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# Emergency Plan

TOTNES TOWN COUNCIL

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*This plan sets out to members of the community: who to contact in various emergencies; how to personally be prepared; and how Totnes Town Council is likely to respond to various emergencies that the town and community might face.*

## Introduction

This Plan has been developed for community use, to help residents find who to contact in the case of an emergency, particularly outside of office hours. The Town Council is often the most accessible tier of local government and has a role as a community leader, and as such would have a key role in helping to make the community aware of a problem through its website and social media channels, and helping the Town deal with and recover from a major emergency.

However, the statutory responsibility lies with Devon County Council in conjunction with various other agencies, including South Hams District Council, the Environment Agency, NHS and the emergency services. The Town Council will support the principal authorities in implementing their Major Emergency Plan and make its resources available to them.

## Objectives

The objective for this document is to identify:

- The role and contact details for the Town Council.
- Who to Contact - there are a number of different types of emergency that could occur, so who should you contact and what can you do;
- Be Prepared – Government advice on how to prepare to keep you and your family safe, particularly with the increasing number of weather warnings; and

## Local Help - The Town Council's Role

In the case of an emergency the first point of contact is always 999. If the emergency is related to a need for access to one of the Town Council buildings, i.e. the Civic Hall or the Guildhall then the points of contact are as follows:

- The Mayor – postholder changes annually, contact information available on the Town Council website, see [Totnes Town Council Mayor](#)
- The Town Clerk – current postholder Catherine Marlton. Work – 01803 862147 please note that the office phone number will be diverted to a personal number when an anticipated risk, for example a weather or health warning, has been issued.

As part of its Emergency Planning, Totnes Town Council aims to involve and support members of the local community to increase community resilience by preparing in advance for emergencies which may arise. It will collaborate with existing community groups to inform residents what they can usefully do themselves, before, during and after various emergencies, and encourage them to draw up their own “Community Emergency Plans”, with the support of Devon Community Resilience Forum.

### Communications: Keeping residents, local community groups and businesses informed

The Town Council is subscribed to a number of updates to help share information locally (for example, the Environment Agency, South West Water, NHS, Devon County Council and South Hams District Council). The Town Council will use its website, social media channels, local media, notice boards and relevant email lists to keep residents, local community groups, and businesses regularly informed during a major emergency. This includes where

there are weather related issues (for example, when the Met Office has issued a red warning for snow, ice, flooding, storms, extreme heat).

### Cancellation of Meetings

The Town Council subscribes to Met Office weather updates. In the event of a red alert for storms or snow, the Town Council will:

- cancel all public meetings;
- post updates on the website and social media with the latest advice from specialist agencies.

In the event of an amber weather warning or unexpected snowfall the Town Clerk has delegated authority to implement the above actions on a discretionary basis.

### Rough Sleepers

Assistance for Rough Sleepers during cold weather - The Town Council website is often asked to assist with housing rough sleepers, particularly during cold weather. South Hams District Council has the responsibility and resources to assist rough sleepers and the Housing Team can be contacted on 01803 861234 or 01803 861539 outside of office hours. You can also connect with [StreetLink](#), a service for reporting concerns about rough sleepers. For more information see the South Hams District Council website for [rough sleepers support](#)

### **Emergency Centres**

In the event of an emergency requiring the evacuation of homes (for example, a gas leak or flooding) these centres are normally opened at the instruction of the County and/or District Council.

### **Who to Contact**

#### Power Cuts

Although it is increasingly rare to experience a prolonged power outage, power cuts can and do still happen, especially if cables and equipment become damaged during storms. It's important to make a plan and know what to do if you experience a power cut:

- Report a power cut 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by dialling **0800 6783 105** or 105. If you're hard of hearing or deaf, dial 18001 before each number and a Text Relay Operator will join the call.
- Check in with people who might need extra support. Help them sign up to the free [Priority Services Register](#) (see below). Make sure they know what to do if there's a power cut.
- Before the onset of severe weather it is important to charge phones, power banks, and any medical equipment. Have backup power sources, like a battery-powered torch and a windup radio.

For further advice on how to prepare and to check for power outages in your area visit the [National Grid - Power cut advice](#) website

## Water Outages

Interruptions to your water supply can occur for various reasons, but winter weather can lead to an increase in burst water pipes both around the home and on the supply network. To report a leak or water outage contact South West Water Emergency number **0344 346 2020** or [visit their website](#).

- Speak to them about being added to their Priority Services Register if you are eligible
- Store essentials at home like bottled water, canned food, and basic medical supplies.
- [Visit their website for advice](#) about preparing your home for cold weather. Prepare you home for cold weather.

## Flooding

The Environment Agency has installed flood defences to high risk areas of the town. They have volunteers to manually open and close the gates based on alerts they send out directly. Residents and business owners at risk are encouraged to register for updates on flooding directly (see below). The Town Council is subscribed to Environment Agency updates and Met Office severe weather warnings and will publish these on social media to inform the community.

The onset of flooding can be rapid and unexpected and can have a devastating and long-term impact to your home, business or everyday life. Whilst flooding is most likely to occur in areas close to rivers and/or the sea, surface water can affect almost anywhere especially when drainage systems are unable to cope with a sudden downpour.

- [Check the Met Office weather forecast](#) and set local alerts. Pay particular attention to any [National Severe Weather Warnings](#) covering your area, and act on any advice issued.
- Check your flood risk, and sign up to receive free flood warnings by phone text or email, you can sign up by calling **Floodline** on **0345 988 1188** or by [visiting the government's website](#).
- Check you have adequate household and/or business insurance and that your policy covers you for flooding.
- Make sure any drains, rivers or streams on your property are flowing and where it is safe to do so remove debris or report blockages.

For further information on what to do before, during and after flooding read the Environment Agency's [flood advice booklet](#) and [visit the Devon County Council website](#).

Flooding in the road that has been caused by blocked drains or gullies can be reported to Devon County Council Highways on their [report-a-problem](#) website or call **0345 155 1004**.

## Fire

During colder months it's really important to take simple steps to minimise the risk of a fire starting in your home.

- Get your chimney inspected and swept by a certified and insured professional. [Find a sweep near you](#). Visit the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service website to [learn the signs that could indicate a chimney fire](#).
- Check smoke alarms and consider fitting a carbon monoxide detector. You can find [more information on the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue website](#).

- Practice your escape route so everyone in your household knows what to do if a fire occurs.

For further fire safety advice visit the [Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service](#) website.

### Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register (PSR) is free to join. It helps utility companies, including energy suppliers, electricity, gas and water networks to look after customers who have extra communication, access or safety needs. It helps them tailor their services to support households who need extra help with everyday energy matters like bills, and also in the unlikely event of a power cut, gas or water supply interruption.

You can find out if you're eligible to join the Priority Services Register, by checking online.

### Pollution

If you suspect that there has been a major pollution incident, the Environment Agency are the organisation to register a report with (incident hotline **0800 80 70 60**) for:

- collapsed or badly damaged river banks
- damage or danger to the natural environment
- dead fish or fish gasping for air
- people taking water illegally from rivers, streams, canals or underground sources such as wells
- incidents at Environment Agency-regulated waste sites
- pollution to land
- unusual changes in river flow

### Cold Weather

In winter, periods of low temperatures, freezing conditions, ice, sleet and snow can all cause disruption on the roads and transport networks. If you notice that a grit bin is running low, this can be reported on the Devon County Council [report a problem](#) website.

Cold weather can also affect our health and some people may face higher risk from the cold. Those most at risk during the winter include older adults, people with long-term health conditions, pregnant people, babies and young children.

- Check you have enough emergency supplies of food and medication
- Prepare your home by making sure you have drained down any outside taps and have enough insulation around exposed water pipes. There is [further guidance on South West Water's website](#).
- Have your heating or hot water appliances inspected and serviced by a [Gas Safe](#) registered engineer.
- If you are concerned about a person sleeping rough in cold weather contact [South Hams District Council](#) or use [Street link to create a report](#).

School Closures - Burst pipes, faulty heating systems, or heavy snow can sometimes lead to schools having to temporarily close. In addition to following updates directly from your child's school, residents can get updates on any temporary school closures and school transport disruption on [the Devon County Council website](#).

Snow Wardens - If any member of the community wishes to participate in the Devon County Council run Snow Warden Scheme please contact the Town Council on 01803 862147. Further information on the role and responsibilities are found at [snow warden scheme](#)

## Hot Weather

Most of us welcome hot weather, but when it's too hot, there are health risks. During heatwaves, more people than usual get seriously ill or die. If hot weather hits this summer, make sure it does not harm you or anyone you know.

Why is a heatwave a problem? The main risks posed by a heatwave are:

- not drinking enough water (dehydration)
- overheating, which can make symptoms worse for people who already have problems with their heart or breathing
- heat exhaustion and heatstroke

Who's most at risk? - A heatwave can affect anyone, but the most vulnerable people are:

- older people – especially those over 75 and female
- those who live on their own or in a care home
- people who have a serious or long-term illness including heart or lung conditions, diabetes, kidney disease, Parkinson's disease or some mental health conditions
- people who are on multiple medicines that may make them more likely to be badly affected by hot weather
- those who may find it hard to keep cool – babies and the very young, the bed bound, those with drug or alcohol addictions or with Alzheimer's disease
- people who spend a lot of time outside or in hot places – those who live in a top-floor flat, the homeless or those whose jobs are outside

## Tips for coping in hot weather

- Keep out of the heat if you can. If you have to go outside, stay in the shade especially between 11am and 3pm, wear sunscreen, a hat and light clothes, and avoid exercise or activity that makes you hotter.
- Cool yourself down. Have cold food and drinks, avoid alcohol, caffeine and hot drinks, and have a cool shower or put cool water on your skin or clothes.
- Keep your living space cool. Close windows during the day and open them at night when the temperature outside has gone down. Electric fans can help if the temperature is below 35 degrees. Check the temperature of rooms, especially where people at higher risk live and sleep.
- For more information visit GOV.UK: Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather.
- You can also get help from the environmental health office at your local council, if you think a hot house is affecting your health or someone else's. They can inspect a rented home for hazards to health, including excess heat.
- **Sunscreen and sun safety**

Watch out for signs of heat-related illness - If you or someone else feels unwell with a high temperature during hot weather, it may be heat exhaustion or heatstroke. Common

symptoms of heat exhaustion include: tiredness; weakness; feeling faint; headache; muscle cramps; feeling or being sick; heavy sweating; intense thirst. Heatstroke is where the body is no longer able to cool down and the body temperature becomes dangerously high. Common symptoms of heatstroke include: confusion; lack of co-ordination; fast heartbeat; fast breathing or shortness of breath; hot skin that is not sweating; seizures. Heatstroke is a medical emergency. If you think someone has heatstroke you should dial 999 and then try to cool them down.

[Find out about the signs of heat exhaustion and heatstroke, and when to get help](#)

Stay safe when swimming - Swimming pools, rivers, lakes, or the sea can be a fun way to cool down when the weather is hot, however summer months are also associated with an increase in drowning accidents. The following advice can help to keep you safe when swimming: always look for warning and guidance signs; never enter the water after drinking alcohol; be aware that open water can be much colder than it looks which can lead to [cold water shock](#); get out of the water as soon as you start to feel cold.

## Be Prepared

The Government has a [Get prepared for emergencies website](#) that includes some simple and effective steps to consider taking in preparing for emergencies and disruption. It suggests that you: are informed; make a plan; prepare your home; talk to others; get emergency supplies. For example,

### **Put together an emergency kit of items at home**

This could include:

- **Battery or wind-up torch** – torches are safer than candles.
- **Portable power bank** for charging your mobile phone.
- **Battery or wind-up radio** to get updates during a power cut – a car radio can be used, however in severe weather it might be safer to stay inside.
- **Spare batteries** for torches and radio and a backup battery for any medical equipment you rely on.
- **A first aid kit (or some first aid items)** including items such as waterproof plasters, bandages, a thermometer, antiseptic, eyewash solution, sterile dressings and gloves, medical tape for dressings, and tweezers.
- **Hand sanitiser and wet wipes** for hygiene purposes when the water is off.
- **Bottled water** – there is no standard figure for this as emergencies can vary in duration and people use different amounts. A minimum of 2.5-3 litres of drinking water per person per day is recommended by the World Health Organisation for survival. 10 litres per person per day will make you more comfortable by also providing for basic cooking and hygiene needs. Additional water might be needed to make up baby formula, for medical devices and for pets.
- **Non-perishable food** that doesn't need cooking, such as ready-to-eat tinned meat, fruit or vegetables (and a tin opener). As with water, how much you need will vary based on your own circumstances. Don't forget food for pets.

- **Baby supplies** such as nappies and baby formula – ready made or ‘ready-to-feed’ formula is best as you may not be able to boil water or sterilise bottles.

Rather than buying all the items at once, you could just add to your emergency kit when you are able and build it up over time.

## UK Government Emergency Alerts

[Emergency Alerts](#) is a UK Government service that can be used to warn you if there’s a danger to life nearby. Examples of situations that may lead to an alert include severe flooding, fires and extreme weather.

Alerts can be sent by the UK Government, Devolved Governments and other public bodies such as the police or your local council. These organisations do not need to know your phone number or location to send you an alert. Alerts are sent to your mobile phone or tablet based on your current location. You do not need to turn on location services to receive alerts.

What happens when you get an alert - Your mobile phone or tablet may:

- make a loud siren-like sound, even if it’s set on silent
- vibrate
- read out the alert

What you need to do - When you get an alert, stop what you are doing and follow the instructions of the alert. If you are driving, find somewhere safe and legal to stop before reading the message. If there is nowhere safe and legal to stop and no one is in the vehicle to read it for you, you can listen to news on live radio to find out about the emergency.

## The Weather

The [Met Office provide up-to-date, expert seasonal advice from carefully selected organisations](#) to help you prepare for and respond to the weather, to stay safe and protect yourself, your homes and businesses.

It includes:

- Top tips to be weather ready
- Tips for staying safe in icy conditions
- Tips for staying safe in snowy conditions
- Prepare a winter kit for your car
- Keeping your home warm this winter
- Vehicle checks to make before long journeys
- Things you should do to prepare for cold weather
- Winter health hacks
- How to get your home and property winter weather ready
- How cold weather affects your health
- Protecting property from flooding
- Looking after your pets during colder weather
- Tips for getting out and about this winter
- Looking after your mental health through the winter
- What do to if you have a frozen or burst pipe

## Defibrillators

The Town Council owns and maintains two defibrillators in the town – outside the Royal Seven Stars Hotel at the bottom of Fore Street and outside the Visitor Information Point at the Civic Hall on the Market Square. Other units are available in the town but community groups need to ensure these are registered and accredited to ensure that the caller can be signposted to the nearest working unit.

## Health Emergencies/Outbreaks/Pandemic

The Town Council subscribes to NHS and Public Health England updates and in the event of an outbreak of contagious diseases/pandemic will:

- cancel all public meetings;
- post updates on the website and social media with the latest advice from specialist agencies.
- act as a co-ordinator for various community groups who are able to offer practical assistance.

For all serious health emergencies call 999. For out of hours non-emergency health issues advice can be given by telephoning 111 or from [NHS 111 online](#)

For information on national health outbreaks see the [UK Health Security Agency website](#)

## Useful Links

There are a number of useful links in this document. For local advice see

[South Hams District Council Emergency Planning Information](#)

[Devon Emergency Planning Partnership information](#)