Storms

Introduction

Storms conjure up images of waves battering a seafront, umbrellas blowing inside out and whirlwinds of leaves and rubbish blowing everywhere. Added to this, it's probably the one time you hear the phrase 'time to batten down the hatches' – let's be honest, everyone's heard that one far too many times! But storms by their nature storms can and do cause plenty of problems. They are what we might call a primary risk that then leads to plenty of secondary ones (such as floods and power outages), which in themselves can be more destructive than the storm itself.

Interesting Facts

Did you know Storms don't have an official Met Office definition, like a hurricane, but they are commonly known as deep and active areas of low pressure with associated strong winds and precipitation.

Local Risk Rating

Volcanic Eruptions are assessed as '**Medium'** on our Community Risk Register

Impact	Significant (2)	**Likelihood**	Medium/High (4)	**Rating**	Medium

What is it?

As highlighted in the interesting fact section, it's difficult to get a definite definition of a storm, but one example of storms is low pressure – storms with names!

Low Pressure/ Storms that are named:

We get low pressure systems moving across the UK all year, which bring rain, wind, and cloud with them. These form over the UK because cold polar air from the North meets warmer tropical air from the South. It is along this boundary that the jet stream flows. The difference in temperature between the cold polar air and warm tropical is greatest in Autumn and Winter which can lead to a stronger jet stream. This can sometimes intensify the low-pressure systems and therefore brings stronger winds and rain with it. If low pressure systems are forecast to bring significant impacts to the UK, it is then given name by the Met Office and becomes a named storm.

Storm Names:

These get released every year (in September) before the 'storm' season begins and go from A – Z. Storms generally get named to help with communication between all agencies and with the public. You can even suggest names every year: Name our Storms - Met Office.

There are also never any names beginning with Q, U, X, Y and Z. So, if you were born Zena Yasemin Quinn your very unlikely to ever get a storm named after you!

History

There are some very severe storms throughout history including:

- Typhoon Nina (China) – 1975, over 25,000 dead from flooding and a further 100,000 reportedly died from famine and disease.
- Bhola Cyclone (Bangladesh and India) – 1970, reported between 300,000 to 1 million deaths.
- Hurricane Katrina (USA) – 2005, over 1,800 people killed in total

**Death tolls are approximates due to different recording measures.*

Focus on the UK: Great Storm of 1987

Recognise the date (maybe not)? This is before they gave storms names in the UK. What you might remember (or if you weren't born at the time, have heard), is weather forecaster Michael Fish telling everyone there was nothing to worry about as a hurricane wasn't on its way to the UK. That comment has gone down in history, making Michael Fish probably the most notable weather forecaster ever, as only hours later a terrifying storm swept through the UK.

The storm brought 100+mph winds which seemed to appear from nowhere. The storm seemed to catch forecasters by surprise due to its sudden arrival. The storm brought huge destruction to the UK, including some deaths, building destruction and environmental damage. It has lived on in the memories of all those who were old enough at the time to experience it and is also continually referenced every year when a new storm arrives.

What are we doing about it in the LRF?

We have a variety of plans for snow which include 4x4 provision to support essential services, vulnerable persons, and utility outage plans. We maintain a close working relationship with the Met Office who provide a comprehensive weather forecasting service. This enables Local Authorities to put winter plans in place to monitor weather patterns and road temperatures, allowing gritting schedules on key roads throughout the county. It also allows the rail companies to plan their business effectively.

Despite all the preparatory activity, sometimes the volume of snow will be too great and cause roads to become blocked and impassable. In this situation, all agencies work together to coordinate their efforts. Local Authorities will bring in snow ploughs alongside working with local farmers to clear as many roads as quickly as possible. This task takes time and routes must be prioritised around essential usage to get the county up and running again.

What can you do?

There's a number of things you could do these include:

- Signing up to be a snow warden in your local area
- Ensure you don't put yourself in danger and keep an eye on the local conditions (especially in relation to travel – essential journeys only?)
- Check on your family and local community
- Ensure you keep some key supplies available (torch, batteries, water etc)

Most importantly do not forget to enjoy it, snow isn't that regular, and we all love to build the tallest snowman!