

Briefing Note to Members from Councillor Tim Carroll - Advice for the Public in a Flooding Crisis

Flooding incidents are increasing and from anecdotal evidence now seem to occur not just from River flooding, but increasingly, from surface water flooding as well.

In a significant and widespread flooding event, such as occurred on 13th December 2008 the multi-agency response is led by the Fire Brigade & Police. The integrated emergency response is set up in the following way:

Gold Command- Locally would be set up at Portishead and gives strategic direction in an emergency. Depending on the severity of the emergency this level of command may not always be set up, and Silver Command would then lead the response.

Silver Command – Locally would be set up in the nearest Police station to the incident-normally Taunton. Silver is intended to strategically direct the operational response.

Bronze Command – Would be set up as near to possible to the site of the incident – at the flooding incident on the 13/12/08 was located at the Little Chef at Southfields Roundabout A303. Bronze command is multi-agency and leads the operational response as directed by Silver.

In any emergency incident there is always a multi-agency response with the 'Blue light' services working together with Local Authorities, the Environment Agency and others.

The Council has a responsibility under the Civil Contingencies act as a Category one responder to provide assistance to the emergency services and arranging care for those who may be evacuated from their homes. That care could be relocating people to a rest centre or making arrangements with local hotels and could lead to arranging temporary accommodation until such time as people may return to their homes. In reality most people prefer to make arrangements to stay with family or friends for a short period.

South Somerset DC also has a policy, agreed in 2002, of issuing sandbags to householders who find themselves in danger of flooding. This service is available both during and outside of normal working hours. There is no statutory requirement to provide this service.

To help you to deal with enquiries from members of the public who are affected by flooding:

If a house is already flooded to a significant level:

- ✓ Call 999 for Fire Brigade assistance
- ✓ Collate important documents from the home: eg: Insurance details, Important contact details
- ✓ Gather warm clothing and toiletries together
- ✓ Contact Insurance companies at an early stage to inform them of the incident.

At the stage when a property and the surrounding area is heavily flooded or in imminent danger of significant flooding the Fire Brigade may decide to evacuate the householder/s to a safe place of refuge, and will liaise with the Councils Emergency Planning Manager to arrange alternative accommodation until householders are able to return to their homes.

If a house is in imminent danger of flooding:

- ✓ Deploy any flood defence measures the householder has available: e.g.; Flood boards, or sandbags.
- ✓ Call the Council on 01935 462462 to request delivery of sandbags (The delivery is normally 6 per doorway)
- ✓ The Council will attempt to deliver within 2 hours of the request being made so the earlier the request is made the better.
- ✓ Collate important documents or move any valuable or valued items to a higher level (where feasible)

For those households that are in close proximity to known flood zones associated with watercourses, then it is advisable to register with the environment agency so they may receive early warning of flooding. There is no warning system in place for surface water flooding. The Council monitors closely the Environment Agency warnings and the Met Office severe weathers warnings, these warnings are also received out of hours by text message.

Commercial Premises: Where there is a danger to life and limb the Fire Brigade will carry out search and rescue duties and evacuate staff to places of safety. The Council do not provide sandbags to commercial premises free of charge, there is a charge of £2.50 per filled bag.

Councillor Tim Carroll
December 2008