

# GETTING WEATHER READY



## Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2018 edition of the Regional Community Resilience Group Newsletter



Regional Community Resilience Group

The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) was formed in 2013 to help local communities prepare for and respond to weather related emergencies.

The group brings together Multi-Agency Partner Organisations from government, utilities and the voluntary sector to work for and with Communities at Risk of Severe Weather.

The RCRG aims to provide a forum to facilitate co-ordination, communication, partnership working and capacity building on community resilience issues. The group is currently working with around 26 communities across Northern Ireland ready to inform and resource them and improve preparedness and community resilience measures.

Unfortunately, severe weather events will continue to occur but through good communication, accessible, reliable information and established practical measures, communities can and have applied self-help measures to reduce impacts and protect property.

This newsletter will be used to highlight important developments to enhance community resilience, provide an opportunity for communities to share experiences to the benefit of others and highlight key responder contacts to help readers to **Get Weather Ready!**

### Partner Organisations:



NIE Networks crew work to repair downed power lines following storm Ophelia



Regional Community Resilience Group

## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

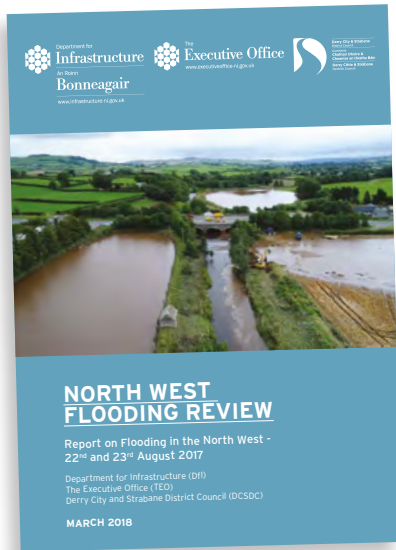
## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

CLICK TO READ...



# Review of North West Flooding Published

A multi-agency review of unprecedented flooding in the North West on 22 and 23 August 2017 has been published.



The Review, which was jointly led by the Department for Infrastructure; The Executive Office; and Derry City and Strabane District Council, gathered evidence from emergency responders; the voluntary sector; government organisations; special interest groups including community representatives; and elected members.

The Review found that following heavy and persistent rainfall amounting to 63% of the monthly average within an 8-9 hour period, that the combined multi-agency response to the subsequent flooding was timely and effective. However the Review has also captured a number of learning points and identified 14 recommendations to further enhance resilience to future flooding. These include establishing community resilience groups in the North West, improvements to flood incident reporting and providing support for community volunteers.

A public information and engagement event was held on 29 March in the Everglades Hotel. At the event, which was very well attended, representatives from

multi-agency responders and support organisations, including Government departments, the Met Office, Red Cross and the Association of British Insurers, were present to not only engage with local people on the Review findings but also to answer any other flooding related questions.

Further information on what to do to prepare for flooding, how to cope during flooding and what to do after flooding has occurred is available at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/flooding](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/flooding).



Attendees and agency representatives at the public information event

The Review found that following heavy and persistent rainfall amounting to 63% of the monthly average within an 8-9 hour period, that the combined multi-agency response to the subsequent flooding was timely and effective.



## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

CLICK TO READ...



# Brilliant Resilient Broughshane

Broughshane is one of four active and thriving community resilience groups operating in the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area.

Following initial support from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, the Broughshane group has grown as locals with an interest in helping their own community have joined. By galvanising community support from residents, local community groups, young farmers and local anglers, a bespoke plan has been developed.

This group of willing volunteers, each with their own individual role to play, is connected by a telephone network that reaches across the community.

Originally an RCRG Pilot Project led by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, the planning process also gained support, advice and guidance from other agencies including DfI Roads, DfI Rivers, Red Cross, PSNI, NI Fire and Rescue, Housing Executive and NI Water.



Lexie Scott, Chair of Broughshane Community Association said: "For many in our community flooding



**ALERT (Automated Local Evaluation Real Time)**

Houston's Mill THRESHOLDS	
T 1 - 1.800m	1st stage alert
T 2 - 2.000m	2nd stage alert, 150mm below bank opposite alert station
T 3 - 2.250m	3rd stage alert, carriageway level opposite Tullymore Manor

Alert Receivers:	
Community Rep	
Community Rep	
Community Rep	
Community Rep	

The group has developed their bespoke plan by galvanising further community support from residents, local community groups, Young Farmers and local anglers, all with an interest in helping their own community.

and the fear of recurring flooding is very real and traumatic. We have strong community networks and the development of this plan has helped us to galvanise the support of local volunteers who have signed up to particular roles such as river watchers, weather alert receivers or a helping hand lifting sandbags.

We have been provided with equipment and involved in decisions about where this equipment is best situated. This means that the decision regarding the best location for the local sand bag stores has

been a community one. The plan empowers us and has provided an opportunity to make face to face contact with government officials. We have really appreciated the support of the statutory agencies throughout and, in particular, the help given by local Council officers."

A system of text alerts from the Met Office to nominated local residents has been put in place which raises awareness of weather warnings. DfI

## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



continued from previous page

Rivers also provides a text alert service for rising river levels. A local panel of volunteer river watchers provides an additional alert to rising water levels. A Local Skills and Resource Register, with details of those volunteers and agencies who can help during a flood situation, has been compiled ensuring a swift and efficient response. The Plan also has a very comprehensive and up-to-date contact list which is essential in emergency situations.

The group is now at the point of testing its own arrangements and is currently working with Mid and East Antrim to undertake an exercise to make sure their planning dovetails with the responding agencies and will run smoothly to reduce impacts on the villagers and protect local property.

Other Community Resilience Projects have been developed in Mid and East Antrim. These include Ahoghill and Toome Road, Ballymena, where groups are helping their communities cope with flooding risks; and in Glenravel and District the local group is prepared for severe weather events.

It is important to note that the Community Flood Plan is not in any way a method by which Council, the responding agencies or the emergency services may reduce their response or service to the community: the plan is intended to support and enhance the response.



Sandbags are securely stored ready for deployment



## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



# Help Us to Help You!

When debris is washed into watercourses it can impede the natural flow of water. The risk of flooding is greatly increased when this debris is washed downstream to inlet grilles fitted to protect culverts at the entrance to open watercourses.

Whilst the source of this debris can often occur naturally through, for example, leaf fall or branches blown down in high winds, material dumped into or around watercourses can also be a contributing factor which can increase the risk of flooding.

As part of normal business, and often in preparation for periods of heavy rainfall, DfI Rivers checks grilles to ensure they are running freely. This preparation is important as blocked grilles are difficult to clear when water levels rise.

You can help us to help you by ensuring that no material is dumped near watercourses.



Grille blocked by debris washed down following heavy rain

## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



John French and Sheila McClelland of The Consumer Council pictured with the Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor Maoliosa McHugh

## Consumer Council hosts Consumer Parliament

The Consumer Council recently staged a 'Consumer Parliament' in the Guildhall, Derry/Londonderry. Organised in partnership with Derry City and Strabane District Council, the event gave members of the public the opportunity to raise consumer issues directly with the people who can help.

The Consumer Parliament included individual breakout sessions, focusing on issues such as flooding, energy, public transport, postal services, broadband and telecoms. The session on flooding was hosted by the Regional Community Resilience Group.

# Storm Preparation is our Business

Rodney Ballentine,  
Network Operations  
Manager at NIE  
Networks, explains how  
the company prepares  
for severe weather  
and deals with its  
aftermath.

Within NIE Networks, weather watching is particularly important. We rely heavily on the Met Office to help us understand the triggers for when a windy day turns into a day when we need to put hundreds of employees and contractors on notice to be ready. We have a duty incident team in place 24/7 to make these decisions and to ramp up resources quickly when required.



Power lines downed by a fallen tree

So far during the autumn and winter of 2017/18, we've had Ex-Hurricane Ophelia on 16-18 October, Storm Eleanor (2-4 January) and Storm Fionn (16-17 January). The worst of these was Ophelia, with wind gusts exceeding 70mph, causing more than 640 faults on the network and interrupting electricity supplies to 57,000 customers.



Replacing downed electricity poles

30,000 kilometres of our electricity distribution network is overhead and therefore susceptible to damage from strong winds; from branches or other blown debris; or from trees coming down across our overhead lines. Our tree and vegetation cutting programmes, which continue throughout the year, help to reduce the number of branches and trees in the proximity of overhead lines but can't eliminate the risk completely.



An NIE Networks crew works to repair a damaged power line

We fix faults by restoring the main backbone of the network first and then work our way down to lines or parts of lines which are feeding one or two properties. This often means that small pockets of mainly rural customers are the last to have power restored. In all three of the above storms, we restored power supplies to more than 98% of affected homes and businesses within 24 hours.

Although winds tend to be worst in the winter months, we have seen severe snow and ice storms at the end of March and lightning storms over the summer months, so watch this space...

---

The worst [storm] was Ophelia, with wind gusts exceeding 70mph, causing more than 640 faults on the network and interrupting electricity supplies to 57,000 customers.

---



## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



# Red Cross: Long-term Impacts of Severe Weather

Whether in the UK or overseas, the Red Cross responds to hundreds of disasters every year. From floods and fires to terrorist attacks and humanitarian crises, they are among the first to arrive, and they stay long after the crisis is over – helping people to rebuild their lives and to be better prepared for any future emergency.



Red Cross has significant interest and experience in supporting people after major flooding incidents. In 2013, the British Red Cross asked 67 people who had experienced one or more severe flooding incidents to sum up their experience in only three words: worry, loss, shock, fear, panic, stress, community, damage and despair were the most frequently used words.

Red Cross helped to support many people whose homes were damaged and who were really struggling to cope in the days and weeks after major flooding in the North West of Northern Ireland in August 2017.

The most important thing to remember is that the event itself is only the start of a long journey for the majority of people, who will

continue to need support in the recovery phase for 12-18 months. Those affected will have good days but also experience set-backs. Anniversaries can be particularly difficult and, while most people dream of getting back home, they can experience problems on a range of issues.

People often are exhausted by the sheer effort of navigating all the processes in rebuilding their homes and their lives: insurers, building contractors, legal teams, drying out of houses, refurbishment and repairs. It can be very stressful trying to organise all necessary meetings and form-filling while trying to rebuild normal family routine.

Financial outlay can be very considerable, especially for households on limited incomes and maybe without insurance.

Community hubs have and continue to provide a point of contact and support for people who need support, information and help in the weeks and months ahead. Experience shows that while the numbers needing help will drastically reduce, there will be people, including the most vulnerable, who will need help and assistance.

The most important thing is that people don't feel they have been forgotten. This will require medium to long-term interest and involvement from all statutory, voluntary, community and rural support organisations who can reach out and help people in their homes, businesses, communities and farms.

It is important to help people to be less fearful about the future and there are, across Northern Ireland and the UK, many communities who have come together to be better prepared to respond and recover from flooding and other risks. This reduces people's anxiety and gives them more control over their own lives.

There is a lot of resonance in the experience, concerns and impacts that people shared with Red Cross at community meetings and some of the personal stories and experiences are contained in two research reports, published by Red Cross in Northern Ireland, which examined the impacts of flooding on people's lives:

[Living in fear of the rain](#)

['Cut off by the floods' – The impact of flooding in rural Northern Ireland](#)



## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

[CLICK TO READ...](#)



# Initiative relaunch aims to stop bogus callers

Quick Check 101, an initiative to help stop bogus callers, has been re-launched by the Utility Regulator and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Under the scheme, residents can phone 101, the police non-emergency number, to check the identity of callers to their home who claim to represent an energy or water network company.

The scheme is not only a collaboration between the PSNI and the Utility Regulator, but also includes all of Northern Ireland's energy and water network companies, and is supported by the Commissioner for Older People.

Jenny Pyper, Chief Executive of the Utility Regulator, explained: "Bogus callers are people who call at your house claiming to be from an organisation in order to trick their way into your home and steal from you. Although most people who call at your door are genuine, some are unfortunately not. As protecting the interests of consumers is at the heart of what we do, we wanted



Relaunching Quickcheck 101 are LtoR: Superintendent Simon Walls, Jenny Pyper of the Utility Regulator and Eddie Lynch, the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

to enhance the good work already being carried out by the energy and water companies to tackle bogus callers."

Superintendent Simon Walls, from District Policing Command, said: "The Quick Check scheme provides reassurance to members of the public about callers to their door claiming to be from network companies. Anyone who wishes to check the identity of someone who says they are calling on the pretext of inspecting gas, electricity or water supplies can now call the police non-emergency 101 number to verify their identity.

"I would encourage members of the public to follow our advice when dealing with unexpected visitors to their home."

- Callers should always be asked for proof of identity. Genuine callers will be only too happy to provide this information and to wait outside the property until it is verified.
- Never leave doors unlocked and do not to leave keys in an unsafe place, such as under doormats or flower pots.

- When answering the door:
  - Before answering the front door, make sure the back door is locked.
  - If you have a door chain, remember to use it before opening the door. If not, we recommend you get one installed.
  - Ask the caller for their identification and check it carefully.
  - Ask them to wait outside and close the door - genuine callers will not mind.
  - Ring Quick Check on 101. The call will be answered promptly by a trained police call handler. They will check with the company that the person at the door is genuine. If they are not, or they think that there is something suspicious, the operator will be able to send the police to you.
  - Do not let anyone into the property until you are satisfied as to who they are.

For further information visit the PSNI website [www.psnipolice.uk](http://www.psnipolice.uk)

## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents Spring/Summer 2018

[CLICK TO READ...](#)





# National Severe Weather Warnings

The Met Office is responsible for issuing severe weather warnings for Northern Ireland. National Severe Weather Warnings are issued when severe or hazardous weather will have an impact on people, businesses, emergency responders and the government.

## Some recent improvements have been made to the service including<sup>1</sup>:

- introducing two additional warning types – thunderstorm and lightning
- extending the lead time of warnings from five days out to seven days

<sup>1</sup> This additional functionality is delayed at the moment due to technical issues.

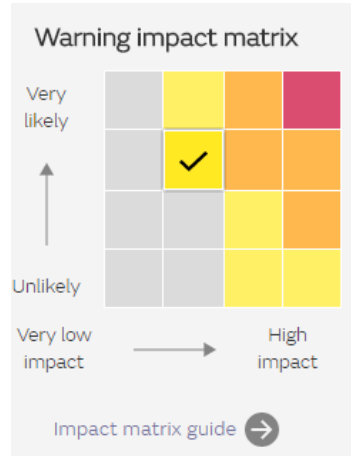
The introduction of thunderstorm warnings adds to the capability of warnings to differentiate between the nature of impacts caused by large areas of rain and smaller areas of intense rainfall from thunderstorms, leading to faster onset impacts.

The introduction of lightning allows warnings to be issued when there is no risk of flooding. Electrical storms can affect power supplies and cause damage to buildings and infrastructure, as well as pose a danger to life.

These changes now mean, we provide warnings up to seven days ahead for rain, thunderstorms, wind, snow, lightning and fog.

Each warning contains the following sections:

- **Headline** – a short weather headline, which states what weather type is forecast



Yellow, amber and red squares on the matrix indicate the impact and likelihood of weather events

- **What to expect** – details on the types of impact forecast and an indication of how likely those impacts are
- **What should I do** – this section links to advice and guidance from our partners on how to stay safe in severe weather
- **Further details** – additional information on the forecast weather.

Warnings are given a colour (yellow, amber or red) depending on a combination of both the impact the weather may have and the likelihood of those impacts occurring.

The impacts can include damage to property, travel delays and cancellations, loss of water supplies, power cuts and, in the most severe cases, bring a danger to life. We show this combination of impact and likelihood in a matrix, which can be seen in the Further Details section of our warnings. To understand how likely we think the forecast impacts are, always check the matrix to see which box has been ticked.

Met Office warnings are available in a number of ways, which make it easy to get the very latest information wherever you are. These include the Met Office app and website, social media, email alerts, TV, radio and RSS (Really Simple Syndication).

---

**The Met Office operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year so warnings can be issued at any time, day or night.**

---



# Emergency Numbers

No matter how prepared we are for inclement weather, there's always the chance of an emergency at home.

Here's a list of phone numbers you might find useful should the unforeseen happen:

Emergency Services:  
**999 or 112**

Housing Executive:  
**03448 920 901**

Northern Ireland  
Electricity Networks:  
**03457 643643**

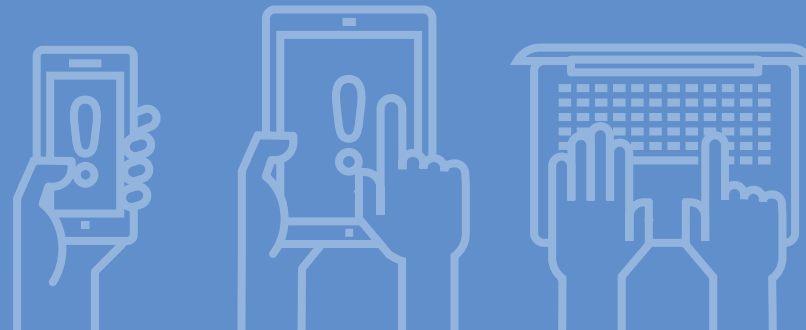
NI Gas Emergency Service:  
**0800 002 001**

NI Water  
Waterline:  
**03457 440088**

Flooding Incident Line:  
**0300 2000 100**

For advice and information on dealing with emergencies visit:  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/  
be-ready-for-emergencies](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies)

Problems with Roads & Streets:  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/  
information-and-services/travel-  
transport-and-roads/problems-  
roads-and-streets](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets)



## GETTING WEATHER READY



The RCRG Newsletter

## Contents

Spring/Summer 2018

CLICK TO READ...

