



MIDLAND RESPONDER

Newsletter of MROC 4x4 Response

November 2018

Working together – Saving lives, reducing harm

Issue No 6

WELCOME to the sixth edition of Midland Responder.

The newsletter can be a source of group interaction so please feel at liberty to send in any items that you would like to contribute and share.

Website: Our website contains lots of useful info such as Midlands flood alerts, photo albums, handy links, newsletters and a shop page: www.mroc4x4response.co.uk
The members area holds documents and information, accessed by password.

Facebook : Our Facebook page has been up and running for a while now and is there to be used by any of you for general chit-chat and discussion; set up as a closed group so posts can only be read by members and not the whole world.
The page can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1493898804198499/>

Welcome new members

Since the last newsletter we welcome Ian Antill, Nick French, Roelof-Paul Kruizinga, Andrew Hedge, Jon Butterworth and Andrew Marchant to the team.
Membership remains about the same as we have had some leave the group.

PRACTICAL TRAINING DAYS

Refresher training 21/01/18 : attended by 15 on what was a damp day that gradually got worse with snowfall; the nice flat grassy field ended up being considerably rutted as vehicles not wearing tyres with a decent shoulder found it very difficult to move around resulting in a great deal of towing. Consequently we ended the day early although the woods were fine and driveable and the little stream crossing was around 25' wide.

Refresher Training 09/09/18 : 16 attended this session, significantly better weather and the large hill was perfectly useable this time. A good pleasant day was had by everyone present.

The next training day is on Sunday 2nd December based around Recovery Techniques.

THEORY REFRESHER TRAINING

04/08/18 : attended by 15 members which, given that it was one of the main holiday weeks, was quite good. The training took place at Coleshill Fire Station courtesy of the Station Commander and the Local Authority who paid for its use.

RADIO NETWORK

March: Having had use of our radios for 2½ years, and as reported this time last year, Sarcomm had increased their fees considerably to all groups; after much negotiation I agreed an excellent rate for the future that would guarantee our further use of the network for the forthcoming couple of years.

However, in March Sarcomm denied the agreement and invoiced us for a considerable sum of money that we could not guarantee on an annual basis. We were not happy at their definition of 'truth' on several instances so therefore decided to cut all ties with them; we were the first to do so and very soon other users of the network followed suit including our own Local Authority.

That decision leaves us with a collection of radios that, although of excellent quality, are no more than posh CB's. On saying that, we have Ch 3 set up on digital which still gives us some security and excellent comms, just not the range. However, they are exceptional for use at an incident where we would be working within a limited area and this was the intended use with that channel.

Looking ahead, the Local Authority are looking at alternatives and a way forward for themselves; hopefully any system they engage with will be able to accommodate our needs too, initial thoughts being repeaters on the 3 main Local Authority buildings with us being able to use one of the spare channels. This would give comms around those areas but finances are always going to play a big part in any decision they may make.

The radios are of course still useable at any incident where we may be working with other response groups as we have seven analogue channels with appropriate frequencies for that purpose.

RSPCA UPDATE

As you are aware, we have an agreement with the RSPCA (Midlands) to provide transport for personnel, equipment and towing of trailers should they need our assistance. I have recently re-confirmed our position with them and the only reason they have not called upon our services so far is simply that they have had no need.

But we are still on their register for emergency help and Midland Superintendants and their Water Rescue Team are well aware of our availability and capability.

SNOW ON OUR PATCH

Early December and late February into March we had good dumpings of snow and were soon activated by CSW and other agencies to help out. We answered calls from CSW and assisted the NHS, West Midlands Ambulance, Solihull Care, and West Midlands Fire & Rescue; we responded to 56 requests for assistance with 29 volunteers covering over 2000 miles and I invoiced for £1480 mileage allowance.

GAYDON LAND ROVER SHOW : In May we supported the club by having a joint club/response stand at the Gaydon Land Rover Show where we displayed vehicles and assisted with a combined advertising and promotional weekend to attract new members. Good weather helped make this a pleasant weekend but a pity we didn't have more of the Response Team there on the stand.

CAMPER CALLING : In August I had a call from the Organisers of the 'Camper Calling' music festival at Ragley Hall asking if we could provide 4 vehicles on each of the next 2 days for recovery & towing duties as a forecast of heavy rain was going to give them many problems with vehicles leaving the park. This was August Bank Holiday but we still managed to accommodate their needs with our members doing a great public relations job and earning the group in excess of £1k.

TRAINING GROUND UPDATE

Last November we hired in plant for a few days to carry out work on the training ground but didn't complete as the ground and soil was so soft then plans to finish off early this year were scuppered because of the wet weather we had; in contrast to that we couldn't finish the work in the summer because the ground was too hard. However, at the end of September we hired more plant and 4 of us spent 3 days at the ground and finished off that work. Previously the cost was covered by funding from The National Lottery but most recently funding from National Grid in Solihull covered the cost of plant hire.

SHOP: Don't forget we have magnetic and laminated signs for your vehicle; these are 300mm x 300mm in size, cost £4 each for magnetic and £2.75 for laminated (fix to internal windows). Temporarily fitted to your vehicle, these are intended for use when we are called out.



These signs cannot be posted!

We also have stickers, clothing and other items on the shop page of our website

<http://www.mroc4x4response.co.uk/shop.html>

BEHIND THE SCENES

A good deal of time during the year has been spent attending various meetings (CVEC: see below) with the local authorities and other resilience partners, usually three or four of us manage to be there.

In September I attended the Emergency Services Show at the NEC which is an excellent networking exercise, a time to catch up with other Response Volunteers and the heads of other Volunteer Agencies.

Later that month I attended the Response UK AGM. They are the national umbrella organisation for the 32 Response groups across the UK and it is important that we have our say in the direction in which RUK and regional groups progress.

CVEC (COUNCIL VOLUNTARY EMERGENCY COMMITTEE)

(for the newer group members who may not have heard of CVEC)

What is CVEC? All counties in England have these committees and they are set up to provide a platform which will allow those voluntary organisations that have an emergency response function within their relevant regional area to work alongside each other and the county resilience team before during and after an emergency. Solihull have tried to be different and call it CSW EVC (Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Emergency Volunteers Committee)

What is the aim? To allow voluntary organisations that have an emergency response function within the Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire sub-region to work alongside each other and the CSW Resilience Team before during and after an emergency.

What are the objectives? To provide a networking opportunity for relevant personal from those voluntary organisations within the CSW sub-region that have an emergency planning/ response/ resilience function, and to facilitate the sharing of joint training and exercising opportunities within the voluntary sector.

This is just one of the ways that work goes on behind the scenes in an effort to progress the group; the idea of CVEC is to try to achieve a bringing together of all voluntary organisations in the area who may be used by CSW; this helps to introduce names to faces and also provides an area where groups can discuss anything response related with a view to improving interoperability and, if necessary, working practices and procedures.

CVEC sits between the User Services (LA's & blue light people) and the LRF's (Local Resilience Forum) although some people who attend CVEC may also sit on the LRF. We joined CVEC in 2015 and now regularly participate as active members.

TRACKER? Should or shouldn't I? Often a question pondered over, usually due to the cost. At the moment there is a huge increase in the theft of vehicles in the West Midlands particularly Land Rover's.

On the 'shop' page of the response website is a link to 'Skytag', a tracker that is easy to fit and reasonably priced, helped because we have an ongoing discount scheme agreed with Guy Topsom the MD of Skytag.

Maybe worth a look? I fitted one back in 2009 and have been more than happy.

INTEROPERABILITY is a buzzword that's been around for a while now and one you will have often seen if reading the Emergency Services Times. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is the legislation that started to bring all services, agencies or organisations that may be affected by any civil emergency together as regarding their emergency preparedness to establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level.

For some time the 'blue light services' have progressed this between themselves and tended to not include others in their principles of joint working. However, the Home Office has informed them that, "if they don't voluntarily roll this out across the country then they will be forced to do so" as, in any incident, any service may call on specialist resources such as flood response or rope rescue teams etc.

In addition local authorities, utility and transport companies as well as private sector operators of critical infrastructure may be involved, and each organisation brings their own expertise to that situation.

All those involved need to be included to ensure that services work together better and consistently by setting a national standard as the actions of one organisation may affect another when dealing with multi agency incidents.

So that framework is now cascading all the way down to voluntary organisations to enable a common format across the UK in how a local area should respond to and coordinate a multi-agency response to an emergency or civil unrest in their area. And as far as we are concerned that is what may be meant by interoperability although presently there is still a great deal of inconsistency across the country. Quite simply, interoperability is defined as the extent to which organisations can work together coherently as a matter of routine.

LOOKING AHEAD

I hope to utilise the group to support one or two commercial events a year and in doing so bring in enough finance to avoid me having to spend many hours applying for external funding, funding that is necessary to keep the group afloat. To that end we have a promise of further event work from the organisers of Camper Calling.

I'm presently trying to organise a group visit to the Highways Agency (Motorway/Trunk Road) Control Centre at Quinton. This is something we did a few years ago and found it extremely interesting with the session being led by Frank Bird. Frank is the Emergency Planning Officer for Highways England, often seen on TV, works closely with, amongst others, the CSW team and is a supporter of response groups.

The Control Centre monitors traffic on roads across the whole of England using camera's and sensors to look after over 5000 miles of roads with all the relevant information being fed back to Quinton.

EASYFUNDRAISING

DO YOU SHOP ONLINE ? SHOPPING ONLINE FOR CHRISTMAS?

Help Response raise money to cover 'day to day' running expenses

Take a look at: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/mroc4x4/>

Personal or Christmas shopping !

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday - you could be collecting free donations for MROC 4x4 RESPONSE?

There are over 3,000 shops and sites on board ready to make a donation, including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, thetrainline and Sai nsbury's – it doesn't cost you a penny extra!

Business Supplies !

If you buy any of the following at work or for a business, you could help raise £'s in donations for MROC 4x4 RESPONSE:

Train tickets Office supplies IT equipment Stationery Hotels Flights

Interested: <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and enter MROC 4x4 Response

Edited by John Kesterton