



Northumberland
County Council

From Storm Arwen to Storm Eowyn

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Background

- Communities and Place OSC task and finish group convened following Storm Arwen
- Report agreed by full Council on 6 July 2022 with 28 Recommendations
- Progress reports received by Communities and Place OSC from Civil Contingencies Team on:
 - 5 October 2022
 - 28 February 2024 (closure report)
- Since storm Arwen NCC have responded to the following 12 named storms:
 - Barra – December 2021
 - Malik & Corrie – January 2022
 - Dudley & Eunice – February 2022
 - Babet – October 2023
 - Ciaran – November 2023
 - Isha & Jocelyn – January 2024
 - Bert – November 2024
 - Darragh – December 2024
 - Eowyn – January 2025

Northumberland County Council's response arrangements 2025

- Northumberland Incident Response Plan version 2.2 includes:
 - Activation procedures
 - Command and control structure for business continuity and major incidents
 - Action Cards
 - Information Cards (including elected members and community resilience)
 - Templates
- Severe weather plan tested during Storms Bert and Darragh. Formally agreed by EMT the same week as Storm Eowyn
- Out of hours on-call rotas for Strategic (Executive Director) and Tactical (Director) levels supported and advised by Duty Civil Contingencies Officer
- Training and exercise programme for the on-call team

Community Resilience

- Network of Assistance Centres around the county, currently 92 venues.
- Could be activated by us but working to empower communities to self activate as Community Response Hubs
- Community Response Hubs
 - Buildings owned by the community and opened by the community to support the community during an incident
 - They know their communities and can often respond quickly
- Work primarily through Town and Parish Councils and with Community Hall committees
- Work in partnership with Safe and Resilient Communities team
- Community Resilience forum events in last 12 months
 - Wooler
 - Hexham
 - Bellingham
 - Cramlington
 - Alnwick
 - Berwick

Storm Eowyn

- First Met Office weather warning received Tuesday 21 January, yellow but in high impact column
- Amber warning received Wednesday 22 January
- Severe Weather plan activated
- First multi-agency meeting held on the morning of Thursday 23 January
 - 8 meetings held until stood down on afternoon of Monday 27 January
- First internal assessment meeting held on the afternoon of Thursday 23 January
 - 8 internal cross council assessment meetings until stood down on the afternoon of Monday 27 January
- First briefing sent to County Emergency Committee on evening of Thursday 23 January
- Community Response Hubs contact by phone on morning of Friday 24 January, followed up by 2 emails

Improvements since Storm Arwen

- The Severe Weather plan was activated and used
- The Northumberland Incident Response Plan was used to support decision making
- Cross Council response was proportionate and coordinated virtually, managed by the on-call tactical officer, supported by the on-call strategic officer, advised by members of the Civil Contingencies Team
- Data from Northern Powergrid (NPg) was forthcoming and shared via business-as-usual arrangements
- NPg's communications with partners and customers was of a higher standard and it was clear what compensation was available for residents.
- Adult social care colleagues were able to process data received from NPg and check on vulnerable clients, any gaps in contact were passed to Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service for face-to-face visits
- Data team stood up as the incident moved into day 3 and 4 to help visualise areas without power and combine data from additional internal datasets
- Community Response Hubs were proactively contacted to ask for updates on their status, some chose to open others made the decision to not open.

Areas for improvement

- Data from Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) was not in the same format as data from NPg and was difficult to work with
- Information from SPEN to residents was poor and difficult to find. It was not clear what their compensation packages was or how it could be accessed.
- Some houses in SPEN's area in North Northumberland had power restored on Wednesday 29 January, 5 days after the storm hit
- The out of hours data requirement and capacity needs to be clarified and developed further
- Contact to community hubs could have been made earlier to reduce the risk of communication outages due to power cuts.
- Message to Community Response Hubs about advantages of letting us know they are open needs to be clearer
- Network of Community Response Hubs to be developed further (continual improvement)
- Wider operational support roles within NCC to be developed and recruited for e.g. admin support