



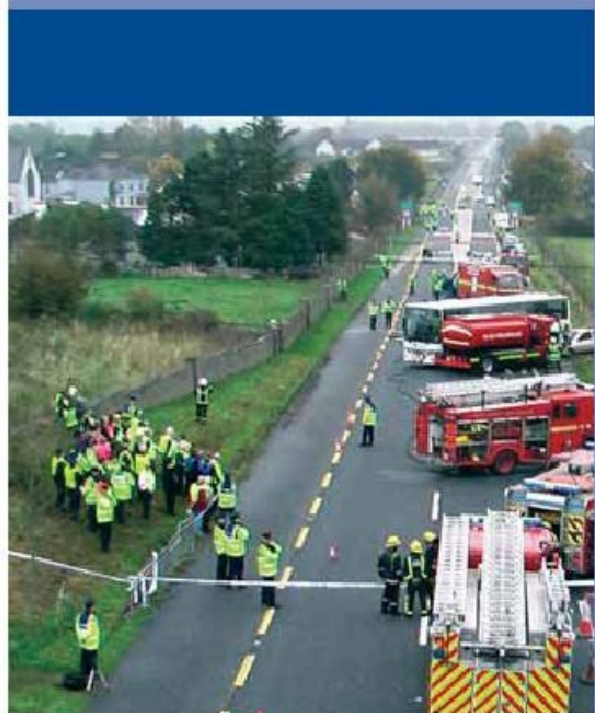
# A FRAMEWORK FOR MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



WORKING DRAFT

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT 6

A GUIDE MANAGING EVACUATION



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## INTRODUCTION TO MANAGING EVACUATION

'A Framework for Major Emergency Management' (2006) replaces the *Framework for Co-ordinated Response to Major Emergency*, which has underpinned major emergency preparedness and response capability since 1984.

The Framework sets out the arrangements, by which the principal response agencies will work together in the management of large-scale incidents.

This *Guide to Managing Evacuation* draws heavily on the experiences in Northern Ireland and the best practice presented in '*A Guide to Evacuation in Northern Ireland*'. Recent events in America in the wake of hurricanes Katrina and Rita have also informed sections of this document.

This document, like others in the guidance series, is presented as a working draft and as such it is requested that comments and insights that arise during exercises or real incidents be fed back to the national level. Comments should be addressed to:

M.E.M. Project Team,  
Fire Services and Emergency Planning Section,  
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## INTRODUCTION

### Evacuation

Evacuation is a process by which people are moved from a place where there is immediate or anticipated danger to a place of safety. The evacuation process encompasses the warning, moving and sheltering of the threatened population. Evacuation is normally a last resort, where there is obvious, immediate or long-term danger to people and where buildings would provide inadequate protection.

### Sheltering-in-place

Sheltering in place is a tactic for reducing human exposure to hazardous chemical, biological, or radiological agents in the event of an accidental or intentional release into the external environment. (Jetter, J. and Whitfield, 2004)

- **Normal sheltering** is defined as taking refuge in existing, unmodified buildings and involves closing all windows and doors and turning off any air conditioning equipment.
- **Expedient sheltering** is defined as taking refuge in existing structures and involves taking simple, rapid measures at the time of an incident to reduce infiltration such as applying plastic sheeting and tape in addition to taking normal sheltering measures.

In many emergency situations evacuation would not be required. Buildings give good shelter from threats such as smoke or chemical clouds and evacuating people may expose them to unnecessary risk. The most frequent reasons for evacuations are fire, flooding, contamination and explosive dangers.

The evacuation process carries its own potential problems, especially if large numbers of people try to leave an area all at once, or evacuees are already ill or infirm and would be adversely affected by being moved, as was evidenced in the evacuation of Texas before Hurricane Rita. Evacuation should not expose people in transit to more danger than if they had sheltered from the danger.

There are many variables involved in evacuations:

**Size-** An evacuation can involve anything from one person up to hundreds, and in extreme cases, thousands. Whilst the level and type of response will vary according to the number of people and size of area evacuated, the principles of planning and response are applicable across the full range of evacuations.

**Location-** It is almost impossible to predict where an emergency which would require evacuation would occur. There are some areas that are exposed to specific risks, for example, from flooding or industrial

activity. Urban areas have higher risk concentrations and therefore it is more common to have to evacuate an urban area, however situations can arise that could require the evacuation of a rural area also.

**Property Type-** Evacuation may be required of any property type including commercial and industrial premises, hospitals, sporting venues and domestic properties.

**Timescale-** Evacuations can be required on a variety of time scales:

- Immediate evacuation in response to an imminent or existing threat. In this situation little or no pre-planning is possible.
- Evacuation within a short timeframe- probably within hours- either in response to an imminent threat or as a precaution against escalation of an existing situation. Some basic planning may be possible e.g. arranging transport and Rest Centres.
- Evacuation is required but the timing is negotiable within a period of days or weeks. Detailed planning is possible.
- Evacuation in response to long-term hazards. There may be a long period of research and consultation, during which time it should be possible to prepare contingency plans. Once the decision is taken to evacuate, the process ought to be able to go ahead with minimal delay.
- In some cases, the first indication the public services may have that an emergency exists is when people begin to self-evacuate in response to a perceived or actual threat. In such circumstances the possibility of a full evacuation should be considered by the emergency services.

**Duration-** Most evacuations do not extend beyond a few hours after which evacuees are able to return to their properties. However, it is possible that the evacuation period may extend overnight or even longer. In some cases the hazard or threat may pass but it will have resulted in damage to buildings or infrastructure that will take time to clean or repair.

If a decision to evacuate is made, then the evacuation tasks will have to be undertaken simultaneously with other emergency response activities such as rescue, fire-fighting and casualty treatment. Evacuation, like other tasks associated with major emergency management, requires inter-agency co-ordination. As outlined within the Framework, the Generic Information Management System is the cornerstone of effective co-ordination, and, as such, it should be utilised to support the evacuation process and to supply information to the overall co-ordination effort.

## **DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO EVACUATE**

Ideally the Local Co-ordination Group, acting on information from the site and incorporating advice from appropriate experts, should make the evacuation/shelter-in-place decision. However, it is often the case that time and full information are not available and the decision may have to be made before the Local Group has met in which case the On-Site Co-ordinator, in conjunction with the other Controllers, will have to make a decision, based on the information available at the time and an informal risk assessment.

The factors that influence the evacuate/shelter-in-place are complex. Among other things, the factors that should be considered include population distribution, projected or actual exposure to a toxic substance, availability of adequate shelters and estimated evacuation times. A decision to evacuate should be based on the reasonable assessment that removing people from the affected area is in the best interest of their health and safety and exposes them to minimal risk. In deciding whether evacuation is necessary, the appropriate co-ordination group should take advice from all available sources. Those with information and/or expertise that could be relevant to making a decision to evacuate include:

- The Fire Service, who can advise on the possible spread of fire or the effects of chemicals involved in an incident;
- Property owners and operators, especially where hazardous or explosive chemicals are involved;
- Drivers, operators, owners and chemical companies in the event of an incident involving the transport of hazardous materials;
- Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team, where explosive devices are involved or old ordnance is discovered;
- Public Health doctors, who can provide information on the effects of chemicals on public health;
- Environmental Health Officers;
- Met Éireann, which can supply information on wind speed and direction, rainfall etc to help determine the potential spread of pollution, smoke etc.;
- The Health and Safety Authority (HSA)/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) who may have access to chemical information and some knowledge of particular sites, although neither have a statutory emergency response capacity;
- The Geological Survey of Ireland can provide advice on ground conditions (liability to subside etc); and
- Other Government and academic organisations with specialist knowledge of pollution, flooding and other hazards.

The nature of the hazard and the time available for consultation will determine the relevant organisations that need to be contacted. Ideally, a meeting of all parties with information to contribute should be held and a risk analysis made. In situations where the danger is a long-term one, there will often be more time to analyse the risks and benefits of evacuation. It may be appropriate to

consult people on the level of risk they are willing to tolerate and to provide information to enable them to make their own decision on evacuation.

In some situations, it may be advised that only a certain part of the population should be evacuated. For example, a fit person in a two-storey property may be able to sit out a short-term flood, while the young and old, and occupiers of single-story properties, would be recommended to evacuate for their own comfort and safety. Similarly, pollution or contamination may affect some groups of people more than others, with the elderly, children and pregnant women being particularly vulnerable to some hazards.

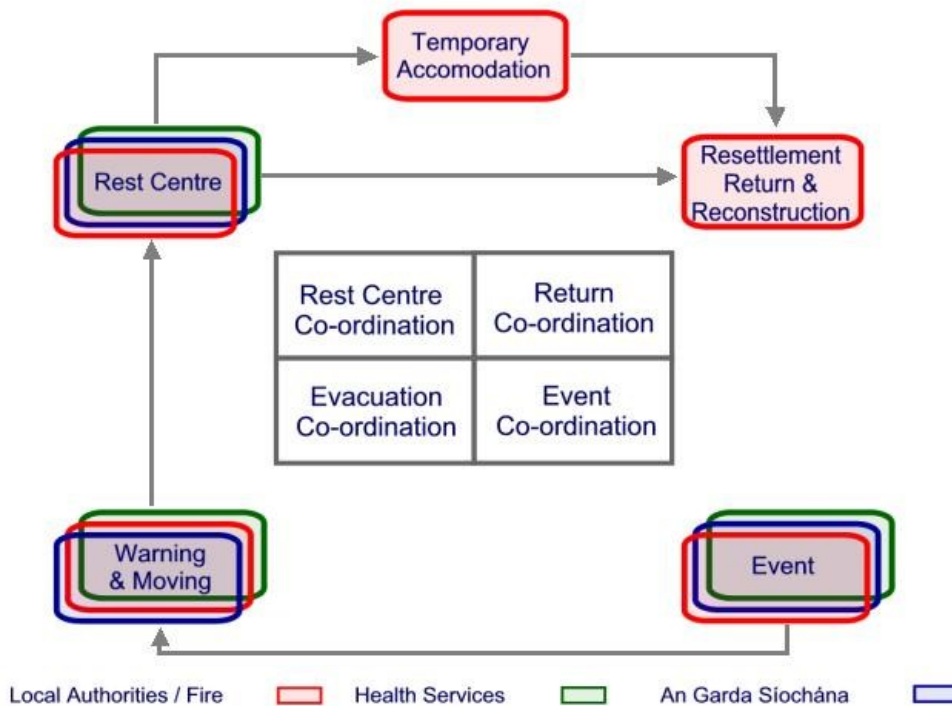
Factors, which may influence the decision on whether or not to evacuate, include:

- **Whether buildings would provide protection for the period the hazard is expected to last.** In most chemical emergency situations the preferred method of ensuring public safety would be to advise everyone to go indoors, close doors and windows and listen to the media for further information – the “Go in, Stay in, Tune in” approach. Evacuation would only be advised where buildings did not give adequate protection, and there was a reasonable chance of evacuating people without exposing them to unacceptable danger levels. In the past it was considered that an explosive hazard should always lead to evacuation, but experience has shown that in some circumstances it may be safer to retreat to a strong area of a building, such as a stairwell.
- **Whether the evacuation can be carried out without exposing people to more danger than if they had stayed indoors.** The risk has to be assessed of the event reaching a critical stage, or escalating, while people are in the open and most exposed to danger. Evacuation can itself be a hazardous process. With many people moving at once, there is a danger of crushing or traffic accidents. The old, the young and the infirm may be adversely affected by having to move.
- **Whether the evacuation can be carried out without exposing responding staff to an unacceptable degree of danger.** Each organisation has a statutory responsibility for the health and safety of its staff. This requires them to assess the risks faced by their staff and to take all possible steps to mitigate them. This may involve ensuring that staff are provided with appropriate protective clothing or deciding that an area poses too great a threat to allow staff to enter.
- **Whether a situation currently not requiring evacuation has potential to reach a point where evacuation would be necessary.** Foresight permits forward planning, and thus facilitates an effective and safe evacuation. A precautionary evacuation may be considered desirable in order to protect people from the escalation of the incident.
- **If precautionary evacuation is considered, whether the economic and social cost is justified by circumstances.** Evacuation disrupts people’s lives, shuts down businesses and interrupts the delivery of essential services. Moving and accommodating the evacuees is expensive. If time is available to plan an evacuation, opportunities for

minimising the costs should be explored e.g. where the date of the evacuation can be set; a weekend is likely to cause less disruption to business and working lives, but more to personal and family lives.

## IMPLEMENTING THE DECISION

Once a decision has been taken to evacuate a threatened population then a co-ordinated inter-agency effort will be required to ensure the successful implementation of that decision. Figure 1 below sets out a model for the structure of an evacuation. The figure depicts the main division of functions and the key relationships between them, but within each functional group there may be further breakdowns possible, with each sub-unit also requiring specific management and co-ordination arrangements.



**Figure 1 Structure of Evacuation**

An evacuation situation divides into four functional areas:

- **The event-** The event defines the parameters of the evacuation, the limits of the danger zone, who should be evacuated, for how long, and what problems are likely to be encountered by people returning after the evacuation.
- The process outlined in the Framework determines the lead agency for the major emergency. The lead agency is tasked with co-ordinating the overall response to the incident including any evacuation. Each principal response agency will support the evacuation process in accordance with their assigned functions. Support may be provided by other organisations, such as the voluntary emergency services, public service organisations and any commercial organisations involved in the event. Agencies with a primary role in delivering a particular function,

e.g. warning, will co-ordinate the assistance of other agencies to deliver that function.

- **Warning and Moving-** The process of warning and moving is a complex one. It involves transmitting the warning information, identifying safe areas and providing some help for people to reach those areas. An Garda Síochána have been assigned the functions of warning and informing the identified population and co-ordinating their movement to the appropriate Evacuation Assembly Point/s. The Local Authority will be required to provide onward transport to Rest Centres for evacuees where this is required.
- **Rest Centres-** Rest Centres are premises where persons evacuated during an emergency are provided with appropriate welfare and shelter. Local Authorities have been assigned the function of providing Rest Centres in the event of an evacuation associated with a major emergency.
- **Resettlement, Return and Reconstruction-** Most evacuations are short-lived and have no long-term consequences, and evacuees can return to their properties within hours. However, in some situations the evacuation may last overnight or for a few days, in which case it would be helpful to find evacuees more comfortable temporary accommodation than the Rest Centre. For some people, the evacuation may be permanent. The main tasks of resettlement, return and reconstruction falls within the remit of the Local Authority with the support of the other agencies.

## **WARNING AND MOVING**

Once a decision has been taken to evacuate, further decisions will have to be taken as to how the process will be carried out. These decisions include:

- When the evacuation should take place – immediately, within hours, on an agreed date, etc.;
- What exact areas are to be evacuated, allowing a suitable margin for uncertainty as to the extent of the hazard, but without disrupting people unnecessarily;
- How information about the evacuation will be communicated to people;
- How the instruction to evacuate can be communicated effectively within the time frame available.
- What instructions need to be given in order for people to respond effectively;
- How people will be enabled to carry out the instruction to evacuate, especially those without their own transport or those with restricted mobility;
- Whether special arrangements will be required for transporting or accommodating some or all of the people;
- What special arrangements need to be made for the welfare of evacuees, particularly those with special needs, and of staff in responding organisations;
- What arrangements, if any, should be made to record who has been evacuated, where they have gone to, and how they can be contacted during the evacuation; and
- What resources will be required, or will realistically be available, for the evacuation process and how they will be accessed.

The activities required to put decisions into effect are:

- Identify the exact geographical area to be evacuated. Printed or digital maps are helpful;
- Alert people to the need to evacuate, being specific about the streets or areas to be involved;
- Inform people of when and how they should evacuate and what personal arrangements they need to make, such as bringing medicines with them and what to do with pets / livestock;
- Inform people of any Assembly Points or Rest Centres which have been established. If more than one Rest Centre has been established, people should be told a specific Centre to attend (e.g. on a geographical basis) to ensure that appropriate numbers arrive at each;
- Ensure that, as far as possible in the time available, these messages can be received and understood by people with special communication needs;
- Arrange the provision of transport, if required, especially for those with mobility difficulties; and
- Where appropriate, provide evacuation staff to the area to help people, answer queries, give directions, keep traffic moving, and, as far as possible, ensure that the whole area has been evacuated.

Clearly, An Garda Síochána is unlikely to have all of the resources necessary to carry out all these activities, and will need input from a range of organisations.

Where self-evacuation of an area occurs by a section of its population then a reassessment of risk should be undertaken to assess whether the hazard warrants a formal evacuation of the entire population of that area. Since it takes a very strong sense of danger to persuade people to leave their homes, businesses or entertainment, it is unlikely that most self-evacuees could be persuaded to return in the short term, even if an objective risk assessment indicated that evacuation was unnecessary. Arrangements should therefore be made to provide for their immediate needs.

The decision on when and where to evacuate will largely depend on the nature of the event that precipitates the evacuation. In many cases there will be no difficulty making a decision on timing: people will need to be moved immediately. Wherever possible, the aim should be to evacuate before the hazard becomes critical, so that evacuees and the staff of responding organisations are not put at risk. However, this strategy carries with it the risk that the evacuation will prove to have been unnecessary. The Co-ordination Group making the decision to evacuate should weigh up the respective implications of evacuating or waiting to see how the situation develops. However, the costs, and implications, of failure to take an opportunity for safe evacuation should not be under-estimated.

**Where people should be evacuated from and to** will be determined by the likely spread of the hazard, as advised by specialist organisations involved in the response to the event. In order to avoid having to expand the evacuation zone and possibly having to re-evacuate some people, reasonable allowance should be made for the event to escalate. In particular, Assembly Points and Rest Centres should be chosen to be accessible from the evacuated area, but not likely to be overtaken by an escalating event.

## **WARNING AND INFORMING**

The first step towards moving people to a place of safety is to alert them to the danger and give them the information they need to make an appropriate response.

There are two types of information that need to be communicated to potential evacuees:

- Key information on who and which areas are being evacuated, why, and when.
- Associated information on how the evacuation is to be carried out, what assistance is available, where people should evacuate to, what they need to bring with them (or leave behind), what arrangements should be made for pets and where further help and advice can be found.

The alert message should be clear and concise and should contain the 'who, where and when' information necessary to enable people to take appropriate action. The amount of associated information that can be got across will depend on the time available. The aim should be to get across, at a minimum, information on where people could go for shelter and what essential supplies they should take with them.

There is a range of people with an interest in information on any evacuation:

- Potential evacuees, i.e. those living inside the evacuation zone.
- Nursing homes, hospitals, health centres, sheltered accommodation, etc, in the evacuation zone – for which special instructions and arrangements may be necessary;
- Schools, which will need to be advised on how best to protect pupils and re-unite them with parents/guardians;
- Transport operators with buses, trains, taxis etc in the affected area – both so that they know how to protect passengers and as resources for transporting evacuees;
- Owners of premises pre-designated for use as Rest Centres, so that they can be prepared;
- Industrial premises and large employers, both inside and outside the evacuation zone. Inside, so that employees can be safely evacuated, and outside, so that employers can give information to their staff and allow for any unable to get to work;
- Friends and relatives of evacuees, who will be concerned about their safety, and may be able to offer temporary shelter; and
- The media, who will be keen to get the story, but will also be a vital resource for information dissemination.

Alerting the public to the need to evacuate is a difficult process. The methods used will be dictated by:

- The urgency of the situation;
- The size and type of area involved – residential, industrial, retail, urban, rural;
- The time of day – working hours, evening, night;

- The population profile – schoolchildren, working adults, retired people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities etc.; and
- The resources available.

Traditionally, **door-to-door** calling and use of **loudhailers** have been used for evacuation alerts. However, these methods have significant drawbacks. Door-to-door calling is a time-and-resource demanding process, especially if the area to be evacuated is a large one. The effectiveness of loudhailers is limited by the generally poor quality of sound reproduction, and the prevalence of double-glazing. If the threat to safety is immediate, staff delivering the message may be exposed to an unacceptable level of risk. However, where conditions are favourable, these probably remain the most effective methods of getting a message across.

Other communication methods, which should be considered, include:

- **Telephone** – systems are available which can deliver a recorded message to a large number of subscribers. These must be pre-installed and linked to computerised mapping systems. While this approach has a potential application in any evacuation, it would be most useful where there is a known hazard, such as a chemical site or an area prone to flooding. Such systems can be extremely effective in distributing warnings but are expensive to purchase and maintain. When using them, special arrangements should be made for the hearing impaired, those unable to understand the contents of messages, and those properties without telephones.
- **Television and Radio** – arrangements exist whereby emergency announcements may be made on RTÉ television and radio channels. Other broadcasters may also agree to put out emergency messages. Any organisation wishing to have an emergency broadcast made should contact its own press office, which will have the necessary contact details for the broadcasting organisations. At certain times of day, the broadcast media can reach a large part of the population, although the proliferation of satellite and cable channels dilutes the audience. However, at other times the number of people listening or watching can be small. Depending on the time of day, broadcasters may include unscheduled news bulletins or interviews with key people, which can be used to get information across to audiences. Organisational press offices will have appropriate contacts and be able to advise on how to get emergency messages across on the media.
- **Leaflet Drop** – not as immediate as previous methods, but can guarantee a high degree of coverage and can accommodate a range of languages and special communication needs, such as Braille and large print.
- **Television Text Services and the Internet** – not for emergency alerts, but useful for posting more information than would be communicable by emergency calls or broadcasts.
- **Organisational PA and e-mail** systems, which can reach a large number of staff quickly.
- **Industrial Sirens** – some industrial sites have emergency sirens or signals, primarily for warning their own staff. These could be used as a

warning to neighbours also, but only if neighbours have been educated to distinguish between routine and emergency signals and instructed in what to do on hearing an emergency alert.

### **Barriers to communication**

The problems associated with different means of communicating the evacuation message have already been discussed. In addition to these, other barriers exist to effective communication of key information:

- **Language** – in any community there may be a number of people whose first language is not English. They may have no English, or insufficient to manage in an emergency situation. In some households the only English speakers will be children.
- **Disability** – some people will have a limited ability to hear, see or comprehend information.
- **Authority** – there is a natural reluctance to accept instructions - especially where people are being asked to do something unusual and difficult – without verifying the authenticity and authority of the message and its bearer. It can help if the message is conveyed by an organisation or figure of accepted authority, such as RTÉ or a member of the emergency services in uniform, but many people will want to confirm the message by speaking directly to someone or seeking alternative sources of information. While engaged in this verification process, they may not pay much attention to the contents of the message.
- **Special needs** – the general message on evacuation may not be appropriate to people with special needs. Hospitals and nursing homes, for example, would only be evacuated in exceptional circumstances, as the danger to patients from moving is nearly always greater than the danger from which others are being evacuated. Suitable sheltering arrangements may be best for them, but they need to receive the necessary information to make an informed decision on this. Similarly, elderly and infirm residents may not be able to evacuate using the preferred means, and may require specific information on how they can receive help.
- **System Failures** – the emergency event necessitating the evacuation may cause physical damage to power and communications systems, resulting in fewer people than normal having access to television, radio and telephones.

### **Overcoming barriers to communication**

In an emergency evacuation, there will be a limit to what can be done to overcome barriers to communication. Pre-planning can be of great assistance, and the more warning there is of the need to evacuate, the greater the importance of having effective communication strategies for groups with special communications needs. Steps that could be taken include:

- Use a range of communication methods to reinforce and confirm the message.
- Include in the alert message a request to ensure that neighbours are aware of the situation, especially those with communication difficulties.

- For known high-risk areas, residents with special communication needs can be identified, and possible solutions to problems discussed with them.
- Involve prominent members of the local community at the earliest possible stage, for example local elected representatives, senior Gardaí and local doctors. People are likely to contact them for verification, so it is important that they are briefed.
- For known risk areas, prepare generic warning messages and instructions in languages appropriate to the locality and in large print, Braille and on tape. If door-to-door calling or local announcements are used, staff should be equipped with supplies of these. Text messages for the TV in a range of languages may also be useful.
- Establish, as far as time permits, the location of people likely to have communications difficulties.
- As a matter of good practice, owners and managers of accommodation for sick, elderly or vulnerable people should have evacuation plans that have been discussed and agreed with the relevant principal response agency.

## **MOVING**

### **Personal choice**

There are very few circumstances where someone who is not causing an obstruction or breaking any laws can be compelled to evacuate premises. However, every effort should be made to ensure that people understand the risks, the reason they are being recommended to evacuate and the possible consequences of not evacuating.

There can be a number of reasons for people refusing to evacuate, including:

- Concern over the safety of property.
- Unwillingness to leave familiar surroundings.
- Disbelief that the danger exists.
- Desire to wait for the return of family members who are away from home.
- Complacency resulting from experiences of hoaxes and false alarms.
- Complacency from having sat out similar emergencies in the past.
- Unwillingness to close down a business or lose working time.
- Unwillingness to leave pets that cannot be located or are not easily transported, e.g. cats, exotic pets or fish.

Where there is opportunity, information issued to the public should take account of people's likely concerns, try to emphasise the seriousness of the situation, and reassure them that security arrangements will be made for the evacuated area, accommodation and help will be available for evacuees, and that care will be taken of those evacuated from other places, including schools.

If people, having been given and having understood this information, still refuse to evacuate, little can be done beyond advising them of steps they should take to protect themselves and, where resources allow, supplying materials and helping them with any protective work required. Where time is available, consideration should be given to asking those who refuse to evacuate to sign a simple statement that they understand and accept the risks. Organisations likely to be involved in recommending or organising an evacuation should take legal advice on this issue. Where possible, those refusing to evacuate should be given an emergency contact number in case the situation deteriorates or a sudden emergency occurs.

Many people may accept the need to evacuate but may not want to go to a public Rest Centre. If the evacuation is likely to be short lived, or if they are being evacuated from work or an entertainment venue and can get transport home, most people will manage for themselves. Particularly in a close-knit community, shelter will be sought among friends and family in the locality. In longer evacuations, many people will stay with friends and relatives, probably spread across the country, and some may choose to go to a hotel. There is no basis for compelling people to go to a Rest Centre. It would be useful for those involved in casualty bureau/missing persons inquiries, Rest Centres and organising the return, to have names, addresses and a contact telephone

number for evacuees making their own arrangements, but in most cases the collection of this information is impractical.

### **Transport**

In an emergency evacuation, most people will leave the danger area on foot or by private vehicle. This may cause problems, with traffic jams and crushes a possibility, if large numbers of people are involved.

There will be a number of people who do not have the ability or resources to make their own way out of the danger zone. Where the situation is urgent, whatever vehicles are available will have to be used: private cars, emergency service vehicles and public transport vehicles.

When more time is available, it may be possible to develop a transport strategy that will take account of the range of needs that people will have for transport. Most people will still use their own private transport, but arrangements should be made for those without access to private transport, or for whom it would be inappropriate.

It may be necessary to direct evacuees to Assembly Points on the periphery of the evacuation zone, where they can meet up with friends and relatives, receive further information and be provided with directions or transport to a Rest Centre. These Assembly Points will be ad hoc arrangements, probably established by An Garda Síochána. For short evacuations, people may be content to wait at an Assembly Point or to return there at intervals for news. Assembly Points should, ideally, offer some form of shelter to evacuees who are waiting to return or for transport, but this will depend on the availability of suitable facilities at the time. Depending on the nature of the incident, it may be useful to have first aid personnel at the Assembly Points to deal with any minor injuries. It would also be useful to try to make a record of those present at the Assembly Point and their onward destination and contact details, but this will depend on the numbers of evacuees involved and the resources available to responders.

Some transport will be needed throughout the evacuation period, even after the area has been cleared. Evacuees may need transport between the Rest Centre and hospital, to visit injured friends or to attend outpatients' clinics. Transport would also be required for those returning evacuees who have no personal transport.

**Buses** are the most available and flexible means of transporting large numbers of people. Many modern buses have low floors for easy access and space for wheelchairs and prams, making them suitable for most people with some mobility.

**Midi-and mini-buses** can get into tighter spaces than full size ones, which may be important in built-up areas. Many organisations own vehicles of this type that are especially adapted for use by people with disabilities, having, for example, wheelchair hoists.

**Emergency ambulances** should only be used in exceptional circumstances, as they have to be available to respond to 999/112 calls. However, should a hospital or nursing home have to be evacuated, ambulances may be required to move seriously ill patients. The Voluntary Emergency Services (VES) may be in a position to supply these vehicles they may also have minibus-style vehicles that could be used in a general evacuation. VES organisations that may be called upon in an emergency should be fully involved in the planning process, and should be included in Rest Centre exercises and training. Further guidance on working with the Voluntary Emergency Services can be found in “*A Guide to Working with the Voluntary Emergency Services*”.

**Trains** can operate only on fixed routes, but they have large capacities. Where there is a station close to known hazard sites or to facilities such as hospitals, they may be a useful means of transport, providing rolling stock was available. In exceptional circumstances, where very large numbers of people have to be moved for long periods, trains could be used as a means of mass transport to accommodation, once evacuees have been assembled at temporary centres.

**Taxis and volunteer drivers** using their own cars are potential sources of additional transport, and may be appropriate for people with special needs which could not be met by public transport vehicles. However, issues surrounding insurance and payment of expenses would need to be discussed and agreed in advance.

**Aircraft** would only be contemplated as a means of evacuation transport for large numbers of people needing to be moved long distances, and it is hard to envisage circumstances where aircraft would be needed to evacuate people from Ireland. However, arrangements may need to be made to receive and accommodate incoming evacuees arriving by plane.

**Helicopters** have a specialised use in evacuating people from places without road access, including ships at sea, areas where the road system has been damaged, and sites best approached from above.

**Boats** may be necessary to evacuate island populations or may be a useful transport method where coastal, riverside or lakeside populations are more easily reached from the water. They may also be necessary as a means of evacuation during severe flooding. A number of resources would be potentially available, including ferries, private craft, vessels owned by the emergency services and other public bodies, and lifeboats. An Garda Síochána should liaise with the Irish Coastguard over the co-ordination of any water-based evacuation.

### **Traffic control**

In any evacuation, arrangements should be made to try to keep traffic moving, at least along key routes. Information on the route to be used by evacuees should be included in the instructions for evacuation that are given to the public. Traffic movements will be particularly difficult in very built-up areas such as housing estates, and in rural areas with narrow roads. An Garda

Síochána units will probably be the main resources used for traffic control, employing a mixture of officers and signed diversions, but where time is available, the local authority roads section and motoring organisations e.g. the A.A., may be able to help with signage and manpower.

Efforts should be made to devise and maintain separate routes for emergency vehicles going to the event site and for traffic evacuating the area.

### **Casualties**

If the event has caused casualties, or if accidents during the evacuation result in casualties, arrangements will have to be made to assess and transport the injured. Where it is safe for ambulance staff to enter an area, normal emergency casualty evacuation procedures would be used. In some cases it may be necessary for responders with access to appropriate protective equipment, usually the Fire Brigade, to evacuate casualties to a safe place, where they can be met by paramedics or emergency medical teams. Walking wounded can often be moved by ordinary buses or cars, either to a casualty clearing station or directly to hospitals. Where possible, the advice of the Ambulance Service should be sought before walking wounded are moved, so that they can be sent to hospitals or clinics with appropriate facilities.

In some circumstances it may be necessary for a Casualty Clearing Station to be set up close to main evacuation routes in order to offer treatment and support to evacuees with medical needs. These could be staffed by either ambulance service staff or suitably trained personnel from the voluntary emergency services.

### **Accounting for evacuees**

One of the most difficult aspects of evacuation, especially emergency or short-notice evacuation, is keeping track of evacuees. There are a number of reasons why it is desirable to do so:

- To check that everyone is accounted for and that no one has been missed in the evacuation.
- To help families trace missing members and to answer queries on the whereabouts of individuals. If more than one Rest Centre is established, families split between different Rest Centres will need to be identified and re-united.
- To eliminate from enquiries people reported as missing who turn up safe at Rest Centres, especially where there have been casualties or fatalities and where An Garda Síochána has established a Casualty Bureau.
- To make sure that everyone is receiving the assistance they require.
- To avoid annoying people by repeatedly asking for the same information or offering the same services.
- To keep people informed of progress of the incident and arrangements for returning.
- To maintain accounting and anti-fraud measures.
- If follow-up were required, for example research into long-term effects of exposure to chemicals, information would be needed on those involved in the evacuation.

There are a number of opportunities for gathering information:

- Prior to a planned evacuation, all affected households can be approached, registered, and their intended destination recorded.
- As cars, buses or pedestrians leave an area, they could be stopped and basic details taken of name, home address, and contact address / phone number whilst evacuated.
- Information can be gathered from those attending Rest Centres.
- Evacuees who have made their own arrangements can be asked (usually via the media) to contact a specific telephone number, either An Garda Síochána, the Casualty Bureau or a helpline set up for the purpose.
- Once the evacuation is over, information can be gathered through door-to-door calling or distribution of questionnaires.

In theory, gathering information is best done during the warning and moving phase, before people disperse. In reality, gathering information prior to the evacuation or during the moving phase is only likely to be practicable during a pre-planned, non-emergency evacuation. In such circumstances, recording information on evacuees should be included in plans.

The effectiveness of registration at Rest Centres will depend on what proportion of evacuees attend. If, having registered those in Rest Centres, serious problems remain with accounting for people, it might be necessary to appeal for evacuees to make contact.

### **Security**

The evacuated area is at risk, not only from the effects of the event, but from thieves and looters. This is unlikely to be a major problem in most situations, but, in order to provide reassurance to evacuees, An Garda Síochána should take steps to control access to the evacuated area and to monitor the evacuation zone for any unauthorised activity. In order to do so, An Garda Síochána may need to draw resources from other organisations, e.g. the Defence Forces.

The area should also be monitored for any occupants who may have missed the evacuation message and be unaware of the situation.

## **REST CENTRES**

Rest Centres are places where people evacuated from premises (including residential, industrial, commercial, entertainment and education properties) can go to receive appropriate shelter and welfare care until they can return to the evacuated area, or be otherwise accommodated.

Whilst informal accommodation of evacuees in commercial, catering or entertainment venues can be acceptable for some very short-term evacuations, it is more usual to provide evacuees with Rest Centre accommodation better suited to their needs. Pre-identification of potential Rest Centres, planning for their operation, training staff in Rest Centre procedures and exercising plans to test their effectiveness, can ensure that appropriate premises are chosen and facilities can be established quickly in emergency situations.

Planning for Rest Centres should be based on the outcome of the Risk Assessment. However, as a general guide, Local Authorities should plan for a Rest Centre that could accommodate thirty people in remote rural areas, up to sixty people in the vicinity of a town and up to one hundred people in an urban area. Large Cities should plan for multiple centres capable of accommodating one hundred evacuated persons.

Using the information from the Risk Assessment, this guidance may have to be adjusted upwards to plan for the response to a specific risk or on the basis of historical evidence of the necessity for evacuation. Whereas there are no fixed rules about the optimum functional size of a Rest Centre, from a resilient planning perspective it may be better to have six or eight Rest Centres capable of taking one hundred people each rather than two, each capable of taking five hundred.

In planning for, and establishing, Rest Centres, the issues to be addressed include:

- Convenience of buildings to known areas at risk.
- Even spread across an area, to allow for general risks.
- Availability, given that evacuations can occur at any time of the day or night.
- Facilities, staff and equipment required for effective operation of a Rest Centre.
- Management arrangements.
- Provision of physical and welfare help which is appropriate to the situation and to the social/religious/cultural/physical/financial needs of evacuees.
- Keeping records.
- Safety of evacuees, staff and building contents.
- Triggers and mechanisms for identifying the need for a Rest Centre and initiating action to establish one.
- Preparation and integration of plans, including establishing understandings on roles, responsibilities and resources.

For each designated Rest Centre there should be a pre-nominated Rest Centre Manager. This person will need to know:

- How many people are likely to be evacuated and some idea of demographics – families, schoolchildren, elderly people, tourists or travellers.
- When the evacuation will take place.
- Approximately how long it is likely to last
- Whether evacuees are likely to have any particular needs, for example if they will be wet and will require a change of clothes.
- Where would be a safe area for a Rest Centre
- Any known groups with special needs, for example residents of nursing homes or sheltered accommodation.

The amount of information available to Rest Centre Managers, and the opportunities for communicating it, will vary according to how much advance warning of the evacuation is available. In some situations the priority may be to get people into shelter, in which case a suitable building should be opened and the Local Co-ordination Group should be informed of the evacuees' location as soon as possible. To allow for such situations, it is essential that lists of potential local Rest Centre, and some basic information on how to select suitable premises, are available.

It is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that arrangements are in place to provide Rest Centre accommodation, and the necessary welfare services, for evacuees. To facilitate this, a comprehensive list of potential Rest Centres should be collated and maintained. At Regional Level, key information about Rest Centres in Local Authority areas should be recorded and maintained to facilitate mutual aid, both within and external to the planning region.

Rest Centres represent a complex, multi-agency response to the needs of evacuees. Potentially involved are the Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive, the owner of the premises being used, voluntary emergency services, welfare and advice organisations, other public service organisations which can provide help, advice and support, and private companies, such as catering firms, and transport operators. Elected representatives, friends and relatives of evacuees and the media will also have an interest in what is going on in a Rest Centre.

Often Rest Centres have to be set up at short notice, outside normal office hours and under adverse conditions. The range of circumstances in which a Rest Centre can be required, the number of organisations potentially involved, and the short notice often given of the need for a Rest Centre, means that effective delivery of Rest Centre services can only be assured by advance planning, training and exercising.

In order to plan and respond effectively, organisations involved in Rest Centres will require:

- An understanding and acceptance of the roles and responsibilities of different organisations and agencies.

- A co-ordinated list of potential Rest Centres, including information on access and setting up.
- An agreed plan for receiving an alert that a Rest Centre may be needed, taking a decision on whether and where to open a Rest Centre, and communicating this information within and between organisations.
- An agreed plan for the setting up and operation of each potential Rest Centre, including its overall management.
- Alert and callout arrangements for staffing each Rest Centre.

A Local/Area plan for Rest Centres should consist of two sections:

- A generic section, setting out responsibilities for deciding to open a Rest Centre, communication arrangements between organisations, the location of, and access arrangements for, pre-identified Rest Centres (and key actions for establishing ad hoc ones), overall management arrangements, and agreed roles, resources, capabilities and responsibilities. Call-out lists for key management staff should be included.
- Individual operating plans for each pre-identified venue, which would include layout, health and safety information, information on the operation of essential pieces of equipment, and staffing arrangements, including call-out lists.

These plans should be agreed by the principal response agencies and others with an interest in Rest Centres. They should be made widely available, at least in summary form, and kept up-to-date by regular review. They should be underpinned by internal organisational plans for staffing, management and communications, including how services to evacuees would be maintained over a period of time and how essential everyday activities would be maintained when resources are diverted to running a Rest Centre.

Changes to the structure, accessibility or use of buildings should be immediately reflected in the Rest Centre plans. Buildings pre-identified as Rest Centres should each have a detailed plan kept on the premises, containing both the generic Rest Centre management plan and a detailed operating procedure for the building. Details of how any equipment or resources required, but not readily available in-house, could be procured, should be included.

Staffing arrangements for Rest Centres should be planned and agreed, as this will enable arrangements to be activated at short notice. Some staff will be required wherever the Rest Centre is, others will be venue-specific. There will therefore need to be separate call-out lists for each pre-planned venue.

In planning for a Rest Centre, thought should be given to the make-up of the local community and any particular needs residents may have. For example, information signs may need to be in more than one language, and refreshments offered should meet people's cultural, religious and medical requirements.

## **Location**

Pre-identifying potential Rest Centres allows for the suitability of facilities to be assessed and operating procedures to be drawn up, thus saving time in an emergency evacuation. In places where there is a known risk, for example close to major industrial hazard sites or in areas prone to flooding, it should be possible to identify suitable Rest Centres in adjacent, but safe, areas and to incorporate these in response plans. However, there should also be a number of general-purpose Rest Centres identified across an area, for use in less predictable emergencies.

Possible Rest Centre properties include:

- Leisure centres, arts centres, community centres, civic buildings.
- Day Centres and other Health Service Executive properties, which would not be required to treat casualties.
- Schools.
- Church and other (GAA, Community Group, Youth Organisation) halls.

## **Facilities**

All nominated Rest Centres will require a range of facilities. Exactly what is demanded of a Rest Centre will vary according to the length of the evacuation and the needs of the evacuees. Where a range of potential Rest Centre properties are available, those with the most facilities should be chosen since it is easier to scale down than to scale up. Facilities required include:

- Good access for vehicles, including buses and emergency service vehicles. Adequate turning, parking, set-down and pick-up facilities.
- Available at any time. Consideration should be given to what would happen the regular occupants of the building if it is required during normal operating hours: adults can usually leave a leisure centre quickly and without difficulty, but schools would have to keep pupils in until safe alternative arrangements were made.
- Disabled access and facilities.
- A variety of rooms, so that different groups (children, old people, families etc) can have their own areas.
- Heating systems that can be switched on outside their normal hours.
- Toilet / hygiene facilities, preferably including separate male/female facilities and washing facilities, such as showers. Baby changing and nursing areas would also be desirable. The actual requirement will vary according to the length of the evacuation and its cause.
- Catering facilities that meet food hygiene and health and safety requirements. Minimum requirement would be the facility to prepare hot drinks and light snacks, but full kitchen facilities would be better.
- Seating adequate for the needs of evacuees. Soft, lounge-style chairs are preferable to hard, upright ones. Primary schools may have difficulty mustering sufficient adult-sized furniture (and toilet facilities).
- Some form of entertainment, usually at least one television. Also a radio to follow local news bulletins.

- Telephones, to enable evacuees to communicate with friends and relatives and for the use of Rest Centre staff. E-mail and Internet access would be useful.
- Fax and photocopying facilities, available for use by Rest Centre staff.
- Free from serious safety risks, or capable of having dangerous areas, e.g. swimming pools, isolated or locked up. Buildings should meet appropriate health and safety and fire safety standards.
- Reasonable access control, for the safety of evacuees, their property and Rest Centre property.
- Accommodation for pets which enables them to be safe but separate from evacuees, for hygiene and safety reasons. Enclosed outdoor tennis / basketball courts make acceptable dog pounds, providing the weather is reasonable. In cold or wet conditions, some shelter will be required for pets. Animal welfare charities could be invited to become involved in planning for providing assistance with pets, as could owners of commercial boarding kennels. Farming organisations may be in a position to help with accommodation for larger animals, such as horses.
- Sleeping facilities – comfortable chairs, exercise mats or camp beds and sufficient rooms to give a reasonable degree of privacy.
- First aid facilities for people who take ill. In many cases the presence of a GP and/or pharmacist may be advisable to cater for evacuees who have not brought their medication with them.
- Large open spaces, indoors or out, where evacuees can get some exercise and children can let off steam safely.
- Quiet areas, especially for the elderly, the very young, the sick and anyone distressed by events.
- Entertainment areas with access to TV, radio, magazines, books, board games, etc.
- There will be some cases, especially in rural areas, where locations with limited facilities have to be accepted. In such situations, critical factors, such as availability of heating and toilet facilities, safety and security and provision of catering, should still be considered.

It will often be the case that Rest Centres receive the most vulnerable evacuees. These will include families with young children, and elderly, disabled and socially excluded people. Venues and facilities should be assessed with this in mind, to ensure that they provide suitable accommodation for the needs that these people will have.

Some evacuees, such as hospital patients or the residents of nursing homes, will require more specialised accommodation than any Rest Centre can provide. The Health Service Executive may be in a position to find suitable alternative accommodation for such evacuees.

### **Equipment**

Rest Centres require a range of equipment, not all of which would normally be available on-site. Items which may be required include:

- Signs for outside the building, to identify it as the Rest Centre.

- Labels for corridors, doors and rooms within the building, to help people find their way about. Safety signage for any particular hazards such as swimming pools or raised stages.
- Identity badges, armbands or tabards for Rest Centre staff, with information on personal name (where appropriate), organisation, and role.
- Forms for gathering information on evacuees.
- Food and drinks (non-alcoholic), either pre-prepared or for use in on-site kitchens. These should be appropriate to the physical, cultural and religious needs of evacuees.
- Blankets, for warmth and if people have to stay overnight.
- A pre-printed information sheet for evacuees, giving information on the organisations involved and their roles, facilities available, where to ask for assistance and some contact numbers for welfare agencies, to keep when they return home.
- Extra televisions, video players/DVD players and radios, if necessary. Videotapes/DVDs suitable for family viewing. Magazines and books.
- Telephone cards or coins for call boxes. Telephone directories so that people can look up numbers of friends and relatives. Chargers and electrical sockets for the safe recharge of mobile phones.
- Clean, dry, clothes, appropriate to the weather conditions, for people who need a change. Charity shops, local manufacturers and chain stores are good sources.
- Toiletries.
- Nappies and children's food.

It may be possible to pre-prepare and store some items, for example direction signs and room labels, on-site. Other articles, such as identity badges and forms for recording personal details may be best kept centrally, but available in a 'grab bag' for immediate use in an emergency. A third category of article would be bulky and/or expensive to store. These, including food, toiletries, clothing and blankets, are best sourced as required through pre-planned contacts and supply arrangements.

### **Layout**

It is desirable that a Rest Centre should have a range of rooms of different sizes, or be capable of being partitioned to provide different areas for different activities or different groups of evacuees. Areas should be set aside for watching TV, for games and exercise and for quiet areas. It would normally be advisable to separate children from elderly people, or to give individual families their own areas. The number of evacuees and their religious and cultural needs will dictate how best to organise the space within the Rest Centre. Some options are:

- Keep everyone together – only possible in very short evacuations.
- Group people in families.
- Group people by age.
- Create male and female areas.
- Where some social, religious or cultural groups will not mix, consider providing them with separate spaces. Where it is necessary to provide

separate facilities, either on one site or separate sites, each area or site should have the same services provided.

Where the evacuation has resulted in injury or loss of life, and a separate friends and relatives centre is not established, it may be necessary to give some evacuees their own space to wait for news or to come to terms with the situation.

### **Health and Safety**

In pre-planning Rest Centre locations, a risk assessment must be carried out on any building considered for use. Where hazards are identified which may pose safety problems, for example swimming pools, school science laboratories and stages in assembly halls, consideration should be given as to how evacuees could be protected from them, and the appropriate measures incorporated in the building's Rest Centre plan. Steps to remove or mitigate risks could include locking doors of individual rooms and approach corridors (providing they are not fire escape routes) to prevent access, or erecting warning signs and barriers. If it is not possible to adequately protect evacuees, the building should not be included in the Rest Centre list.

Care should be taken to ensure that the number of people in the Rest Centre does not exceed the maximum safe capacity of the building.

Kitchens or other areas where food is being prepared should meet relevant health and safety requirements. Staff working with food must have appropriate training.

Pets should not be allowed in the same accommodation as people. Arrangements should be made to keep domestic animals in a secure area.

### **Communications**

Evacuees will want to contact friends and relatives to confirm that they are safe and to arrange alternative accommodation. Phones should be made available, or phone cards or coins for on-site pay-phones. It may also be useful to have cards for pay-as-you-go mobiles and to make available chargers and sockets where mobile phones can be safely charged. There should be Rest Centre rules on where mobile phones can be switched on and used, to avoid annoying people.

### **Roles and responsibilities**

Running an effective Rest Centre requires a partnership approach from a range of organisations. No one organisation would have the facilities, staff and skills necessary to carry out all the tasks associated with a Rest Centre. The key organisations, and their main roles, would be:

The provision of **physical care** is a local authority responsibility. Physical care is often best provided by the staff who normally run a building and are familiar with its systems. Facilities such as catering are often provided by in-house expertise, but other experienced caterers should be able to provide a service, using the building's facilities. Where some or all functions (catering,

cleaning, facilities management, etc) are contracted out by the organisation owning the building, roles and responsibilities in emergency situations should be included in contracts and service level agreements. It can be helpful to include a responsibility to contribute to an emergency response in the employment contracts of all staff in a nominated Rest Centre, whether directly employed by the building operator or contract staff.

Provisions should be made for any particular requirements of evacuees, for example translators for non-English speaking individuals. The Department of Justice should be approached if assistance is required in obtaining interpreters from private sector suppliers.

**Welfare care** may be provided by a range of organisations, including the Health Service Executive, Voluntary Emergency Services, clergy and community organisations. In order to ensure that people receive appropriate help at the right time, the Health Service Executive should co-ordinate the input of other organisations in this area. In particular circumstances, these may need to be supplemented by specialist input, for example from the Department of Social Welfare.

Evacuees may arrive at the Rest Centre disoriented, distressed, and angry. As far as possible, staff with appropriate training should be available to help and comfort them. Every effort should be made to treat evacuees as individuals and to understand and meet their needs, within the constraints of the overall response.

Involvement in running the Rest Centre and dealing with evacuees may have an adverse psychological effect on staff (including volunteers and support staff) in the short-or long-term. Consideration should be given to the provision of appropriate psychosocial support, both at the time of the event and afterwards.

### **Casual Volunteers**

In many situations, casual volunteers may offer their services. Evacuees may themselves volunteer to help with Rest Centre activities. While extra pairs of hands are often welcome, Rest Centre plans should not depend on ad hoc volunteers for staff. If casual volunteers are to be used, the following points should be considered:

- Safety and security, especially if children or valuables are involved.
- Hygiene and health and safety issues with untrained volunteers in hazardous locations, such as kitchens.
- Financial or legal liability, if ad hoc volunteers are injured (physically or psychologically) or if activities under their control experience problems.
- Management and supervision arrangements, including debriefing afterwards.

In general, it may be better to sensitively refuse offers of help. However, where extra people are needed, or if some evacuees would benefit from having something to occupy their minds, an experienced person should be

appointed as Volunteer Manager, to deploy and manage casual volunteers, keeping in mind the issues above.

## **Records**

On Warning and Moving, efforts should be made to obtain a record of evacuees and their whereabouts. In a Rest Centre, there are additional reasons for wanting to know who is present:

- To ensure that the number accommodated is within the safe capacity of the venue.
- To plan the delivery of services, such as catering.
- To respond to people who enquire directly to the Rest Centre about friends or relatives.
- As a record, in case evacuees wish to claim in the future for loss or injury incurred in the Rest Centre.
- To ensure that people attending the Rest Centre are genuine evacuees.

Some form of registration of evacuees is therefore desirable. The longer the evacuation is likely to last, the more important it is to know who is present and what their needs are. How the registration is to be carried out should be part of the generic Rest Centre plan. Some guidelines are:

- Use a pre-prepared evacuee registration form, which will prompt staff to record all necessary information. If more than one organisation needs information from or about evacuees, the registration process should be co-ordinated, so that evacuees are not repeatedly asked for information by different people.
- Don't try to gather information at the front door: queues will form outside. The priority is to get everyone under cover and settled comfortably.
- Everyone should be registered, even infants. Parents/guardians should fill in forms on behalf of children.
- Some way of easily checking who has been registered should be devised. Cloakroom tickets have been found useful as a way of keeping track of evacuees, but beware of people perceiving that they are being treated as 'just numbers'. Other methods which have been used include identifying evacuees already registered by giving them labels for their clothes or hospital-type arm-bands, to so as to avoid duplication.
- Information should be collected sensitively, especially if people are distressed. Staff collecting information should try to identify particular physical or psychological needs, so that evacuees can be referred on for special help.
- The requirements of the data protection legislation should be understood and met.

## **Security**

Some form of access control should be exercised. New arrivals should be welcomed, given information on the Centre and directed to relevant services.

Names and forwarding address/telephone number of people leaving to take up offers of shelter elsewhere should be recorded, so that they can be taken off Rest Centre records and enquiries re-directed.

Some evacuees will bring valuables with them, which will be difficult to protect in communal areas. Rest Centre plans need to consider whether there is secure storage available, and, if so, where liability would fall for anything put in safe storage that subsequently is reported missing.

It is desirable to have a Garda presence at the Rest Centre, to:

- Gather any information needed for the Casualty Bureau or other investigations.
- Provide liaison with An Garda Síochána activities in relation to the overall incident.
- Protect evacuees from the media or other intrusions.
- Deal with any incidents that may arise. Some evacuees may be carrying knives or other dangerous weapons, or may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Where a nominated Rest Centre building already has its own security arrangements, the plan should include how, if at all, private security guards should be used, and how they should interact with An Garda Síochána.

Facilities at a Rest Centre will never be ideal, especially where the evacuation extends beyond a few hours. Concern about the event and about property, coupled with the inevitable stresses of Rest Centre life, can lead to people becoming uncharacteristically distressed or aggressive. Staff should be aware of this possibility and, where possible, some should have training in techniques of reducing stress and defusing conflict situations.

### **Voluntary donations in kind**

Some events will cause loss or damage to evacuees' personal property, including clothing. For immediate welfare purposes, Rest Centre plans should include arrangements to supply evacuees with clean, dry clothes and toiletries.

Broadcast appeals for donations in kind should not be made. Rather, if particular items are urgently required, commercial or voluntary sources should be individually approached. Charities that run shops can often supply a wide range of goods from warehouses and local premises. However, news reports of loss or damage, or of distress caused to children, will often result in offers of replacement goods, clothes, toys etc. In general, such offers should be tactfully discouraged, perhaps by messages in the media that all the evacuees' immediate needs are being met. It is impossible to be sure that donated goods meet legal safety standards, sorting and storage of donations is space-and time-consuming and it is difficult to achieve an equitable distribution.

If goods are donated, sorting and distribution of donations should not be allowed to interfere with the delivery of core welfare services. Many charitable organisations regularly receive and sort donations, either for charity shops or for distribution abroad, and they may be willing to undertake this role during an evacuation also. Some local charities also have experience of distributing donated goods to people in need in the community, and their expertise and local knowledge should not be overlooked.

### **Closing down**

A Rest Centre should not be shut down until all evacuees are able to either return safely to their properties or be moved to more suitable temporary accommodation. The fact that an area is available for re-occupation may not mean that everyone can leave the Rest Centre. Where large numbers are evacuated, the return will have to be staged to prevent traffic problems and to ensure security of property. Property may have been damaged and be unsuitable for immediate re-occupation, utilities may have been disrupted and people may need to have return transport arranged for them.

It may be valuable to keep the Rest Centre open as a feeding or drop-in centre until properties are fit for occupation, essential utilities restored, and local support services resumed. Depending on its location and everyday function, the Rest Centre building may have a medium-and/or long-term role as a focus for the continued supply of welfare services and practical assistance to the affected community.

Once an evacuation is over, and the building no longer required, every effort should be made to leave the Rest Centre property in a clean and orderly state.

### **Finance issues**

Rest Centre plans should include clear information on how the Local Authority will pay for supplies and equipment, both in advance and during an incident, and on financial responsibility for any minor work that may be needed to potential Rest Centre buildings to ensure their suitability.

Costs may also be incurred outside the Rest Centre, for example for evacuees in hotel or Bed and Breakfast accommodation, or in private nursing homes. There may also be costs incurred for keeping pets, if they are sent to kennels. Responsibility for these costs should also be agreed at the planning stage, so as to avoid public disagreements over payments after an evacuation.

### **Debriefing**

Following the use of any building as a Rest Centre, all the organisations involved should hold debriefing sessions to identify lessons learned from the experience which could be used to improve future performance, either on that

particular site or with Rest Centres generally. A suitable critical incident debrief should be considered, where appropriate.

## **Resettlement, Return and Reconstruction**

Most evacuations last a few hours and have no long-term consequences. The evacuees return home and normality is resumed. Some evacuations will result in people being away from their homes for extended periods and the resettlement, return and reconstruction will take considerable planning and investment.

Before evacuees are permitted to return to their homes or premises the Local Authority need to ensure that the area is safe. Damage to the infrastructure of an area: utilities, shops, banks, transport facilities, may require the services of public bodies and voluntary organisations to support returning evacuees. People returning after an evacuation may need practical and psychological support to enable them to repair and clean their properties and to resume normal life. Possible long-term consequences of the event should be considered and measures put in place to assess and respond to them.

### **Resettlement**

Some people may be unable to return to their original homes, for physical or psychological reasons. These could include:

- Vulnerable people, who were only just coping prior to the event.
- People who lack the resources required to repair and restore their properties.
- People who do not wish to return to their original home area, because of civil disorder.
- Those whose homes are unsafe, or perceived to be unsafe, owing to long-term risk factors.

In these circumstances, evacuees should be helped to find suitable alternative accommodation. The Local Authority will have to co-ordinate with public and private agencies to arrange suitable alternative accommodation in these circumstances.

Some people will be able to eventually return to their properties after a delay of weeks or months. While they are waiting for clearance, they will need very similar support to those who are permanently displaced, and they will also possibly need help with re-occupation when the time comes.

### **Return**

In preparing to return evacuees to their properties, the following issues need to be considered:

- Any forensic or Garda investigations which need to be carried out before the area is re-occupied.
- A damage survey and risk assessment should be carried out to identify hazards to the public, and any remedial action should be taken.
- Delays in allowing people to return can result in additional losses to property owners, for example through weather damage and loss of

business. A realistic balance, therefore, needs to be struck between safety requirements and the need to facilitate people in getting their lives back to normal.

- Key infrastructure services (water, electricity, telecommunications) should be available before, or soon after, re-occupation.
- Plans should be made for a controlled, safe and secure return to evacuated premises.
- An information campaign may be necessary to inform dispersed evacuees of return arrangements and any actions they need to take to protect their own health and safety on return. Information should be distributed through Rest Centres, the media and leaflet distribution.

### **Reconstruction**

The issues of Reconstruction and Recovery are addressed in Section 6 of the Framework for Major Emergency Management.

## **CHECKLISTS**

## **DECIDING TO EVACUATE**

Here are some of the questions that the person/organisation co-ordinating the response to an event should consider. Not all questions will be relevant to all situations.

Has this event public safety implications?

Where can more information be obtained?

- An Garda Síochána
- Public Health Doctors and other Health Service Executive resources.
- Local Authority Fire Service
- Site owners, managers and operators.
- Vehicle drivers, transport and chemical companies.
- Army Technical Officers.
- Met Éireann
- Health and Safety Authority (HSA)
- Environmental Protection Agency(EPA)
- Environmental Health Officers.
- Others.

Can public safety be reasonably assured by methods other than evacuation?

- Sheltering.
- Warnings on avoiding particular areas/behaviours.
- Advice to carry out certain tasks, e.g. boiling water, sandbagging.
- Making supplies available, e.g. drinking water, heaters.
- Changing/enhancing the emergency response.

Is there a risk of the event escalating?

- When?
- How far?
- What would be the effects?
- Would the safety measures above (if any) still provide adequate protection?

Is evacuation necessary?

- When?
- Everyone, or just some?
- What area is affected/is likely to be affected?
- What are the risks to people if they do evacuate? Are these less than the risks from not evacuating?
- Can an evacuation be carried through without unacceptable risk to the staff involved in organising and implementing it?
- What will be the potential economic and social costs of the evacuation?
- What information is needed by organisations involved in other functions within the evacuation?

## WARNING AND MOVING

These are questions that should be asked at the planning stage, but in most cases only basic principles or contact information can be incorporated into plans. Specific answers will be required when the questions are asked in the light of a potential or actual evacuation. Most of the questions are for the co-ordinator(s) of the warning and moving phase, but they should be addressed by all organisations with a potential to respond as they indicate where different organisations contribute to the response and what would be required.

- When should the evacuation take place?
- Can it be done in this timeframe?
- Are there any alternatives?
- What area should be evacuated?
- Does any allowance have to be made for potential escalation of the event?
- How many people are likely to be involved?
- What is the population structure of the area?

### Warning and informing

- What message needs to go out? When?
- The area involved and the timescale.
- Additional information on routes to use, belongings to bring/leave etc.
- What method(s) will be most effective within the existing constraints?
- What barriers to effective communication are likely to be encountered?
- How can these problems be addressed?

### Organising the evacuation

- What can be done to reassure those who have concerns about evacuating?
- What will be done about people who refuse to evacuate?
- How will people leave the danger zone?
- Does transport need to be provided? If so, for how many people?
- Is specialist transport needed, for example for people with restricted mobility?
- Where can the necessary transport be obtained from within the existing timescale and constraints? Are there local or national registers of transport operators which could be used?
- How are transport resources going to be managed and co-ordinated?
- Who will pay for any additional transport expenses?
- How is special transport to be provided? What information on potential users is available?
- What traffic management arrangements are required?
- What organisations can help with traffic management or signage?
- What arrangements can be made for transporting casualties? Where should they go?
- Is it possible to check that everyone has left the evacuation zone?
- Is there any option to count or register evacuees as they leave the area?
- Where will evacuees go?
- Who needs to be informed so that a Rest Centre can be set up?
- How will evacuees be informed of the location of the Rest Centre?

- Will additional transport be required to get people to the Rest Centre?  
What resources are available?
- How is the event progressing? Is there any change to earlier predictions of effects?

How can the area be secured once the evacuation is complete?

## **REST CENTRES**

### **Planning for Rest Centres**

Is there a generic plan for activation of Rest Centre arrangements, provision of services and management? What does it need to cover?

Is there a detailed plan for setting up and running each Rest Centre?

How will each Rest Centre be staffed? Are there up-to-date callout lists for each?

Have both generic and individual building plans been updated in accordance with agreed schedules? Have buildings or organisations changed since the plans were last written/revised?

### **Identifying and equipping Rest Centres**

What buildings would make suitable Rest Centres?

- Available and accessible.
- Adequate parking space.
- Disabled access and facilities.
- Sufficient rooms to give different groups their own space.
- Adequate heating.
- Toilet / hygiene facilities.
- Catering facilities – health and safety requirements.
- Adequate and suitable seating and other furniture.
- Entertainment facilities.
- Telephones, fax, e-mail facilities.
- Photocopying and other office facilities.
- Safety risks absent/controllable.
- Access control and security arrangements.
- Pet accommodation.
- Space for sleeping facilities.
- First aid facilities.
- Exercise space, especially for children.
- Quiet areas.
- What equipment is required?
- Signs and room labels.
- Identity badges/tabards/armbands for staff.
- Evacuee registration forms.
- Food and drinks.
- Blankets.
- Information sheets on Rest Centre facilities.
- Additional entertainment equipment – computer games, books, magazines, etc.
- Telephone cards or coins for payphones. Telephone directories. Charging points for mobile phones.
- Replacement clothes.
- Toiletries.
- Nappies, baby food and milk, sterilised bottles.
- How will evacuees be organised within the Rest Centre?
- Family groups.
- Age groups.
- Single-sex groups.

- Entertainment areas.
- Quiet areas.
- Nurseries.

Have foreseeable social/cultural/religious/language/medical needs been catered for?

Has a risk assessment been carried out for the use of the building as a Rest Centre? Is the Rest Centre safe and secure? Can health and safety and fire safety requirements be met?

How can evacuees communicate with friends / relatives? How can they make enquiries to the Casualty Bureau, if there is one, and how can they be eliminated from Casualty Bureau enquiries?

Who will compile and update Rest Centre lists?

Who should have copies?

### **Activating and running Rest Centres**

How might information on the need to establish a Rest Centre be received?

Who should be informed once any organisation becomes aware of the need?

Once information has been received that a Rest Centre is required, consider:

How many people are being evacuated and when?

How long is the evacuation likely to last?

Is there any indication of how many will require Rest Centre accommodation?

Has an ad hoc Rest Centre already been opened?

Where is the most appropriate pre-planned Rest Centre?

Who has keys and can carry out the initial opening up of the building?

Who needs to be told? What staff will be required?

What facilities do the evacuees require?

Are any arrangements required which are not in the plan? How can they be provided?

What information should be gathered on evacuees, when and how?

Have social/cultural/religious/language/medical needs of evacuees been identified and catered for?

What is being done with any personal possessions evacuees have brought with them?

What arrangements are being made for pets?

What entertainment arrangements are necessary? Do some individuals/groups have particular needs (football matches, soap operas?).

How are the contributions of all organisations being co-ordinated to make sure that no-one is missed or receiving too much attention?

What is being done about informal and ad hoc volunteers? Are there jobs they can safely do? Who will manage them?

Are any material donations being received? What can be done to discourage them (unless they are genuinely needed) and who will store and sort them?

Are shift-working arrangements being made for staff if the situation is likely to continue?

Can alternative, more comfortable, arrangements, other than a Rest Centre, be made for some or all evacuees?

How can evacuees be kept informed of progress with the event which caused the evacuations? What other information do they need and how can it be delivered effectively?

What arrangements are necessary for providing psychological support to evacuees, especially if people are dead or missing or property has been damaged?

What practical support do people need now? What will they need when they are able to return to their properties?

Is it safe for evacuees to return? How will they get back to their property if they have no personal transport?

Does the Rest Centre need to stay open after evacuees have gone, for example to provide catering?

What additional expenses have been incurred by responding organisations, including the building owners/operators? How will they be covered?

Have staff involved in the Rest Centre (including support staff such as cleaners) been debriefed and offered appropriate psychological support?

## **RESETTLEMENT, RETURN AND RECONSTRUCTION**

### **Resettlement**

Are there people who cannot return to their properties?

- Immediately.
- In the short-term.
- At all.

What are their options?

- Rest Centre.
- Hotel / B&B.
- Sheltered accommodation (for those unable to resume independent living).
- Alternative housing on a temporary or long-term basis.
- Relatives and friends.

### **Returning**

Are any forensic, technical or criminal investigations complete?

Are there any unsafe structures or serious contamination which have to be dealt with before people return? Who will carry out any remedial work?

Does the return need to be staged to ensure security of property?

Should there be a limited return to enable clearing up, emergency repair or salvage work to be carried out?

Do evacuees need transport?

How can evacuees not in Rest Centres be informed of return arrangements?

### **Practical support**

What practical support do returnees need? What advice can be given to them on safety and public health issues?

How can sources of help and assistance and their locations be communicated to returning evacuees?

Should a multi-agency Public Information Centre be established?

- Location.
- Who should manage and co-ordinate it?
- What organisations should participate?
- How long should it operate for?

If the basic infrastructure is damaged, what help do people need?

- Food.
- Clean water.
- Communications facilities.
- Help with shopping, banking.
- Transport, to visit hospital, the information centre, offices etc.

### **Psychological support**

What support services are likely to be required?

How can people be offered help in a culturally appropriate way?

How can information about services and facilities be effectively distributed?

What plans and allowances need to be made for memorial services, anniversaries and similar occurrences?

How is the restoration of the physical environment likely to affect people's psychological welfare? What services need to be provided and advertised? What long-term arrangements need to be made to support the community? Have all staff involved been debriefed and offered access to psychological support?