

Date: 28th September 2007

Edition: 3

## Welcome to the third edition of the GDS Newsletter

We were involved in a number of incidents over the last 12 months that have fully tested all of our operating procedures. While we delivered the service required, it is important that we continue to develop our procedures. Over the summer we have been busy reviewing and revising them to make sure that we can deliver an ever improving support service to potential end users in local and national government when the need arises.

We will be implementing improvements that range from a better way of recording and controlling the information flow in our emergency operations centre, to further embedding science into the business.

## GDS Stakeholder Survey 2007



The screenshot shows a web-based survey form titled 'CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY'. It includes a GDS logo and asks for the user's organization type and how they heard about the GDS. The organization type options are: Government Office, Civil Authorities - emergency planning officer, Civil Authorities - other, Government department, Commercial business, Emergency responder category 1, and Emergency responder category 2. The 'How did you hear about the GDS?' dropdown menu is set to 'GDS Presentation'.

We will be sending out our Stakeholder Survey for 2007 within the next few days. The survey will target views from our stakeholders and potential end users in local government. If you receive a copy of the survey please complete it, so that we can take your views into account when we review our business plan and decide our work programme.

We value your opinions so if you do not receive a copy of our survey and would like to take part please e-mail GDS at [gds@gds.qsi.gov.uk](mailto:gds@gds.qsi.gov.uk) by 12 October 2007, please include "Survey 2007" in the subject line your e-mail.

## Polonium 210 Decontamination London

In November 2006 the Government Decontamination Service (GDS) was requested, via the GDS emergency contact procedures, to attend the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms to participate in a meeting of the Civil Contingencies Committee. It had been established that Alexander Litvinenko had died as a result of ingesting a radioactive isotope identified as Polonium 210. Forensic investigation established a number of venues across London had been contaminated.

GDS opened its Emergency Operations Centre, based at the HQ in Stafford, from where GDS involvement was coordinated. During the response phase of the incident GDS Specialist Framework Suppliers were deployed to London, at the request of the Health Protection Agency to provide assistance with monitoring for health protection purposes. GDS provided advice, guidance and access to the GDS Specialist Supplier Framework to the Metropolitan Police Gold Command and subsequently at the Recovery Working Group, chaired by the Chief Executive Officer from Westminster City Council.

GDS worked closely with partners from Westminster City Council, Health and Safety Executive, Environment Agency, Department of Transport and the Health Protection Agency on the production of a framework strategy for dealing with radioactive contamination arising from circumstances surrounding the death of Alexander Litvinenko. Decontamination work was carried out at nine venues using a variety of methods from wiping impervious surfaces with tacky cloths, to removal of loose contamination or more aggressive methods involving removal of the contaminated areas that exceeded the reference level provided by the Health Protection Agency.



## Before and after – aggressive removal was required

Following the incident GDS has participated in a number of lessons identified events and also commissioned each of the radiological contractors to document their involvement in the incident, to enable lessons to be learned. This information has been shared across Government to improve

### Our Mission:

The UK Government Decontamination Service increases resilience by providing advice and guidance to those responsible for dealing with decontamination following a CBRN or major HazMat incident.

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resilience through enhanced planning. GDS has also reviewed its operational procedures to reflect lessons learnt.

### Hospital Decontamination



In August GDS was invited to observe the logistics and process involved in a biological decontamination of a major regional hospital in Oxnard California. This involved the winding down of admissions to the hospital, setting up alternative maternity and emergency bed facilities and the clearance of the hospital.

The tenting and fumigation of the hospital took place over a period of a week and a successful outcome was achieved. The four storey building at 33,000 square metres and 265 beds, whilst not the biggest job that the contractor had completed, was probably the most complicated. GDS was able to see the type of facilities required to support the decontamination and observe the intense round the clock monitoring and control that is needed. Decontamination took place over a 12 hour period starting in the evening when temperature and humidity conditions were suitable.

While most of the moveable equipment was removed into storage, major equipment such as CAT scanning facilities were left in place and covered. Apart from a slight colour change of some fabrics and some minor rust issues there was no detrimental effect to the hospital.

The major issue was the presence of extensive mould throughout the hospital and this, along with other biological 'bugs', was cleared using chlorine dioxide gas. The use of this was closely regulated by the National and Californian State Pesticides officials. Stringent controls and monitoring arrangements were put in place to protect the public and give the Hospital regulators confidence to allow the hospital to admit patients within 72 hours of the process being completed.

The techniques employed to decontaminate this building are readily transferable to be used on buildings in the UK, and lessons learned would speed the remediation process.

### GDS Teams

#### Liaison Team 2

Liaison team 2 is headed by a retired former superintendent from Lothian and Borders Police, with 17 years experience of counter terrorism and was the single point of contact for CBRN for the Scottish Region. Team 2 is responsible for liaison with Scotland, three Government Office regions in England (North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humber) and Gibraltar. Over the past 12 months the team has delivered awareness presentations on GDS to Regional and Local Resilience Forums and at a number of exercises and events across the north of England and Scotland.

The team also has responsibility for overseeing three specialist suppliers, covering the full range of chemical, biological and radiological decontamination, working with them to develop their CBRN knowledge, understanding and capability.

The team recently took over responsibility from Team 3 for assisting authorities dealing with an anthrax incident in Northumberland. Decontamination is scheduled for October by a GDS Framework Supplier using Vaporized Hydrogen Peroxide.

### The Emergency Services Show 2007



GDS will exhibit at the Emergency Services Show this year. We identified that not all emergency responders are fully aware of the support that was available following a deliberate or accidental release of chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear materials (CBRN) or a major accidental release of hazardous material (HAZMAT).

It is hoped that our attendance will give many responders a chance to discuss issues with GDS directly.

Entrance is free to the Emergency Services Show 2007, for more information visit [www.theemergencyservicesshow2007.com](http://www.theemergencyservicesshow2007.com).

