

Preface

The third international conference in the generically entitled series “Water Contamination Emergencies” was the most ambitious. Two previous conferences asked the question “Can we cope?” and identified ways of “Enhancing our response”. The main theme running through the two-day programme of the third conference was Collective Responsibility which developed the previous conferences by recognising the need for all those involved in responding to water contamination emergencies to share, collaborate and draw on lessons learnt. It was emphasised that achievement of the desired outcome required the co-ordination of significant effort in preparation and response. The conference provided the opportunity to understand others’ roles, responsibilities and limitations, and positively encouraged the development of trust that is a vital ingredient of any emergency response team.

The book opens with an introductory chapter setting the scene from a public health perspective. The following 39 chapters were written by experts in their field, including medical and health professionals, environmental protection professionals, risk and business continuity managers, emergency planners, service and support providers, detection and equipment suppliers, disaster recovery specialists, water security experts, water distribution modellers and from water companies and regulators. Three broad themes of Operations; Information and Data Management; and Communications, and include chapters which cover a wide range of scenarios and follow the sequence of an incident, that is: the threat, the developing scenario, further response; and remediation. Chapters consider in detail the modelling of the threat; water safety plans and preparedness; security; incident management; contingency planning; remediation; vulnerability assessments; surveillance, early warning systems and detection; information management and databases; forensic investigations; interagency collaboration and integrated response; command and control; medical responses; mutual aid and exercises. The USEPA water security initiative; experience with vulnerability assessments; UK emergency planning; communicating with the public during water contamination emergencies; radioactivity monitoring in emergencies; and rapid analysis methods are also covered.

Responsibilities of particular post-holders and organisations are defined in legislation or other national requirements. Although individuals will have identified their own key responsibilities it is hoped that readers of this book will take further action to establish effective and efficient working relationships and knowledge-sharing networks with those with whom they will be required to work in an emergency - in other words, taking “Collective Responsibility”.

John Gray
November 2008

