

Press release: Too many serious incidents in charities go unreported, regulator says

The charity regulator has improved its guidance on reporting serious incidents, to help charities report appropriate matters as soon as possible after they occur.

The Commission says there is significant under-reporting of problems by charities, which is putting charities at potential risk of further harm, including reputational damage.

[How to report a serious incident in your charity](#) replaces previous guidance and follows a consultation with charities.

The new guidance:

- includes new tools, such as examples and checklists to make it clearer to trustees what they should, and should not, report to the regulator
- provides greater clarity on incidents resulting in “significant financial loss”, making clear that losing significant funding or contracts that the charity can’t replace should be reported to the regulator
- no longer requires trustees to report if their charity doesn’t have a safeguarding policy in place, as that information is now captured through the annual return.

The Commission says that reporting a serious incident to the regulator helps trustees demonstrate that they are taking appropriate action to deal with it. It reminds trustees that by reporting a serious incident, they can limit reputational and actual harm to the charity, and allows the Commission, if asked, to state that the trustees handled the situation responsibly.

Serious incident reporting also helps the Commission to gauge the volume and impact of incidents within charities and to understand the risks facing the sector as a whole, and to respond, for example with guidance or alerts to the wider sector.

Sarah Atkinson, Director of Policy and Communication at the Charity Commission, said:

Trustees cannot always foresee or prevent a serious event arising in their charity. What they should do, however, is to act responsibly and quickly when something does go seriously wrong, taking steps to limit risk and protect their charity from further harm. Making an incident report to the Commission is one of the most important ways trustees can demonstrate that they are doing

just that. Our updated guidance helps charity trustees understand when and how to submit a report.

I would like to thank those who took part in the consultation. We have listened to your contributions and I am confident that we have improved the guidance as a result.

She added:

We remain concerned about significant under-reporting of serious incidents to the Commission. Too often, our casework shows that an incident could and should have been reported to us at a much earlier stage. I urge trustees to act quickly and responsibly in reporting serious incidents as soon as they occur, using the dedicated reporting facility at rsi@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk.

A serious incident in a charity is described as an “adverse event, actual or alleged, which results in harm to a charity’s work, beneficiaries or reputation; the loss of a charity’s money or assets, or damage to a charity’s property”. Last year, charities reported 2,181 incidents to the Commission, over half of which (55%) related to safeguarding; around one in seven (14%) related to fraud or money laundering, with a third of reported frauds being internal (‘insider’) fraud.

Serious incident reporting has been increasing steadily year-on-year since 2011-12, when 1,027 incidents were reported, but the Commission continues to find events and problems in its case work that should have been reported to the regulator at an earlier date.

In future, trustees will be able to report serious incidents via the Commission’s online services, making it easier for trustees to submit timely and accurate reports.

An [analysis of the Commission’s consultation](#) on the revised guidance is also published today.

Ends

[Press release: Barriers at the ready in ‘Broadchurch’](#)

Visitors to West Bay, near Bridport, will see up to 60 metres of temporary

coastal defence barriers deployed in East Beach car park in preparation for any future tidal incidents.

The barriers – one of 4 types used by the Environment Agency – are large, self-supporting, recyclable containers filled with aggregate. They are covered with an impenetrable membrane which prevents water from getting through. They are also fitted with a lid to prevent loss of fill material during over-topping and extreme weather conditions.

Exercise organiser and engineer Dan Hooper said:

West Bay is a high risk flood area because of strong south westerly winds, high tides and the close proximity of properties to the sea and nearby River Brit, so it's essential we are 'incident-ready' by carrying out exercises like this.

These barriers are relatively new to the Environment Agency so this exercise provides us with an opportunity to get to grips with them. We are learning how we open, connect and fill them using a stockpile of beach materials already located on site.

Sharpening our practical skills and knowledge means we can better protect homes, businesses and the environment quickly and safely should a major incident be expected in West Bay or anywhere along the Dorset coast.

Partner agencies have been invited to observe the exercise, including representatives from the British Army, Dorset Local Resilience Forum (local authorities, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, Civil Contingencies Unit) and the West Bay Harbourmaster.

One of the Environment Agency's new Incident Command Units (ICU) will also be on site recording footage of the exercise. The WiFi-enabled ICU acts as a mobile incident room and a temporary headquarters for staff out in the field, enabling better site management, situational awareness and visibility in flood risk communities.

Part of the car park will be cordoned off, but vehicle users will still be able to access the remainder of the car park and beach.

Notes for editors

West Bay is a designated World Heritage Site and situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Environment Agency is currently working with West Dorset District Council, co-ordinated by the Dorset Coast Forum, to identify and improve the coastal defences in West Bay and make the beaches more resistant to storm damage, while also preserving the iconic views and amenities.

The 'Jackbox' flood defence barriers are made by Hesco. They are easy to store and transport and can be deployed quickly by 2 people and a machine.

They can be filled with earth, sand, gravel, crushed rock or other granular materials and are easily removed.

Media opportunity

Members of the media are invited to observe the exercise from 11am. Interviews with Dan Hooper will be available at 12pm. Please confirm your attendance with the press office (telephone 0800 917 9271).

Attendees should be appropriately dressed and will be asked to sign in on arrival/given high-visibility clothing and hard hats (if crossing the cordoned off area).

The nearest available alternative car park will be at:

Station Road car park

Station Rd

West Bay

Bridport

DT6 4EW

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[National Statistics: Monthly sea fisheries statistics July 2017](#)

The monthly landings statistics will be released at 9.30am on the 4th Friday of each month, or the next working day if this is a bank holiday.

[News story: £28,220 penalty for release of non-native species](#)

On 20 September 2017 Ni Li and Zhixiong Li pleaded guilty to a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 at Brighton Magistrates' Court.

The court heard how on 15 June 2015, 361 live American lobsters and 35 Dungeness crabs were released off Brighton on the Sussex coast by a party of over 100 Buddhists as part of a religious ceremony. The court was told how Zhixiong Li organised the party and oversaw the release, and that Ni Li procured the Lobsters from a specialist fish merchant in London. The action was contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which is in place to protect indigenous species from invasion by non-native species. When the release was discovered swift action by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) working with the local fishing industry led to a significant number of the non-native animals being recovered.

Ni Li was fined £3,500, ordered to pay £9000 in compensation, costs of £3000 and a victim surcharge of £170.00.

Zhixiong Li was fined £500.00, ordered to pay £9000 in compensation, costs of £3000 and a victim surcharge of £50.00.

The compensation was awarded to the MMO to pay for the action to recover the non-native species.

Commenting on the prosecution a spokesman for the MMO said:

“The size of the fines in this case recognises the significant risk to the marine environment posed by offences of this nature.

The MMO would like to thank both the local fishing industry for their significant assistance in the recovery of the animals from our seas and the Buddhist community for their help in communicating and educating people on the risks posed by the release of non-native species into our waters.”