- To advise on decontamination methods and disposal of contaminated waste arising from decontamination.
- To investigate the incident and obtain and secure evidence in conjunction with other investigative bodies where applicable.
- To advise and authorise where appropriate on disposal of waste arising from the incidents and clean up operations.

3.5.6 Voluntary Organisations

In Wiltshire and Swindon the LRF Voluntary Agencies Sub Group is well supported by a large number of local voluntary organisations who may be available to act in support of emergency services and other agencies, in particular by providing humanitarian assistance services.

The Local Authority can organise the deployment and co-ordination of the following voluntary organisations:

- British Red Cross
- St John Ambulance Brigade
- WRVS
- Salvation Army
- RSPCA
- Inter-faith, Churches Together and Clergy
- RAYNET
- WILSAR
- Wiltshire 4x4
- Rotary
- Skywatch

3.6   COMMAND & CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

In any cold weather event the recognised levels of command and control (Strategic, Tactical and Operational) would be implemented as appropriate.

Careful monitoring of extreme weather warnings and the resulting effects on the local population would indicate the level of response required.

Where the effects of the prolonged cold weather exceed the normal capabilities of any one organisation they made declare a Major Incident using the normal procedure as laid in the LRF Joint Procedures Guide.

SECTION 4 – HEAVY RAINFALL & FLOODING

4.1   INTRODUCTION

Protracted periods of heavy rain may cause its own problems for example an increase in road traffic collisions and localised flooding. However, more prolonged periods of heavy rain can lead to the risk of flash flooding or rivers bursting their banks in the local area causing wider and more severe disruption.

Over the last 10 years floods have caused terrible damage to thousands of homes and business in England and Wales. Flooding is a natural process that can happen suddenly and whilst organisations such as the EA and Local Authority can provide warning and advice to home and business owners who are aware they are situated on flood plains, the population are encouraged to take responsibility for their own flood preparations.

4.2   FLOOD WARNING LEVELS

The EA are responsible for flood defence and flood warning in England and Wales and provide a 24hour 'Floodline' on 0845 988 1188 for the general public to listen to recorded flood warning information.

The EA uses available technology to monitor rainfall, river levels and sea conditions 24hours a day and operate the following flood warning services including four codes which indicate the level of danger associated with any warnings.

Flood Watch - Flooding is possible. Be aware! Be prepared! Watch out!

Flood Warning - Flooding of homes, businesses and main roads is expected. Act Now!

Severe Flood Warning – Severe flooding is expected. Imminent danger to life and property, Act Now!

All Clear – All Clear is issued when flood watches or warning are no longer in force. Flood water levels receding. Check all is safe to return. Seek advice.

4.3   ALERT CASCADE

It is recognised that a number of category 1 organisations receive alerts severe weather alerts and flood warnings directly from the Met Office.

Although it is incumbent upon any individual organisation who receive this information to distribute it accordingly, the Major Incident Planning Officer at Wiltshire Police will seek to engage with external organisations at an early opportunity regarding severe weather and flooding alerts.

It will be important to maintain close liaison between the emergency services, Local Authorities and PCTs to ensure that any necessary actions or required response is undertaken.

4.4   RISKS

4.4.1 Public Health

The associated public health risks during periods of heavy rainfall or flooding would include:

- Contaminated water and the dangers from raw sewerage.
- Risk of water borne bacteriological or microbiological disease, i.e. leptospirosis or cryptosporidium.
- Risk of drowning.
- Risk of electrocution.
- Members of the public becoming cut off or stranded.
- Increased risk of transportation incidents.
- Lack of access to clean water supplies.

4.4.2 Vulnerable People

The identified risks above are exacerbated in the case of vulnerable people, such as the elderly, the very young and those suffering from chronic or acute health conditions.

Maintaining service provision wherever possible to those receiving home-based care is an essential consideration for heath and social care services and must be included in relevant Business Continuity Plans.

4.4.3 Transport

Heavy rainfall and flooding may affect the transport infrastructure and in some cases cause damage which with long lasting effects lasting for the medium to long term.

4.4.4 Water Rescue

The Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service would be the primary responding agency to a water rescue incident as there are no coastal services within Wiltshire or Swindon. If necessary Military Search and Rescue helicopter assistance would be requested from the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC) at RAF Kinloss.

4.4.5 Structural Damage

Severe flooding could give rise to serious and long term structural damage to the environment, the transport infrastructure, essential services and most importantly housing and building contents.

In a severe flooding event the recovery phase could take up to many months or years and have a significant impact on displaced people and services. Experience has shown that government support to such events has often been slow and inadequate thereby exacerbating the problem. In many cases people will not be covered by insurance and the Local Authority's ability to meet the ongoing costs will be limited and subject to invoking the Bellwin Scheme.

4.4.6 Impact on Pre-Planned Events

When organising a pre-planned event the possibility of heavy rainfall and flooding must always be considered and risk assessed according to the scale and nature of the event.

Consideration should be given to the length and time of event, ground conditions and producing relevant advice for attendees on health and safety requirements in wet weather. The importance and repercussions of wet weather should always be identified and properly planned for by any event management team or group.

Weather patterns should be monitored prior to any pre-planned event and appropriate measures put in place, as highlighted above, or cancellation of the entire event if extreme rainfall is expected.

4.4.7 Animal Welfare

DEFRA and the SVS are likely to be the lead agencies in the provision of advice to farmers on the welfare of live stock. The RSPCA would be a source of information in respect of advice regarding domestic animals.

4.4.8 Business Continuity

Under the provisions of the CCA 2004 all category one responders are required to have in place Business Continuity Plans which should include maintaining service levels and where necessary providing advice to external organisations during periods of heavy rainfall and flooding.

As a matter of good practice all organisations should have some form of business continuity arrangements in place.

During periods of heavy rainfall or flooding there may be a shortage of basic essential items such as bread, milk, fuel which may result in panic buying.

Losses of power, heating and telephony failures could also be expected and should be planned for accordingly as this will increase the risks for vulnerable people

4.5   WARNING AND INFORMING

The Wiltshire and Swindon LRF have a Warning and Informing Protocol together with a joint Media Guide which contain information on engaging with the public and managing the media in the pre, during and post event phases of an incident.

Relevant advice and information to the public would include the following:

- The associated risk of contaminated water.
- The importance of personal hygiene and infection control.
- The risk of drowning and fast flowing water.
- Advising the public not to take unnecessary risk, i.e. no playing in the water, making on essential journeys etc.
- Tune in to local TV and radio services for further updates and information.

4.6   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.6.1 Police

The primary areas of Wiltshire Police responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life in conjunction with other emergency services
- To co-ordinate the responding emergency agencies and other supporting organisations.
- To protect and preserve property.
- To investigate incidents and secure evidence.
- To collate and distribute casualty information.
- To identify the dead on behalf of HM Coroner.
- To prevent crime.
- To ensure short term measures to restore normality after all necessary actions have been taken.

The Police would perform a co-ordinating role of behalf of the other emergency services in response to a heatwave event and co-ordinate any local media messages and the activation of the LRF Warning and Informing Protocol.

4.6.2 Fire & Rescue Service

The primary areas of Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service responsibility in incident situations are:

- To life-save through search and rescue.
- To fight fires and fire prevention.
- To render humanitarian services.
- To provide safety management within the inner cordon of an incident.
- To provide and/or obtain specialist advice and assistance in the management of hazardous materials.
- To protect and consider all environmental issues.
- To conduct salvage and damage control.

- To conduct, in conjunction with the Ambulance, decontamination procedures if required.

The Fire and Rescue Service have a water rescue capability to support rescue and humanitarian assistance operations. In addition, they have to access to high volume pumping equipment to remove and divert water from flooded areas.

4.6.3 Health Services

Primary Care Trust (PCT)

The primary areas of Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs responsibility in incident situations are:

- To assess the impact on the health of the population and on the delivery of the health services to those affected and to the general public.
- To initiate and support the public health response.
- To mobilise our community resources.
- To assist the acute hospitals with decanting patients into the community
- To provide a primary care response to an incident involving evacuation or sheltering.
- To take the lead, with Social Services, in relation to social and psychological support.
- To undertake epidemiological follow up.

Ambulance Service

The primary areas of GWAS responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life together with other emergency services.
- To provide treatment, stabilisation and care of those injured.
- To arrange the most appropriate means of transporting those injured to the receiving and specialist hospitals.
- To provide appropriate transport for medical, staff and equipment.
- To establish effective triage systems and determine the priority of those injured for treatment.
- To provide a focal point for NHS services and other medical resources.
- To lead and provide communication facilities for NHS resources, with direct radio links to hospitals, control facilities and other agencies as required.
- To maintain emergency cover throughout the GWAS area and return to state of normality
- To inform the Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs of potential major incidents.
- To maintain the health and safety of personnel.
- To conduct, in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Service, decontamination procedures if required.

Health Protection Agency (HPA)

The HPA would be the lead agency for the provision of advice in relation to contaminated and associated risks.

4.6.4 Local Authority

The Local Authority areas of responsibility in incident situations are:

- To support the emergency services and those agencies engaged in the response to an incident.
- To be prepared to lead in incidents, for example, incidents involving schools.
- To provide a co-ordinated response for all Local Authority resources.
- To maintain services and ensure a return to normality as soon as possible.
- To activate and co-ordinate the response of the voluntary agencies, utilities and other supporting agencies.
- To provide transportation and suitable temporary accommodation for survivors, evacuees, friends and relatives etc.
- To assist with the provision of suitable premises for use as emergency mortuaries (see LRF Mass Fatalities Guide).
- To provide, on request, a media centre.
- To provide emergency catering.
- To provide, on request, engineering, highways, environmental health, communication and specialist support.

The Local Authorities within Wiltshire and Swindon have prepared detailed flood plans for the local area. These documents will be a valuable source of information and will include information on:

- Potential areas of flooding, including flood plains and known flash flooding points.
- Trigger levels.
- Actions of the Local Authority Duty Emergency Team.
- Advice on accessing Sandbags in some cases.

Wiltshire County Council has identified Flood Wardens within many Parish Council areas.

4.6.5 Environment Agency

The EA respond when notified or requested by the emergency services or Local Authority to any incident where there is a threat of harm to the environment. The primary responsibilities are:

- To ensure the source of pollution is traced and stopped.
- To ensure remedial action is being taken to prevent situation worsening.
- To take samples from polluted watercourses and analyse where necessary.
- To advise on decontamination methods and disposal of contaminated waste arising from decontamination.
- To investigate the incident and obtain and secure evidence in conjunction with other investigative bodies where applicable.
- To advise and authorise where appropriate on disposal of waste arising from the incidents and clean up operations.

In particular relation to flooding the EA responsibilities are:

- To issue flood warnings on main rivers to the public and relevant organisations.
- To maintain EA flood defences.
- To provide assistance to other agencies when appropriate/possible.
- To provide up to date information on flooding situation during the incident from continuous monitoring.

4.6.6 Voluntary Organisation

In Wiltshire and Swindon the LRF Voluntary Agencies Sub Group is well supported by a great number of local voluntary organisations who may be available to act in support of emergency services and other agencies, in particular by providing humanitarian assistance services.

The Local Authority can organise the deployment and co-ordination of the following voluntary organisations:

- British Red Cross
- St John Ambulance Brigade
- WRVS
- Salvation Army
- RSPCA
- Inter-faith, Churches Together and Clergy
- RAYNET
- WILSAR
- Wiltshire 4x4
- Rotary
- Skywatch

4.7   COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

In any heavy rainfall or flooding event the recognised levels of command and control (Strategic, Tactical and Operational) would be implemented as appropriate.

Careful monitoring of extreme weather warnings and the resulting effects on the local population would indicate the level of response required.

Where the effects of the prolonged rain exceed the normal capabilities of any one organisation they made declare a Major Incident using the normal procedure as laid in the LRF Joint Procedures Guide.

SECTION 5 – OTHER EXTREME WEATHER & NATURAL INCIDENTS

5.1   INTRODUCTION

Other weather conditions that cause repercussions for the local services would include high winds and storm conditions through to those rare and unusual increasing events such as tornadoes, earth tremors and other incidents which are thought of as 'acts of god'. Generally the duration of these events are short-term; however, the impact can often be catastrophic for the area affected.

5.2   ALERT CASCADE

It is recognised that a number of category 1 organisations receive alerts severe weather alerts directly from the Met Office.

Although it is incumbent upon any individual organisation who receive this information to distribute it accordingly, the Major Incident Planning Officer at Wiltshire Police will seek to engage with external organisations at an early opportunity regarding severe weather alerts.

It will be important to maintain close liaison between the emergency services, Local Authorities and PCTs to ensure that any necessary actions or required response is undertaken.

5.3   RISKS

5.3.1 Public Health

The associated public health risks would be dependent on the type of weather or event experienced, however examples of risks which could be experienced may include:

- Risk of flying debris.
- Risks from lightening strikes.
- Risk of structural damage and collapse.
- Risk of members of the public becoming cut off or stranded.
- Increased risk of transportation incidents.
- Loss of essential services.

5.3.2 Vulnerable People

The identified risks above are exacerbated in the case of vulnerable people, such as the elderly, the very young and those suffering from chronic or acute health conditions.

Maintaining service provision wherever possible to those receiving home-based care is an essential consideration for all services and must be included in relevant Business Continuity Plans.

5.3.3 Transport

Extreme weather events may affect the transport infrastructure and in some cases cause damage which with long lasting effects lasting for the medium to long term.

5.3.4 Structural Damage

Extreme weather events could give rise to serious and long term structural damage to the environment, the transport infrastructure, essential services and most importantly housing and building contents.

In an extreme weather event the recovery phase could take up to many months or years and have a significant impact on displaced people and services. Experience has shown that government support to such events has often been slow and inadequate thereby exacerbating the problem. In many cases people will not be covered by insurance and the Local Authority's ability to meet the ongoing costs will be limited and subject to invoking the Bellwin Scheme

5.3.5 Search and Rescue

There is likely to be an increased demand on the emergency services, particularly the Fire and Rescue Service to remove trapped casualties and those who become trapped through structural collapse and other activities caused by the extreme weather.

The Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service have staff trained in rope access techniques and can access specialist equipment for urban search and rescue from other Fire and Rescue Services in the South West.

An increase of search and rescue requests in extreme weather increases the likelihood of the emergency services approaching other external organisations such as WILSAR and/or the Military for assistance. Search and Rescue helicopters may be requested from the ARCC at RAF Kinloss.

5.3.6 Impact on Pre-Planned Events

When organising a pre-planned event the possibility of an extreme weather event must always be considered and risk assessed according to the scale and nature of the event.

Consideration should be given to the length and time of event, the safety of temporary structures, the location of trees and surrounding topography. The importance and repercussions of any extreme weather event should always be identified and properly planned for by any event management team or group.

Weather patterns should be monitored prior to any pre-planned event and appropriate measures put in place, as highlighted above, or cancellation of the entire event if extreme weather is expected.

5.3.7 Animal Welfare

DEFRA and the SVS are likely to be the lead agencies in the provision of advice to farmers on the welfare of live stock. The RSPCA would be a source of information in respect of advice regarding domestic animals.

5.3.8 Business Continuity

Under the provisions of the CCA 2004 all category one responders are required to have in place Business Continuity Plans which should include maintaining service levels and where necessary providing advice to external organisations during periods of extreme weather.

As a matter of good practice all organisations should have some form of business continuity arrangements in place.

During periods of extreme weather there may be a shortage of basic essential items such as bread, milk, fuel which may result in panic buying.

Losses of power, heating and telephony failures could also be expected and should be planned for accordingly as this will increase the risks for vulnerable people

5.4 WARNING AND INFORMING

The Wiltshire and Swindon LRF have a Warning and Informing Protocol together with a joint Media Guide which contain information on engaging with the public and managing the media in the pre, during and post event phases of an incident.

Relevant advice and information to the public would depend on the type of incident experienced; in the case of a sudden or unexpected extreme weather event it may simply contain the following:

- Seek shelter and stay inside.
- Tune into local television and radio for updates and advice.

Where there is prior notice of extreme weather, advice may also include:

- Advice to travellers to check on conditions before leaving home, allow plenty of time and only make journeys if absolutely necessary.
- Where journeys are essential ensure you are properly prepared i.e. carry with you a hot drink, shovel, blankets, torch, mobile phone and sufficient fuel for the journey.

5.5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.5.1 Police

The primary areas of Wiltshire Police responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life in conjunction with other emergency services
- To co-ordinate the responding emergency agencies and other supporting organisations.

- To protect and preserve property.
- To investigate incidents and secure evidence.
- To collate and distribute casualty information.
- To identify the dead on behalf of HM Coroner.
- To prevent crime.
- To ensure short term measures to restore normality after all necessary actions have been taken.

The Police would perform a co-ordinating role of behalf of the other emergency services in response to an extreme weather event and co-ordinate any local media messages and the activation of the LRF Warning and Informing Protocol.

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The primary areas of Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service responsibility in incident situations are:

- To life-save through search and rescue.
- To fight fires and fire prevention.
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- To protect and consider all environmental issues.
- To conduct salvage and damage control.
- To conduct, in conjunction with the Ambulance, decontamination procedures if required.

5.5.3 Health Services

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The primary areas of Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs responsibility in incident situations are:

- To assess the impact on the health of the population and on the delivery of the health services to those affected and to the general public.
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- To undertake epidemiological follow up.

Ambulance Service

The primary areas of GWAS responsibility in incident situations are:

- To save life together with other emergency services.
- To provide treatment, stabilisation and care of those injured.
- To arrange the most appropriate means of transporting those injured to the receiving and specialist hospitals.
- To provide appropriate transport for medical, staff and equipment.
- To establish effective triage systems and determine the priority of those injured for treatment.
- To provide a focal point for NHS services and other medical resources.
- To lead and provide communication facilities for NHS resources, with direct radio links to hospitals, control facilities and other agencies as required.
- To maintain emergency cover throughout the GWAS area and return to state of normality
- To inform the Wiltshire and Swindon PCTs of potential major incidents.
- To maintain the health and safety of personnel.
- To conduct, in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Service, decontamination procedures if required.

5.5.4 Local Authority

The Local Authority areas of responsibility in incident situations are:

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- To take samples from polluted watercourses and analyse where necessary.

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- RAYNET
- WILSAR
- Wiltshire 4x4
- Rotary
- Skywatch

5.6   COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

In any extreme weather event the recognised levels of command and control (Strategic, Tactical and Operational) would be implemented as appropriate.

Careful monitoring of weather warnings and the resulting effects on the local population would indicate the level of response required.

Where the effects of extreme weather or natural incidents exceed the normal capabilities of any one organisation they made declare a Major Incident using the normal procedure as laid in the LRF Joint Procedures Guide.