

Communities “exercise in a box”

Test your community
emergency plan – before the
crisis!

Somerset Prepared Resilience Conference
15 Oct 2025

www. **Somerset**
Prepared .org.uk

Contents

- Introductions
- Ways to test your community emergency arrangements
- Workshop – group work
- Plenary
- Other help and support available



“No plan survives first contact with the enemy”

Introduction

The purpose of this “exercise in a box” is for communities and community leaders to test their emergency plans and ability to deal with the emergency situations.



“A plan is not a plan until it has been tested”

The template is titled "Community Emergency Plan" and is version 2.0.2024. It includes fields for "Community Name", "Activation", "Ownership", "Address", "Post Code", "Local Community Network", "Issue Date", "Update Due", and "Version". A "Contents" section lists various chapters with page numbers: Contact Details (3), Resources & Skills (4), Shelter (5), Local Hazards & Risk (5), Community Mapping (6), Volunteer Action Card (8), and Health and Safety Aide Memoir (9). Below the table, the "Plan Aim" is described as "To enhance community resilience in a way that complements and supports the work of all responding agencies." The "Plan Objectives" are listed as "The aim of the plan is achieved through utilising local: Resources, Skills, Knowledge". A box at the bottom right contains the text "Simple Plans Safer Places" with a checked checkbox.

Methods for testing your plan

- **Table-top exercise.** We would recommend this option first as you will be able to fine-tune your plan quickly. It will also give you the opportunity for key people to get to know each other.
- **Walk through.** This will enable key players to have an understanding of what is required of them before an actual test.
- **Contact / call-out exercise.** This is where you test that you can make contact with the people on your call-out list. But no one should deploy.
- **Live Play Exercise** This is the stage before an actual incident. This will test all areas of your plan from communication to deal with road closures and evacuation.
- **Live incident** This will test your plan which may be scrutinised at a later date.



Charlie says: “Remember to update your plan with any learning after every exercise or real incident.”

What you need to run a table-top exercise



- Copies of your plan
- Maps of the area involved
- People who will implement the plan
- A room (this will vary in size according to numbers)
- Timings of how long the exercise will run for (agenda)
- Refreshments (optional)
- Pens, paper, laptops, flipcharts, projector
- A scenario.....

And the aim of the test!



Sally says: “A table-top exercise is to test the PLAN not the PEOPLE.”

Table-top exercise scenarios



There are four table-top scenarios to choose from. You may wish to do all four or just one.

The scenarios include

1. Flooding
2. Total power outage
3. Severe weather
4. Food shortages



“A plan is not a plan until it has been tested.”



Flooding

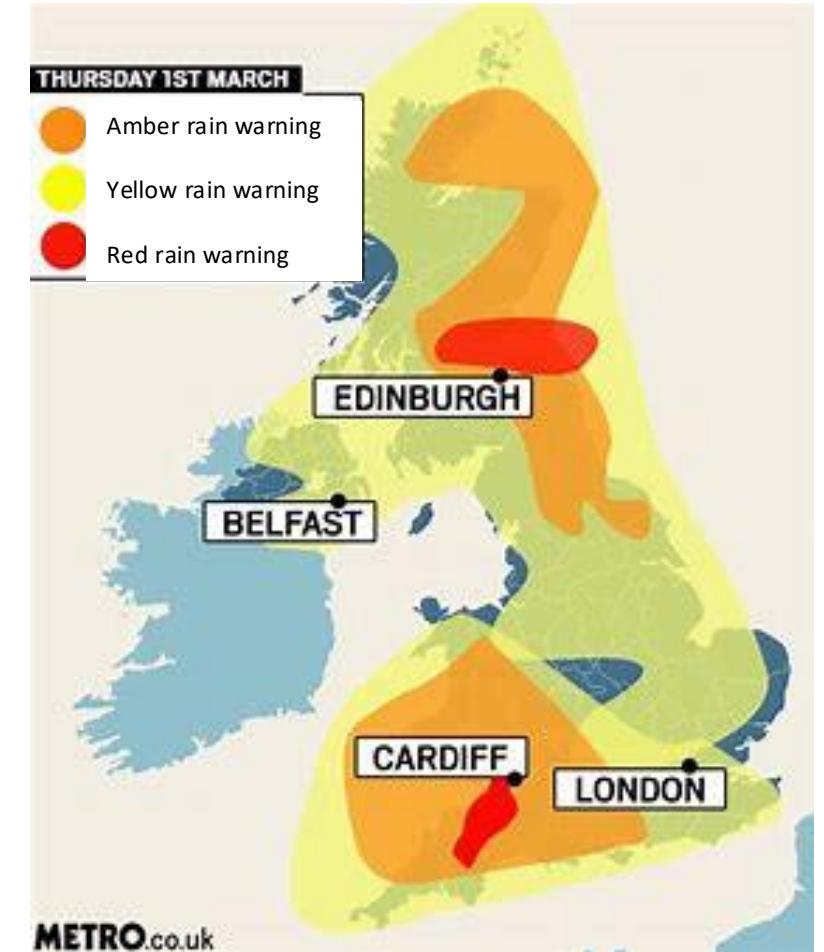
Current Situation



- The Met Office have issued a severe weather warning for rain fall within the next 16 hours (at least 150mm in 24 hours).
- This will cause surface water flooding, and many rivers are expected to flood particular in low laying areas.
- Travel disruption is expected to occur.
- The public are encouraged to take the necessary action in these areas.

First phase - activation

- What are the triggers to activate your plan?
- How will you inform the people listed in your plan?
- What are the first actions listed in your plan?



Second phase – response

- How will you inform your community?
- What resources are available to your community?
- Where will you get your information from?
- How will you keep everyone safe?



Third phase – stand down and recovery

- How will you know when the emergency is over?
- What should you do at the end of an incident?



Other considerations - to extend the scenario...

- “Extendibility”: what if the rain carries on for a second or third day?
- “Concurrency”: What would you do if there was a second emergency at the same time?
- “Business Continuity”: what if the emergency happens when the local organiser is away on holiday?

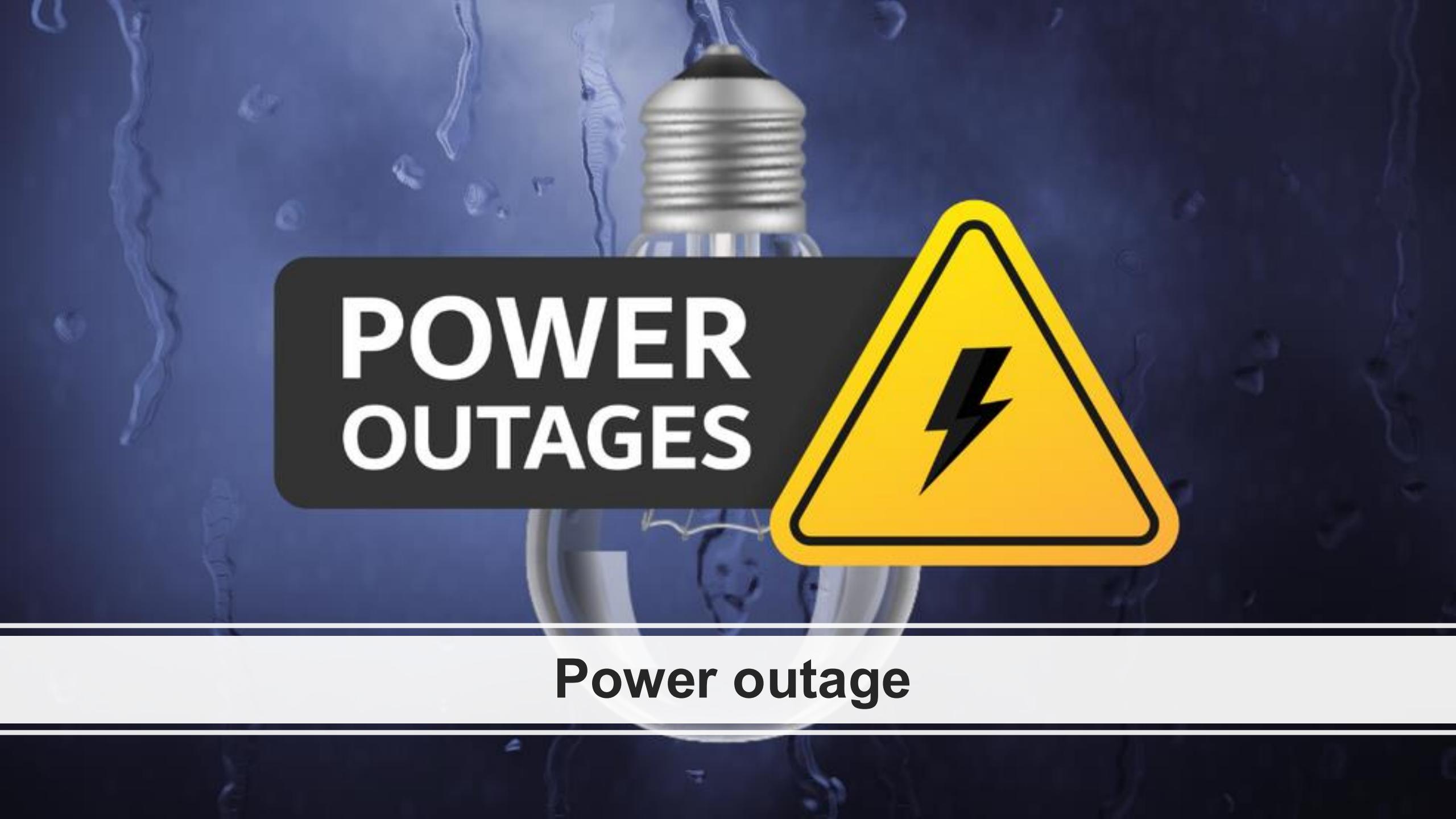


Summary

- Build plan tests and exercising into your planning process.
- Be clear about the aim and objectives of any test or exercise.
- After the test, write down any learning and update your plan.



Sally says: “Think about ways to make the event fun! Why not make your plan test an event for the community?”



POWER
OUTAGES



Power outage

The current situation

National Grid and SSE suffer a major power outage due to a software failure. This affects all of Somerset, Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire.

There is no current indication of when power will be restored. Teams of engineers are working on the issue and will update date you in 6 hours.

First phase - activation

- What are the triggers to activate your plan?
- How will you inform the people listed in your plan?
- What actions will you do first?



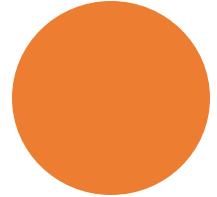
Second phase – response

- How will you inform and check on your neighbours and the wider community?
- What equipment and resources would you need during a power cut?
- How will you get information about when power will be restored?
- What would you advise your local community?



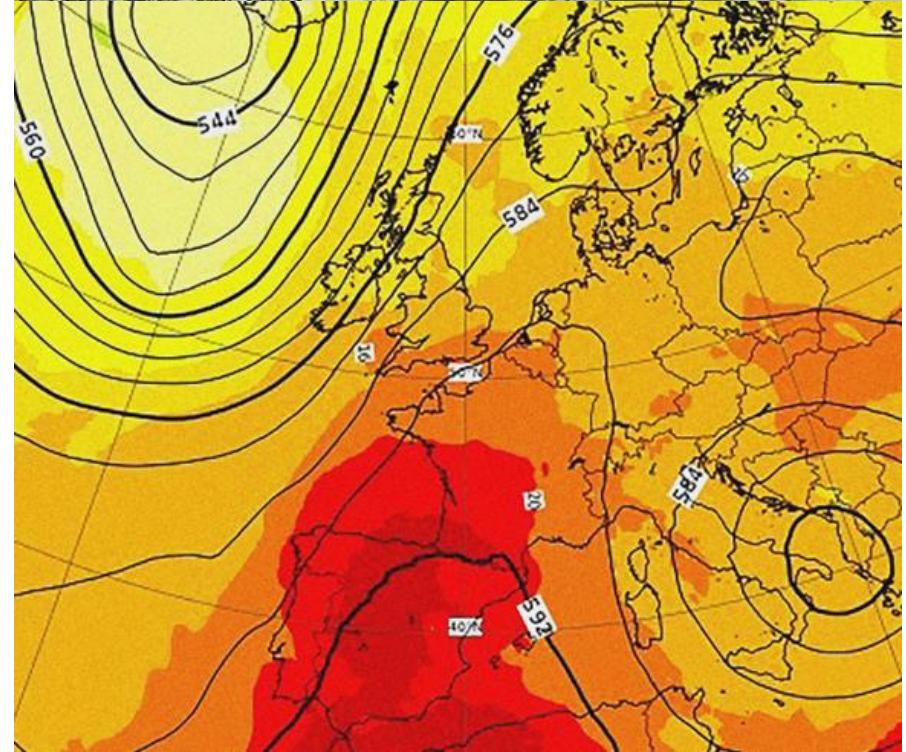
Third phase – stand down and recovery

- How will you know when the emergency is over?
- What should you do at the end of an incident?



Other considerations?

- What other issues could this incident cause for your community?
- “Concurrency”: What would you do if there was a second emergency at the same time?
- “Business Continuity”: what if the emergency happens when the local organiser is away on holiday?

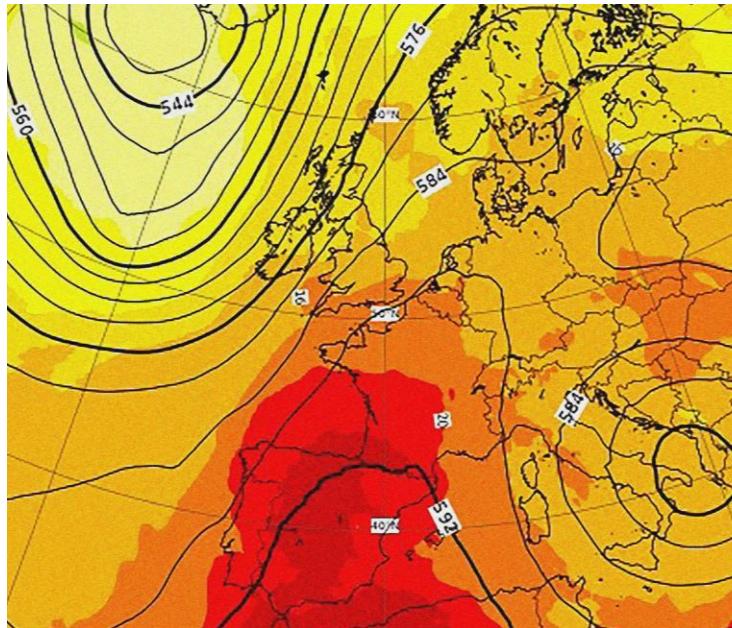


Summary



- Build plan tests and exercising into your planning process.
- Be clear about the aim and objectives of any test or exercise.
- After the test, write down any learning and update your plan.

Sally says: “Think about ways to make the event fun! Why not make your plan test an event for the community?”



Severe Weather

The current situation



- A heavy snow fall is forecast for tomorrow
- At least 12 inches is expected to fall with some drifting
- It will cause major disruption to travel
- The weather is set to last for 72 hours
- Some areas may suffer power outages

First phase - activation

- What are the triggers to activate your plan?
- How will you inform the people listed in your plan?
- What actions will you do first?



Second phase – response

- What could you do **before** the snow starts to fall?
- What do you need during a cold snap with heavy snow?
- How will you keep in touch with and check on your neighbours and the wider community?
- What other issues could this cause you?



Third phase – stand down and recovery

- How will you know when the emergency is over?
- What should you do at the end of an incident?



Other considerations

- “Concurrency”: What would you do if there was a second emergency at the same time?
- “Business Continuity”: what if the emergency happens when the local organiser is away on holiday?
- What if it was an extended heatwave rather than cold and snow? What actions would you take?





Food shortages

Current situation



- Due to an industrial dispute some basic food supplies are being severely disrupted
- Supermarkets are reporting members of the public panic buying
- Milk, Bread, Pasta, rice, toilet rolls and fresh produces are particularly affected
- Some supermarkets will start rationing
- Theft of food is becoming an issue

First phase - activation

- What are the triggers to activate your plan?
- How will you inform the people listed in your plan?
- What actions will you do first?



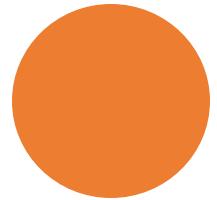
Second phase – response

- How will you inform and check on your neighbours and the wider community?
- What equipment and resources would you need in your community?
- How will you get information about the situation?
- What would you advise your local community?



Third phase – stand down and recovery

- How will you know when the emergency is over?
- What should you do at the end of an incident?



Other considerations?

- What if the disruptions continue for weeks or even months?
- “Concurrency”: What would you do if there was a second emergency at the same time?
- “Business Continuity”: what if the emergency happens when the local organiser is away on holiday?



What is your plan going forward

- What would your plan encourage your community to do?
- How would you help your neighbours?
- How would you deal with the shortages?
- What can you put in place to help with shortages?
- How will keep your community informed?
- How would you look after vulnerable people within your community?

How we can support

- Emergency plan-writing workshops
- Somerset Prepared Small Grant Scheme
- Community Flood Action Fund
- Awareness & support events for residents
- Flooding and flood safety workshops in schools
- Formation of a Flood Group Network



How we can support

SOMERSET PREPARED RESILIENCE ROADSHOW

RESILIENCE DROP-IN 4-6PM

FLOOD WARDEN WORKSHOP 6.30 - 8.30PM

Tuesday 8 July 2025

West Coker Village Hall, Churlands Close,
94a High Street, West Coker, BA22 9AU

This event is your One-Stop-Shop for Emergency Preparedness and Resilience information. Drop in anytime between 4pm and 6pm to chat to experts and ask your resilience questions, and attend the Flood Warden workshop from 6.30pm - 8.30pm.

Somerset Prepared partners attending will include Somerset Council, Somerset Rivers Authority, the Environment Agency, EVAG, and Avon and Somerset Police.

If you are a resident, Flood Warden, Parish, Town, or City Councillor please join us for a cuppa & cake & learning.

Book the Flood Warden workshop here:



EMERGENCY
GRAB BAG

www.Somerset
Prepared.org.uk



SOMERSET PREPARED COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

DAY 2025

Wednesday 15 October 2025

9.15am - 4pm

Taunton Racecourse Conference Centre, TA3 7BL

Help Somerset become stronger and more resilient.

Parish, Town, City Council and Community Group representatives are invited to attend this free resilience and emergency planning-focussed event. The day features a wide range of workshops networking opportunities and equipment demonstrations.

Book your free ticket here:
<http://bit.ly/3YaSO81>



somersetprepared@somerset.gov.uk
www.somersetprepared.org.uk



EMERGENCY
GRAB BAG

www.Somerset
Prepared.org.uk





Question Time

QUESTIONS

Contact: somersetprepared@somerset.gov.uk