

# Emergency Risks in Haringey

## Introduction

Haringey is a safe place to live and work, but from time to time emergencies do occur. The purpose of the Haringey Risk Register is to inform residents and businesses of the kinds of emergencies that might occur in the borough. The risks have been assessed by the Local Resilience Forum for North Central London.

The Emergency Services, the Council and other organisations have plans in place for dealing with all these emergencies, and helping the community to get back to normal. Residents and businesses can help:

- Be aware of what emergencies can happen
- Think about what you, your family, your business would do if the worst happens, and what you can do to be prepared.
- Remember “Go in, Tune in, Stay in”. In other words: you are usually safer inside. Listen to TV or radio for advice from the emergency services on what to do. Stay in – unless you are asked to leave, and until you know it is safe.

## The risk of terrorism

The risk of terrorist attacks is well known to Londoners. The police and the security services continually assess the likelihood of an attack, and the threat level can change according to current intelligence. Because of this, and because of the sensitivity of the information that the assessment is made on, the terrorism threat is excluded from the risk assessment process. However, the UK, and London in particular, face a severe and ongoing risk of terrorism. In the past, plots have usually focused on central London targets, but there is no guarantee that this pattern will be repeated.

The emergency services, local authorities and other partners in London have a variety of plans to deal with the consequences of terrorism, and hold exercises and training to ensure we are ready to respond to the next attack.

## The risk of other emergencies

### The most likely emergencies to affect Haringey

#### 1. Water main bursts

Most of the large water mains in the borough are more than 100 years old. Unfortunately, they can burst without warning, and cause localised flooding. This happened three times in 2007, and affected whole streets. A water main burst can take several hours to shut off the flow of water.

## **2. Fire involving gas cylinders**

Many workshops and garages use acetylene cylinders – for example in welding work. Unfortunately, if a fire breaks out where acetylene cylinders are stored or used, the gas becomes unstable and poses a risk of an explosion. The cylinders themselves become projectiles, and can be propelled over significant distance. The normal Fire Brigade procedure is to evacuate an area of up to 200m surrounding the site, for up to 24 hours. Residents may be asked to leave their homes, and transport will be disrupted. This has happened twice in the last two years in the borough.

## **3. Power cuts**

Power cuts happen with great frequency. Usually they are a nuisance rather than an emergency. Most power cuts only affect a small number of properties at a time, and are repaired within a couple of hours. However if a power cut was widespread or lasted for many hours it would be more serious, particularly in cold weather. Traffic disruption may occur if traffic lights fail, and in darkness normally safe areas can be more hazardous.

## **4. Severe weather**

Severe weather can take a number of forms – usually high winds, heavy rain or snow. High winds can cause building damage, and fallen trees. Debris thrown through the air can be a serious hazard. Heavy rain can cause localised flash flooding if it overwhelms the drainage system. Usually this would be shortlived. Heavy snow can cause significant disruption. If it falls very suddenly, it may overwhelm efforts to keep roads open. Pavements can be slippery and treacherous.

All severe weather is likely to cause disruption to transport, and it may often be safer to avoid unnecessary travel. It is unusual for severe weather to occur without warning – sensible advice will be given through weather forecasts and on the Met Office website (<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>).

## **5. Building collapses**

In recent years, there have been a number of collapses of buildings. Sometimes this has been because of an external impact – like a vehicle collision. But on most occasions they are caused by careless building work. Remember: when undertaking any structural alteration to your property, pay close attention to building regulations, and get professional advice.

Building collapses can cause serious life-threatening injuries to anyone in the building at the time, and there may be disruption to the surrounding area, depending on the kind of building involved, its location and so forth. The disruption will last until everyone has been accounted for, and the site has been made safe to the public. This could take several hours or possibly a number of days.

### **More serious risks**

The following risks are considered somewhat less likely to occur, but would be more serious if they happened.

#### **6. Flooding**

The main flood risk in Haringey is from the River Lee. The River Lee has flooded in living memory, but not since the River Lee Relief Channel was completed in the 1970s. But climate change means that the risk of flooding is increasing. There are several thousand homes at risk of flooding in the Tottenham area.

More information on the flood risk to the borough can found on the Environment Agency website (<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk>). You can find out if your home is at risk, and sign up to Flood Warnings Direct. You can also find advice on how to protect your property from flooding.

#### **7. Flu pandemic**

One of the most serious risks to the UK as a whole is the risk of a new strain of flu emerging (possibly from bird flu). People would have very little natural immunity, and somewhere between 1 in 4 and 1 in 2 people would fall ill, over a period of many months. Most people would recover after being quite unwell for about 2 weeks, but a large number of deaths would be expected.

There is a lot of planning taking place, led by the NHS, to help the country prepare. Having many people unable to work at the same time will cause disruption to public services and businesses. A key part of the response will be to promote sensible hygiene and other measures to try to control the spread. Businesses should consider how they will continue running if key staff are unwell. For further information, go to the Department of Health website (<http://www.dh.gov.uk/PandemicFlu>).

#### **8. Rail accidents**

There has never been a major rail accident in Haringey, but there are a number of lines that run through (or under) the borough. Improvements in train design and track safety means that rail travel is a very safe form of transport. However, if train crashes occur, there can be large numbers of casualties and major disruption to the area.

### **Risks that are very unlikely to occur**

#### **9. Extreme drought**

Climate change means that London is likely to experience droughts in future years. Long periods of below average rainfall will put London's water supply under stress, and it is important to use water sensibly. In the early stages of a drought, a number of restrictions to use may be imposed on use, which would be gradually increased according to the severity. The likelihood of a drought in London progressing to the point where it would be considered an emergency – for example where standpipes would be needed – is considered to be low.

#### **10. Industrial accidents**

There are very few industrial sites that could cause a serious emergency in the borough. The most hazardous sites are dealt with under the Control of Major Accident Hazard

(COMAH) Regulations. There is one such site within the borough (the Hornsey Gas Holder in Clarendon Road), and two others on the edge of the borough (the Coppermills water treatment works, and the gas holder in Leaside Road). All of these sites are regularly inspected and have an excellent safety record. The site operators have plans that the emergency services and the Council have copies of, in the unlikely event that an incident occurs.

Industrial accidents can cause explosions, fires and/or the release of toxic chemicals. If an incident like this occurs in your area it is usually best to go indoors and stay there, unless and until you are told to leave by the emergency services.

For further information on risk assessment for our area, you can read the North Central London Community Risk Register ([http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about\\_us/media/CRRnc.pdf](http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/about_us/media/CRRnc.pdf)).