

THE EMERGENCY PLANNING OBJECTIVE:

TO PROMOTE THE COORDINATION OF EMERGENCY PLANNING FUNCTIONS ACROSS ALL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER KEY PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND TO OVERSEE THE EMERGENCY PLANNING PROCESS IN GENERAL.

INTRODUCTION

This objective and the Security Objective are closely linked. The Department's mandate in respect of emergency and peacetime planning was described in Section 1. The main outputs associated with this objective are the provision by the civil-military Office of Emergency Planning of supports to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, the coordination of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Emergency Planning, and the provision of oversight in relation to the emergency planning process.

RESPONSE

As part of the response to the events of September 11, 2001, the Government established a Task Force on Emergency Planning, chaired by the Minister for Defence, and assisted by the Department's joint civil-military Office of Emergency Planning (OEP) and an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Emergency Planning.

The Government Task Force meets regularly to review the various emergency planning and response issues, to report to Government and to ensure a coordinated and effective response to large-scale emergencies. The Minister, as Chairman of the Government Task Force, reports regularly to Government.

The existing lead roles of Departments in respect of specific emergency planning arrangements continue and existing emergency plans have been reviewed in the light of current developments under Task Force and Working Group auspices. The process has been notable for the very high level of co-operation between all Government Departments, other key public authorities, the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces.

The Minister for Defence, as Chairman of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, provides direction linking the active engagement of Government to the emergency planning process. The Government Task Force continues to lead policy coordination and oversight of emergency planning. It continues to encourage a proactive approach by Departments and other key public authorities with roles in policy development for the broad emergency planning, management and response areas.

The Government Task Force provides a forum to share concerns on emergency planning issues and to promote their resolution. This allows Departments and key public authorities to work closely together to ensure the provision of integrated and effective emergency planning, management and response. This high level coordination is important to ensure that any gaps or overlaps are identified at an early stage and the necessary steps are taken to rectify them. It is also an effective forum to facilitate the presentation of the analysis of the threat environment. Those with responsibility for security matters, principally An Garda Síochána, brief the Minister for Defence and the Government Task Force members on the threat assessment.

In addition to providing support to the Government Task Force, the Office of Emergency Planning coordinates the work of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Emergency Planning and is developing its oversight role by working with the relevant Government Departments and other key public authorities to quality assure the various Government emergency planning functions.

Another key focus of these structures is to ensure that the information being presented to both the media and the public is aimed at developing an understanding of the issues and the likely responses that any emergency may require.

The Government Task Force, the Inter-Departmental Working Group and the Office of Emergency Planning work closely with the Government Information Service and Press and Information Officers of Government Departments and other key public authorities maintaining the linkages for updating and coordinating arrangements for handling queries on emergency planning and emergency management from the media as well as information and advice to the public.

Also providing a wide range of services to other Government Departments and agencies. This will continue.

THE EMERGENCY PLANNING OBJECTIVE STRATEGIES

To foster a more proactive approach to the conduct of emergency planning by interacting with key players in other Government Departments and key public authorities

To provide the necessary supports to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, chaired by the Minister for Defence, and the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Emergency Planning

To oversee the emergency planning arrangements in Government Departments and public authorities under their aegis

Adoption of assurance mechanisms to promote continuous improvement of the emergency planning functions within Government Departments and other key public authorities

To provide Strategic Emergency Planning Guidance (SEPG) to Government Departments and other key public authorities aimed at achieving effective management of the emergency planning process (The first such Guidance document was issued in December 2004)

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Promotion of a facilitative climate and development of greater confidence in the emergency planning process

Establishment and maintenance of an emergency planning contact programme through regular meetings of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning and the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Emergency Planning

Regular meetings and active pursuit of the issues arising Provision of regular reports to Government

Regular reviews and validation of Government emergency planning and response arrangements through formal annual oversight programmes Third oversight cycle to be completed by end of 2005

Regular review will identify any further guidance that requires development by the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Emergency Planning, which will issue as appropriate