



WELCOME

Welcome to the Summer 2022 edition of RCRG eZine

We hope you find this edition of the RCRG E-zine informative and useful

Regional Community Resilience Group activity

A meeting was held with Community Groups in the northwest region of Northern Ireland to promote and reinforce the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) message, and to establish new RCRGs where possible.

The northwest area has been particularly badly affected by significant flooding; most recently from the impact of Storm Franklin in February 2022. In August 2017 the Glenelly Valley and Plumbridge areas experienced unprecedented levels of rainfall that resulted in widespread flooding and significant disruption across many communities.

The meeting was another opportunity for local residents to engage with multi-agency partners to consider how community resilience could be improved for future severe weather events. Representatives of DfI Rivers, Derry City & Strabane District Council and Local Government Civil Contingencies attended the meeting and provided updates on the work carried out on preparation and response mechanisms for severe weather events. Information was provided on weather warnings; river level data; flood reporting and response procedures; and the use of pre-deployed resources in flood risk areas. These can all help the community develop its response capabilities. Those who attended were reminded of the importance that Community Resilience can play as an additional layer of support for the local community during severe weather events.

Requests were received for further help with contingency measures

to benefit the local community including additional sandbag containers and equipment with suitable local sites already identified. Community members will now be alerted to severe weather warnings by e-mail and text messages from the RCRG. This will assist local members to manage their local plans and resources to help mitigate against potential flood impacts in the future.



Plumbridge: the Parish Hall showing tidemark and damage after extensive flooding due to severe weather – August 2017.

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Stay-safe advice for using sandbag stores

During severe weather events, it is only natural to become anxious when trying to protect our homes and property. It is also important to remain calm, in order not to increase the risk to ourselves and others.

The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) multi-agency partners want to make sure that access to public sandbag stores is safe for all users. Inspections have been carried out at sandbag container locations to assess and minimise the risks for anyone using them. The next step is to contact groups directly to highlight safety awareness and to discuss any areas of concern.

Some tips are listed below to help access sandbag containers safely:

Before

Planning ahead

- Always be alert to risk and the potential for harm.

- Consider what more you can do to prevent harm.
- Observe the ground conditions and clear away obstructions.

During

Responding to weather alerts

- Plan your approach to the store and be aware of the step.
- During darkness, even in street lit areas, consider if another form of light is required.
- If the doors are difficult to open; seek help. Do not try to free the doors on your own. Once open; secure the doors, especially during high winds.
- Lightning strikes are rare but mainly occur during thunderstorms, so keep contact with metal containers to a minimum.

- Do not attempt to lift more than you are able. If necessary, get help.
- Always take sandbags from the top of the stack and remove them from the store one at a time.

After

Making the Store Safe after use

- Return unused sandbags and tools to the store.
- Do not return sewage or waste contaminated sandbags.
- Check that everyone is out before locking up.
- Finally, remember to Lock the Door.



Secure the door



Ensure sandbag stores are kept tidy for safe access



Outdoor classroom and Natural Flood Management Project at Belfast Castle

A number of natural flood management (NFM) measures, alongside an outdoor educational space and forest trail have opened as part of a demonstration project in the grounds of Belfast Castle.

The new outdoor educational space was designed as a resource for visiting school groups to learn about the water-cycle, flooding and the environment. The new facilities include an outdoor chalk board and seating area with a forest pathway and a bridge constructed over one of the



The outdoor classroom at Belfast Castle



The 'leaky dam' which helps control the flow of flood water

'leaky dams' that form part of the project. The project also includes the creation of two new 'swale' features (shallow drainage channels) that will capture and slow the flow of surface water runoff from the road and hills within the Belfast Castle grounds.

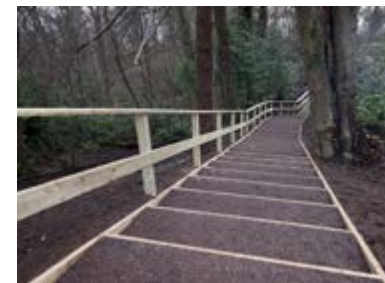
This scheme demonstrates how the 'Living with Water in Belfast' project is hoping to use open green spaces to naturally manage the flow of water through a catchment, from source to sea. Projects like these, which use NFM and other sustainable drainage

systems (SuDS), will complement and reduce the need for conventional hard infrastructure such as bigger pipes and higher floodwalls. It is hoped that they will provide a blueprint for the development of future projects to help reduce the flow of water in drainage and wastewater management systems which are under pressure.

The project was developed by the Department for Infrastructure's 'Living With Water Team', in partnership with Belfast City Council as part of the 'Living with Water in Belfast: An Integrated Plan for Drainage and Wastewater Management in Greater

Belfast' report; published in November 2021.

The Living With Water in Belfast Plan is a 12-year, £1.4 billion investment programme that aims to protect the city against flooding, enhance the local environment and help grow the economy by providing capacity in drainage and sewerage systems. Living With Water proposes an integrated and collaborative approach to drainage and wastewater management which includes both natural drainage solutions, like the Belfast Castle scheme, alongside conventional hard infrastructure, such as bigger pipes, larger wastewater treatment works and higher flood defences.



Natural materials used in pathways also help control water run-off



The Living With Water in Belfast Plan can be found on the Department for Infrastructure's website at: <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/living-water-belfast-plan>

Met Office 'Nowcasting' for summer

The Met Office has launched a new 'Nowcasting' product to complement severe weather warnings and to add more localised, short notice, weather detail for areas where storms are most likely to happen.

The Met Office has, for some years now, issued thunderstorm warnings as part of its National Severe Weather Warning Service.

While these warnings tend to cover large areas, the nature of thunderstorms often means that, even within warning zones, many areas will miss the worst storms and escape impacts from flooding.

The Met Office have launched

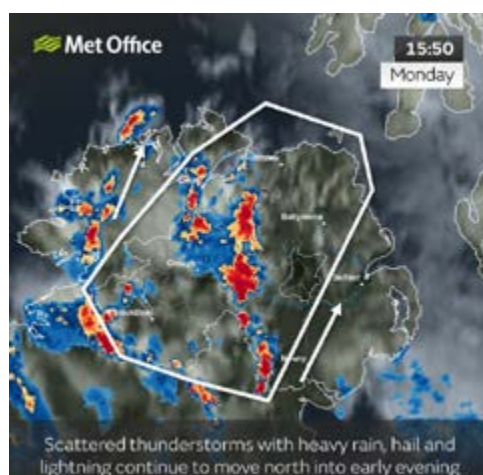
a new 'Nowcasting' product to compliment warnings and add more localised, short notice detail to where storms are most likely to happen.

The two Nowcast products shown here were issued on the afternoon of the 16th of May 2022. The first shows the area where storms were likely to develop and the second updates where the storms were expected to move to after their

development. As the name suggests, Nowcasting graphics will only be valid for a few hours ahead. They can be found on the Met Office twitter feed: [@metofficeNI](https://twitter.com/metofficeNI).

It is important to remember that weather warnings remain the best way to get advanced information on severe weather and these can be accessed most readily via the Met Office App.

[A range of advice articles can also be found on the Met Office website](#), including top tips on getting out and about in summer, staying well in the sun, regional advice on flood preparedness as well as some resources for you to download.



Top tips for a “sizzlingly” good Summer

Summer is a great time to enjoy a BBQ with family and friends, but warm weather and outdoor cooking can create perfect conditions for bacteria to grow. Luckily, the Food Standards Agency (FSA) is on hand with some top tips.

Food poisoning can be avoided by following good food hygiene practices. Here's what you need to do before, during, and after your BBQ to protect you, your family and your guests:

1. Prepare

Prep your food hygienically and clean your BBQ.

2. Wash

Wash hands, utensils and surfaces. This will help stop harmful bacteria from spreading onto food.

3. Don't mix

Utensils used to prepare raw and ready-to-eat dishes should be kept apart.

4. Defrost

Defrost food overnight in the fridge or use a microwave on the defrost setting directly before cooking. Once defrosted, eat it within 24 hours.

5. Check dates

Eating food that's past its use-by date can make you ill. Best-before dates are about quality. The food will be safe to eat after the best-before date but may not be at its best.

6. Do not reuse

Avoid reusing a sauce or marinade which has already been put on raw meat.

7. Storage

Keep perishable foods chilled and out of the sun until serving.

8. Pre-cook

Consider cooking chicken and pork in the oven first, then giving it a final finish on your BBQ.

9. Be thorough

It's important to cook food at the right temperature and for the correct length of time. This kills any harmful bacteria.

- Steaks can be served pink, rare or bloody.
- Chicken and pork - as well as burgers, kebabs and sausages - should not be served pink or rare.

10. Leftovers

Cover and cool cooked foods at room temperature quickly.

- Place them in a fridge or cool bag within one to two hours.
- Consume leftovers within 48-hours.

Finally, ask about allergies and intolerances before preparing food for people. More information can be found on our website <https://www.food.gov.uk/safety-hygiene/bbq-food-safety>

Safety in the Sun

Too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or sunbeds is the main cause of skin cancer in the UK.

Almost 9 out of 10 cases of melanoma (the most serious type of skin cancer) could be prevented by taking the correct precautions, as well as avoiding sunbeds altogether.

This article aims to provide information on both skin cancer prevention and detection.

What causes skin cancer?

There are 2 main types of UV rays that damage our skin. Both can cause skin cancer:

UVA

- UVA penetrates deep into the skin.
- UVA ages the skin but contributes much less towards sunburn.
- UVA radiation is used in tanning beds.

UVB

- UVB affects the top layer of skin
- UVB is responsible for most sunburns.

- UVB radiation can burn unprotected skin in just 15 minutes.

Sun protection top tips:

By following our top tips you will be safe in the knowledge that you are protecting yourself and your family from harmful amounts of UVA and UVB radiation.

Sunscreen

Make sure that you purchase a good quality sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30, to protect you from both UVA and UVB radiation.

- Apply it properly at least 30 minutes before you go outside. This will allow your skin to fully absorb the lotion.
- Reapply sunscreen to your exposed skin every two hours.

Sunglasses

Research has found that 5 - 10% of skin cancers occur on the eyelid.

- When buying sunglasses, look out for indicators of high quality and safe glasses with: 'CE Mark', 'UV 400 label', or '100% UV protection' written on the label or sticker.

Clothing

Darker clothes with tightly woven fabric will give you more protection from the sun.

- Look for clothing with an Ultraviolet



Pictured are the Specialist Team who treat Skin Cancer patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

Protection Factor (UPF) on the label.

- A UPF of 40 or higher means that your clothes will absorb or reflect at least 97% of UV light.

Hydration

Being dehydrated may not be as visible as sunburn, but it can be just as dangerous.

- If you are exposed to a hot climate, you are at a greater risk of becoming dehydrated and developing heat stroke.

- Avoid dehydration by drinking at least 2 litres of water a day and try not to consume alcohol or caffeine.

Remember: sun damage is cumulative - it builds up over time, particularly if you've had multiple severe sunburns. Damaging your skin now can possibly lead to health risks later in life.



Cancer Nurse Specialist reviewing patient skin.

Wildfire Safety

This time of year brings with it a heightened risk of wildfires. This is due mainly to easterly winds, high temperatures and dry weather conditions, along with the discarding of litter and the burning of waste materials.

Northern Ireland Water's Catchment Liaison Officer, Rebecca Allen, explains further:

"Wildfires not only pose a risk to human life, wildlife, property and the environment, but also to our drinking water supplies.

"NI Water manages twenty-four water-catchment areas that supply drinking water to customers across Northern Ireland. Water catchments are where water is collected into lakes and dams from the natural landscape via rivers and streams. Many of these areas, like the Mourne Mountains, are prone to wildfires that can significantly impact on water quality and the cost of water treatment.

"While NI Water is working hard to deal with the problem of wildfires, our water treatment works continue to treat the catchment waters to a very high quality before it is delivered to Customers' tap."



The public is reminded that deliberate setting of wildfires is a criminal offence and if you spot anyone setting a fire call the PSNI immediately.

Spotting a fire:

- Report to the NI Fire & Rescue Service immediately.
- Do not attempt to tackle fires that cannot be put out with a bucket of water.
- Leave the area as soon as possible.
- If you see someone setting fires, report to the PSNI.

Enjoying the countryside:

- Leave no trace; take your rubbish with you
- Never fly-tip waste material.
- Extinguish cigarettes and other flammable materials properly.
- Never throw cigarette ends out of car windows.
- Avoid using open fires.
- Be considerate in parking vehicles so as not to impede emergency vehicles' access.

Using water wisely

Drinking-water is a precious, finite resource; vital for a healthy society and a safe, natural environment. Working together is necessary to manage this precious commodity for the good of all.

Coming into the summer months, NI Water wants to remind everyone that it's important to conserve as much water as we can to avoid potential supply interruptions during hot weather periods.

Start by thinking how much water you use each day – whether for washing your hands, cleaning endless dishes or getting through that mountain of washing – and you will start to realise the enormous amount we use.

To help you 'Get Water Fit', try out NI Water's online water audit and receive your free water saving items including; a 4-minute 'shower timer', 'toothy timers' and 'swell gel bags' for the garden.

Here are some tips to get you into the water saving habit:

Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth

- A running a tap can use 6-litres of water per minute.

Use a bowl for washing vegetables

- You can then reuse this water for watering garden plants.

Make full use of your washing machine

- Half load programmes on washing machines use more than half the water and energy of a full load. So, wait until the machine is full before switching it on.

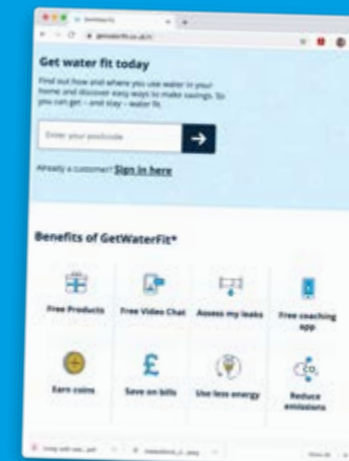
Fix leaking taps

- A dripping tap can waste more than 60-litres of water per week.

Keep a jug of water in the fridge

- To have a cool drink, don't run the tap until it runs cold.

NI Water also offers water-butts for schools and community groups; these help conserve water all year round and they can be used to water plants and for other purposes.



You can find out more about water efficiency and how you can help at the link: <https://www.getwaterfit.co.uk/#/>

Quarry and Water Safety

Stay Safe Stay Out

Tragically, over the past few years in Northern Ireland a number of people have been killed or seriously injured at disused or working quarries. Now that warm weather and the summer holidays are here, there is concern that members of the public – particularly children, teenagers, and young adults – could be tempted to enter their local quarry. Disused or working quarries, are not places of fun and recreation. By trespassing, members of the public place their own, and the lives of others, at considerable risk.

Potential hazards include:

Cold water

Quarry lakes can have very cold water even on a hot day in the middle of summer. Strong swimmers have drowned in quarries due to the unexpected shock of extreme cold on their bodies.

Deep water

Quarry lakes can be very deep and shelving. Exit from the water may only be possible in a few places. There may be underwater pumps working or currents that can drag you under.

Hidden obstructions

There can be concealed underwater obstructions and other hidden hazards

that can seriously injure swimmers or individuals jumping into the water – tombstoning into quarry lakes is not safe.

Sand piles

Playing on, or tunnelling into, stockpiles of sand exposes you to the risk of sudden collapses or movements that can easily bury you.

Cliff edges

Walking near quarry faces exposes you to the risk of serious falls as the edges can be unstable and may collapse unexpectedly. Sheer faces may be obstructed by vegetation.

Rock falls

Climbing or walking near rock faces can expose you to the risk of rock falls.

Quicksand

Ground that looks solid, such as the surface of a silt pond, can suddenly break and act like quicksand sucking you down.

Biking

Trail and quad biking in quarries exposes riders to risks from unstable terrain, unexpected obstructions and being hit by moving plant.

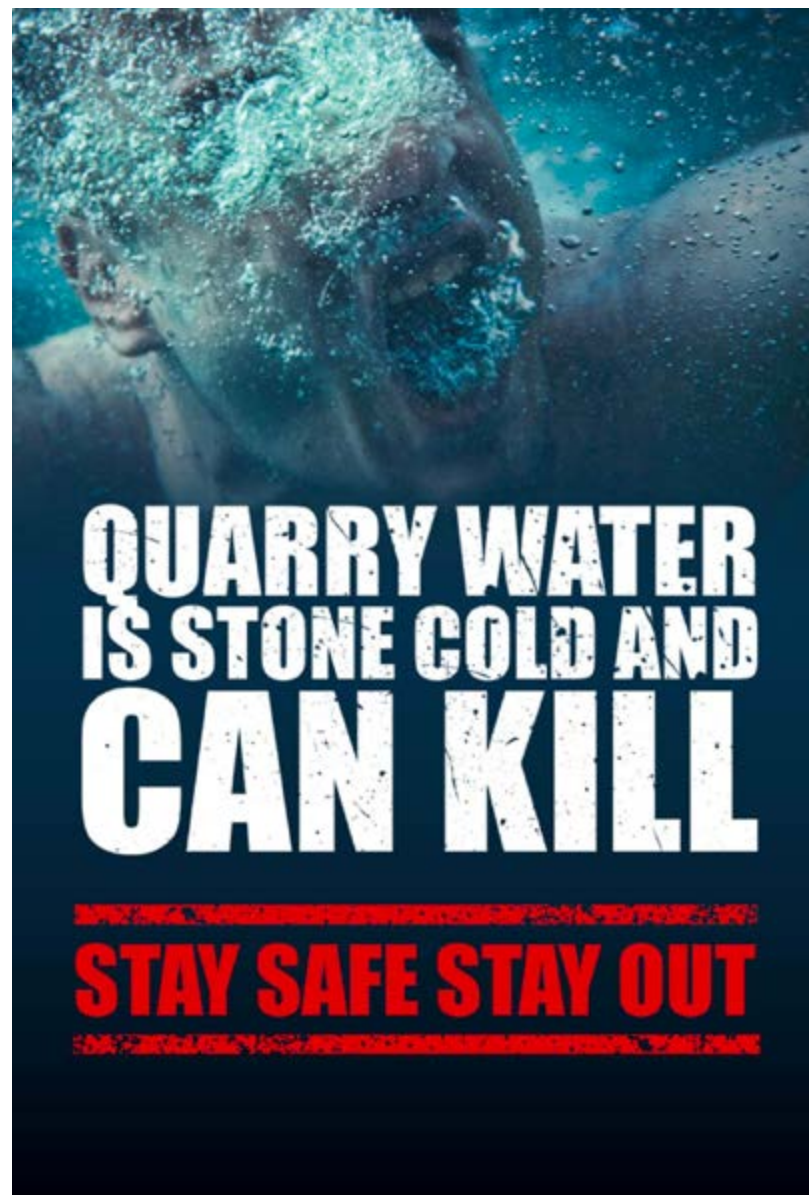
Quarry machinery

People on bikes or on foot may not be visible to operators of large machinery. They may not appreciate that the driver cannot see them.

Remote locations

Quarries are often located in remote areas where mobile phone reception is poor and where no one may be on hand to help in the event of an accident.

To help prevent further deaths, HSENI in partnership with the Mineral Products Association Northern Ireland (MPANI), are promoting the national Mineral Products Association “Stay Safe Stay Out” campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of entering quarries uninvited. Resources are available online to promote this serious message and discourage members of the public from trespassing on to quarry sites. Campaign materials are available at: <https://mineralproducts.org/Campaigns/Stay-Safe.aspx>



#BeReadyNI - September 2022

Preparedness is not difficult. No one should ever be alone in an emergency. Being informed and accessing trusted resources and networks for help are key. Join the #30days30waysUK and #bereadyNI campaign this September for more information.



Winter Debrief

A Multi-Agency Winter Weather Debrief was held on the 24th May 2022 to learn lessons from this year's winter weather events.

The aim was to review multi-agency contingency planning, incident response activities and recovery management (from September 2021 to March 2022) to obtain new insights that may be applied and embedded in future resilience planning.

The Met Office provided a winter weather overview. A total of 50 public weather warnings had been issued over the period – four amber and 46 yellow warnings – the majority having been for high winds. An update on the impacts of the named storms

was also provided, which included storms: Arwen, Barra, Dudley, Eunice and Franklin.

Many other partner organisations involved in responding to the severe weather also participated. DfI Road's and DfI River's representatives discussed impacts experienced by their agencies and the actions taken. Others included: Council representatives, Northern Ireland Water, Northern Ireland Electricity, Red Cross, Police Service of NI, NI Fire and Rescue Service, NI Housing Executive and the Education Authority.

All organisations were asked to recap any aspects of their preparedness, co-ordination or communications that worked well, but also importantly to identify points for improvement. The lessons learned will become actions to implement in advance of future severe weather incidents.

Save Money on Energy Bills

Energy prices have shot through the roof and the cost of living has become a big challenge for everyone this year.

However, there are small changes that you can make to help your energy budget stretch that little bit further.

The Consumer Council is encouraging us all to think about ways we can reduce our energy costs through energy efficiency and, importantly, by trying to save over the summer months to cover energy costs for the coming winter.

Here are some tips on actions you can take now to save on electricity and heating bills:

Minimise electricity usage

- Switching off appliances at the wall could save you £40 per year.
- Only using the water you need in a kettle could save you £8 per year.
- Reducing your washing machine temperature to 30°C could save you £10 per year.
- Wait to use appliances like your washing machine and dishwasher until there is a full load.

Save on home heating

- Don't obstruct radiators with furniture.
- Keep curtains closed to keep heat in.
- Draught-proof windows and doors.
- Turning down your thermostat by 1°C could save you £80 a year.

Switch suppliers and save

Electricity

- There are five electricity suppliers who have over 20 different tariffs available so you should switch and save.
- The Consumer Council's website has a free energy price comparison tool that allows you to compare all available tariffs in one place.

Gas

- If you are a gas customer in the Greater Belfast area, check that you are on the cheapest tariff as there are two suppliers in this network.
- Unfortunately, there is no competition in the Ten Towns' gas network.

Heating Oil

- Every week the Consumer Council surveys prices from around 70 home heating-oil suppliers across

Northern Ireland.

- Results are published of the cheapest, the average and the most expensive prices for 300-litres, 500-litres and 900-litres in an interactive information tool on its website.
- You can use this information as a benchmark to see if you are paying more than the average on the cost of home heating-oil.

Want to know more?

You can get in touch with the Consumer Council for free advice by calling its freephone number on 0800 121 6022, Monday to Friday: 9am-5pm.



“Wonderwall” celebrates 100 years!

2022 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the completion of the Mourne Wall construction; a remarkable feat of craftsmanship that has stood the test of time and harsh conditions over the century.

Work on the wall commenced in 1904 and took 18-years to complete, providing a boundary for the 9,000-acre water catchment area that supplies the Silent Valley and Ben Crom reservoirs. Major repairs, over two years, have now been completed which involved flying repair-stones from local quarries by helicopter and rolling them into place using age-old methods.

NI Water’s Education & Learning Officer, Anna Killen, comments:

“This anniversary is a chance to reflect on the importance of the Silent Valley, not only as a beautiful visitor attraction, but also as a working site providing a source of drinking water to

thousands of homes and businesses daily.

“Covid-19 has shone a light directly on how vital, safe, clean water is for our health and wellbeing. Now is the time to really think about how we can respect and conserve the water we use every day and how we are leaving the planet for the next 100-years.”

To mark this special birthday, NI Water is planning a series of events, kickstarting with a family fun-day on Sunday, 14 August, from 1pm to 5pm. Live music, entertainment, food, and games will all be available on the day.

It is planned to place time capsules in the wall; so any group interested in placing



a capsule should contact the NI Water Education Team at: education@niwater.com. Other events will be announced on niwater.com.

Join in the fun at the Silent Valley ‘Party in the Park’ to celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the great Mourne Wall. For more information visit www.niwater.com/silent-valley

Enniskillen Emergency Services’ Day

Fermanagh and Omagh Community Safety Partnership, in partnership with key emergency service providers, recently hosted an Emergency Services’ Day in Enniskillen to highlight and celebrate the work of the emergency services across the district.

Speaking ahead of the event, Councillor Keith Elliott, Chair of Fermanagh and Omagh ‘Police and Community Safety Partnership’ (PCSP), said:

“Fermanagh and Omagh PCSP is delighted to be working with the Emergency Services’ sector to once again highlight the invaluable service they provide across the district. Much of this goes unseen and unheralded, and I believe that the community should be aware of the important work they do. Collaboration between the PCSP and partner organisations to promote community safety and education is integral to the role of the PCSP.”

Visitors to the event had the opportunity to see at close quarters, the tremendous work undertaken by the emergency services in the district. Included were demonstrations from

the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, Northwest Mountain Rescue Team, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust and a special display by the Police Service of Northern Ireland’s Canine Display Team.

PSNI Constable Wayne Robinson said: “We are pleased to be working with the PCSP to showcase some of the work we and our colleagues within the emergency services do on a day-and-daily basis.”

To find out more about the work of Fermanagh and Omagh PCSP, please contact the team by telephone on: **0300 303 1777** or, textphone on: **028 8225 6216**.





The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) Newsletter – Keeping members weather ready

The Regional Community Resilience Group Newsletter aims to keep its members up to date on getting weather ready.

The Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) was formed in 2013 to help

local communities prepare for and respond to weather related emergencies.

The group brings together Multi-Agency Partner Organisations from government, utilities and the voluntary sector to work for and with Communities at Risk of Severe Weather.

The RCRG aims to provide a forum to facilitate co-ordination, communication, partnership

working and capacity building on community resilience issues. The group is currently working with over 35 communities across Northern Ireland ready to inform and resource them and improve preparedness and community resilience measures.

Unfortunately, severe weather events will continue to occur but through good communication, accessible, reliable information and established practical

measures, communities can and have applied self-help measures to reduce impacts and protect property.

This newsletter will be used to highlight important developments to enhance community resilience, provide an opportunity for communities to share experiences to the benefit of others and highlight key responder contacts to help readers to **Get Weather Ready!**

Partner Organisations:



Emergency Numbers

No matter how prepared we are for inclement weather, there's always the chance of an emergency at home. Here's a list of phone numbers you might find useful should the unforeseen happen:

Emergency Services:
999 or 112

Housing Executive:
03448 920 901

Northern Ireland Electricity Networks:
03457 643643

NI Gas Emergency Service:
0800 002 001

NI Water Waterline:
03457 440088

Flooding Incident Line:
0300 2000 100

For advice and information on dealing with emergencies visit:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/be-ready-for-emergencies

Problems with Roads & Streets:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/travel-transport-and-roads/problems-roads-and-streets