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## Welcome to the fifth edition of the GDS Newsletter

### 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.

### Contact Details:

Tel: 08458 501323

Email:

[gds@gds.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:gds@gds.gsi.gov.uk)

[www.gds.gov.uk](http://www.gds.gov.uk)

As always there is plenty of activity in GDS. The main focus is around the replacement of the specialist framework contractor programme. I am happy to report that we are now entering the competitive dialogue stage with contractors that have applied to join this framework. The new framework is expected to be in place by the autumn

Decontamination problems cross international boundaries, and GDS have recently shared information with Australian State Governments on approaches to increase resilience to CBRN attacks and to establish robust methods of remediation and decontamination. International links are important and sharing of experiences has proved useful in dealing with incidents

**Robert Bettley-Smith**  
Chief Executive

### GDS and LGA

The Local Government Association (LGA) represents the interests of just under 500 English and Welsh Local Authorities and is an important stakeholder for GDS. The LGA and GDS have worked closely together over the last 12 months to strengthen links between the two organisations.

The LGA and GDS have previously been part of the multi-agency National Recovery Working Group which developed guidance to support local responders in dealing with the recovery stage of emergencies. More recently, the LGA have been assisting GDS with the revision of the Strategic National Decontamination Guidance, and the re-tender of the GDS and Office of Government Commerce Buying Solutions (OGCb.s.) Specialist Supplier Framework. The current framework expires in October 2008 and the LGA have been kept fully informed throughout the procurement process. The input of the LGA helps to ensure that GDS and OGCb.s. put in place a new framework of specialist contractors able to provide decontamination services to Responsible Authorities following a CBRN or major HazMat incident.

The LGA represents a significant set of GDS stakeholders and the views of the Association are helping to form the strategic direction of the GDS. This has been recognised with the appointment of the LGA's Emergency Planning Recovery Advisor to the newly formed GDS Strategic Advisory Board. The GDS and LGA are confident we can continue to work in partnership and build on the strong foundations already in place.

### Exercise Solent Shine

Exercise Solent Shine was a desk top exercise delivered by the Health Protection Agency on behalf of the Department of Health. The aim of the exercise was to explore the health and multi-agency response to the detonation of a Radiological Dispersion Device (RDD) on Southampton Water.



GDS sent two players to the exercise: a scientist to assist at the Science and Technical Advice Cell (STAC), and a member of the 24/7 on-call team for the Recovery Working Group (RWG). These would be the relevant GDS staff that could be deployed to such an incident if requested.

The invented scenario involved an explosion followed by a fire on a foreign registered container ship in Southampton Water. The fire caused the release of a radioactive material. Dosimeters on emergency services personnel attending the incident alerted the authorities to a radiation release. The Southampton – Cowes ferry had been passing the other vessel at the time of the initial explosion, and as a result passengers and crew had been exposed to the release of radioactivity from it. The container ship was successfully brought alongside at a remote dock in Southampton, and the ferry was held in port at Cowes. (This would result in limited transport links to the mainland)



The early part of the exercise focused on the initial response, which was successfully played out. Mains water pumping facilities in the area were turned off as a precaution. Sampling and monitoring confirmed that low level fallout had been deposited along the coast. This was discussed at the RWG, however it was decided that insufficient information was available to decide if decontamination was required.

Towards close of play on the day, information became available that confirmed that the ferry was contaminated. The exercise closed before this could be discussed at the STAC or the RWG.

In conclusion, participation in the exercise was useful for GDS. GDS Specialist Framework Suppliers would have been able to use established techniques to monitor the coast if this had been a real incident. The GDS Science Team working with Specialist Framework Suppliers would have been able to advise on decontamination options for the ferry and container ship.

### **(Exercise Solent Shine written in conjunction with the Health Protection Agency (HPA) – photographs supplied by HPA)**

#### **GDS Science**

In order for the Government Decontamination Service to fulfil its role it is dependant on the provision of high quality technical information and technologies for the decontamination of buildings and infrastructure following CBRN incidents. One of the roles of the GDS Science Team is to ensure that these requirements are delivered. There are a number of ways in which it does this and one of the ways is by their involvement in the development of GDS's specialist supplier framework. The Science Team are involved in current procurement process, their role being to ensure that any technical capabilities stated by the bidders are based on reliable scientific evidence.

The GDS Science Team work very closely with GDS liaison Teams to identify and analyse current capability within the GDS framework, the aim being to enhance capability through the utilisation existing technologies available or to highlight any capability to develop of new/ novel technologies. The Science Team are very active in the current CBRN Science & Technology programme by currently managing several projects that relate to novel decontamination technologies and sit on the various boards associated with the programme.

GDS Science also play an important role in building, developing and maintaining good working relationships with key suppliers of scientific advice from within other government departments, centres of excellence, private decontamination contractors as well as CBRN scientists from around the world. The aim being to prevent duplication of work and also to be aware of any new developments within the CBRN and decontamination fields. These links have led to GDS representation on a number of working groups considering technical issues in CBRN counter - terrorism.

#### **London Prepared 2008**

On 10 March 2008, GDS had an exhibitor's stand at the London Prepared 2008 – Working in Partnership seminar held at Victoria Park Plaza, London. The seminar looked to develop London's ability to respond to major emergencies from both a national and international perspective by examining experiences and best practice.



The event was primarily aimed at senior officials from London's Cat 1 & 2 responders who may be required to fulfil the role of 'Gold' for their organisation in an emergency. The seminar was opened by the Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, Paul Stephenson and the keynote address was given by Rt. Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Minister for the Olympics and London. The presentations given throughout the day concentrated on emergency preparedness and resilience.

The new GDS stand was exhibited for the first time at this event and we would like to thank everyone who visited the stand. We spoke to many people throughout the day from areas such as local government, emergency services and multi-agency partners to name a few. Areas discussed included:

- Advice and guidance that GDS can offer to Responsible Authorities
- What support GDS can offer in contingency planning and during actual incidents
- The GDS Framework of Specialist Suppliers and how they are deployed if the need arises.

Following the success of attending this event, GDS are taking part in CBRN Resilience to be held in London in July 2008.