

## **Section 14: Major Emergency Management**

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As previously outlined in Section 1 above, in addition to the specific areas listed under Section 26, will also take into considerations the substantial volume of work carried out and contribution the Fire Authority makes to Major Emergency Management both within County Kilkenny and the South-East region.

### **14.1 Definition**

A Major Emergency is defined as any event which, usually with little or no warning, causes or threatens death or injury, serious disruption of essential services or damage to property, the environment or infrastructure beyond the normal capabilities of the principal emergency services in the area in which the event occurs, and requires the activation of specific additional procedures and the mobilisation of additional resources to ensure an effective, co-ordinated response.

### **14.2 Background to Major Emergency Planning**

The National Framework for Major Emergency Management (2006) replaced the Framework for Co-Ordinated Response to Major Emergency, which underpinned Major Emergency preparedness and response capability since 1984. The 2006 Framework was prepared under the aegis of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Major Emergencies and was approved by Government decision. It enables the three principal response agencies (PRA's); An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Local Authority to prepare and make a co-ordinated response to Major Emergencies including fires, transport accidents, hazardous substances and severe weather.

In 2008 a new Major Emergency Plan was released which was consistent with 'A Framework for Emergency Management' (2006) as issued by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government and in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department in relation to Major Emergency Management. The Major Emergency Plan is reviewed on a regular basis.

The purpose of the Major Emergency Plan is to put in place arrangements that will enable Kilkenny County Council to effectively manage a Major Emergency in co-operation with other the Principal Response Agencies, An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive. The document sets out mechanisms for co-ordination of the Principal Response

Agencies at all levels of Major Emergency Management - on site, at local level and at regional level. In addition, it defines a common language and terminology to facilitate inter-agency working. It also provides for linking to national level emergency management. Major Emergency Management continues to be a priority issue for Kilkenny County Council.

### **14.3 Inter-Agency Arrangements**

Any one of the principal response agencies may declare a major emergency and the mobilisation procedures of the Major Emergency Plans of the three relevant agencies will be activated immediately they are notified of the declaration. The Major Emergency Plan of each agency sets out that agency's response, as well as its contribution to the combined response of all agencies.

The other Principal Response Agencies responsible for Emergency Services in this area are -

- Health Service Executive South,
- Kilkenny / Carlow Garda Division.

Additionally, due to there being three (3no) Upper Tier Seveso Sites in the County, there are site specific External Emergency Plans for each Seveso Site which are reviewed and tested on a three-year cycle.

### **14.4 Kilkenny County Council Response to a Major Emergency in County Kilkenny**

In the event of a major emergency, the primary role of Kilkenny County Council is to ensure life safety by providing a suitably trained and equipped emergency service in the form of the Fire Service. In general, the Fire Service will likely be the first section of the Local Authority to respond to any Major Emergency.

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service main roles in the event of a Major Emergency occurring County Kilkenny are as follows -

- Immediate Response,
- Extinguishing Fires,
- Rescue,
- Dealing with Flooding Incidents,
- Dealing with Spillages / Hazardous Materials,
- Storm / Severe Weather Response,
- Provision of Water Tankers,

- Provision of an On-Site Controller of Operations / On-Site Co-Ordinator,
- Provision of On-Site Co-Ordination Facilities (including an Incident Command Unit vehicle),
- Facilitating and Participating in the Crisis Management Team.

The Fire Service will prepare itself for large scale and inter-agency operations through participation in appropriate exercises. The Fire Service will also further develop relationships with the Voluntary Emergency Services *i.e. Civil Defence as appropriate*, in particular in preparation for joint assistance in the event of a Major Emergency occurring. The fire service will also work with local community and voluntary groups as appropriate in the event of a Major Emergency occurring as appropriate.

#### **14.5 Co-Ordination Roles and Facilities**

The designated on-site Co-Ordinator of Operations for Kilkenny County Council is the Director of Services for Roads. For most key roles, alternates are also identified in the Major Emergency Plan. The On-Site Co-Ordinator is alerted in the event of an incident by the Eastern Regional Communications Centre. Depending on the nature of the incident, Kilkenny County Council may assume the role of Lead Agency (the agency with overall responsibility for Co-Ordinating a response to the incident) and the On-Site Co-Ordinator may assume the role of the On-Site Controller of Operations. An Incident Command Unit based at Castlecomer Fire Station is available for the On-Site Co-Ordination Team.

Kilkenny County Council participates in the Local Co-Ordination Group. The Chief Executive or their designated alternate shall represent Kilkenny County Council on the Local Co-Ordination Group. Meeting Room No.1 in the County Council in County Hall has been set up with communication and other facilities to enable the Local Co-Ordination Group to operate from this room.

Both the On-Site and Local Co-Ordination groups shall be assisted by the Crisis Management Team. This team shall meet as required at the Council Chamber in the Kilkenny County Council Headquarters in the event of a Major Emergency and shall provide technical and administration support to both the On-Site and Local Co-Ordination groups. Members of the Fire Service will also participate in this group as appropriate. Telecommunications facilities (*laptops with emergency e-mail addresses, telephone conferencing etc.*) and other facilities (*e.g. Whiteboards, stationary etc.*) are available for the Crisis Management Team. A facility is available to implement a Helpline (*Call Handling Service*)

should the need arise during severe weather or another emergency. It is staffed by Local Authority personnel, who have been suitably trained. Further details regarding the above are provided in the Major Emergency Plan for Kilkenny County Council.

#### **14.6 Major Emergency Management in the South East MEM Region and National Groups**

Kilkenny County Council is part of the South East Region for Major Emergency Planning. The Principle Response Agencies responsible for Emergency Services in the South East MEM Region are as follows -

##### Local Authorities

- Kilkenny,
- Waterford City and County,
- Wexford,
- Carlow.

##### Health Services Executive

- HSE South.

##### An Garda Síochána

- Kilkenny / Carlow / Waterford Garda Division,
- Wexford Garda Division.

Other members include the Irish Coast Guard, the Defence Forces and representatives of the Voluntary Emergency Services. There is both a Steering Group and a Working Group for Major Emergency Management in the South East Region. Kilkenny County Council is represented on the South East Regional Steering Group by the Director of Services (Roads) or their alternate and is represented on the Regional Working Group by the Chief Fire Officer or their alternate. These Regional Groups in turn report into the National Working Groups. The National Working Groups have membership from the three Principal Response Agencies and the NDFEM.

**Objectives for the Period of this Plan:**

**Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service will prepare itself for large scale and inter-agency operations through participation in appropriate training and exercises.**

**The Fire Service will also further develop relationships with the Voluntary Emergency Services i.e. *Civil Defence as appropriate*, in particular in preparation for joint assistance in the event of a Major Emergency occurring.**

**Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service will continue to participate on the Regional Working and Steering Groups as appropriate.**

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