

Minister announces new measures to bolster UK's resilience

Lead Minister for Resilience and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Kit Malthouse MP, announced new measures to bolster the UK's resilience on a visit to the Met Office yesterday (Monday 15 August).

Minister Malthouse visited the Met Office, based in Exeter, to see how their forecasting expertise feeds into government planning to tackle severe weather and how the agency worked closely with Government and other partners to give people plenty of warning and advice about staying safe in the recent extreme heat.

The Minister announced the launch of a new public emergency text alert system for the UK, as well as changes to the Civil Contingencies Secretariat – the Cabinet Office's emergency planning and response team.

Speaking in the Operations Centre of the Met Office, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Kit Malthouse MP, said:

“To make sure that government continues to offer the best possible prevention and protection against threats, we are shaking up how we prepare for and respond to emergencies, strengthening the effective resilience capability we already have in place.

“We will launch a new public emergency alerts system in the Autumn which will focus on extreme weather, revolutionising our ability to ‘warn and inform’ people who are in significant and immediate danger. These alerts will be sent direct to people’s mobiles giving details of the emergency – such as local flooding – explaining what to do and how to seek help.

“Our vital COBR unit – which leads the government’s response to acute domestic and international emergencies – will be bolstered by a dedicated team helping to future-proof us from harm. This National Resilience Framework Team will take a deeper look at our approach to risk and how we mitigate it and help us take huge leaps forward in terms of collecting, analysing and using live data.”

Ian Cameron, Director of Markets at the Met Office, commented:

“The right messaging helps people take action to stay safe. It is clear that we are seeing an increase in the number of extreme weather events in the UK and overseas. Just this summer we have seen temperatures in the UK exceed 40C for the first time on record, followed closely by the heatwave which ended earlier this week. Communicating effectively is imperative so we can warn and alert people, ensuring they are aware and have more time to take action and look after themselves, their friends and family.”

Minister Malthouse spoke with a range of staff in the Met Office to learn more about their work, from the Meteorologists who lead on weather forecasts,

to the Space Weather Operations team who are part of just one of three space weather prediction centres in the world, monitoring potentially disruptive solar activity for government and industry.

The [emergency alerts system](#), which will focus on events like extreme weather and warning the public where there is a risk to life, will be launched in the autumn following a public awareness campaign. The free message will give details of the emergency – local flooding or wildfires, for example – what to do and how to seek help, and will relay urgent messages to over 85% of mobile phones in areas affected.

Changes to the Civil Contingencies Secretariat – the Cabinet Office's emergency planning and response team – will see a COBR Unit continuing to lead the government's response to acute emergencies, and work on longer term planning being driven forward by a separate team dedicated to strengthening the UK's underlying resilience. This National Resilience Framework Team in the Planning and Analysis Secretariat will take a deeper look at the government's approach to risk and how it is mitigated as well as collecting and analysing live data to improve future responses to emergencies.