



**This article, 'Facing Disaster' written by Lynda King Taylor, appeared in the Spring issue 2006 of *Policing Today*, the Journal of the Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales & Northern Ireland.**

For more background on Lynda King Taylor and her work visit  
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For the Winning Community Relations training background visit  
<http://www.padpolice.com/relations.php>  
and the programme contents and delegate feedbacks can be found at  
[http://www.padpolice.com/docs/Winning\\_Community\\_Relations.pdf](http://www.padpolice.com/docs/Winning_Community_Relations.pdf)

For more information on the Paddington police/community Sector Working & Safer Neighbourhoods Group, referred to in the article, operating in North Westminster, Metropolitan Police Service, London visit <http://www.padpolice.com/>



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# Facing up to Disaster

*Lynda King Taylor reviews responses to recent major incidents, including the London terrorist attacks, and asks whether government policies to deal with emergencies and maintain business continuity are working*

*Photo: Greater Manchester Police*

Since the fateful day of 7 July 2005, members of London's emergency and transport services have been sharing views on the lessons learnt from the attacks. A report on their conclusions will be published shortly and the London Assembly's Review Committee is considering how best to prepare for similar disasters in the future.

All the services involved are already learning from the events of 7/7. London Underground has said that despite the chaos and difficulty of managing the emergency and an 'antiquated' and unreliable radio network underground which is soon to be updated, the speed of communication had been, the words of its managing director, Tim O'Toole, 'amazing'. The Metropolitan Police has conceded that it was a mistake to use a national rate 0870 number for the casualty bureau hotline and the London Fire Brigade admitted it had been a mistake to move chief commanders to Hendon on the outskirts of London as it distanced them from their command centres. Such responses indicate a significant change in the way the various authorities react to emergencies. In recent years, whether it has been train crashes, millennium bug planning, foot and mouth, riots, petrol disputes,

flooding, the traumatic experiences of 9/11, the 2004 tsunami, our own 7/7 and the recent Hertfordshire fuel explosion, keeping up to the mark in this phenomenal growth in critical incidents disasters, natural or man-made, has been a major task for all emergency services.

The earlier Civil Contingencies Act was fit for 1920 but never for the twenty-first century. The new legislation has without doubt assisted local arrangements for civil protection, human welfare, and, from 15 May 2006, Business Continuity advice from local authorities. An emergency is clearly defined under the Act as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare or the environment, or a war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK. The 'responders' under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 embrace local authorities, Environment Agency, utilities, transport bodies, Strategic Health Authorities and other 'co-operating bodies' such as the Health & Safety Executive as well as the police, fire and ambulance services. Mapped throughout the 2004 Act are roles and responsibilities for local responders, duties such as informing and warning the public, sharing information, risk assessment of emergencies and a basis for

performance management at local level. Its Emergency Power conditions – the 'triple lock' (serious, necessary, proportionate) and indeed its limitations which Emergency Powers cannot cover – such as the altering of any aspects of criminal procedures and prohibiting industrial action, will now be familiar. There is no doubt that the 2004 Act has succeeded in bringing all agencies and others to work together on resilience activity.

But will it be enough for the proposed Government's 'resilience' strategy to work? Possibly not, when one considers the challenges of contemporary society. The business continuity resilience issues required to deal with terrorism threats, as well as their integration in corporate risk management, are now imperative and often imperfect: it is essential to make business continuity for terrorism issues an integral part of corporate risk management and policing partnership. The threat from international terrorism is now global and will be a long-standing danger. The business community is in the frontline. Business continuity has a vital role to play in mitigating the social and economic consequences of a terrorist attack. Working in partnership will frustrate and eventually defeat the terrorist. Police and



A chart from a presentation by Andy Trotter, Deputy Chief Constable of British Transport Police, to a recent conference of business leaders

other agencies working together with business and communities are essential to this aim.

Major international companies now face a much wider range of accountabilities. The limits to corporate responsibility are being redefined and companies have to be willing to contribute actively to the debate for example on the impact of globalisation. In a world of insecurity, reducing the perceived inequities in the present international system is a governmental priority and companies are expected to play a role in the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals. For example, Anglo-American operates an ambitious framework of Business Principles, which govern its ethics and standards and how it interacts with society. As a natural resource company with long investment horizons, it must preserve both its licence and its 'social licence' to operate. As such, it sees its corporate reputation as a significant asset – thus corporate responsibility and sustainable development are increasingly at the heart of its business model.

At a recent conference senior police officers outlined to industry leaders and continuity managers the resilience required to deal with terrorism threats and maintain business continuity. It is unlikely this presentation between a senior police officer and a corporate boardroom would have occurred before 9/11. It is to be applauded and we should see more of it if police are to better appreciate the underlying priorities that govern police response, or, as vital, those of business communities. Just how good – or bad – are we at building a business continuity management (BCM)

culture, which is essential to working in partnership with police to fight terrorism following a critical incident? People are the most challenging aspect of BCM. In the absence of widespread backing, a significant proportion of a BC Manager's effort will be wasted, leading to frustration and underachievement, whilst leaving the organisation exposed and vulnerable. Strategies for measuring the firm's 'continuity culture' are key as well as new thought processes and attitudes toward risk and effective communication. As no two corporate cultures are the same BC managers are faced with reconciling regulatory rigorous intent with their own company's personality. This is a tough challenge, requiring insight, imagination, innovation and insatiability.

As the chart above shows there are supply chains linking organisations, indust-

ries and economies. Before 9/11 growing concerns that commercial supply chains had become more 'brittle' were rarely voiced in public because any suggestion that a supply chain might be vulnerable could undermine confidence in the companies concerned, potentially leading to competitive disadvantage. Managing risk in the global supply chain is a major area where police could better work with business to face the threats. There are a number of issues which show inextricable links between some common business practices and other areas, sometimes not considered in business terms, such as poor information sharing between rivals. There are times when commercial sensitivities may have to come second place to the risk from terrorism and some common sharing of information could benefit all concerned. Police should work more closely in partnership with business communities to get this message across.

**Managing Risk in the global supply chain is a major area where police could better work with business**

Globalisation has had a huge impact on supply chains, with most global companies shifting their manufacturing enterprises to Asia, and in particular China. Whilst this trend results in huge labour cost savings, it has had an enormous impact on pipeline management. It also means that the transport chain needs to be robust. The interdependencies are often not recognised, most companies operate risk management policies in respect of systems, but very few deploy a



Buncefield Oil Depot, January 2006 Image from Cities Revealed™ aerial photography © The GeoInformation Group, 2006

coherent supply chain BCM policy. Even fewer receive advice or work together with police and other agencies on issues of eco-terrorism. Whilst some risk is unavoidable, risk mitigation should span the width and breadth of the supply chain. Are the Government's 'resilience' efforts and energies effective in this direction? To any seasoned observer the answer would be NO. Key issues are outsourcing trends and the resulting impact and the inherent dangers, as well as environmental and safety issues. Without collaboration and integration measures across the whole supply chain – from vendor-supplier-customer – the risk to business is magnified greatly. That is why it is vital police forces must respond to such emergencies to tackle them more effectively under arrangements and structures more in keeping with 2006.

There is one final area one hopes the London Assembly will take into account. Following the 7/7, the police made strenuous efforts to reassure their Muslim communities. However, this often ostracised those other communities who felt vulnerable by the effects of the disasters – commuters returning to the areas of the incidents, businesses and their staffs,

visitors travelling into central London and those who had lived in and around the railways stations and locations affected. In a recent meeting with a senior Metropolitan Police officer, my colleague – the chairman of a BME partnership – admitted his 'embarrassment' at the excess of citizen engagement and reassurance offered to one community rather than another. Police have existing partnerships in place between themselves, their partners and all their communities. These could have been better utilised, especially at local level, bringing all on board for reassurance – and reconciliation – follow-

ing the tragedies. In this way we can all work better together for a safer society in the face of terrorism and other threats.



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#### If you'd like to know more...

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The Civil contingencies Act 20004 and its documentation can be found at <http://www.ukresilience.info/ccact/index.htm>

For more information on any specific aspect of the Act the Act Implementation Team can be contacted at [ccact@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ccact@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk) or on **020 7276 5053**.

The London Resilience booklet *Strategic Emergency Plan* and information on Regional Resilience Teams and Regional Forum can be found at <http://www.londonprepared.gov.uk/emergplan.pdf>