

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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GDS Annual Report and Accounts

The GDS Annual Report and Accounts 2006/2007 were laid before Parliament on 21 June 2007, copies can be downloaded from our website gds.gov.uk.



Welcome to the second edition of the GDS newsletter

We have dealt with a number of incidents, three are worthy of particular mention. First an anthrax case where buildings were sampled and then cleared. Another where buildings were sampled, decontaminated and then returned to use. GDS worked with the responsible authority to achieve this in a timely and efficient manner.

Second in a linked anthrax case, the GDS is working with the local authority to facilitate the decontamination of a domestic building.

Third the decontamination of the various venues in London affected by Polonium 210 could not have been done in such an efficient, effective and timely manner without the GDS framework of suppliers and GDS facilitation. This work is best summed up with what I said at the time: "The Government Decontamination Service, which is a relatively new Government agency, is working with Westminster City Council and other local authorities to facilitate the decontamination as a result of having previously identified and evaluated specialist suppliers that could be engaged rapidly under pre-negotiated arrangements."

Robert Bettley-Smith
Chief Executive



Mike Anderson, Helen Ghosh and Robert Bettley-Smith

Official Opening of the GDS Building in Stafford

Helen Ghosh the Permanent Secretary at Defra, accompanied by Mike Anderson Director General for Climate Change, officially opened the GDS building at MoD Stafford on 26 June 2007. She was pleased that people at GDS had joined together from many different backgrounds including the Fire Service, the Police, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, and the Civil Service, and had produced an organization that was able to work across government at a local and national level

GDS Teams

Future issues will focus on teams in GDS. In this Newsletter the focus will be on Liaison Team 1 and the GDS Science Team.

Liaison Team 1

Responsibilities of Team 1 include liaison with three Government Office Regions (East, East Midlands and West Midlands), Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. We have delivered awareness presentations on GDS capability and have taken part in a range of exercises.

Team 1 has the responsibility for overseeing a number of specialist suppliers, working with them to develop their CBRN knowledge, understanding and capability. Recent incidents have allowed GDS to validate supplier response arrangements and their ability to remediate at the scene of a real incident. The incidents have proved the real value of the Supplier Framework and the partnerships we have developed. Other activities include working with the City of London Police and City financial institutions in the development of their CBRN Business Continuity Plans. We have further investigated underground deep storage facilities, Airport resilience, and attended many other remediation related events.

GDS Science

We have a small science team that manage several projects funded by the Home Office, and advise on the science in relation to supplier capability and the effectiveness of decontamination. The GDS Science team seeks to build, maintain and develop relationships with our colleagues and counterparts from across the globe. The benefits should be faster clean-up, reduced costs by using the most up to date methods and increased public confidence

A member of the GDS science team attended the 9th International Symposium on Protection Against Chemical and Biological Warfare Agents in Sweden. The symposium is an interdisciplinary forum for the mutual exchange of information regarding protection against chemical and biological warfare agents. The delegates and speakers included scientists and

experts from many international government laboratories, the military, educational establishments and industrial laboratories.

Attendance at this symposium gave the GDS science the chance to see at first hand current research and new technologies through oral and poster presentations on topics such as detection and identification of chemical and biological warfare agents, decontamination and developing technologies.

Anthrax Incident

As mentioned in the introduction by Robert Bettley-Smith.

GDS was called in by Health Protection Scotland when it was discovered that a death was attributable to inhalation of Anthrax. GDS became part of a multi-agency response to deal with this incident.

We were able to assist with sampling using a specialist supplier on the GDS Contract Framework. When the sampling confirmed that decontamination was necessary, we were able to supply scientific information and advice on the decontamination options available. Health Protection Scotland decided that chlorine dioxide gas should be used.



The photograph shows the decontamination of Smailholm Village Hall. This was covered by a large tented structure; chlorine dioxide gas was then pumped into the building. GDS was able to advise and facilitate the disposal of the waste product (salt water which was a by product produced in the decontamination). Biological indicators were placed in the building before decontamination. After decontamination these were sent to a laboratory for analysis, no observable growth indicated that the gas had penetrated all areas of the building. The building was sampled again to confirm that it was now safe to

use.

National Recovery Working Group

The National Recovery Working Group (NRWG) was established in January 2007 to provide a single point of reference for recovery guidance for local responders and to identify gaps in recovery support and guidance.

A large number of Government Departments, Agencies and other organisations, including GDS, have been involved in pulling together guidance on all aspects of recovery.

Representatives from the GDS Liaison Teams will attend the NRWG stakeholder consultation events across the UK in August and are happy to discuss some of the recovery issues relating to our work.

The NRWG Project aims to complete its tasks by October 2007, after which the web-based advice for local responders (particularly Local Authorities) will become available. In the longer-term, the website can be updated with further guidance/revisions and case studies as they occur.

For more information about GDS' role in the NRWG please contact gds@gds.gsi.gov.uk.

For more information about the NRWG please contact Rhiannon Harries, Regional Resilience Division, Communities and Local Government: Rhiannon.harries@communities.gsi.gov.uk or Tel 0207 944 8575.

The year ahead

The GDS business agenda will focus heavily on continuing to build links with stakeholders and partners. This will enable us to better understand what you need and where GDS can assist you in helping to prepare and respond to a CBRN or major Hazmat incident.

- Continuously review the capability and capacity for dealing with decontamination against the national risk assessment.
- Continue to engage with stakeholders across the UK, strengthening resilience by providing support and advice on decontamination options and related issues.
- Maintain existing liaison relationships with specialist suppliers through regular supplier meetings, continuing to develop knowledge of available expertise and methods of decontamination.

Throughout the year we will review our progress and effectiveness and ask for your feedback to help us deliver the service that you need.

GDS Website

As part of a government website transformation project aimed at improving access to information the GDS website will be moved to become part of the DEFRA website, redirects will be set up to guide users to the GDS pages on the DEFRA site. We will also be looking to improve the content and increase the amount of information available.