



Are you ready?

A guide to preparing for emergencies



Prepare
yourself

Prepare
your community

Prepare
your business

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Introduction

The aim of this is to provide clear practical advice to help you, your family, your businesses and your community prepare for and respond to an emergency. A lot of the information is common sense, but it has saved lives in the past.

All the responding agencies in the Thames Valley work hard to make sure that they are as prepared as they can be in the event of an emergency. Plans are in place which are regularly reviewed, and staff from the emergency services and other agencies take part in simulated emergency exercises and training to make sure they work. In the first stages of an emergency, the priority will be to protect life and property wherever we can, and then to help communities recover as quickly as possible.

Sometimes a major emergency will only affect one area of the community, at other times it could affect a wider region. Whatever the extent, we will work closely with the media and ensure social media and relevant local news, radio and websites are kept up to date, so that you can assess any likely impact on you and your family.

Regardless of how much planning we do however, there is likely to be a time delay in the emergency responders getting to the scene of an emergency or for emergencies, which affect a large geographic area they simply cannot be everywhere at once.

Therefore it is important that you, your family, businesses and local communities are prepared. This booklet is prepared by members of Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum which is made up of number of local agencies including: Emergency Services, Health Agencies, Local Authorities, Environment Agency, Highways, Utilities and Voluntary sector partners, such as the British Red Cross.

Preparedness

Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.

Go in, stay in, tune in

If you find yourself in an emergency, your common sense and instincts will usually tell you what to do, this would normally be:

- **STAR:** Stop, Think, Assess, Respond
- If people are injured or in danger, contact the emergency services by dialling **999** and follow their advice
- Remain calm, reassure others and think before acting
- Check for injuries - remember to help yourself before helping others
- Stay informed by listening to local radio, watching local television stations and checking trusted websites and social media. If you are not involved in the emergency, but are close by or believe you may be in danger, in most cases the advice is:

GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN; this creates a barrier between you and the hazard. Of course there may be occasions when you should not 'go in' to a building for example if there was a fire.



GO IN to a safe building



STAY IN until you are advised to do otherwise



TUNE IN to local TV or radio for more information

At home

Planning for an emergency in your own home

To prepare for an emergency, you should take time to find out:

- Where and how to turn off water, gas and electricity supplies in your home
- The emergency procedures for your children at school
- The emergency procedures at your workplace
- How your family will stay in contact in the event of an emergency
- If any elderly or vulnerable neighbours will need your help
- How to tune in to your local radio station and social media
- A list of useful phone numbers, for example your doctor and close relatives
- Where you would go if you were asked to evacuate



Be prepared at home

Some emergencies require evacuation; some require staying in and sheltering - are you ready?

In the case of most major emergencies, the simple advice is to go inside, stay inside, and tune into local radio. We use social media and local radio to broadcast emergency warnings and information. Radio remains one of the most accessible means of communication as it can be received in homes, businesses, and cars.

Radio is very reliable as it can still broadcast and be received during a power cut by using a wind-up or battery powered radio. With most incidents the safest place to be is indoors, and with correct preparation you should be able to stay there safely for some time. Remember, in the case of a fire in a building you are in - get out, stay out and call the fire brigade out.

Agencies such as the Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Health Agencies, Local Authorities, Met Office, and Environment Agency work together with BBC (and other media outlets) to make sure that they give out accurate and up-to date information to keep people fully informed on what to do during any emergency. Knowing what to do during an emergency is an important part of being prepared and may make all the difference when seconds count.

What would I save?

REMEMBER: NO ITEM OF PROPERTY IS WORTH LOSING A LIFE OVER

Make sure that you have prepared a 'grab bag' of items that you may need in the event of an emergency. If you are at home and an emergency happens, try to gather together:

- Prescribed medication and medical aids such as walking sticks and dietary foods- oxygen, insulin, inhalers
- Copies of important documents in a waterproof wallet (personal ID, insurance documents, banking etc.)
- Your pet in a carrier and its food
- House and car keys
- Toiletries and sanitary supplies
- A battery or wind-up radio and torch (include some spare batteries)
- First aid kit
- Baby food and care items where necessary
- Your mobile phone and charger
- Cash and credit cards
- Warm, waterproof clothing and blankets
- Bottled water, ready-to-eat food (tinned food) and a bottle / tin opener, in case you have to remain in your home for several days

Apart from family members and pets, what else in your home would you not want to lose? This could be:

- Documents including insurance, birth and marriage certificates or passports
- Photographs
- A piece of furniture
- A favourite toy or baby blanket

By considering now what you would not like to lose, you can take prompt action to save or preserve it. You could:

- Copy documents and photographs and ask someone to look after them
- Prepare to put furniture etc. upstairs or up high to prevent water damage
- Consider purchasing a fireproof/waterproof container for those special items



Evacuation and Shelter

Help and advice on what to do in an emergency situation

Being asked to leave your home or business can occur day or night and is usually only done to protect life. Fires, floods, industrial accidents and security issues are just a few examples of what can cause evacuations.

The emergency services decide whether an evacuation is necessary and it is then the council's duty to ensure the welfare of those who have been made unintentionally homeless for the period of the

evacuation. The nature and circumstances of the incident will determine the council's ability to set up facilities for those evacuated. If you are evacuated, you should always consider if you could stay with friends and family nearby.

If your property is damaged and is not fit to live in, it is the responsibility of your landlord or housing association (if in rental) or insurance company (personally owned property) to re-house you temporarily.



Leaving your home

When an evacuation occurs, the emergency services will most likely set up a cordon. A cordon is a controlled area which the emergency services set up for safety or to preserve evidence.

The emergency services will ask everyone within the cordon to leave until it is safe to return.

If you are asked to leave the cordoned area as an evacuee, then you are advised to take essential items such as medication with you only if you have time to gather them.

It's beneficial to have a grab-bag ready at all times with important items to take with you in an evacuation. See **Preparing for Emergencies**

Be prepared to leave quickly, in certain situations, emergency services may ask you to leave your home. If this happens, leave as quickly and calmly as possible. If you have time and it is relevant to do so:

- Turn off electricity, gas and water supplies, unplug appliances and lock all doors and windows and take the items identified previously
- If you leave by car, take bottled water and blankets
- Take your pets (with suitable carriers or leads)
- Tune in to social media and local radio for emergency advice and instructions
- Inform emergency services of where you have gone and how you can be contacted
- Ensure you take all health aids, including glasses, hearing aids, ability aids and any prescribed medication

Remember – those who are most vulnerable will be the most affected by an emergency, particularly if they need to be evacuated. This can involve more complex medical and physical needs to mobilise individuals and greater support and care is required. If you know of a neighbour, friend or relative please take the time to prepare them in the event of evacuations, read this document together, support them and alert the local council if further help and support is required, such as transport, medication, temporary accommodation and medical attention. Please see our more detailed section on supporting vulnerable people and how to reduce vulnerability.

Making arrangements for your pet

If you're evacuated in an emergency, it's up to you as an owner to make arrangements for your pets. The best way to make sure your pet stays safe is to agree with friends or family in advance that you will take in each other's pets in an emergency. Make sure that this pet sitter does not live in the immediate area, or they may be having to evacuate as well.

It's a good idea to put together a "pet emergency kit" in case you need to evacuate from your home. This should contain:

- Carrier, litter tray and litter, poo bags
- Tinned or dried food, including bowls
- A photograph of your pet for identification purposes - perhaps put a photograph in your purse or wallet now so it is ready when you need it
- Lead, collar and identity tag
- Any medication your pet needs
- Pet insurance documents
- Vaccination certificates and/or pet passports

If you have advance warning that an evacuation is going to happen, try to place your pets somewhere safe such as a local cattery or boarding kennel - local animal charities may be able to help.

Planning for an emergency isn't just a good idea for cats, dogs, and other indoor pets - don't forget to consider outside pets such as rabbits, guinea pigs and tortoises as well.

Larger animals and livestock

It's very difficult to evacuate large animals with little notice, so having a plan is vital in case of an emergency. Some things to keep in mind when creating a plan:

- Aim to evacuate animals as soon as possible to a safe place outside of the immediate area
- Arrange your evacuation route in advance and work out an alternative route just in case
- Set up safe transportation - make sure that you have available trucks, trailers, or other vehicles suitable for transporting farm animals
- Arrange to have experienced animal handlers and drivers to transport them
- Take your supplies with you
- At an evacuation site you should have, or be able to readily obtain, food, water, veterinary care, handling equipment and generators if necessary

Where to go

If you can, you should stay with family and friends as nearby as possible until you are told it is safe to return to your property. If you are evacuated in an emergency, you will also need to make arrangements for your pets. The best way to make sure your pet is safe is to agree with friends or family in advance that you will take in each other's pets should an emergency occur. Otherwise, ensure you have pet carriers or something suitable to more easily transport your pets.

If you have no family and friends to go to, the council may consider establishing a Reception Centre to provide basic welfare facilities for those impacted by the incident.

If a Reception Centre is established, you will be informed of its location and may be asked to make your way to the centre. If it is some distance away, transport may be provided. It is important to let the emergency services responding know that you will be attending the Reception Centre, and if you can, you should notify a family member that you will be attending the Reception Centre for reassurance as they may be concerned. Please register at the Reception Centre and notify staff if you intend to leave. This will let the council and emergency services them know they do not need to look for you.

Returning home after an emergency

Listen to advice from emergency services or local authorities about specific actions you should follow when it is safe to return home. Be wary of anyone who knocks on your door offering to carry-out building or repair work, check their credentials first.

Crisis, emergencies and disasters can cause major trauma which may have long lasting psychological impacts, please see *Coping with stress following a major incident*. You may find this leaflet helpful if you have been involved in, or affected by, a traumatic incident. It provides information on how you may expect to feel in the days and months ahead, and to help you understand and have more control over your experience.

Supporting vulnerable people



Advice for parents and carers

Supporting vulnerable people

Vulnerable people are most often the most affected by emergencies and disasters. If you are vulnerable you may need additional assistance. As such, it is important that as a society and community we look out for each other and help those in need. Checking on neighbours and family members and getting to know each others needs can be critical to coping in an emergency. This will help to plan, prepare and reduce risk; and highlight any challenges which may arise during emergencies. Please see our more detailed section on supporting vulnerable people and how to reduce vulnerability.

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free service provided by suppliers and network operators to customers in need. Being a priority user means you will receive priority support in an emergency, advance notice of planned outages, and much more. Find out if you qualify and sign up to this service. If you know someone who is vulnerable, encourage them to sign up and, if you are a carer, sign them up.

You can sign up to both your power and water supplier. You can find their contact details on your energy bill, or if you don't have this to hand, visit the energy networks association (ENA) website www.energynetworks.org and type in your postcode to find out who you should contact. It is important you sign up to both agencies separately.



Be prepared for emergencies

If you suffer from ill health, have a disability or impairment, then your preparedness plan is especially important. You will need to carefully consider the best options for you. Talk to your doctor, health worker and service providers to identify assistance and backup solutions, especially if you depend on life-saving equipment or medicine at home and/or undergo routine treatments in a clinic or hospital.

'In Case of Emergency'

Find an 'ICE' partner, ICE stands for 'In Case of an Emergency'. This is a quick and easy way for the emergency services to find the contact details of your next of kin if you are injured and unable to tell them who to contact.

This simple idea of storing the word ICE in your mobile phone address book before the name and number of the person you would want to be contacted, could be invaluable. Make sure that:

- The person whose name and number you are using has agreed to be your ICE partner
- Your ICE partner has a list of people they should contact on your behalf and knows any important medical information
- If your ICE contact is deaf - type ICETEXT - then the name of your contact before saving the number
- If you want more than one ICE partner, simply save them as ICE1, ICE2 etc

Have emergency friends

One of the easiest ways of preparing for emergencies is to identify 'emergency friends'. Emergency friends should be people you trust who can help you in an emergency. You should identify at least one emergency friend who lives nearby and a second one who lives further away.

Emergency friends should arrange to help each other if one of their homes or members of family have been affected by an emergency. Examples of how you can help each other out include:

- Swap house keys. You never know when you might lock yourself out or need pets feeding if you get stranded away from home
- Provide each other with a place to stay if you have evacuated from your home or if it's affected by flood, fire or utility failure
- Arrange to look after each other's children or to pick them up from school if you have an emergency at work or in the family
- If you are suffering from an infectious disease, like flu, the NHS might ask you to send someone to collect your medication for you
- Keep copies of your most important documents or pictures safe for each other
- Be an emergency point of contact for family members who may be separated in an emergency

Make sure all your family knows who your emergency friends are and make a note of them in the Household Emergency Plan. Sit down and have a chat with each other so you identify all the ways you can help one another.

Talking to children and vulnerable people about emergencies and disasters can be challenging. Be reassuring and positive. Don't terrify or alarm them. Find ways to gently yet truthfully explain what may happen and how you are planning and preparing for such events. Mention early warning signs and how the person should react. Discussing such matters sensitively several times a year reduces fear and anxiety and lets everyone know how to respond appropriately. Make sure people know when and how to call for help and involve them in as many practical and pro-active ways of preparedness as possible, including practising your plan.

The Herbert Protocol

The Herbert Protocol is a national scheme which encourages carers to compile useful information which could be used in the event of a vulnerable person going missing.

Carers, family members and friends can complete the form in advance, and in the event of your family member or friend going missing, the form can be easily sent or handed to the police or Search and Rescue to reduce the time taken in gathering this information. <https://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/missing-person/missing-persons/vulnerable-people-at-risk-of-going-missing/dementia-missing-risk-herbert-protocol/>

Homelessness provision

The Salvation Army provides warmth, food, and shelter to anyone (18 years+) that find themselves without a place to stay. If you are aware or in contact with someone without somewhere to stay, please encourage them to contact either:

- Your local Council Housing team for homelessness advice
- The Salvation Army on **01982 812743**

If you are concerned about someone sleeping rough, you can also send an alert to **StreetLink** or call **0300 500 0914**

If you suspect someone is in immediate risk, harm, or danger from sleeping rough, please telephone the Police on **999**

Emergency information schemes

There are several local schemes available to assist you to store important personal and medical information which would be useful to have available in an emergency. Coverage depends on location. Listed below are a couple of schemes, but many others are available:

- Message In A Bottle - for more information contact your local **Lions Club**
- Talisman Medical Alert Bracelets - available from retailers



Utilities loss

Loss of power and water

Disruptions to power and water supplies are often linked to severe weather events. These simple steps will help you to stay safe and as comfortable as possible throughout any disruption:

- Check if your neighbours have also lost services; knowing if others are affected will make a difference to what you should do
- If you have a pre-pay meter, check you still have credit
- Contact your electricity network operator to report the fault and ask for information
- If you lose power for a prolonged period, take precautions to stay safe; take care using candles, naked flames and even portable heating. Never leave lit candles in unoccupied rooms or with unsupervised children or animals
- Make sure your home is well insulated. A well-insulated house can stay warm for 12 hours or longer
- Register with your utility providers if you consider yourself to be vulnerable

If the emergency services tell you to evacuate your home you should do so. Refusing to leave on their advice will put you, your household and those trying to help you at risk.

Responder resources may be limited and you should try to stay with an emergency friend. If you are stranded, however, the council will provide basic accommodation (in a rest centre).

If you are evacuated, this may be for some time (ranging from a few hours to several months), so you should bring the relevant items identified in the emergency "grab bag" list.

If you have pets, you should have a plan for where they can stay in the event that you are evacuated from your home. There will only be very basic facilities for pets in the rest centre. The people who run rest centres are trained to give you support and advice. They will help you through the stress of an evacuation and prepare you for what to do afterwards.



Electricity failure

To report a power cut, call: 105 (National Number). If you have an electricity failure and only you have lost power then:

- Check your trip switch (a circuit breaker fuse system - it will be near your electricity meter). If the trip switch is still on, call your electricity network operator
- If the trip switch is off, switch it back on. If it switches back off, one of your appliances may be faulty so unplug all appliances and reset the trip
- If only part of your supply has failed and the trip won't reset, there may be a fault with your wiring so contact a registered electrician
- If electricity is lost for a prolonged period over a wide area, being prepared can make a difficult situation easier
- Do not open fridges for any longer than is necessary - they will normally stay cold for many hours

Water failure

When safe drinking water is unavailable, it is more than just an inconvenience - it can become a health emergency. If the whole area has lost water supply your water supplier has a duty to provide you with alternative water sources. This could be bottled water, stand-pipes or water tankers.

If you are unable to go out to collect water, make sure you have an emergency friend that can collect water for you. Make sure you have an emergency water supply. Everyone's needs will differ, but the Food Standards Agency advises that the average adult should take in 11.5 to 2 litres of water in a typical day, (6-8 250ml glasses).



Gas failure

If you smell gas in your home, call the free 24-hour national gas emergency number 0800 111 999, whether the smell is inside or outside the property. You'll be asked a series of questions designed to build a picture of the reported gas escape or gas emergency. From these details, the operator can identify the right gas safety advice for you - such as:

- Do not turn electrical switches on or off
- Open doors and windows
- Avoid using naked flames

An engineer will be sent to make the property safe. If the gas is lost for a long period, National Grid will send you details about the incident (e.g. update on the situation, when they can safely restore supplies, alternative heating and cooking provisions etc.) If gas is lost for a prolonged period over a wide area, being prepared with emergency heating can make a difficult situation easier.

- To conserve existing heat in your home, use just one or two adjacent rooms. Keep these areas isolated by closing doors and/or hanging blankets over doorways. The kitchen and an adjoining room are usually good choices
- If the authorities inform you that you could be without power for several days, your best option may be to move in with an emergency friend

Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is a free service provided by suppliers and network operators to customers in need. Being a priority user means you will receive priority support in an emergency, advance notice of planned outages, and much more.

You are eligible to sign up to the Priority Services Register and receive more support if you:

- Have children under 5 years old
- Are over 60 years old
- Have special communication needs
- Are disabled
- Are electricity-dependent (such as for medical care)
- Have a chronic illness
- Have a short term medical condition

Suppliers and operators also recognise that people can be vulnerable because of life-changing events such as bereavement and recovery from hospital treatment.

Find out more and sign up through your power or water supplier. You can find their contact details on your energy bill, or if you don't have this to hand, visit the energy networks association (ENA) website and type in your postcode to find out who you should contact.

Loss of goods and services

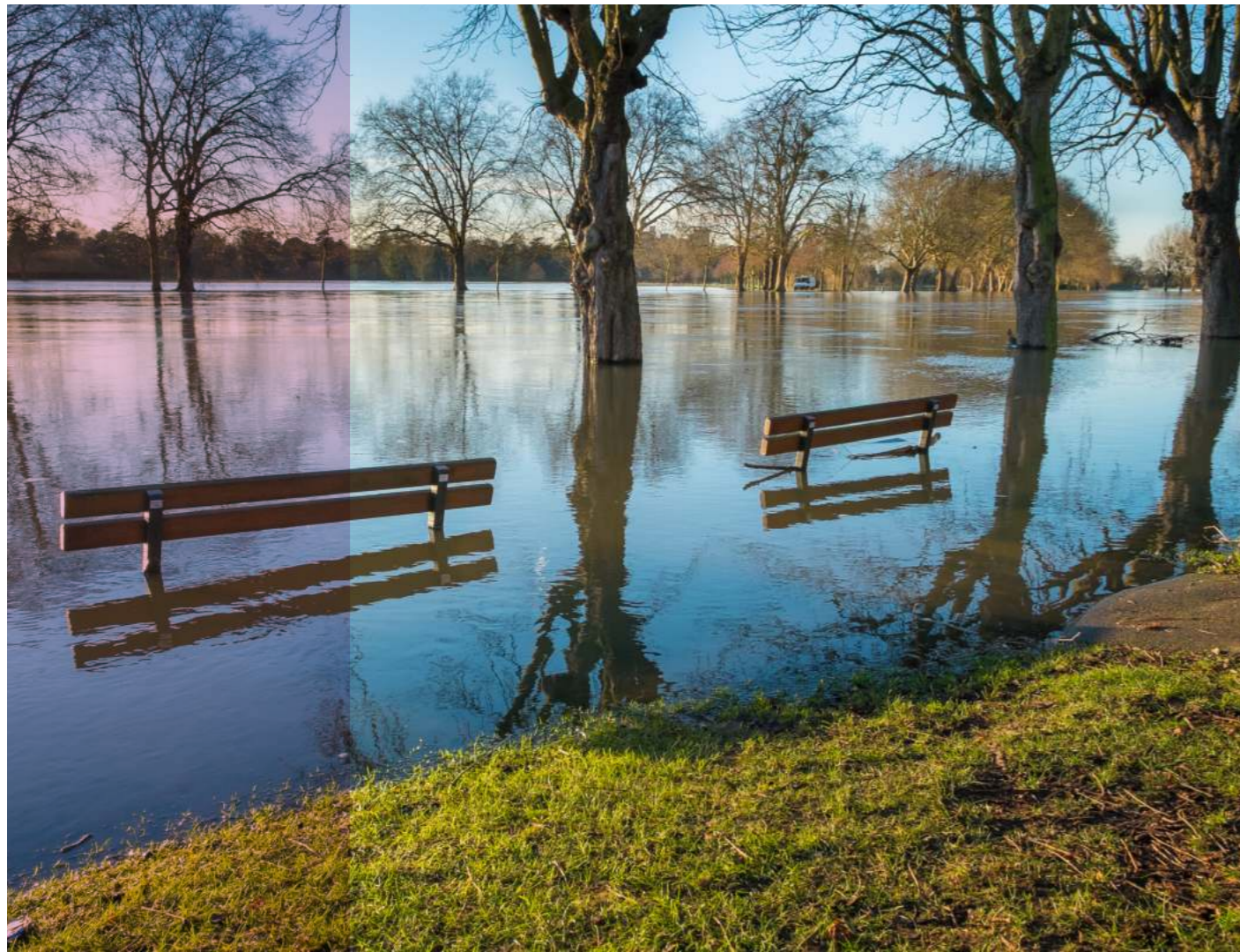
In the event of a disruption to infrastructure systems there are various risks and associations:

- Disruption to essential services e.g. doctors surgeries, bin collections, water, power, gas
- Potential impact on logistics of essential supplies such as food, medication, toilet roll

How you can prepare

Ensure you keep an emergency kit in your property which will contain essential items such as a wind-up torch, batteries, wind-up radio and supplies of tinned food. Ensure you have enough emergency reserves in your house for up to ten days including: essential medications, food and water. Remember you can phone **111** for health advice.





Flooding

Around 5.4 million - or 1 in 6 properties - are at risk from flooding from all sources across England. Flooding can come from several sources: rivers, coastal waters, groundwater, surface water or sewage spills. There are a number of things you can do in advance to prepare for flooding and to minimise its effects.

Preparing for a flood

Ensure that you know your property's risk to flooding and what type. To assess your risk from river flooding visit: www.gov.uk/check-flooding or call Floodline on **0345 988 1188**.

- If you are at risk you may be able to register for the Environment Agency's free flood warning service, via the www.gov.uk website or by telephone. Ensure you keep the Floodline number handy to get the latest information
- Get to know the flood warning codes and what they mean. This information is on the Environment Agency pages on www.gov.uk
- Check your buildings and contents insurance policy to confirm you are covered for flooding and to check you haven't underestimated the value of your home contents
- Know how to turn off your gas, electricity and water supplies. If you have any doubts, you should ask your supplier for advice. Putting stickers on the taps and switches you need to turn off during a flood makes it easier to remember and quicker to do
- Think about what you will do with pets, cars, furniture, electrical equipment and garden furniture should you be affected by flooding. You can download a template to produce a household flood plan on www.gov.uk
- Get involved with your local community to find out if there is a community flood plan and how to get involved if you're able to volunteer
- If a flood is likely, put plugs in sinks and baths and weigh them down, and put a towel in the toilet and a weight on top of lid, to prevent sewage from overflowing
- If your home is prone to flooding, buy flood protection equipment in advance. The National Flood Forum has information on flood protection equipment at www.floodforum.org.uk as does the bluepages.org.uk a directory of property flood products and services put together to advise and inform you of what's available to help reduce the risk of flooding to your home or business

Responding during a flood

- Tune in to your local radio station, follow the news online, social media or call Floodline on **0345 988 1188** to get the latest information
- Report property flooding or river blockages to the Environment Agency incident hotline on **0800 80 70 60**.
- If safe to do so, turn off gas, electricity and water supplies before flood water enters your home and prepare for utility disruption
- If your home has been flooded you are advised to move your family and pets upstairs, or to a high place with a means of escape - remember to take your emergency "grab bag" with you
- Do not touch sources of electricity when standing in flood water
- Never drive through flood water. 80% of flood deaths occur in vehicles
- If there is raw sewage in your property you should not enter your property at all and you should seek alternative accommodation until it has been cleansed
- Ring your insurance company as soon as possible and follow their advice. If you can access your property, take photographs for evidence
- To protect against contamination always wear waterproof outerwear, wellingtons and gloves
- Get your local electricity supply checked before switching back on and have your gas or oil central heating checked by a qualified person
- Your local council may help provide skips for clearing flood-damaged household items

After a flood

- Check the Environment Agency pages on www.gov.uk
- Remember flood water is likely to be contaminated with sewage. Do not let children play in flood water. Belongings that have been in flood water may be contaminated. Used sandbags need to be disposed of, the sand should not be used afterwards

High wind storms

Preparing for high winds

- Secure or store loose objects outside that could blow into windows
- Close and fasten doors and windows securely
- Park vehicles in a garage or well away from trees, buildings, walls and fences



During high winds

- Stay indoors as much as possible - do NOT go outside to repair damage whilst the storm is in progress
- Find shelter in a substantial, permanent, enclosed building
- Slow down if driving on exposed routes, such as over bridges, and find alternative routes if possible. Take particular care of side winds if driving a high-sided vehicle or if you are towing another vehicle or container
- Do not touch electrical or phone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging

Heatwaves

Preparing for heatwaves

During extended periods of hot weather, people and animals are at risk from the effects of heat. To reduce the risks, the following should be considered:

- Apply high-factor sun-screen regularly during the day
- Try to keep your house cool; closing blinds and curtains can help
- At night, keep your sleeping area well ventilated
- Take cool (not cold) showers or baths or spray yourself with water throughout the day
- Wear lightweight, loose, light-coloured clothing and a wide-brimmed hat
- Drink plenty of cold fluids, but not alcohol or caffeine, which dehydrate the body
- If driving, keep your vehicle ventilated to avoid drowsiness. Take regular breaks and have plenty of water in the vehicle
- Try to avoid going out during the hottest part of the day (11.00am - 3.00pm)
- Avoid being in the sun for long periods of time
- The elderly and very young are most at risk for dehydration. If you have elderly neighbours check on them daily
- Avoid excessive physical activity (it can cause heat stroke or heat exhaustion), or do it in the cooler ends of the day
- Ensure that babies, children, elderly people or animals are not left alone in stationary cars
- Be alert and call the health services if someone is unwell or further help is needed

Snow and ice

Preparing for severe winters

At home considerations

- Ensure you have enough insulation around your water tank(s), loft and external water pipes
- Check you have de-icer, salt/grit and the necessary tools to keep your home safe and clear of snow

Walking considerations

- If you are going outside, wear several layers to avoid losing heat and cover your head. Keep moving your arms and legs to help the blood circulate
- Wear practical footwear that is warm and has good grip for the conditions
- Consider using a walking stick to aid balance

Travel considerations

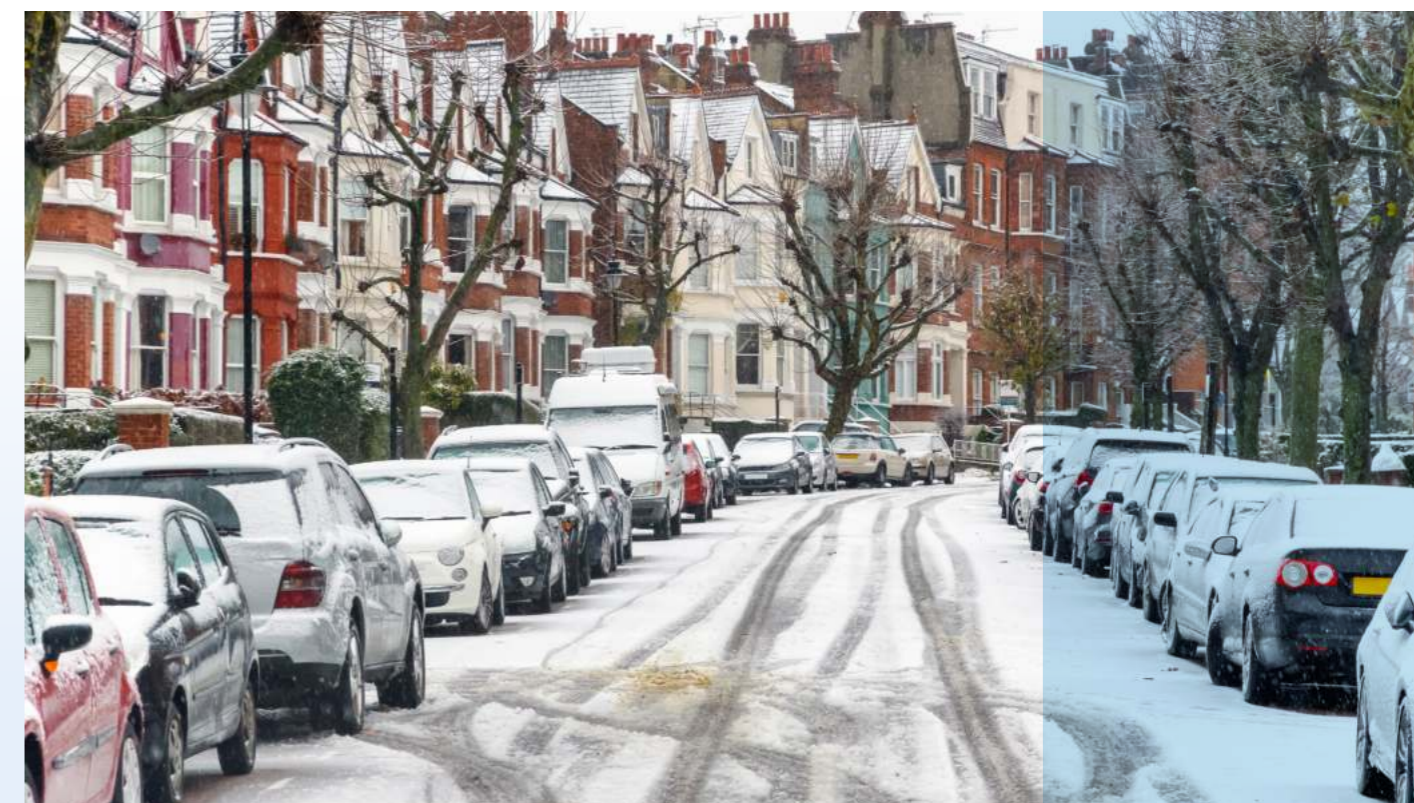
Consider whether you really need to make the journey. If you are travelling when snow or ice is forecast, make sure that you and your car are fully prepared for the trip and that:

- You have warm clothes, food, water, fully charged mobile phone, torch, spade and possibly a reflective jacket

- Tell somebody when you expect to arrive and the route you plan to take
- Make sure there is enough screenwash in the windscreen washers, and have some spare to top up if needed
- Try to wait for the roads to be treated/gritted before travelling - note it may be that only the major roads are treated
- If you must drive, check the Highway Code for advice on driving on ice and snow. The main points are:
 - Slow down
 - Allow extra room - it can take 10 times as long to stop in these conditions
 - If you start to skid, ease gently off the accelerator and avoid braking. If braking is necessary pump the brakes, don't slam them on
 - If you get stuck, stay with your car and tie something brightly coloured to the aerial

Other snow considerations

- Keeping the paths around your property clear of snow
- If safe to do so you may wish to consider knocking down any icicles that form to prevent them falling onto someone
- Check to see if your gutters are being affected by the weight of snow
- Put salt or grit on paths and driveways
- Consider getting together with neighbours to clear footpaths and community areas



Fire

Protecting yourself, your family and your home

- For more information, contact your local fire and rescue service:
 - Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes bucksfire.gov.uk/safety-advice-hub
 - Oxfordshire www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/fire-and-public-safety/fire-and-rescue-service
 - Royal Berkshire rbfrs.co.uk/your-safety
- For general fire awareness info: fireengland.uk/fire-safety
- Fit and maintain smoke alarms - at least one on every floor (test monthly)
- Plan an escape route in case a fire breaks out



Reduce fire hazards in your home

- Do not overload electricity sockets
- Do not leave items on charge over night
- Do not leave appliances on when you're not home
- Have your appliances regularly tested including electric blankets

During a fire

- If there is a fire in your home or affecting your home then get out, stay out and call 999 and follow the advice of the fire and rescue service
- Do not use a lift
- If you are moving or trapped in smoke, stay close to the floor where the air is cleaner
- Never re-enter your home until the fire and rescue service has made it safe



Outdoor fire

Countryside safety

- Avoid open fires in the countryside. Always have them in safe, designated areas
- Put out cigarettes and other smoking materials properly before you leave your vehicle
- Don't leave bottles or glass in woodlands. Sunlight shining through glass can start a fire. Take them home or put them in a waste or recycling bin
- If you see a fire in the countryside, report it immediately
- Don't attempt to tackle fires that can't be put out with a bucket of water - leave the area as soon as possible
- Never throw cigarette ends out of car windows - they could start a fire and endanger lives



Barbecues

- Follow the safety instructions provided with disposable barbecues. Never use a barbecue indoors
- Never leave a barbecue unattended
- Make sure your barbecue is well away from sheds, fences, trees, shrubs or garden waste
- Keep children, pets and garden games away from the cooking area
- After cooking, make sure the barbecue is cool before moving it
- Empty ashes onto bare garden soil, not into dustbins or wheelie bins. If they're hot, they can melt the plastic and cause a fire
- Store gas cylinders outside, away from direct sunlight and frost
- Make sure the tap is turned off before changing the gas cylinder
- After cooking, turn the gas supply off first and then the barbecue control. This will stop any gas from leaking

Bonfires

- Site the bonfire well away from houses, garages, sheds, fences, overhead cables, trees and shrubs
- Never leave the bonfire burning unattended
- Build the stack so that it is stable and will not collapse outwards or to one side
- Never use flammable liquids - paraffin or petrol - to light the fire
- Don't burn foam-filled furniture, aerosols, tins of paint and bottles
- Keep everyone away from the fire - especially children, who must be supervised at all times
- Pour water on the embers before leaving

Camping and caravan

- Fit and regularly test a smoke alarm in your caravan
- To avoid a build-up of poisonous gases make sure the caravan is ventilated, and never block air vents
- Never use candles in or near a tent - torches are safer
- Don't smoke inside tents
- Never bring a barbecue inside a tent or caravan. They create deadly carbon monoxide gas which will soon fill an enclosed space suffocating all sleeping inside

Fly tipping

As well as looking and smelling bad and attracting vermin, fly tipping can be used as fuel to start a deliberate fire. If the problem is not dealt with quickly, it can lead to an increase in fly tipping in the area, increasing the risk of fire resulting in potential loss of life and damage to property and the environment. This puts an unnecessary drain on fire service resources.

- If you see fly tipping, then report this to your local authority. Please use this link to find the relevant council for your location Find your local council; www.gov.uk/find-local-council

Outdoor water safety

Be water aware

Cooling off in rivers, canals, ponds, quarries and lakes can have deadly consequences. Every year, firefighters are called to incidents where residents (particularly children and young people) get into difficulty when swimming in open water.

Pools and hot tubs should be covered at all times to prevent drowning of children and pets. The water temperature must be checked before allowing children and pets into the water to prevent scolds and burns.

Hosepipes should also be run for a few moments and the water temperature checked before attempting to cool off under garden hoses as stagnant water in the pipe can become super-heated causing burns and scalding.

Dangers of cooling off in open water

The water may look calm on the surface, but there may still be strong undercurrents that could pull even a strong swimmer under.

The water may also feel relatively warm on the surface, but just a few feet below can be icy cold – even in the hot weather – and can very quickly cause severe cramp and hypothermia.

Young people often misjudge their swimming ability – they may view a river or lake as a tempting means of cooling off during a hot spell of weather, but fail to appreciate the harmful effects that the cold water can have on their stamina and strength.

Key safety tips for staying safe near water

- Alcohol and swimming do not mix – stay out of the water if you've been drinking
- Always watch your child while at the beach, lake or other natural bodies of water
- Never let older children swim in unsupervised areas like quarries, canals or ponds and stay vigilant
- Don't swim near motor boats, jet skis or other power vehicles
- Never interfere with lifesaving equipment – you might need it yourself
- Learn to spot and keep away from dangerous water
- Take safety advice – heed notices which warn you of the danger. See national water safety signs for guidance www.rospa.com
- Children should always visit open water sites with a grown-up
- Swimming anywhere other than at purpose built and supervised swimming pools is highly dangerous and is not recommended, unless as part of an organised club

See also: Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents – advice on water safety. www.rospa.com



Transport emergencies

Road safety and emergencies

Help protect yourself and other drivers, stay within the speed limit and keep left unless you're overtaking. This helps to keep you and other road users safe, and to keep traffic flowing as smoothly as possible.

Plan ahead. Check that your vehicle is safe and roadworthy, and that you have enough fuel for your journey. Remember to plan for breaks and don't drive when you're tired.

If you or anyone in your vehicle is unable to follow our breakdowns advice for any reason, stay in your vehicle, keep your seatbelts and hazard warning lights on and call 999 immediately.

Keep the following items in the car if you can:

- Warm clothes
- Hi-vis jacket
- A torch
- Breakdown cover details
- Any medication you need
- Charged mobile phone
- Food and water



Personal safety and security

How to report suspicious activity

Whilst it is important that we all go about our daily business normally, it's also sensible to remain alert to danger and to report any suspicious activity you see or hear.

Always report suspicious activities, you may have vital information. If you hear, see or come across anything that may be linked to terrorist activity, please tell the police. They want to hear from you.

- Call **999**, in an emergency, or for non-emergency calls to Thames Valley police, call: **101**
- Call the anti-terrorist hotline on **0800 789 321**
- Crimestoppers - a national organisation independent of the police. You can talk confidentiality on: **0800 555 111**
- Textphone - facility for people who have hearing disabilities: **0800 0324 539**

Remember, terrorists need...

- A place to live: Are you suspicious about any tenants or guests?
- To plan: Have you seen anyone pay an unusual amount of attention to security measures at any location?
- Money: Individuals may set up bogus bank accounts, copy credit cards, and return goods for large cash refunds.
- Equipment: If you are a retailer, do you have any cause to be suspicious about anything being bought?

What to do during and after a terrorist attack

RUN: If there is a safe route run, if not, hide. Leave your belongings behind and insist others go with you. Do not congregate at meeting points

HIDE: It is better to hide than confront. Barricade yourself in, turn your phone to silent and use only when it is safe to do so

TELL: Dial **999** when you can, give location, direction and description of attackers. Keep out of the area and stop others entering if possible. Provide details of casualties, injuries and building or location information if possible

Make sure you know the security plans at your place of work and what to do in an emergency. If the incident/explosion involves a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agent then the emergency services are equipped to respond to such incidents. They are able to decontaminate large numbers of people quickly if necessary. This involves showering and dressing in temporary clothing. It is important that this takes place where the incident happened so that other people and areas, including homes, are not contaminated. If necessary, you would also be assessed by health service personnel.



Health and wellbeing

Health advice

If you become unwell or are injured, a range of NHS services exist to help you get well. Choosing the right one will ensure you receive the best possible treatment. www.nhs.uk

- Call NHS **111** if you urgently need medical help or advice but it's not a life-threatening situation. You can also call NHS **111** if you're not sure which NHS service you need
- Call **999** if someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk
- Visit a walk-in centre, minor injuries unit or urgent care centre if you have a minor illness or injury (cuts, sprains or rashes) and it can't wait until your GP surgery is open
- Ask your local pharmacist for advice – your pharmacist can give you advice for many common minor illnesses, such as diarrhoea, minor infections, headache, travel advice or sore throats
- Make an appointment with your GP if you are feeling unwell and it is not an emergency



Get training

A simple first aid course can provide you with basic skills that could help you save the life of a family member or friend. Local courses are provided by St. John Ambulance www.sja.org.uk/courses or British Red Cross www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk





Infectious disease

There are a number of infectious diseases that may lead to localised, national or even international outbreaks if they are not rapidly controlled. Some of these diseases include pandemic influenza, covid-19, norovirus (sickness and diarrhoea), measles and tuberculosis.

Many diseases are not common due to previous vaccination programmes but there is a risk that they may return or a new disease may develop. As a result everyone needs to be prepared to listen to medical advice and take the appropriate action.

You can reduce the risk of catching or spreading any infectious disease by:

- Covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing - use a tissue
- Disposing of dirty tissues promptly and carefully - bag and bin them
- Maintaining good basic hygiene, for example washing your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face or to other people
- Cleaning hard surfaces (e.g. kitchen worktops, door handles) frequently, using a normal cleaning product
- If you are worried about any illness then, unless otherwise directed, you should contact your GP or NHS Direct on **0845 4647** or go to the NHS Choices website at **www.nhs.uk**

Disease outbreaks

In an animal disease outbreak, controls are placed over the movement of certain livestock to reduce the spread of disease and to make sure we can trace the root of the outbreak. Therefore, if you are unable to move your livestock or outdoor pets ensure they are as far from danger as possible, and arrange for shelter and food to last them several days.



Build your resilience

Resilience is what allows you to cope with life's ups and downs. Making something worthwhile out of painful times helps your resilience grow. Starting a support group to help others, or making something creative out of bad experiences by, for example, writing, painting or singing, can help you express pain and get through hard times. Find out how to build your mental resilience at **www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing**

National Support Organisations

These organisations offer support to people involved in coping with a disaster or personal crisis:

- Samaritans **08457 909090**
- CRUSE Bereavement **0844 4779400**
- Victim Support **0845 3030900**
- NHS **111**

Emergency contact list

Keep a record of contact details below, in case you ever need them in the case of an emergency.

Work	
Doctor	
School(s)	
Water supplier	
Electricity network operator	
Gas supplier	
Telephone/internet provider	
Home insurance company	
Home breakdown services	
Emergency friend	

Conclusion

Individuals and communities that are aware of and understand the risks they may face are more able to cope and recover from any negative impact they experience in an emergency. In a large emergency, the pressure on emergency services such as the police, fire and rescue, health systems and local authorities can be extreme and they may not be able to help everyone immediately. If members of the public have their own personal plans and coping strategies in place, they take the pressure off emergency services and allow them to first help the people who are directly affected, most vulnerable and who cannot help themselves such as the elderly, the sick and children. The more resilient and capable we are as individuals and communities, the more likely we are to be able to support and help others.



Prepare
yourself

Further information

Further information can be found on our website at www.thamesvalleylrf.org.uk

You can contact Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (09:00 - 17:00) via email at tvlrf@thamesvalley.police.uk or by writing to **Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum, Thames Valley Police Headquarters South, Kidlington OX5 2NX.**

If you need urgent advice, please phone the Thames Valley Police non-emergency number: **101.**

In a life-threatening emergency situation, please call **999.**



Prepare
your community



Prepare
your business





Thames Valley
Local Resilience Forum