

Policy for the Distribution of Sandbags during Flooding Incidents

1. Practical Steps for Property Owners

1.1 Sandbags are one of the most well known means of keeping floodwater out of a property during flooding events. The materials are easily available and relatively cheap, and in most cases, they are effective. However, their use does have some disadvantages as listed below:

- Filling is time consuming and requires two people.
- They can be difficult to handle.
- They may contain contaminants such as sewage if they come in contact with floodwater.
- The sacking material is biodegradable and will disintegrate with time.

1.2 Owners of properties that are at risk of flooding are therefore encouraged to keep, where possible, their own stock of empty sandbags together with sufficient stocks of sand to fill the bags at times of potential flooding. Further information on practical measures to minimise floodwater entry and damage to property is contained within the Environment Agency's document "Damage Limitation Guide" and can be obtained from the Environment Agency's web site. In addition, there are proprietary products available on the market to protect openings such as doors, windows and vents.

1.3 In the event of severe weather and where there is a genuine risk of flooding, Carmarthenshire County Council will provide filled sandbags to properties upon request. Our primary response will be to flooding incidents originating from the highway and non-main river sources. Main Rivers are governed by the Environment Agency, who may not always be in a position to provide sandbags, depending on demand and local circumstances. Therefore each request made to Carmarthenshire County Council will be considered in relation to the prevailing circumstances, irrespective of the flooding source. It should be borne in mind that there is a limit to both the availability and the ability to distribute sandbags, particularly when wide-scale flooding is being experienced. **Therefore, reliance on the County Council to provide sandbags should not be considered as being the primary means of protection.** The Council will give priority to known flooding black spots, where there is the potential of several properties being flooded. Distribution will be in accordance with Section 2 below.

1.4 The Authority's press Officer will issue a statement to the press outlining the sandbag policy at the beginning of autumn of each year.

2. Distribution

- 2.1. Requests for sandbags from the public as a result of flood warnings, severe weather warnings or actual flooding events, will normally be received directly by Area based staff during normal working hours. Outside normal working hours, requests will be passed to the relevant Duty Officer, via the Council's 24-hour emergency contact bureau – Careline (see Phone Book).
- 2.2. Requests will generally be dealt with in the order they are received and arrangements will be made to distribute sandbags as requested. However, at times of more serious widespread flooding events, the distribution of sandbags will need to be prioritised according to severity, risk, location and available resources. The County Council will endeavour to respond to most requests but there may be some delay, particularly for the more widespread or large scale events.
- 2.3. Delivery of sandbags will normally be to the nearest point of access to a property from the highway or access road. Further manoeuvring of the sandbags within the boundaries of a property will be the responsibility of the property owner. The Council workforce may assist in this respect in some circumstances, but such assistance will not always be possible.
- 2.5. It may be necessary during extreme weather events to call upon external help from the armed forces to distribute further sandbags. This may be the case when filled sandbag stocks have been exhausted and labour resources are over-stretched. The decision to call upon the armed forces will be made by the Head of Street Scene following discussions with the Duty Officers. The Head of Street Scene will make a formal request via the Council's Emergency Centre. The procedures for requesting aid from the Armed Forces are documented within the Council's Integrated Emergency Response Plan. However, the availability of the armed forces in such circumstances cannot be guaranteed, and the timing of their response will be dependent on their location/commitment at the time.
- 2.6. Members of the public will not be allowed to collect sandbags directly from any of the Council depots for health and safety reasons.

3. Stocks and Supplies

- 3.1. The County Council will all times keep 500 filled sandbags in serviceable condition, ready for deployment, at each of the following locations:
 - a) Trostre Highways Depot, Llanelli.
 - b) Cillefwr Depot, Carmarthen.
 - c) Glanamman Depot.
 - d) Llandovery Depot.

3.2. The County Council will keep a stockpile of 20 tonnes of sand at each of the above depots at all times together with an ample stock of unfilled sandbags.

4. Policy Review

4.1 The policy will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary.