

Date 28 November 2008

Edition 7

Welcome to the seventh edition of the GDS Newsletter

Following detailed discussion with commercial companies, the Office of Government Commerce Buying Solutions and GDS I am pleased to report that the new Framework Agreements for Specialist Suppliers are now in place. This was carried out under the EU Procurement Regulations. The number of companies holding a framework agreement has increased along with the skills offered by the companies. The new Framework links to an increased resource available in the UK and thereby also increases the resilience of the UK to respond to incidents. We now have Specialist Suppliers on the framework to deal with the wide range of decontamination and related services necessary to help speed the return to normal business.

Robert Bettley-Smith
Chief Executive

GDS Revised Remit

Following discussion with all government departments involved with the work of GDS a revision of the remit, originally set in October 2005, has been agreed by Ministers. This sets out in more detail the expectations for the Agency and is split between

- Preparing for a crisis; and
- Supporting the crisis recovery phase.

Over the next few months we will be recruiting staff to deliver this remit and will explain further any implications to the service offered to the end users.

New Specialist Supplier Framework

Over the past 12 months, GDS and the Office of Government Commerce Buying Solutions (OGCb.s) have worked on the procurement of a new Framework Agreement for the provision of Decontamination Services. The advert for CBRN decontamination services was published in the Official Journal of the European Union in December 2007 and the EU Competitive Dialogue Procurement Procedure was used.

We are pleased to announce that the new Framework Agreement was awarded in October 2008, and a Framework Supplier Briefing Event took place on 13th November 2008 (see below). The number of suppliers on the new Framework has increased and there is coverage across chemical, biological and radiological/nuclear decontamination services. GDS are looking forward to working with the Specialist Suppliers over the life of the new Framework, evaluating and developing their capability within the CBRN arena.

GDS would like to thank a number of organisations involved in the procurement process, including; Defra, HPA, Dstl, the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, the Local Government Association, the Association of British Insurers, the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjustors and the Pool Reinsurance Company Limited. OGCb.s. also provided support to GDS and will remain the Contracting Authority and Framework Owner.

Specialist Supplier Briefing

The newly refurbished Britannia Stadium, home of the recently promoted Stoke City Football Club, was the venue for the introduction of the new Specialist Framework Suppliers to the GDS. Obviously there were lots of football references with GDS looking to set out their goals for the new agreements.

While some of the suppliers had worked with us in the past there were a number of new faces. The aim of the day was to bring all the Specialist Suppliers to a level of understanding of the potential threats and expectations required from a response. As well as briefing from GDS science and operational staff a very useful insight to the work of the Home Office CBRN area was given.

The afternoon session got down to some more detailed planning around what would be expected by both the Specialist Suppliers, GDS and our end users to deal with an incident. This covered the need to provide secure staging areas for equipment and personnel, storage areas for waste management and call-out arrangements among many other details.

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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Finally, we explained what the GDS remit, recently revised and agreed by Ministers, meant for the working arrangement we wish to foster with them. We also laid out the plans which are being developed to assess and enhance their capabilities over the period of the agreement.

The feedback from those who attended the event is being analyzed but immediate impressions gained were very favourable and suppliers were keen to get involved and support this important part of the UK Resilience programme.

A Garden in the Midlands

Following the death of a retired scientist, who had worked in the nuclear industry some years before, relatives were concerned that he may have done experiments at home and had approached the Health Protection Agency (HPA) for help. The HPA referred the request for help to us; we were required to pass it to the local council because our remit is only to get involved if the local authority needs and requests help. Environmental Health Officers from the local authority interviewed relatives and took a very tentative look at the property, they decided that they did not have the resources to investigate and asked for our help.

Photographs provided by Environmental Health Officers of outbuildings suggested that potentially dangerous chemicals were present, and knowing that this scientist had worked in the nuclear industry added veracity to the suggestion of possible radioactive sources.



We identified a GDS Specialist Framework Supplier that could deal with both chemical and radioactive remediation. Liaison by Environmental Health Officers alerted local residents to the work planned, however contractors entering this property in protective clothing using breathing apparatus must have been a strange sight for this quiet town. Radioactive monitoring equipment quickly confirmed these precautions were necessary as radioactive items were located within the gardens and outbuildings. The initial survey also identified chemicals that were in a dangerous condition, these were made safe immediately. In total 17 radioactive items were also identified; these were put into safe and secure storage at the property. One consequence was that the top level of soil had to be removed from the garden, which was not a very easy task in protective clothing and on an unusually sunny day.

The moving of radioactive material is never straight forward, agreements had to be made with the Environment Agency to move and dispose of this material. The property was returned to the family in July. This was the result of successful multi-agency working over a period of 3 months, which included the safe disposal of chemicals, radioactive material, soil from the garden and the decontamination of the property.



Emergency Services Show 2008

Thank you to everyone who visited the GDS stand. We very much appreciated the opportunity to discuss aspects of our work with responders from the emergency services and local government. The subjects discussed included all aspects of how we provide advice and guidance to support contingency planning and during actual incidents, and how Framework Specialist Suppliers are deployed if the need arises.

