Press release: Exercise Tempest tests the Environment Agency flood response ahead of winter

More than 300 metres of temporary flood defence barrier, drones and new visual mapping technology are being put to the test today (7th November) as the Environment Agency continues preparation for the winter ahead.

Exercise Tempest will see frontline staff test out temporary barriers in Stratford-upon-Avon –birthplace of William Shakespeare – for the first time. The exercise will test working arrangements with the local council and partners so that barriers can be put up quickly and safely when needed to help to protect properties on the waterfront from flooding.

Staff on-site and in the Environment Agency's incident room in Lichfield will also be working together to test new visual mapping technology which will provide better intelligence about flood damage and impacts on the ground. This includes drones that teams can use to survey wider flood-hit areas, sending footage via a live feed, to the Environment Agency incident room.

Up and down the country, the Environment Agency is prepared to take action this winter wherever it is needed.

Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency, said:

> This test exercise is one of many across the country to make sure we are ready for winter. We have 6,500 trained staff ready to respond to flooding and we're making the most of new kit and technology.
>
> Since the flooding of winter 2015/16, the Environment Agency has invested £12.5 million in new equipment including an additional 20 miles of temporary barriers, 500,000 sandbags and 250 pumps. The use of drones will also allow us to have a clearer idea of flood damage on the ground.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

> This exercise is a brilliant example of work taking place across the country to make sure we are fully prepared for any potential flooding this winter.
>
> The use of new hi-spec equipment such as drones and live 'visual mapping' to show flood affected areas will be a huge asset to flood prevention teams.

> The investment we have made in new technology, portable barriers and other equipment forms part of the £2.5 billion we are spending across the country up until 2021 to better protect over 300,000 properties.

Temporary barriers are just one of the ways the Environment Agency aims to better protect people and properties. But it's important to remember people can never be fully protected against flooding, which is why people are being urged to go online and check their flood risk by entering their postcode, and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.

More than 1.2 million people are signed up to the Environment Agency's free flood warning service, which sends a message directly by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued.

From 2015 to 2021, Government is investing £2.5 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects which will reduce the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water for at least 300,000 homes.

News story: Pubs Code Adjudicator tenant survey

The Pubs Code Adjudicator launches a tenant survey which is live until the end of November.

The Pubs Code Adjudicator (PCA) has commissioned an independent research company, GfK, to undertake a survey of the tied pub tenants whose pub-owning businesses are one of the six covered by the Pubs Code. The purpose of the survey is to assess tenants' awareness of the Pubs Code and its provisions; and to get their views on how it is working in practice for them.

GfK will be surveying a representative sample of tied pub tenants throughout November. The survey will be a telephone interview and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. Not all tenants will be contacted, but all six of the pub-owning businesses support the aims of the survey and would encourage tied pub tenants to take part if approached.

All responses will be confidential and non-attributable. The results of the research will be published by the PCA. We expect this to be in the New Year.

News story: International experts share decommissioning expertise

Hosted by the NDA, the project was set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the wake of the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan, but is also drawing lessons from decommissioning at other nuclear sites, including:

- Al Tuwaitha nuclear site in Iraq, damaged during conflict
- Three Mile Island Unit 2 in the US, damaged by a partial core melt
- Chernobyl in Ukraine
- the A1 reactor in Slovakia, damaged following incorrect insertion of a new fuel element

The workshop also looked at a number of historical facilities which can face similar challenges, including:

- Sellafield's First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP)
- the industrial Uranium Graphite Reactors in Russia
- the redundant fuel cycle facilities at Marcoule, France

Three working groups are studying the above cases and their conclusions will feed in to a final report, providing guidance that could be deployed in the event of future accidents. Their focus is on the challenges faced by regulators, the technical challenges of managing physical and radiological hazards and the strategic decision-making processes.

Named DAROD (Decommissioning And Remediation of Damaged nuclear facilities), the project began in 2014 as a result of the IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, drawn up following the Fukushima-Daiichi accident.

John Rowat, from IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, said:

> The purpose of DAROD is to identify where existing guidance for normal decommissioning and remediation can be adapted to situations involving damaged nuclear facilities, and to identify how member states might be better prepared to manage such situations in the future.

At the Penrith workshop, a special session was held on Sellafield's FGMSP, introduced by Sellafield's Head of Programme Delivery for Legacy Ponds, Dorothy Gradden, who gave an update on progress at the facilities. Delegates were also given an opportunity to tour the FGMSP, enabling them understand the challenges and see the progress at first hand.

John Mathieson, the NDA's Head of International Relations, said:

> The workshop brought together a diverse range of regulators and decommissioning practitioners from around the world, many of whom have first-hand experience of dealing with damaged nuclear facilities.
>
> It was an honour for the UK and NDA to be asked to host this workshop for this important project, and the discussions were extremely valuable.

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Press release: Call for women to get life-saving smear test after uptake drops

Public Health England (PHE) has issued a fresh appeal to young women to take up the invitation of a cervical cancer test as new figures published today show a fall in the number of 25 to 29-year-old women being tested.

NHS Digital statistics show a drop in the number of women of all ages being screened but worryingly only 62% of younger women took up the invitation for a test last year.

PHE is urging all eligible women (aged 25 to 64) who are invited for cervical screening (smear tests) to take the test.

Cervical screening currently prevents 70% of cervical cancer deaths. However, if everyone attended screening regularly, 83% of cases could be prevented.

Professor Anne Mackie, PHE's director of screening said:

> It is of real concern that fewer women, particularly younger women are not being screened, with over a third of women under 30 not

taking the test.

If women are embarrassed about having the test or worried about what the test results might say, they should talk to their GP who can explain why the test is important.

PHE is committed to improving screening attendance and has a programme of work which includes:

- supporting local services to encourage more women to attend screening by providing clearer information
- encouraging GPs to consider offering a variety of appointments earlier in the morning and evening, making it easier for women to attend at a time that suits them
- developing an interactive database which informs individual practices about the numbers of women they are screening and how they compare with neighbouring practices

Women aged 25 to 49 registered with a GP are invited every 3 years and every 5 years if aged 50 to 64. The test detects abnormalities within the cervix that could, if undetected and untreated, develop into cervical cancer. Studies show if the proportion of women screened was raised to 84% it could save the NHS £10 million a year as well as women's lives.

The Cervical Cancer Screening Programme, recommended by the UK National Screening Committee, began in 1988 and the expert committee has reviewed the evidence every 3 years. The committee recommends the programme as it shows clear benefits and saves lives. Screening remains a choice, based on a woman's individual circumstances.

Background

1. Women over the age of 64 will no longer be invited for cervical screening unless they have had a previous abnormal result that requires a further follow up.
2. PHE's interactive screening coverage tool shows screening coverage for individual GPs and how they compare with neighbouring practices.
3. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.