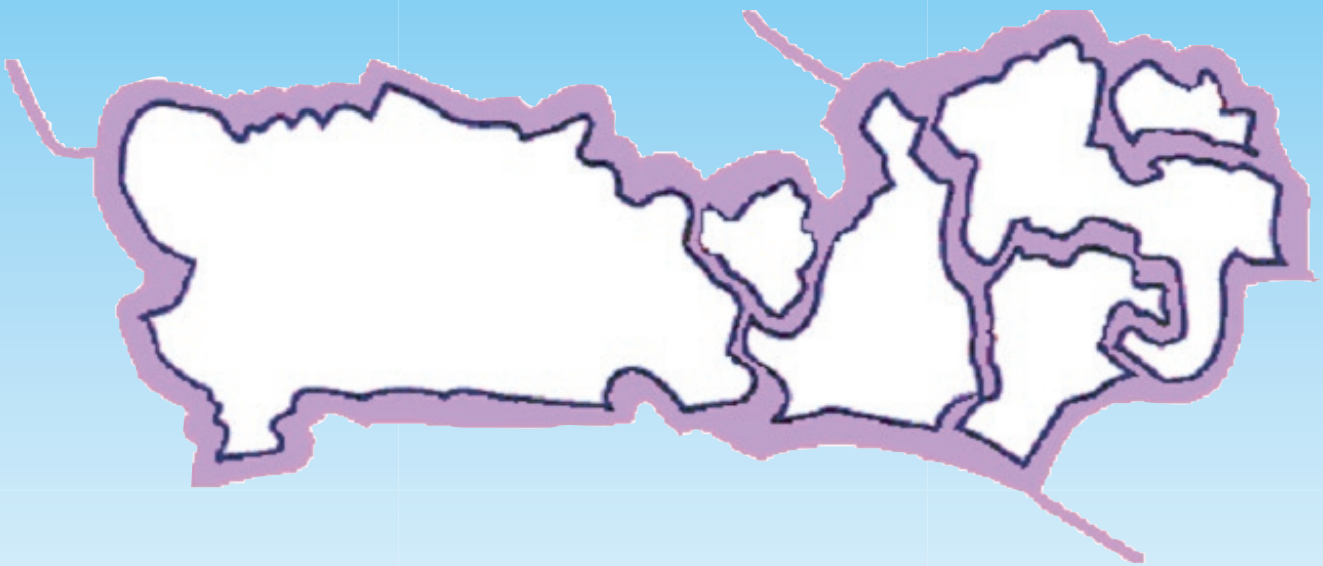


# Planning for Disasters in Berkshire



A Guide to Civil Contingencies  
and Resilience



**WOKINGHAM**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL





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## INTRODUCTION

We live in prosperous times, but with a need to plan for the unpredictable and unexpected events that may touch our lives at any time and in a number of different ways. These events are triggered by a variety of influences like the weather, transport accidents and terrorism, to name just a few. I am sure that we all appreciate any effort focused on reducing these risks and managing these unwanted events.

The six Unitary Councils in Berkshire have prepared this Guide and other plans to provide basic information about what you can do to protect yourself in the event of a major incident or accident. The Guide provides the basic do's and don'ts in simple steps to prepare for an emergency without unnecessary interruption to day to day activities.

The Chief Executives of the Berkshire Unitaries welcome the opportunity to inform the public and hope that this information provides a useful addition to your response to any emergency.

The Berkshire Unitary Authorities Chief Executives

## WRITE YOUR OWN EMERGENCY PLAN

The Emergency Services and your Council 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, make a risk assessment for your home. Is there a risk of flooding? 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 two escape routes 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 a terrorist attack or 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 up to three days or more. This also means having your own water, food and emergency supplies. You may lose power, 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 disaster 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.

- ◆ Try using 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 Disaster 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, soup, 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:**

- ◆ First aid kit including: first aid manual, sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes, cleansing agents and soap, thermometer and sunscreen
- ◆ It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during a disaster. Ask your GP or pharmacist about storing prescription medications. Be mindful of expiry dates. Keep a list of medication you and your family are on as part of your kit or plan.
- ◆ Have the following non-prescription medications in your disaster supply 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.

### **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 you 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
- ◆ 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 chlorine bleach
- ◆ Consider a small shovel for digging a latrine

### **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
- ◆ Entertainment items e.g. books and board games



## EVACUATION

While evacuation is generally considered a matter of last resort, 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 easy to see why it is 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. Sheltering is much safer for you (see page on Shelter). 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 disaster supply kit with items from the “emergency supply kit” checklist that you would need in a Rest 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. Have the tools you would need to do this (usually adjustable pipe and crescent wrenches) at a fixed place ready to use.
- ◆ 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

## SHELTER

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. Your local radio stations are listed on page 12.

- ◆ 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 (see diagram).
- ◆ **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. Please listen to the local radio station.
- ◆ Avoid using the telephone, especially your mobile phone, unless it is essential as the Emergency Services may be attempting to contact you or need to use the limited number of lines available.

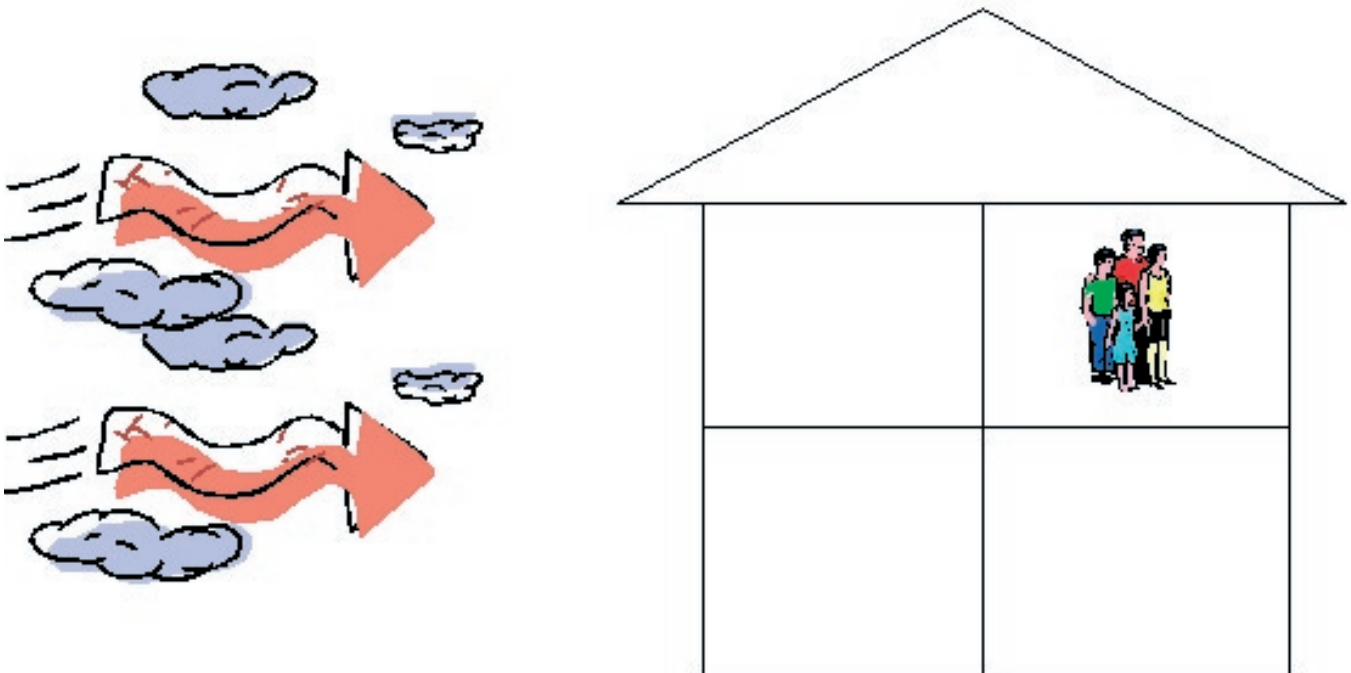
- ◆ The Police and education authorities will ensure that children attending any schools affected by the emergency are properly looked after.
- ◆ Should you be out walking when the sheltering advice comes, go into a shop or other public building and wait for further instructions.
- ◆ Follow the advice 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 RADIO STATIONS

<b>BBC Radio Berkshire</b>	104.1, 104.4, 95.4, 94.6 FM
<b>2-TEN FM</b>	97, 102.9, 103.9 FM
<b>107 FM</b>	107 FM
<b>Star FM</b>	106.6 FM
<b>Kick FM</b>	105.4 & 107.4 FM
<b>Kestrel FM</b>	107.6 FM

**Take SHELTER downwind above ground level if possible –**

**GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN**



## FLOODS

Some areas of Berkshire have had periods of flooding in the last few years and often people know that they live within a flood risk area. The significant floods of 2000 and the floods in early 2003 are two examples. 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 Environment Agency also has information that will help you before, after and during a flood.

**Please note that YOU are obliged to protect your property and not the Local Authority.**

Here are some suggestions of what you can, or must not do:

### **DO ...**

- ◆ Stay calm. Don't panic.
- ◆ If you know that you live in a flood risk area, subscribe to the Environment Agency automated flood warning system. This service is free.
- ◆ Keep a list of useful numbers to hand e.g.: Your local Council, the Emergency Services, your insurance company, Floodline – 0845 988 1188, as well as the quick call reference number for your area which significantly speeds up access to information relevant to your home. You can get the quick dial number from the Environment Agency.
- ◆ 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 Disaster 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 at the last minute when flooding occurs.**

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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. Consider writing a Flood Plan, and store these notes with your Flood Kit.
- ◆ Switch off gas, water and electricity if you get flooded.
- ◆ Find a place to move pets to if a flood is on the way. Provide a litter tray or other facility.
- ◆ If road conditions permit and it is safe to do so, remove vehicles to areas unaffected by flooding; ask friends and relatives to use 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 ...**

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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 up 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'.

**[www.environmental-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environmental-agency.gov.uk)**



## WINTER STORMS AND EXTREME COLD

Heavy snowfall and extreme cold can immobilise an entire region. Major snowstorms or extreme cold can hit even regions that usually experience mild winters. Berkshire is predominantly a rural area with many isolated roads and small villages. There are extreme dangers if you are caught in your car during a snowstorm. Just think back to the jam on the M11 in Cambridgeshire during the winter of 2003. Now 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. It is a good idea to have this information at hand if you are driving during the winter months.

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 using the primary route road network.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Always keep your fuel tank full.
- ◆ 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

**If you get stuck in a winter storm in a remote area, you can 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.
- ◆ Carry a candle and means of lighting it. Leave a gap in the window for fresh air.

## **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 disaster 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, as it can bring on a heart attack.
- ◆ 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.

[www.met-office.gov.uk](http://www.met-office.gov.uk)

## HEATWAVE

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 over-exposed 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
- ◆ If you do not have air conditioning, stay on the lowest floor away from the sunshine.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Avoid strenuous work during the warmest part of the day. Try not to work alone when working in extreme heat and take frequent breaks.
- ◆ Regularly check on family and friends who are vulnerable, such as the elderly.
- ◆ Look up heat-induced illnesses such as sunburn, heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke in your first aid manual and be prepared to give first aid.

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

[www.thames-water.com](http://www.thames-water.com)

[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## FIRE

In 2000, Fire Brigades in the United Kingdom attended 936,500 fires or false alarms. The latest figures indicate that the total number of fire related deaths fell to an estimated level of 600. Fire is by far the biggest risk for a disaster in your home. Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service's Community Fire Safety team offers free advice and information aimed at helping you minimise the risk of a fire affecting your life or property. Please read up on fire safety at: [www.rbfrs.co.uk](http://www.rbfrs.co.uk). In the following you will find a few useful tips to keep you and your family safe:

- ◆ **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.
- ◆ Try to identify two routes out of every room. Take a few minutes to 'walk' the routes with your family.
- ◆ Keep your escape routes clear of obstacles.
- ◆ Know where door and window keys are kept. Check that everyone is able to operate keys and locks.
- ◆ Don't leave your TV or similar items on standby.
- ◆ Don't smoke in bed!
- ◆ Shut all doors at night. This slows the spread of a fire.
- ◆ Never leave a burning candle. Never have candles in children's rooms.
- ◆ Clean out storage areas. Don't let newspapers and magazines accumulate.



**FIT A SMOKE ALARM**

## **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 Brigade.
- ◆ Call from a mobile phone, a neighbour's phone or a phone 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.
- ◆ Do not use a lift during a fire.
- ◆ **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 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 Brigade 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.

**Ask your Community Fire Safety Team for advice, visit [www.rbfrs.co.uk](http://www.rbfrs.co.uk) or call the Helpline on: 0118 932 2152**

## 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 life, health or property 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. Berkshire has a number of regulated facilities in addition to the major national transport road and rail routes that cross the county. 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. If the site has an Automated Voice Messaging Service, sign up to it. It will inform you around the clock if there is an emergency.

### **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.



# Household Chemical Emergencies

Nearly every household uses products containing hazardous materials. Although the risk of a chemical accident is slight, knowing how to handle these products and how to react during an emergency can reduce the risk of injury.

- ◆ Follow the instructions on the product label for proper disposal of chemicals.
- ◆ Take outdated or unused medicines back to the pharmacy for disposal.
- ◆ Read the instructions before using new chemical products and be sure to store household chemicals according to the instructions on the label.
- ◆ Store chemicals in a safe, secure location, preferably up high and always out of reach of children.
- ◆ Avoid mixing household chemical products.
- ◆ Never smoke while using chemicals.
- ◆ If you spill chemicals, clean them up immediately with rags. Wear gloves and eye protection. Allow the fumes in the rags to evaporate outdoors, and then dispose of the rags in accordance with the instructions on how to dispose of the chemical itself.
- ◆ Post the number of the Poisons Information Service: 0207-635-9191 by all telephones.
- ◆ Learn to recognise symptoms of toxic poisoning:
  - ◆ Difficulty breathing
  - ◆ Irritation of the eyes, skin, throat or respiratory tract
  - ◆ Changes in skin colour
  - ◆ Headache or blurred vision
  - ◆ Dizziness
  - ◆ Clumsiness or lack of co-ordination
  - ◆ Cramps or diarrhoea

- ◆ If your child should eat or drink a non-food substance, find the container immediately and take with you to the phone when you call for help. Medical professionals may need specific information from the container to give you the best emergency advice.
- ◆ Call 999.
- ◆ Follow the professional advice carefully. Do not give anything by mouth before told to do so by a medical professional.
- ◆ Read up on what to do in case of poisoning in your first aid manual **before** anything happens.
- ◆ Take immediate action if the chemical gets into the eyes. Flush the eye with clean water for a minimum of 15 minutes, unless authorities instruct you not to use water on this particular chemical. Continue cleansing even if the patient indicates they are no longer feeling pain and then seek medical attention.

[www.rbfrs.co.uk](http://www.rbfrs.co.uk)



[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## PETS

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Pets might not be allowed into a Rest Centre. Be aware that you might have to leave your pets with the RSCPA to be picked up after you are able to return home.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ 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 Disaster 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 rest centre.

## 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. If sheltering advice is given, animals should also be sheltered. Make sure, however, that enough food and water is available.
- ◆ All animals should have some form of identification.

## 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 you see an injured or stranded animal, do not approach or attempt to help. Call your local animal control or local Council.
- ◆ Animal carcasses can present a serious health risk. Do not touch. Contact your local authority for advice.
- ◆ 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.

**[www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)**

## THE RECOVERY FROM A DISASTER

Once the immediate threat is over, the recovery phase begins. You will want to go back to a state of normality, although in most major 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, but some responsibilities have to stay with you as an individual, especially where your health and property are concerned.

### **Your first concern after a disaster is your family’s health and safety:**

- ◆ Be aware of new hazards created by the disaster. Watch for washed out roads, contaminated buildings, contaminated water, gas leaks, broken glass, damaged wires, slippery floors and similar situations
- ◆ Be aware of exhaustion. Don’t try to do too much at once. Set priorities and pace yourself.
- ◆ Drink plenty of clean water. Eat well and get enough rest.
- ◆ Wear sturdy boots and work gloves when working with debris. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water often, especially when in contact with floodwater.
- ◆ Inform your local authority or Emergency Services about health and safety hazards, such as chemical releases, downed power lines, washed out roads, smouldering insulation, and gas leaks or dead animals.

### **Returning to your home**

- ◆ Returning to a damaged home can be both physically and mentally challenging. Above all, use caution.
- ◆ Wear sturdy boots and work gloves.
- ◆ Before going into your house, walk carefully around the outside of your home and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you smell gas, do not enter your home and leave immediately.

- ◆ If your home was damaged by fire, do not enter until authorities say it is safe.
- ◆ Check for cracks in the roof, walls and chimneys. If it looks like the building may collapse, leave immediately.
- ◆ A torch is the best source of light for inspecting a damaged home. CAUTION: Switch it on outside. It may produce sparks that could set leaking gas alight, if present. Don't use open fire inside your house, if you suspect leaking gas.
- ◆ If you cut off your gas supply before you left, it needs to be switched on by a professional and gas systems tested before you can safely use it.
- ◆ If you enter a house and smell gas or hear a hissing sound, leave immediately.
- ◆ Check electrical appliances. If they are wet, they need to be checked by a professional before use.
- ◆ Open windows and doors to get the air moving again. Especially if you have been sheltering in your house, you need to get a draught going to vent your property of any gases that may have built up.
- ◆ Throw out fresh food, cosmetics and medicines that have been in contact with floodwater.
- ◆ DO not let your children play with toys that have been in contact with floodwater, before you have disinfected them.
- ◆ Check with your local authority or Water Supply Company before using the water; it may be contaminated.

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

Any disaster will 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:

- ◆ 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

Disasters 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. Please remember that children can also be affected by seeing drama unfurl on television.

- ◆ 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, drawing or find a way to help others affected by the same disaster.
- ◆ Contact your Community Care department of the local authority or your 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.



## USEFUL WEBPAGES AND CONTACT NUMBERS

<b><u>Information</u></b>	<b><u>Website</u></b>	<b><u>Telephone</u></b>
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	<a href="http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk">www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a>	01344 351400
Department of Health	<a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk">www.dh.gov.uk</a>	0207 210 4850
Home Office	<a href="http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk">www.homeoffice.gov.uk</a>	0870 000 1585
Emergency Planning Society	<a href="http://www.emergplansoc.org.uk">www.emergplansoc.org.uk</a>	0845 600 9587
Environment Agency	<a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk">www.environment-agency.gov.uk</a>	
How to make a risk assessment	<a href="http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf">www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf</a>	
International Committee of the Red Cross	<a href="http://www.icrc.org">www.icrc.org</a>	
The Met Office	<a href="http://www.metoffice.gov.uk">www.metoffice.gov.uk</a>	0870 900 0100
National Radiological Protection Board	<a href="http://www.nrpb.org.uk">www.nrpb.org.uk</a>	01253 831600
Reading Borough Council	<a href="http://www.reading.gov.uk">www.reading.gov.uk</a>	0118 939 0900
Royal Berkshire Ambulance Trust	<a href="http://www.berkshire.nhs.uk/rbat">www.berkshire.nhs.uk/rbat</a>	0118 936 5500
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service	<a href="http://www.rbfrs.co.uk">www.rbfrs.co.uk</a>	0118 945 2888
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	<a href="http://www.rbwm.gov.uk">www.rbwm.gov.uk</a>	01628 796888
Slough Borough Council	<a href="http://www.slough.gov.uk">www.slough.gov.uk</a>	01753 552288
Thames Valley Police	<a href="http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk">www.thamesvalley.police.uk</a>	0845 850 5505
UK Resilience	<a href="http://www.ukresilience.info">www.ukresilience.info</a>	
West Berkshire Council	<a href="http://www.westberks.gov.uk">www.westberks.gov.uk</a>	01635 42400
Wokingham District Council	<a href="http://www.wokingham.gov.uk">www.wokingham.gov.uk</a>	0118 974 6000

## Volunteer Organisations

British Red Cross (BRC)	<a href="http://www.redcross.org.uk">www.redcross.org.uk</a>	0207 235 5454
Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET)	<a href="http://www.raynet.uk.net">www.raynet.uk.net</a>	
Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	<a href="http://www.rspca.org.uk">www.rspca.org.uk</a>	0870 555 5999
South East Berkshire Emergency Volunteers Search and Rescue (SEBEV SAR)	<a href="http://www.sebev.co.uk">www.sebev.co.uk</a>	0118 977 6331
St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB)	<a href="http://www.sja.org.uk">www.sja.org.uk</a>	0870 010 4950
WRVS	<a href="http://www.wrvs.org.uk">www.wrvs.org.uk</a>	01235 442900



Summaries or extracts of this document can be made available in larger print or on audio cassette. Copies in other languages may also be obtained. Please contact 01753 539944.

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