

Education and Training

THE EMERGENCY PLANNING COLLEGE

By Tony Moore MPhil FICPEM

Introduction

As a result of comments that were made about the Emergency Planning College (EPC) in the report by the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Homeland Resilience in June 2013, entitled *Improving Efficiency, Interoperability and Resilience of our Blue Light Services*, and subsequently in the response by the Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management (ICPEM) to that report which appeared in the Autumn edition of *Alert*, I was invited to spend a day at Easingwold in November. There I met with Ronnie Coutts, who is the Director of Training and Resilience, Serco, and the four Faculty Heads, Mark Leigh, Head of Crisis and Emergency Management; Beverley Griffiths, Head of Crowd and Public Safety; Lynda Vongyer, Head of Business Continuity; and Alan Rees, Head of International Training. Michael Charlton-Weedy, Director of Resilience Training at the Cabinet Office, joined us for lunch.

History

The EPC is the United Kingdom's (UK's) leading organisation for multi-agency and major-incident preparation. Until the beginning of the century, it came under the Home Office but with the reorganisation of emergency planning at the beginning of the century, culminating with the passing of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, it passed to the Cabinet Office and the College played an important role in guiding practitioners in its implementation. This coincided with a move away from the traditional way of delivering courses in which it relied on



Emergency Planning College at Easingwold, York

in-house, full-time staff to one in which training was largely delivered by carefully selected Associate Lecturers who had specific expertise in their subject area. This enabled the College to be more reactive to the demands of resilient professionals. At the same time, it also began to provide off-site training for those wanting locally-delivered and bespoke training. This included countries and organisations outside the UK.

Current organisation

When in 2010, Serco took on a 15-year contract to run the College on behalf of the Cabinet Office, the mission it was given was quite simple - to enhance UK resilience. This coincided with a financial downturn in the country's economic prospects, which had the effect of making less money available for those involved in resilience to invest in training, and it became clear that more

flexible and innovative ways of accessing professional learning had to be offered. Whereas, under the Home Office and the Cabinet Office, although less so, it had been a College which people, predominantly from the emergency services and local authorities, attended to be trained, under Serco it became a service offering not just training but expertise in five main areas:

- Crisis and Emergency Management, formerly civil protection;
- Business Continuity, which is likely to be changed in the near future to Organisational Resilience to reflect a wider requirement from end users;
- Crowd and Public Safety;
- Exercising;
- An International Learning Programme to support the UK's interests overseas.

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Areas of activity

In order for it to meet the current requirements of the resilience community, the College has six main areas of activity.

- Through its seminars, webinars, and occasional speakers, it is able to provide debate and promote information sharing. Webinars are particularly useful in that those interested can access them and, indeed take part, without leaving their place of work; alternatively, they can access the debate at a time which is convenient to themselves. Coupled with its Knowledge Hub, the College now provides a one stop service for professional development.
- It has recently formed a new partnership with the University of Portsmouth, as a result of which those attending courses at the College people can now gain credits that contribute to academic qualifications. The University offers four related degree courses, one at undergraduate level, a BSc (Hons) in Risk and Security Management, and three at post-graduate level, an MSc in Crisis and Disaster Management; an MSc in Security Management; and an MSc in Risk, Crisis and Resilience Management. Whilst the possession of formal qualifications are not essential to those involved in resilience, they are increasingly a requirement for those recruited to permanent, full-time roles in the field.
- Exercising is critical in ensuring organisations are prepared for and able to manage the risks that may affect lives, reputations and profits. Using sophisticated, computer technology, which enables participants to deal with events with unexpected complexities in real-time, the College's exercising capability now provides a flexible innovative exercising tool. Exercises can be created to simulate a range of events, including technological emergencies,



Delegates relaxing in one of the comfortable break out areas

transport emergencies, weather related emergencies, disruption of essential services and supplies, and emergencies associated with and human and animal diseases.

- The College now has a number of regional centres across the UK to enable it to deliver many of its programmes off-site. In addition, bespoke training can be developed and run for and within a particular organisation to suite individual requirements. For instance, in 2013, bespoke training was developed for Network Rail and Sellafield nuclear installation, amongst others. In the case of Sellafield, it involved the deployment of 20 subject-matter experts on an Emergency Management Improvement Programme, which is due to run for 4 years.
- In collaboration with a variety of partners, the College now leads on a significant number of resilience projects both in the public and private sectors. For instance, it has a team of highly experienced business continuity consultants that are appointed to directly assist an organisation with the implantation of key business continuity projects or programmes. It can also carry out an audit of organisations wishing to comply with BS2599,

the British Standard for Business Continuity Management, or ISO22301, Societal security – Business continuity management systems – Requirements, designed by the International Organization for Standardization. In both cases, the EPC played a leading role in identifying the standards in the first place.

- Through a variety of innovative techniques, for example, e-learning, tablets in classrooms and the use of virtual reality, together with new and revised courses, greater learner support, wider consultancy, quarterly newsletters, and online booking, the College is able to deliver a cohesive service on all aspects of resilience to both the public and the private sectors.

Facilities

The College has invested heavily over recent years in providing facilities that are in keeping with such an establishment. It has 150-seat tiered, state-of-the-art lecture theatre, ten seminar rooms equipped with sophisticated Audio Visual (AV) and Information Technology (IT), and a modern, on-site hotel with 102 double en-suite rooms. In addition, it has a restaurant, a coffee lounge, a bar selling reasonably priced drinks, and a modern, fully equipped gymnasium.

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Brief overview of work carried out in 2013

As stated earlier, the College's mission is to enhance UK resilience. But making the United Kingdom a safer and more resilient country is not merely dependant on the emergency services and local authorities. For instance, 80% of the country's critical infrastructure is owned or managed by the private sector. So, if the College is to achieve its mission, it must work with a broad spectrum of professionals from both the public and private sectors, and, indeed, the voluntary sectors. In 2013, the number of delegates increased by 50% reflecting both a demand and a level of recognition in what the College has to offer.

In 2013, the College currently offered 54 different courses of which 26% were new or revised courses. It delivered 130 courses at Easingwold and 145 courses at clients venues, and ran 35 exercises most of which were specifically designed for a particular client or in relation to a particular location. It also provided consultancy services to 25 organisations. Its customer breakdown with 39% from the private sector, 15% from local authorities, 14% from central or regional government, and 11% from the emergency services, reflected the wider involvement of people and organisations committed to making the United Kingdom a more resilient place in the face of emergencies that are becoming more complex. The College's growing international reputation meant that it offered advice and guidance or ran courses for 30 countries. Included in this were courses in Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Morocco, which were all delivered in the French language. Courses were also delivered in the Arabic language both-in country and in the UK for delegates from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. A recent mass fatalities seminar was not only attended by those who could be expected to be present,



Interacting in fully equipped modern facilities

such as police, specialists in Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) and local authority planners, but by coroners, forensic scientists and emergency planners from the private sector. It also attracted overseas delegates from as far as the United States of America and New Zealand, indicating its growing international reputation.

Occasional papers

Another source of information is the increasing number of Occasional Papers emanating from the College, the most recent of which are:

- The Identification of Hazardous Industrial Sites in Publicly-Available UK Disaster Risk Assessments;
- Leadership in Multi-Agency Emergency Co-ordinating Groups;
- Review of Persistent Lessons Identified Relating to Interoperability from Emergencies and Major Incidents since 1986.
- The last of the three papers is reviewed separately in this edition of Alert.

Associate Lecturers and Consultants

A criticism that has been made of the College is that there are insufficient staff who have a background in the emergency services or

in local authority emergency management. The College has a small permanent staff. The Director has a military background as do two of the Faculty Heads. Of the other two, one has a local authority emergency management background and the other has experience of working in both the public and private sector in business continuity. There are also two Course Directors, one of whom has a military background and the other in the police and coastguards. But the important thing to recognise is that they all have considerable experience in the design and development of training. The subject expertise comes from the 48 Consultants and Associate Tutors, many of whom are recognised leaders in their field. For instance:

- 16 are either former or serving senior officers from all three of the emergency services;
- 7 are either former or serving members of local authority emergency planning departments;
- 1 is the co-ordinator of a Local Resilience Forum (LRF); and
- 1 is a central government resilient specialist.

In addition:

- 8 are specialists in business continuity management with experience from both the public and private sectors;

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- 7 are crowd event safety management specialists;
- 3 are specialists in the design and development of exercises; and
- 3 are experts in civil protection risk, with experience at both the national and local levels.

In addition, amongst the Associate Tutors are people who have experience of managing transportation accidents, technological accidents, health-related emergencies, flooding and other weather-related emergencies and those who have been involved in providing humanitarian assistance.

Unlike in the past, Associate Tutors are no longer people who undertake the occasional 'teaching' or 'consultancy' role on behalf of the College. They are expected to undertake practical research, publish and make significant contributions to the development of a more resilient capability, both in the United Kingdom and abroad. Those who are former members of, for example, one of the emergency services or a local authority emergency planning department, are expected to remain up-to-date in relation to what current practices are in their former organisation.

The future

The main aim of the report, *Improving Efficiency, Interoperability and Resilience of our Blue Light Services*, by the All-Party Parliamentary Committee on Homeland Resilience in June 2013, was to suggest ways of improving interoperability of the police, fire and ambulances services. In doing so, it called for the formation of a National College of Emergency Service Excellence. Whilst it claimed that the EPC (referred to in the report, incidentally, as the Emergency Services College, possibly identifying a lack of understanding of the mission and purpose

of the College on the part of the Committee) did attempt to bring together all the emergency services and other organisations involved in multi-agency working including non-blue light scenarios such as influenza outbreaks, the implication was that this was not sufficient to provide a more integrated response to emergencies.

The market for services in civil protection is becoming more competitive, in that there are a growing number of possible providers, and, at the same time, more constrained, particularly as suggested earlier in the article, as a result of current economic climate that exists in the United Kingdom. The EPC is aware of both and aims to stay ahead of any competition by adapting or updating many of its current programmes and becoming even more innovative in the manner in which they are delivered, in order to meet the increasing demands of its customers, but, it is important to note, without compromising on excellence. To achieve this, it has three principle aims. Firstly, it is currently introducing new ways of contributing to UK resilience through training, education, advice and exercising. Secondly, using a growing and innovative range of new products delivered in ways that make it easier for their customers to access them, the EPC is working hard to reach new and wider audiences with a growing range of products, some of which are described earlier in the article. Thirdly, it is building on its already national and international reputation as the thought leaders in multi-agency civil protection and its connections to government, practitioners, industry and academia and its position makes it best placed to do so.

The fact that the United Kingdom has an Emergency Planning College, providing multi-agency training and education, is the envy of many countries around the world. It is in a position to provide a lead

in making the emergency services not only more interoperable amongst themselves when dealing with emergencies, but, more importantly, perhaps, in making them more interoperable with the host of other organisations without which the United Kingdom will not be a more resilient place. But this requires a strong lead from the Cabinet Office and a commitment and a willingness from Government Departments and the emergency services, in particular, to make greater use of the facilities and the expertise that the EPC has to offer.



Author Profile

A former soldier, senior police officer and pseudo academic, Tony Moore is a Founding Fellow and Deputy President of the Institute. He is co-editor of three editions of Tolley's Handbook of Disaster and Emergency Management, published in 2002, 2004 and 2006, and is the sole author of Disaster and Emergency Management Systems, published by the British Standards Institution in 2008.

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

The Emergency Planning College has launched a new partnership with the University of Portsmouth which would allow students who have attended certain courses at the College since 2009 to gain accreditation points towards a Post-Graduate Diploma or full MSc degree.

For further details, see www.epcollege.com/epc/training/academic-study/

