

# Incident command - Organisation at incidents

## NEW POLICY POSITION



This policy should be read with:

- PN987a – equipment officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987b – advanced command support – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987c – intermediate command support – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987d – BA sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987e – damage control officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987f – evacuation sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987g – initial command point operative – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987h – monitoring officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987i – lobby sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987j – inner cordon sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987k – inner cordon recorder – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987l – inner cordon controller – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987m – FSG sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987n – FSG coordinator – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987o – fire sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987p – resources officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987q – welfare officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987r – water officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987s – sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987t – operations commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
- PN987u – search sector commander – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP

Official

## Policy summary

This policy sets out the incident command system that enables incident commanders to manage and fulfil their incident plan. This includes the various resources available for deployment, including sources of specialist advice. It is accompanied by Organisation at Incidents: Knowledge, skills and competence, which provides further detail and is essential reading for all commanders, operational personnel and fire control personnel.

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► Responsible Head of Service is the Assistant Commissioner, Operational Policy & Assurance

► Responsible team is Incident Command Policy & Assurance

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# 1. Background

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- 1.1 Operational response is hazardous and varied. Some incidents need only simple actions and procedures to be dealt with effectively and safely. Larger, longer, and more complex incidents may require a greater degree of control.

## Communications

- 1.2 Communication can be ineffective or fail when information is not shared at the right time or is not understood by the receiver. This can lead to:
- Incorrect or inappropriate information being used to assess a situation, resulting in:
    - Poor individual situational awareness.
    - Inconsistent shared situational awareness.
    - A faulty perception of events unfolding.
  - Wrong decisions being taken for the actual situation.
  - Failure to co-ordinate team activities, causing task conflicts between personnel or other agencies.
  - 'Freelancing' because of a breakdown in leadership and confidence.
  - Increased risk of accidents because risk-critical information is not shared or understood.
- 1.3 Throughout all aspects of communication, fire and rescue services and their employees need to be aware of the potential for misuse of information, and mindful of the legal requirements placed on them, by legislation such as the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

## Spans of control

- 1.4 Unless spans of control are maintained at manageable levels, incident commanders may be overloaded with information, which may impact on:
- Gaining effective situational awareness.
  - Appropriate decision-making.
  - Effective communication.
  - Ability to maintain control of the incident.

## Cordon control

- 1.5 Cordon control may often be a multi-agency responsibility. However, the incident commander has a duty, so far as reasonably practicable, to ensure that people are not put at risk by fire and rescue service activities. The incident commander has a duty to inform people of the hazards, and the control measures that are necessary to protect them.
- 1.6 Failure to fulfil these duties, or a lack of appropriate cordon control, may result in personnel, other emergency responders or members of the public gaining access to the hazard area, with its associated risks.

## Resource deployment

- 1.7 Effective deployment of appropriate resources may be key to the success or failure of an incident commander's strategy or plan to resolve incidents. Any failure or delay in requesting the mobilisation of sufficient and appropriate personnel, equipment, specialist skills and other agencies to an incident may:
- Delay operational intervention.
  - Increase the risk to the public, including casualties.
  - Reduce the safety of personnel or other emergency responders.
  - Result in loss of or damage to property.
  - Have a detrimental effect on the environment.
  - Affect the reputation of the fire and rescue service.
  - Impact on levels of public confidence.
  - Delay community recovery.

## 2. Incident command system

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- 2.1 The incident command system is an all-hazards approach, providing a progressive, scalable and flexible system of operational command, control and organisation. The system is designed to help an incident commander manage and fulfil their incident plan. It encourages a controlled and systematic approach to resolving incidents.
- 2.2 The incident command system should commence from when the first call is received about an incident and remain in place until the last appliance leaves an incident. During that time, it is used to:
- Identify tasks and hazards.
  - Assess risk.
  - Manage and review control measures.
- 2.3 Usually the last activity at the incident ground is to hand over responsibility for health and safety to the appropriate person or agency (see duty of care in Safety Management KSC)
- 2.4 The key components of the incident command system include:
- Clear, defined, and visible lines of command.
  - Manageable spans of control.
  - A communications infrastructure.
  - Appropriate responsibility and authority.
  - Clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities.
  - Sectorisation of the incident.
- 2.5 It is the role of incident commanders to effectively and safely organise resources to obtain the best resolution to an incident. It is the role of all personnel, who may attend or are involved with an incident, to be familiar with the requirements of the incident command system and know how to operate safely and effectively in it. This applies equally to those who will perform a command role and those who will be operating under the command of others, including the fire control room.

- 2.6 Incident command and support activities start on receipt of the emergency call to the fire control room and continue to the conclusion of the incident.
- 2.7 Operations on the incident ground should be well-organised and controlled. The incident command system provides the incident commander with a clear framework to help them structure, organise and manage an emergency. It can be adapted to all sizes and types of incident and helps incident commanders to deploy and use resources effectively.
- 2.8 The incident command system will only be successful when applied with good command skills. It is not the incident command system that achieves the outcome; it is how the incident commander makes and applies sound operational decisions within it.
- 2.9 The incident command system supports the incident commander to use health and safety arrangements, policies or procedures, which are tailored to the characteristics of an incident and the objectives of the incident plan.
- 2.10 Incident commanders should be aware of becoming overburdened and having too broad a span of control. This can result in ineffective leadership, poor decision-making and poor communications, leading to a failure of situational awareness. Incident commanders should consider the issues of team dynamics to get the best from the resources available to them.
- 2.11 Fire and rescue services have a responsibility to provide their incident commanders with the necessary training, equipment, and resources to effectively apply the incident command system to any incident.
- 2.12 This guidance has been created to align with National Operational Guidance for incident command. Other agencies should base their expectation of the fire and rescue service response to multi-agency incidents on the incident command system contained in National Operational Guidance. Therefore, the content of this guidance will support intraoperability and interoperability.
- 2.13 Using common language and components will ensure fire and rescue services can more effectively resolve local, cross-border and national incidents.

## Intraoperability

- 2.14 Clearly defined roles, particularly the specialist roles performed by personnel from dedicated departments such as Brigade Control or hazardous materials, will support intraoperability and the establishment of effective command teams.

## Interoperability

- 2.15 Interoperability is delivered through the JESIP doctrine. It is essential that all components of fire and rescue services, including Brigade Control personnel, operational planning departments and incident commanders, identify and liaise with relevant partner agencies. This ensures that in the event that they are required to respond to different incident types, all agencies are fully aware of the assistance available to maximise effectiveness in saving lives and reducing harm.
- 2.16 It is possible that other agencies who attend an incident will have risk-critical information. Incident commanders should request risk-critical information in the joint agency briefing as well as sharing any information they have. They should ensure this information flows throughout the incident.

## Organisation at an incident

- 2.17 To support the effective application of the incident command system at incidents, the LFB will:
  - Provide surcoats (see ORP Organisation at Incidents document) that enable command team members to be readily identified on the incident ground

- Provide training (see relevant training specification) to ensure commanders are capable and knowledgeable to effectively and safely organise resources, in order to obtain the best resolution to an incident.
- Provide training (see relevant training specification) to ensure all personnel who may attend or are involved with an incident, to be familiar with the requirements of the incident command system and know how to operate safely and effectively in it

## Effective communication

- 2.18 To support effective communication that integrates communication and decision-making between the incident commander, operational personnel and Brigade Control, the LFB will establish an organisational procedure (see ORP Effective Communication) to:
- Ensure there is resilience in operational communication strategies and equipment.
  - Test the compatibility of communications equipment, systems and processes with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other agencies.
  - Ensure appropriate communication systems are in place at incidents.
  - Have contingency arrangements for reinstating operational communication, in the event of equipment or strategy failure.

## Command support function

- 2.19 To ensure an effective command support function that enables incident commanders to effectively implement their incident plan, the LFB will:
- Identify personnel who are competent to carry out the command support role.
  - Provide suitable equipment to indicate the command point at an incident.
  - Have arrangements in place to provide the necessary vehicles and equipment for command support functions.
  - Provide systems that enable the recording of information at command points and in sectors.

## Sectorisation

- 2.20 To enable incident commanders to sectorise incidents in order to maintain effective spans of control, the LFB will:
- Provide Command Support System software, Incident Command Wallets and Forward Information Boards that enable the recording information at command points and in sectors.
  - Establish joint working protocols with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other agencies for sectorisation through the Inter-border liaison group, see policy number 857 - working with other brigades, and the LESLP Major Incident Procedure Manual.
  - Following any review of operational risk assessments, conduct a task analysis to identify the likely resources and personnel that may be required, including potential sectorisation arrangements. The result of this task analysis will be used to generate a pre-determined attendance that will be recorded in policy number 412 – mobilising policy and mobilised to the associated incident type once identified.

## Command roles and responsibilities

- 2.21 To ensure the effective operation of the incident command system and ensure all command roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, the LFB will:
- Ensure as part of the operational risk planning process that a functional analysis is undertaken to identify the roles (see ORP Organisation at Incidents) likely to be performed in the command team, including the level of skills and appropriate responsibilities for each role
  - Develop local arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services (see policy number 857 – working with neighbouring brigades) and other agencies (see LESLP Major Incident procedure manual) that define command roles, responsibilities and expectations
  - Have regular contact with neighbouring services through the Inter-border liaison group (see policy number 857 – working with other brigades) to ensure that appropriate cross-border command structure plans are in place.
  - Ensure that JESIP principles (see policy number 971 - Joint emergency services interoperability principles - JESIP) have been adopted and embedded in service procedures.
  - Develop robust systems (see ORP Organisation at Incidents) to ensure that the handover of command is structured and does not compromise the safe management of the incident.

## Cordon controls

- 2.22 To ensure incident commanders can control resources and manage safety by effectively implementing cordons, the LFB will:
- Provide an organisational procedure that ensures appropriate equipment and other resources to safely implement cordon control (see ORP Organisation at Incidents)
  - Establish within the LESLP Major Incident Procedure Manual the roles and responsibilities for implementing and maintaining cordon control with partner agencies for multi-agency incidents.
  - Jointly establish within the LESLP Major Incident Procedure Manual (see LESLP Major Incident procedure manual) the briefing arrangements for when other agencies are working within inner cordons under the safety management of the fire and rescue service.
  - Consider pre-planning and exercising with partner agencies for cordon control arrangements.

# 3. Resources

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## Additional resources

- 3.1 To support incident commanders to identify and deploy the appropriate resources to deliver a full incident plan, the LFB will:
- Ensure relevant information on the availability of service resources is made available to operational personnel and Brigade Control through the mobilising system and BOSS.

## Specialist resources

- 3.2 To ensure that incident commanders can access specialist resources that may be required to assist with identified risks with the Brigade area, the LFB will:

- Ensure relevant information for all available service specialist resources (including those resources used by neighbouring and partner agencies) is made available to all personnel.
- Provide an organisational procedure (see ORP Organisation at incidents) that ensures that potential contribution of specialist personnel is considered when planning the response to incidents, to improve safety and efficiency on the incident ground.
- Have arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services on the shared use, procurement or availability of specialist resources.
- Ensure relevant personnel have a thorough knowledge of the capabilities of specialist resources to support selection of the appropriate resource for an incident.
- Include recommended specialist resources in Site Specific Risk Information.
- Ensure relevant personnel have an understanding of the National Resilience capabilities.
- Maintain a directory of specialist resources for incidents.
- Consider pre-planning and exercises with external specialist resources.

## Specialist advice

- 3.3 To ensure that incident commanders can obtain specialist advice from a competent person to deal with an incident safely and effectively, the Brigade will:
- As part of the operational planning process (see ORP Organisation at incidents), develop arrangements and protocols with identified sources of specialist advice.
  - Maintain the details of sources of specialist advice and know how to request their attendance.
  - Ensure personnel are aware of the types of specialist advice available.

## Enhanced logistics support (ELS)

- 3.4 To support the effective and scalable deployment of National Resilience resources if required in the event of a national level incident, the Brigade will:
- Have systems in place to request ELS resources from National Resilience Fire Control (NRFC).
  - Identify appropriate locations for the National Resilience enhanced logistical support equipment to be located.



# Document information

## Dates

Issue status	Date
Issued	1 March 2022
Reviewed as current	Click and select date.
Last amended	26 June 2023
Next review due	1 March 2025

## Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA		SDIA		HSWIA		RA	28/02/2022
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## Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/Paragraph nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 9	RA date added.	26 June 2023

## Related policies

Listed below are all the related policies:

Policy number	Name of policy
PN987a	Equipment officer – incident command – organisation at incidents – SOP
PN987b	Advanced command support – incident command – organisation at incidents - SOP
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