

'Watchkeeper' team to respond to disasters

Sophia Sleigh City Hall Reporter

A 24-HOUR emergency management centre will be created in London to bolster the city's response to terror attacks and major disasters.

A dedicated team called the London Watchkeeper Service is being set up to help London government following last year's terror attacks and Grenfell fire.

The service will help Cobra, the government emergency council, and use "public and private" data to monitor what is going on in London. The command centre's job will be to keep

New centre to lead London's reaction to terror attacks and emergencies

lead agencies updated on everything from extreme weather, terror attacks and public disorder to fires, transport disruption and health problems.

The Greater London Authority's (GLA) current model of one on-call 24-hour officer reporting on major incidents

was described by officials as no longer "sustainable" due to the volume of incidents that London faces.

Professor David Alexander, an expert in disaster reduction at University College London, told the Standard: "Other countries have civil protection services with emergency operations centres that are manned around the clock and that have a monitoring brief as well as a remit to issue warnings and coordinate emergency response activities."

"Britain does not have a fully fledged civil protection service but relies on the police to be the lead agency in most

emergencies.

"Failure to anticipate events is a potential Achilles heel. Part of constructing the vital common operating picture, to be shared for response by all agencies, is to feed information into it in a very timely manner."

City Hall, which has worked with the Government on the proposal, has earmarked £500,000 to start the scheme with nine members of staff on a 24/7 rota.

The service will feed information to the Mayor of London, the GLA, London councils and local authority gold com-

mand, which assigns emergency responsibility to a borough chief executive each week.

The Mayor of London's chief of staff, David Bellamy, said during a recent budget meeting: "There are simply too many incidents, including protests and false alarms – and social media means they are in the public eye – for one person to deal with reactively, especially given the high number that fall outside business hours and the prolonged workload that results when they occur."

Plans for the service will be finalised when the City Hall budget is approved.



Story for our time: Leah Harvey and Charly Wakefield in the Globe's production of *Emilia*. Below from left, Michelle Terry, Morgan Lloyd Malcolm and Nicole Charles

West End-bound, all-female show that shines light on Shakespeare's Dark Lady

A PLAY about a pioneering woman poet who is thought to have been William Shakespeare's muse will be brought to the West End by an all-female cast and production team.

Emilia tells the story of Emilia Bassano, a published poet in her own right who some believe is the Dark Lady in Shakespeare's sonnets.

The play was the first to be commissioned

by artistic director Michelle Terry when she took over at Shakespeare's Globe last year.

The production, directed by Nicole Charles, will start its West End run in March at the Vaudeville Theatre in The Strand.

Morgan Lloyd Malcolm wrote the play as the #MeToo movement gained momentum. Producer Nica Burns said it was a "story for these times". She added: "There was feeling of utter excitement that this is a play that speaks directly to the audience and the audience respond back."

Ms Lloyd Malcolm said: "We could never have predicted the response we got and I am so happy and excited to be able to bring *Emilia* back for more people to meet her!"

Robert Dex



Stocking filler that helps savings add up

Lizzie Edmonds

Consumer Affairs Reporter

A FATHER has invented a stocking filler card game that aims to teach children about the value of money.

Silly Monkeys, developed by financial expert and author Rob Gardner, rewards children for saving acorns.

Mr Gardner, from Richmond, based the game on his book *Save Your Acorns*. The book follows "Grandpa" squirrel

who teaches two children to save their acorns by telling them a cautionary tale about hungry monkeys who wasted their bananas. The winner of the game is the player with the most acorns.

Mr Gardner, co-founder of investment consultancy firm Redington and father to Tara, four, and Camila, 20 months, said: "It's imperative for us as parents to teach our kids the important lessons – how and why to budget and save – as early as possible."



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