

# Preparing for Emergencies in Birmingham

A practical guide for individuals  
and communities



Produced by Birmingham Resilience Team





## OUR DUTY OF CARE

Emergencies can and do happen.

Too often we think that emergencies are things that only happen in far off lands. True, we are unlikely to suffer from devastating volcanoes or hurricanes here in Birmingham. But major emergencies that can seriously threaten our lives, environment and economy do happen far more often than you might think.

In recent times we have seen: 40,000 Brummies without electricity for up to 24 hours; civil unrest in Lozells; the tornado that affected large parts of Kings Heath, Moseley and Sparkbrook; evacuation of a large part of the City Centre; industrial and transport accidents that have required the evacuation of residential areas; and the arrest of terrorist suspects. Over the last two years, Birmingham has also experienced flooding. In addition to hundreds of homes, roads and railway lines have also been affected. The River Tame, River Cole and River Rea have all flooded affecting several neighbourhoods, the worst affected

being Witton, Sparkhill and Selly Park. Moreover, we have seen flash flooding affecting many areas simply because of the intensity of the rain. Climate change means that this will happen more often.

So, rather than thinking that major emergencies will never affect your area, it would be much better if you knew exactly what to do if you were caught up in an emergency.

The following advice is relevant to you, your family and friends whether at home, at work, away visiting or on holiday. It is not designed to scare anybody, but to ensure that you are able to cope more easily with unexpected situations or emergencies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Tilsley". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Councillor Paul Tilsley**  
Deputy Leader  
Birmingham City Council

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## PLEASE NOTE:

This brochure has been produced with the assistance of a number of community organisations including Access for Birmingham and Neighbourhood Forums. This brochure will be reviewed bi-annually.

However, if you have any suggestions on how this document can be further improved, please contact the Birmingham Resilience Team on 0121 303 4825 or email: [info@birminghamprepared.gov.uk](mailto:info@birminghamprepared.gov.uk)



## ADVANCE PREPARATION

### HELPING YOU TO HELP YOURSELF

Emergencies usually strike without warning and in different ways. It can mean the loss of basic services including water, power, gas and telephones. Did you know that in recent severe weather emergencies, mobile phones have become overloaded making contact with family and friends impossible? It could mean damage, or threat of damage, to your property, by flooding, fire or blast. It could mean evacuation from your home and, indeed, from your whole neighbourhood. It could mean your family would find it difficult to stay in contact.

In emergency situations, you can cope best by preparing in advance and working with families, friends and neighbours.

You can:

- Make sure you can have access to some essential emergency supplies
- Make sure that you carry 'In Case of Emergency' information
- Produce your own simple emergency plans

### ESSENTIAL EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

Emergencies can happen at anytime and anywhere and you will want to provide a range of supplies for each different situation. You might be: in your home, required to evacuate your home, in your car etc.

## IN YOUR HOME

You should keep sufficient supplies that meet your household needs for at least three days. These should include:

- Torch and spare batteries
- Blankets/sleeping bag
- Camping stove
- Bottled water
- Candles/hurricane lamp
- Long-life food
- Baby food and associated items
- Personal medication
- First Aid Kit
- Battery powered radio and spare batteries
- Can opener
- Matches
- Fire extinguisher
- Wellingtons, rubber gloves and waterproof clothing

Make sure you have adequate household insurance, and that you store important documents carefully e.g. safe from fire and flooding etc.

Familiarise yourself with the location of all your utility stop cocks etc in the event that you

are required to disconnect your water, electricity or gas supply.

If you or a member of your family have a specific medical problem that requires a permanent utility supply of water, gas or electricity, you can contact the relevant company and register your special needs.

For example, you may require permanent electricity for dialysis purposes. Your utility bill will provide information on how to register.

## IF YOU HAVE TO EVACUATE YOUR HOME

Preferably, you should have a bag already packed with the following items, or at least have a bag available and quickly pack the following:

- Any medication that may be required
- Glasses or contact lenses
- First Aid Kit
- Essential keys including house and car
- Cash, credit and debit cards and other small valuable items which may be unsafe if left behind



- Passport and any other important documents
- A change of clothing, footwear, and sleeping attire
- Washing, shaving and sanitary supplies
- Any special items for babies, children, elderly and disabled people
- Torch, very small radio, and batteries
- Mobile phone and charger
- Supply of appropriate food, drinks and can openers etc

### IN THE CAR

It is a good idea to keep an emergency supply kit in your car in case you face an emergency (such as severe weather) or have a breakdown.

### ALL YEAR ROUND:

- Bottled water
- Long-life snacks
- First Aid Kit
- Torch and batteries
- Mobile phone and cigar plug lead charger
- List of useful telephone numbers
- ICE Wallet

### ADDITIONALLY IN WINTER MONTHS:

- Blanket/s
- Waterproof coat and warm hat
- Wellington/waterproof boots
- Spare thick socks
- Shovel
- Gloves

## IN CASE OF EMERGENCY (ICE)

Eight out of ten people aren't carrying information that would help if they were involved in an accident.

Storing next-of-kin details in your mobile phone, or carrying it in your wallet or purse, will help the emergency services if you are unable to tell them who to contact.

ICE stands for 'In Case of Emergency': it's what the emergency services will look for if you're involved in an accident.

If you use your mobile phone book to store the name and number of someone who should be contacted if you have an emergency, simply add the letters ICE in front of the person's name. Make sure the person whose name and number you are giving has agreed to be your 'ICE partner'. You should also make sure your ICE partner has a list of people to contact on your behalf.

If you haven't got a mobile phone and want to keep the information on a sheet of paper in your wallet or purse, a form can be found on the website [www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk](http://www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk) or contact the Birmingham Resilience Team on 0121 303 4825.

## LIVING IN A FLOOD PLAIN

If you live in or near to a flood plain, you can obtain advice and information from the National Flood Forum. The Forum provides advice to communities and individuals who have been flooded or are at risk of flooding.

The website is listed on the back page of this brochure under 'Other Sources of Information'.

## LIVING OR WORKING IN THE CITY CENTRE

Birmingham City Council has been working with the emergency services and other organisations for a number of months to enhance the specific plans in the event of a mass evacuation of Birmingham City Centre, such as the evacuation on 9th July 2005.

A key development is the use of a public warning and information system developed in partnership with West Midlands Police. For further information, visit [www.birminghamalert.co.uk](http://www.birminghamalert.co.uk)



## MAKING YOUR OWN EMERGENCY PLANS

### PREPARING YOUR OWN EMERGENCY PLANS

Preparing a simple plan can help ensure that you, and your family, can respond effectively to an emergency. Everyone's circumstances are different and plans will need to reflect that. Examples of personal and family plans are available from the Birmingham Resilience Team website.

You should:

- Discuss with your family what should go into your emergency plan
- Think about potential dangers that could occur and what action to take in respect of each
- Ensure each member of your household knows what to do in an emergency
- Identify several places to meet at if an emergency occurs:
  - First, somewhere close to your home in the case of say a localised fire
  - Second, identify two specific locations away from your neighbourhood in the event that a major evacuation has been implemented. Identifying two locations enables you to select friends or family members in different areas with an alternative, should one be away on holiday or business

- ALL FAMILY MEMBERS MUST KNOW THE CONTACT NUMBERS TO USE AND THE LOCATIONS TO ATTEND
- Find out about emergency plans in your work place and other premises close to your home. See if they may have implications for you or your family. Find out about emergency plans in your children's schools and confirm how you will be reunited with your children
- You should include arrangements for emergencies whilst you are on holiday
- Specific emergency plans may have been prepared for gasholders, chemical plants or areas subject to flooding. Find out what they say and how these might affect you. Establish what action you should take when warnings are given

## **THIS LEAFLET PROVIDES GENERAL INFORMATION ON PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES.**

More detailed advice in relation to specific emergencies e.g. severe weather, release of hazardous chemicals, bomb explosions, etc and also Business Continuity measures to assist your business in the event of an emergency, are all available from the Birmingham Resilience Team on 0121 303 4825 or visit the website at [www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk](http://www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk)



## IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

To respond to emergencies, it always helps to know what is happening. However, sometimes this is not possible. Therefore, it is necessary for your plan to be sufficiently flexible to work, especially when you are unsure what is actually taking place.

### REMAIN CALM - BE PATIENT - DEAL WITH THE IMPORTANT THINGS FIRST!

- Care for any injured but only if it is safe to do so, e.g., cut off power before helping someone suffering from electric shock. Do not go near any power cables that have been damaged
- Do not use matches as gas services may be damaged. If you smell gas, turn off at the main valve, open the windows and move everyone outside to an immediate safe location
- Check for fires and other hazards using appropriate gloves and equipment, e.g.,

domestic chemical or flammable liquid spills

- Check that your neighbours are OK, particularly any disabled persons

### PUTTING YOUR PLAN INTO ACTION

- Watch TV or listen to the radio for news and information, particularly instructions on what to do. Pass information to neighbours and friends, particularly if they are hearing or visually impaired
- The advice may be to stay at home, close doors and windows and then listen to the television or radio



- If you need to travel, try to work out the safest route and tell other family members where you are going, how you are travelling and what route you are taking. Leave a note at your home saying where you have gone
- Wear protective or appropriate clothing and footwear, particularly during extreme weather
- If possible, call your family contacts so that they know what is happening
- If not accompanying you, make sure your pets are safe and secure
- Gather your emergency kit together (see advance preparation page 3-6) and be ready to move to your identified meeting place(s) or, if this is not

possible, to an evacuation centre nominated by the emergency services or local authority

#### IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO, ENSURE THE FOLLOWING BEFORE LEAVING

- Utilities, such as water, gas and electricity have been turned off if you believe supplies have been damaged or you are instructed to do so by emergency services
- Your premises and property are secured
- You are in possession of any essential medication
- Remember do NOT go alone to or enter any building that might have been affected by fire, explosion etc until assessed by a surveyor

## GETTING AWAY

- Take care when moving into or from a dangerous area
- Stay together with your family group or friends
- Do not enter fast-flowing or deep water where flooding is occurring by foot or by car
- Try to inform a neighbour of your whereabouts if you are going to stay with friends or family

## BE AWARE OF THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

- People with disabilities may need more time than others to take necessary action in an emergency. Be ready to offer help
- Be aware that some people with hearing or sight difficulties may not recognise warnings. Offer help where needed

- Working animals, e.g., guide dogs, may become confused during disasters; again offer help where required
- Wheelchair ramps may become unusable; seek other options for those requiring help
- Be ready to offer assistance to those disoriented or needing help with breathing or other difficulties
- Recognise that some people may be suffering from emotional stress and try to direct them to someone who can help, such as a local doctor, faith community representative, Salvation Army member or British Red Cross befriender
- Recognise that English may not be everyone's first language and so try to direct them to someone who could assist with translating any information



# COPING WITH EMERGENCIES



## GO IN

- Wait inside until all clear is sounded or you are given other advice.
  - Do not use your phone; keep lines free for emergency use only.
- 



## STAY IN

- Close and stay away from windows and doors.
  - Stay calm and wait for further advice.
  - Children attending school will be cared for on site.
- 



## TUNE IN

- Listen to local media for further information/instructions.
- If advised to evacuate, follow the route as instructed, as certain paths may be blocked or dangerous.

Listen out for helpline phone numbers and write them down. Updates in the event of an emergency will be published on the Incident Bulletin Board on the website [www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk](http://www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk)

A Birmingham City Council Emergency Information Line will also be activated in the event of an emergency. This advice line will provide access to information for communities affected by an emergency.

Local radio stations:

BBC Radio WM

95.6FM

BBC Asian Network

1458 & 828AM

Heart FM

100.7FM

BRMB

96.4FM

Galaxy

102.2FM

Radio XL

1296AM

Smooth

105.7FM

Research indicates that tragedy causes feelings of shock, fear, anxiety, depression and grief. These feelings are normal reactions to an emergency situation.

It is recommended that you:

- Remain calm and controlled
- Keep your family together when possible
- Focus on what practical tasks you and your family can do
- Take turns in listening to/watching media to prevent further distress



# THE ROLE OF THE EMERGENCY SERVICES AND THE CITY COUNCIL

## THE EMERGENCY SERVICES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The emergency, or 'blue-light', services have the major role in responding to emergencies – at least in the initial stages. Responsibility for 'recovery' falls mainly on the City Council.

### West Midlands Police

Have a duty to protect life and have a major role in co-ordinating the response of emergency services and other agencies.

### West Midlands Fire Service

Not only have a duty to protect life and property in the event of fires, but also respond to other emergencies as directed by the Secretary of State, e.g. incidents

on the highway, flooding etc. This will include search, rescue and protection of people. The fire service is equipped to deal with a wide range of incidents including: chemical spillages and incidents, decontamination etc.

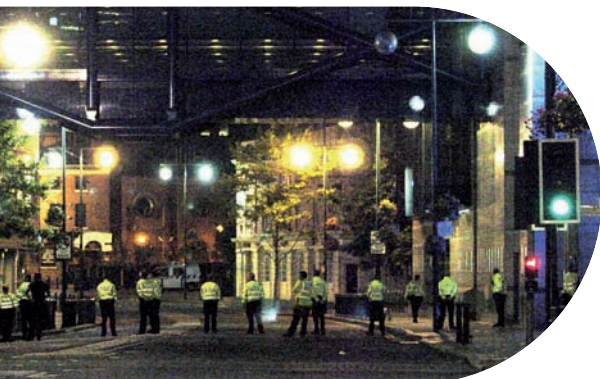
### West Midlands Ambulance Service

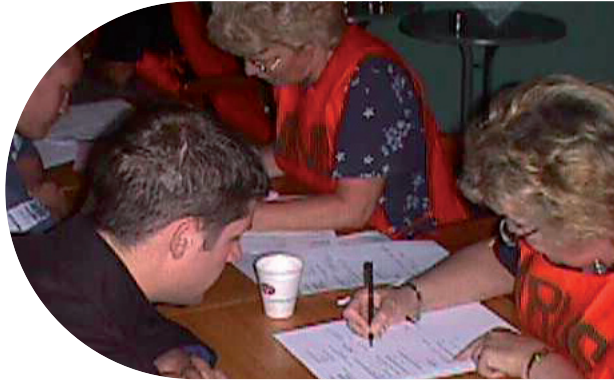
Have a duty to despatch appropriate resources to provide treatment and transport for casualties.

## BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The main role of the Birmingham Resilience Team is to ensure that the City of Birmingham can respond effectively to any major

photograph courtesy of Birmingham Post and Mail





incident and recover from it as quickly as possible.

Birmingham City Council has three main objectives in the event of a major incident:

- To support the community affected by the incident
- To support the Emergency Services responding to the incident
- To maintain normal services wherever possible

To achieve these objectives, Birmingham City Council provides a number of services including:

- Immediate temporary shelter
- Temporary accommodation
- Emotional / crisis support for victims, family and friends

- Information and media support, including help lines and interpreting services
- Transport
- Road closures and diversions
- Building safety inspections
- Clearance of debris, roadgully clearance etc
- Temporary mortuaries

The City Council works closely with the emergency services and a range of other organisations, including the voluntary sector, to provide, update and maintain plans which ensure that appropriate resources are deployed in responding to emergencies. Staff are appropriately trained and exercised in their respective roles and responsibilities.



## GENERAL SAFETY MEASURES

Listed below are some general safety measures that are useful in preparing yourself for both major and minor emergencies.

- Keep emergency telephone numbers (including special friends and family contacts) by your telephone and in your wallet/purse
- Teach your children how and when to call the emergency services (999)
- Make sure that each member of the family knows how to turn off the services: water, electricity, gas at the mains
- Check that your insurance cover is adequate for your family, home and any contents. Keep brief details of your insurance companies and their telephone numbers with your contact list
- Remind your family how to use any fire appliances that you may have
- Install smoke detectors at suitable locations throughout your home, especially near bedrooms
- Ensure you have a complete First Aid Kit. If possible, undertake a first aid course
- Identify any risks in your home, including garages and sheds. Ensure the removal of potential hazards e.g., faulty electrical equipment, acetylene gas cylinders
- Identify any safe areas in your home that could be used for shelter during emergencies



These can vary depending upon the dangers faced i.e. upper levels in the event of flooding

- Identify together with the rest of your family, the best and safest escape route from your home. Always remember to keep this route clear of obstructions or other potential hazards
- Conduct regular maintenance of your family vehicles and structures around your home, which may become dangerous if not maintained
- Draw up a list of the skills your family, neighbours and friends possess that could help in an emergency. e.g., first aid, emergency service personnel
- Keep the details on your contact list of anyone who

would care for your pets if they could not accompany you

## BASIC FIRST AID

By understanding the basics of first aid you can help save lives. You will certainly be of great help until the emergency services arrive.

## REMEMBER- KEEP CALM AND SAFE

- If people are seriously injured, call 999 immediately
- If someone has broken bones try to avoid movement as much as possible
- If someone has severe bleeding, apply firm pressure to the wound using a clean, dry dressing and raise it above

the level of the heart. Lay the person down, reassure them, keep them warm and loosen tight clothing

- For anyone with burns, cool with water for at least 10 minutes. Wrap affected area in cling film – do not apply dry dressings. Keep them warm
- If anyone is unconscious with no sign of life, and you have the necessary skills, give mouth to mouth resuscitation
- See [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or [www.redcross.org.uk/firstaid](http://www.redcross.org.uk/firstaid) for more advice

## REMEMBER

If you are involved in any emergency, it is important to:

- Ensure 999 has been called if people are injured or there is a threat to life
- Do not put yourself or others in danger
- Follow the advice of the emergency services
- Remain calm and reassure others
- Check for injuries – look after yourself first before attempting to help others

IF YOU ARE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN AN INCIDENT BUT ARE CLOSE BY OR BELIEVE YOU MAY BE IN DANGER, IN MOST CASES THE ADVICE IS GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN.



# OTHER USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

<b>Emergency Services</b>	999
<b>NHS Direct</b>	0845 4647
<b>Birmingham City Council</b>	
<b>General Enquiries</b>	0121 303 9944
<b>Severn Trent Water</b>	0800 783 4444
<b>South Staffordshire Water</b>	0800 24 33 52
<b>Gas Emergency</b>	0800 111 999
<b>Electrical Emergency</b>	0800 328 1111
<b>Environment Agency Floodline</b>	0845 988 1188
<b>Highways Agency</b>	0870 066 0115

## USEFUL WEBSITES:

**[www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk](http://www.birminghamprepared.gov.uk)** Provides further emergency planning information for individuals and families and business continuity information for local businesses.

**[www.Help2Travel.co.uk](http://www.Help2Travel.co.uk)** Provides information on bus, train, metro, plane, road travel, cycle routes, car parks and air quality for Birmingham and the West Midlands.

**[www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk](http://www.preparingforemergencies.gov.uk)** This website has information on how you can help yourself and others in emergencies. A lot of it is based on common sense advice and may seem obvious or familiar to you, but it has saved lives in the past.

**[www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)** This Government website exists to provide a resource for civil protection practitioners, supporting the work which goes on across the UK to improve emergency preparedness.

**[www.floodforum.org.uk](http://www.floodforum.org.uk)** The Forum provides advice to communities and individuals who have been flooded or are at risk of flooding, the support, knowledge and help they need to organise themselves to manage the effects

**[www.west-midlands.police.uk](http://www.west-midlands.police.uk)** This website provides information on how the West Midlands Police Force serves the 2.5 million citizens, and also provides advice and guidance on emergency preparedness and crime prevention.

**[www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)** This website provides information on how the West Midlands Fire Service serves the 2.5 million citizens, and also provides advice and guidance on emergency preparedness, fire safety and business continuity.

For translation phone

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欲獲得中文譯本請致電

Pour la traduction téléphonez au

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অনুবাদের জন্য টেলিফোন করুন

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ترجمے کیلئے اس نمبر پر فون کریں

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