

# Command skills - knowledge, skills and competence

## NEW POLICY POSITION



This policy should be read with:  
**PN986a - Operational discretion - SOP**

Official

## Policy summary

This publication complements and supports the Command Skills policy, providing the detail required for assertive, effective and safe incident command to be practised and applied. It is an essential guide to the safe systems of work required at incidents.

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## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 The material contained within this document provides the content that underpins the **Brigade's incident command training specifications**. LFB incident command training specifications are aligned to National Operational Guidance. They correspond and comply with the original National Occupational Standards (NOS), to provide a clear framework of competence for all areas of operational activity.
- 1.2 Tactical actions are identified in this document to highlight the actions expected of incident commanders. These tactical actions form the basis for the practical application elements of training specifications, to ensure that staff are trained to demonstrate the actions expected.

## 2. Leadership

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- 2.1 The LFB Behaviours Framework defines a set of behaviours that, when demonstrated, are associated with delivering excellence. LFB leaders are expected to lead with compassion, togetherness and accountability, demonstrating the following behaviours both on and off the incident ground:
  - Self-awareness.
  - Selfless.
  - Empathy.
  - Inclusive.
  - Teamwork.
  - Empowers and coaches others.
  - Takes ownership and accountability.
  - Professional.
  - Forward-looking.
- 2.2 Incident commanders are leaders of the operational response to incidents. Leadership in this context is about the impact on people affected by the performance, decision-making, actions and behaviours of an incident commander.
- 2.3 Leadership is an essential element of a commander's role in resolving incidents. The application of good command skills will enhance the way in which they lead and command an incident. Effective leadership will contribute to the safe and effective resolution of incidents. These skills are as important as their operational knowledge.
- 2.4 At an emergency, personnel in the LFB, people from other organisations and members of the public will look to the commander to lead the response and resolve the incident. They expect the commander to be calm, confident, decisive and professional.
- 2.5 Effective leadership is more than exercising authority and power. Commanders should be able to apply the most appropriate leadership styles, behaviours, technical knowledge and command skills to resolve an incident. An important element of this includes the need to give others confidence in their leadership. This is related to command presence and commanders should always be mindful of the impression they are creating. The way in which a commander behaves will influence how others respond. Positive relationships will improve the performance of a team, which can contribute to improved safety. Effective commanders have interpersonal qualities that make them more likely to achieve the best from others.

- 2.6 Commanders will lead others in dynamic and complex environments and also need to be prepared to adopt a leadership role at multi-agency incidents. They should be able to instil confidence and inspire others to help resolve the incident, recognising individual contributions and building and encouraging trust. People who are led well at an incident are willing to trust and accept the influence of the commander. They will be motivated and committed and more likely to co-operate and comply with an incident commander's instructions and plans.
- 2.7 The incident commander is responsible for leading the incident to a successful conclusion, but they cannot be responsible for making all decisions or supervising every detail of an incident. For this reason, incidents are often divided into sectors or functions. Each person who commands a sector or function will also need to show competent leadership skills.
- 2.8 There are many different leadership styles, commanders are most likely to maximise performance by recognising that no single leadership style is ideal for all situations. They will need to adapt their style to the situation they are faced with. They should consider the following before adopting the appropriate style:
- The level of risk.
  - How fast the incident is developing.
  - The type, size and complexity of the incident.
  - The competence of personnel.
  - The experience of personnel.
  - The physiological and psychological condition of personnel.
- 2.9 All personnel at the incident should take personal responsibility for the way they act, to ensure the safety of themselves and others, and to achieve the objectives set out by the commander.
- 2.10 Personnel should be appropriately supervised, based on the hazards and risks present. The greater the risk to personnel and others, the greater the degree of supervision that is required. This may be by direct or remote observation and monitoring; an example of this is a sector commander supervising personnel in their area of responsibility.
- 2.11 Leadership relationships exist across an incident ground. They include those between:
- An incident commander and the leaders of other agencies.
  - An incident commander and their command team.
  - Command team members.
  - Command team members and personnel under their control.
  - Personnel.
- 2.12 For instance, a sector commander will be led by the incident commander, but at the same time be the leader of personnel in their sector.
- 2.13 An effective incident commander should understand the influence of the following factors on their leadership:

#### **Self-awareness of personal limitations**

- 2.14 A commander should be aware of the impact of their actions and behaviours on the personnel they are leading. Being self-aware can help them maximise team performance. They should be able to control and adapt their behaviours, having an awareness of how these might be received.

- 2.15 Commanders should also be aware of how the behaviours of others can influence their own responses and behaviours, and ensure they control their reactions. It is important to be aware of and manage preconceptions that might influence the way the commander or others respond.

### **Valuing and supporting others**

- 2.16 It is important that an incident commander values the contribution others may make in support of their leadership. They should always behave professionally and ensure that others behave likewise, particularly as the environment by its very nature is likely to be stressful. They should motivate and inspire others through empowerment.

### **Displaying and instilling confidence**

- 2.17 A commander should be aware that others at an incident take direction from them. Personnel may respond more positively to a confident commander, which will improve the team's performance. They may also detect negative behaviours such as panic, insecurity or uncertainty. In either case, it may affect how personnel respond to the situation and to a commander's instructions.
- 2.18 Feedback should be provided to the commander. This makes sure everyone has a shared and realistic view of what is likely to happen.
- 2.19 Stress can reduce an individual's capacity to process information. Displaying and instilling confidence may make personnel less anxious. It is important that personnel feel able to ask for help or assistance when they need it.

### **Demonstrating and fostering trust**

- 2.20 A commander needs to lead personnel in challenging and potentially dangerous circumstances. Trust between the commander and the personnel they lead is essential.
- 2.21 Commanders should consider the impact that the characteristics of the incident and the tasks that need to be carried out have on personnel and members of the public. Trust is also likely to reduce anxiety, which is known to reduce people's capacity to process information.

### **Fostering open, two-way communication**

- 2.22 The way a commander behaves will affect whether personnel believe there is two-way communication. It affects how likely they are to share critical information. Two-way communication does not always mean an opportunity for lengthy debate. The incident will influence the style of two-way communication. This concept applies at all levels on the incident ground. Effective communication at all levels builds a shared situational awareness. It is this which underpins the identification of objectives and the development of operational plans.

### **The use of authority and different styles of leadership**

- 2.23 A commander should be aware of and adopt an appropriate leadership style. This is the style which gets the desired response from others. Some situations will require a more authoritative style of leadership, while others may permit a style with greater interaction.
- 2.24 The commander should be aware of how these styles are likely to influence people. They should adopt the appropriate one for the given situation. Equally, others at an incident should understand that a commander may need to vary their style to achieve the best outcome.

### **Setting expectations and standards**

- 2.25 Personnel look to the commander to provide vision, a set of clear objectives and set an appropriate tempo to resolve the incident. It is important for the commander to make clear what they expect in terms of standards, role and outcomes.

- 2.26 This could include compliance with essential standards, such as operational procedures, levels of personal protective equipment (PPE) or how a task is carried out. The commander sets these standards and expectations, but everyone remains accountable for achieving them.

### **Safety leadership**

- 2.27 An incident commander's commitment to safety is a crucial influence upon incident ground safety. Incident commanders must demonstrate their commitment to safety by:

- Prioritising safety within their problem solving, decision-making and plans.
- Promoting and valuing safe systems of work and behaviours.
- Ensuring sufficient resources are available to resolve problems and the incident.
- Openly communicating hazard, risk and safety information along with their safety expectations.
- Monitoring safety directly or by nominating an officer to manage safety on the incident ground.

For more information please see **Safety Management**.

### **Competence**

- 2.28 An incident commander should use and share their knowledge and experience as a keystone of their leadership and use it to inform their plans. They should use these factors to provide explanations and justifications where appropriate. They should also use their experience and knowledge to coach inexperienced personnel where applicable.

- 2.29 Competent leadership means:

- Demonstrating safety leadership by setting standards of performance and behaviour.
- Using technical knowledge and interpersonal communication skills to inspire and motivate others.
- Adopting the appropriate leadership style to suit the situation.
- Having the courage and ability to make decisions with incomplete or ambiguous information when under pressure.
- Using technical knowledge and interpersonal communication skills to gather and understand information, to develop and maintain situational awareness.
- Using technical knowledge and interpersonal communication skills to develop and implement an incident plan.
- Forming teams of the right people with the right expertise to safely resolve an incident.
- Using interpersonal communication skills to establish trust between a commander and the people and teams they engage with.
- Collaborating and co-operating effectively with others.
- Valuing the contribution of others and looking after their welfare.
- Displaying confidence and using personal resilience skills to effectively manage stress and fatigue.
- Being responsible and accountable for decisions taken and plans implemented when in command.
- Not being afraid to make or highlight mistakes and using them to learn and improve.

### **Tactical actions**

- 2.30 Incident commanders:

- Should use their leadership knowledge, skills and behaviours to instil confidence, foster trust and manage safety.
- Should understand how valuing and supporting others and having open and two-way communication will contribute to their leadership.
- Should understand how the influence of using their authority appropriately will contribute to their leadership.
- Should apply the most appropriate leadership styles to resolve an incident.

### 3. Situational awareness

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- 3.1 Situational awareness is the perception and understanding an incident commander has of an incident, including its hazards, risks and operational activities. It also consists of how a commander anticipates the incident will develop taking into account their actions. For a commander, it is their perspective of the scene of operations.
- 3.2 Situational awareness, or a mental picture of the incident, is the foundation for the commander to formulate a plan of action. On the basis of this understanding, the commander will assess risk and make decisions, identify and prioritise objectives and develop an incident plan. The commander will also look ahead and consider how an incident may develop and also predict the consequences of actions.
- 3.3 Good situational awareness is fundamental to being able to make good decisions. Decision makers, whether they are a commander, operational personnel or fire control personnel, make decisions based on their perception of the situation and their perception of the problem. For decision-making to be effective, it is necessary for the commander to put in place the means to continuously monitor the operational environment to detect changes, and to ensure their understanding of the situation remains accurate. An example of this would be an appropriate command structure and communication network.
- 3.4 It is important for incident commanders to ensure that the level of situational awareness is maintained when handing over command.
- 3.5 Maintaining good situational awareness of the incident is a critical skill. Commanders need to have the ability to build an accurate mental picture of the situation. They need to be able to do this in challenging, dynamically changing and high pressure circumstances, sometimes with incomplete or inaccurate information.
- 3.6 A person's mental picture of an incident is like a jigsaw, made up of many sources of information interpreted as a single view. An example of this is shown below.



**Figure 1: Situational awareness components**

- 3.7 Some pieces of this jigsaw come from direct exposure, for example, to events that can be seen or directly experienced at the incident. However, a commander may not have all of the information available that they need to form a full and accurate picture.
- 3.8 Other pieces of the jigsaw come from memories of similar events, assumptions or communications with others. For example, as personnel work on their tasks, new information about hazards and the risks they present may come to light. As the commander may not be aware of this information, they rely on each person to carry out their own risk assessment to stay safe, react appropriately and relay new information back to them in a timely manner. This information may affect the incident plan and the safety of people operating in that area, so it is important that personnel are aware of their responsibilities. Further information about risk assessments is provided in **Risk assessment at incidents**.
- 3.9 These elements combine with information that is directly available to create a mental picture. Therefore, it is important for commanders to constantly monitor their situational awareness and verify the accuracy of any assumptions that might underpin their understanding of the situation.
- 3.10 Working conditions at an incident may affect their ability to process information. The amount of information they need to process, how they manage information and distractions, the tasks they are involved with and the amount of stress they are feeling all take up part of a commander's capacity to process information. Evaluations of operational decisions, whether post-incident or in a training environment, will take these conditions into account.
- 3.11 Insufficient situational awareness may lead to commanders overlooking information when they make decisions. It may result in a failure to revise a decision that has already been made in light of new information that does not fit the commanders' perception of the situation. This is known as 'confirmation bias', as attention is biased only to information that confirms the current view of the situation. Other information that is highly relevant to the actual situation might be ignored if it does not fit with this view. This may adversely affect the way in which the risk picture posed by the incident is communicated in safety critical briefings and when command is transferred.



- 3.12 Other types of biases also affect memory recall and interactions with others, which in turn may also affect the accuracy of a commander's perception of an incident.
- 3.13 Understanding the relationship between the information that was reasonably available to a commander at the time, and the impact of the conditions experienced by them on their ability to process information, is of particular importance when investigating bodies consider operational decisions.
- 3.14 The three stages of situational awareness are:
- Information gathering.
  - Understanding information.
  - Anticipation.
- 3.15 In accordance with the three stages of situational awareness, incident commanders should:
- Know the typical sources of information available to them when in charge of an incident when gathering information; this will assist them to obtain and maintain situational awareness.
  - Be able to interpret the information they have gathered, together with their knowledge and past experience, into a coherent picture to understand the situation; this process will continue throughout an incident.
  - Be able to anticipate how an incident will develop and change based on their understanding; in particular, they should be able to predict the impact of their actions on incident development and outcomes.

### **Information gathering**

- 3.16 To accurately perceive a situation an incident commander should gather and understand information to enable them to anticipate how an incident may develop and what the impact of an intervention may be on its development.
- 3.17 Providing risk-critical information to the incident commander is essential to ensure safe operations. Command decision-making can be significantly affected if there is a lack of risk information or where information has not been passed on. Brigade Control personnel will often be required to receive and communicate risk-critical information. Where risk-critical information is included on mobilising information it is highlighted to make it to identify.
- 3.18 One of the tasks of the incident commander is to apply suitable control measures. To be able to do this they must be able to gather all available information about an incident. This is likely to include: information from the pre-planning stage, such as Operational Risk Database (ORD) risk information or operational event plans.
- 3.19 Incident commanders will gather safety and other information from a variety of sources, to gain accurate situational awareness. The following sources of information should help to inform situational awareness throughout the incident:
- Brigade Control.
  - Mobilising message.
  - Responsible person or on-site representative.
  - People involved.
  - Witnesses.
  - Personnel.
    - Local knowledge.

- Operational intelligence – information on the state of operations, for example progress or conditions.
- Safety information.
- Other agencies.
- Mobile Data Terminals (MDT).
  - Operational Risk Database (ORD) Hazard or Tactical Plan Information.
  - Hydrant information.
  - Crash/vehicle data.
  - ChemData.
- Site information such as:
  - Layout plans.
  - Evacuation strategies.
  - Emergency plans.
- Building system information (e.g. AFA panels, ventilation systems) scene surveys.
  - Weather conditions.
  - Visual signs.
  - Signage.
- Audio and visual equipment including:
  - Closed-circuit television (CCTV).
  - Aerial resources, such as the Brigade drone capability and NPAS helicopter down-link.
  - Inspection cameras.
  - Audio life detectors.

3.20 Visual equipment is only of benefit if the downlink is available and accessible for personnel to view when gathering information about the incident.

3.21 Specific incident types may also present additional sources of information, for example passenger or cargo manifests, stock inventories, and so on. Indications about these sources of information are provided in other policies where appropriate.

3.22 Sources of information may need to be referred to throughout the incident, to ensure the information is still relevant and up to date. The accuracy of all information should be assessed and confirmed where possible, prior to using it for decision-making. A record of the information gathered should be made, especially if provided verbally.

3.23 The type of information that may be obtained includes:

- Previous incident history at the location.
- The development of the incident.
- Numbers and locations of people missing or unaccounted for.

3.24 There may be barriers to information gathering, including:

- Incomplete or unavailable information.

- Distractions causing information to be missed.
  - Missing information as attention is fixed on a single element of the situation, often referred to as 'tunnel vision'.
  - Ignoring new information as it does not fit with their current view of the situation, often referred to as 'confirmation bias'.
  - Failing to scan or re-scan the incident scene to gather information.
  - Information being difficult to detect or obtain.
  - Misperception or misunderstanding of information.
  - Failure of technology, such as telecommunications.
  - Unavailability of resources, such as audio or visual systems.
- 3.25 Other barriers to information gathering may be due to the inability to communicate with people at or involved with the incident. This includes those who may:
- Be affected by the incident and showing signs of distress or confusion.
  - Have disabilities that impair communication.
  - Have insufficient command of English to understand questions or instructions or provide information.
- 3.26 The quickest solution may be to find somebody else at the scene who can assist. If it is possible to determine the language being spoken, Brigade Control can give access to LanguageLine interpreting services. The incident commander should arrange for a call to be made to Control using a Brigade mobile phone stating the need for LanguageLine services. Control will then open a three-way conference call with LanguageLine to provide translation services.

### **Understanding information**

- 3.27 As a commander gathers information, they will process it and extract the meaning. This helps to form an understanding of the situation. They will integrate this information with knowledge and memories, which may include:
- Experience of incidents at the same or similar buildings or locations.
  - Experience of incidents with the same or similar situations.
  - Assumptions.
  - Expectations.
  - Mental models, which may be:
    - Knowledge structures formed from previous learning – in this context, it is a file of information stored in memory that represents a combination of cues and their meaning; for example, a mental model of how to resolve a type of incident, or how to operate a piece of equipment.
    - Combinations of cues or pieces of information that may activate a previously formed mental model; when a particular mental model activates, it maps out what is expected to happen and typical actions or responses.
- 3.28 Activating a mental model may also lead the commander to direct attention to information relevant to the situation. This has some benefits as it saves time and frees up mental capacity to process information. However, it can also lead to neglecting other pieces of information that might prove to be important and may also lead to confirmation bias.

- 3.29 Experience, context and assumptions can supplement or distort a commander's interpretation of the scene. Assumptions should be confirmed as accurate as soon as practicably possible to avoid persistent misperception.

### **Anticipation**

- 3.30 Incident commanders should use their understanding of the situation to anticipate what is likely to happen next, including how the situation might develop and the consequences of their actions. In order to effectively plan their operational activities, it is vital that their interpretation reflects the actual situation, which will allow them to effectively plan their operational activities.
- 3.31 Understanding of the history of the incident development, including numbers and locations of persons missing or unaccounted for, will help them to anticipate how the incident may develop.

### **Effective situational awareness**

- 3.32 Effective situational awareness ensures that the interpretation reflects the actual situation. Incident commanders need to be aware of the factors that can assist them to obtain and maintain effective situational awareness. They should understand how to put in place the means to monitor the operational environment to detect changes and maintain an accurate understanding of the situation. This may include the use of:
- Clear, accurate and timely briefing using the structured briefing model to and from the commander will help to ensure people share up-to-date information.
  - Minimising distractions during critical tasks: This may help to reduce demands on mental processing capacity. Effective organisation at an incident can assist with reducing distractions.
  - Appropriate spans of control: Can reduce the likelihood of becoming overloaded with information by delegating responsibility for certain areas or tasks. Delegation allows the commander to maintain an overall view of the situation by implementing an appropriate command structure. Maintaining good lines of communication by implementing an effective communication network is vital. They ensure people exchange accurate, relevant and timely information. Efficient use of command support resources can also assist with maintaining appropriate spans of control.
  - Regular review: Commanders should actively monitor the incident and regularly compare their mental picture with cues and information from the current situation, to ensure their situational awareness remains accurate and complete. Monitoring, Assurance or Operations Review Team (ORT) Officers can also assist with this.
- 3.33 Well-trained incident commanders should be aware of the factors likely to adversely affect their situational awareness. These may include:

### **Location of the incident command point**

- The siting of the incident command point, and the potential scale of the incident ground, may prevent visual cues being seen.

### **Stress**

- Anxiety and stress take up part of a person's cognitive processing capacity. They can narrow attention and reduce available capacity for focusing on and understanding information. This may lead to commanders neglecting important information or not processing it properly, causing an inaccurate mental picture of the situation to be developed.
- The commander should be aware of the signs and symptoms of excessive stress and take appropriate action to manage the impact on themselves and personnel. See Personal Resilience.

## Fatigue

- Fatigue can reduce cognitive processing capacity, which will decrease a commander's ability for concentrating on and making sense of information. See Personal resilience.

## Assumptions that are not confirmed as accurate

- Experience, context and assumptions can supplement or distort a commander's interpretation of the scene. Assumptions should be confirmed as accurate as soon as practicably possible to avoid persistent misperception.

## Poor information management

- An incident commander must effectively manage available information to ensure it is accessible when required, either during or after an incident. They should arrange for information to be visually displayed to suit them, to provide an overview of the current situation. This will assist them to detect and track incident developments, validate and record information.
- Ineffective information management can lead to an overload of information, which can be overwhelming. It can take up mental processing capacity, leaving less to focus on and understand the wider situation. Alternatively, it may lead to a lack of information that can be very frustrating and lead to poor judgement and decision-making, and an inadequate incident plan.

## Automatic actions

- A cue might automatically cause a certain response. Automatically responding to an element of the situation may not always fit with the required overall incident response. See Intuitive decision-making and Analytical decision-making.

## Biases that affect decision-making, memory recall and interactions with others

- Biases are systematic errors in thinking when processing and interpreting information in order to make judgements and decisions. They help to mitigate the effects of information overload as they are a means to shortcut the amount of cognitive processing required to optimise overall processing capacity. Biases not only effect decision-making but also cognitive processes associated with memory recall and social interactions.
- The table below illustrates some of the biases. These have been arranged into vertical columns for each of the categories of decision-making, memory and social interaction.

Decision-making biases	Memory biases	Social biases
<p><b>Confirmation bias:</b></p> <p>To search for, interpret and focus on information that confirms your perception.</p>	<p><b>Bizarreness effect:</b></p> <p>Bizarre information is better remembered than common information.</p>	<p><b>Authority bias:</b></p> <p>To attribute greater accuracy to the opinion of an authority figure and be more influenced by that opinion</p>
<p><b>Omission bias:</b></p> <p>To judge harmful actions as worse, than equally harmful omissions (inactions).</p>	<p><b>Misinformation effect:</b></p> <p>Memory about an event becomes less accurate because of interference by subsequent information.</p>	<p><b>Halo effect:</b></p> <p>To perceive a person's positive traits to spill over to other areas of their personality.</p>

<p><b>Anchoring bias:</b></p> <p>To rely too heavily, or ‘anchor’, on one piece of information when making decisions.</p>	<p><b>Primacy effect:</b></p> <p>To better recall information received first.</p>	<p><b>Horns effect:</b></p> <p>To perceive a person's negative traits to spill over to other areas of their personality.</p>
<p><b>Attentional bias (tunnel vision):</b></p> <p>To pay attention to some things while simultaneously ignoring others.</p>	<p><b>Recency effect:</b></p> <p>To better recall information last received.</p>	<p><b>In-group bias:</b></p> <p>To give preferential treatment to others perceived to be members of your own group.</p>
<p><b>Sunk cost bias:</b></p> <p>To justify increased investment in a decision based on prior investment, despite new evidence suggesting the decision was wrong.</p>	<p><b>Availability bias:</b></p> <p>To place greater value on information that is recalled quickly.</p>	<p><b>Stereotyping:</b></p> <p>Expecting a member of a group to have certain characteristics without knowing that individual.</p>

**Mental models**

Some of the issues with mental models are:

- The wrong mental model may be activating.
- The correct mental model is activating but it may be a poorly formed one.
- There might not be a relevant mental model.
- There may be too much reliance on some features of the mental model.

**Situational awareness responsibilities for all personnel**

3.34 As personnel carry out their tasks, they may gain new information about hazards or risks. Each person has a responsibility to complete their own **risk assessment**, and to provide this to the incident commander as appropriate. This new information may affect the incident plan and the safety of people, property or the environment. Therefore, it is important that personnel are aware of their responsibilities for identifying hazards and assessing risk, to support accurate situational awareness.

**Shared situational awareness**

3.35 Resolving an incident involves the efforts of many people and multiple teams. This might include a number of Brigade personnel as well as responders from other agencies. For any team to work effectively they need to have a common interpretation of events, or shared situational awareness. This supports co-ordination of tasks and activities on the incident ground, including those of other agencies. Commanders should be aware that a dynamic environment can lead team members to form different impressions of the incident. This can happen without teams being aware of it. It can cause conflict and make it more challenging to make decisions.

3.36 It is not necessary for all personnel to be aware of all of the information about an incident. Having too much information may result in information overload which could reduce an individual's ability to deliver tasks. Good shared situational awareness will mean that team members have the information necessary for their role and have a common view of the situation.

- 3.37 Teams may be assigned to specific areas or tasks, which means that the direct information they have, such as what they can see and hear, is limited to their area of work. However, they should know what contribution their task(s) are making to the incident commander's objectives.

### **Shared understanding**

- 3.38 Team members will interpret information in a particular way based on their individual understanding. A team with good shared situational awareness will have a similar knowledge of the status of the goals they are working towards. They will also understand the status of the goals of other team members in relation to the operational plan. They should also have a common understanding of how their actions may affect others, and the goals they are trying to achieve.

### **Shared expectations**

- 3.39 The team should have a common understanding of what they expect to happen when they are carrying out activities. They should have a similar understanding of how their own and other people's roles work. For example, they should share the same expectations of their roles in accomplishing the task, the nature of the task, and the equipment they have.
- 3.40 This can also improve the team's performance, as they have similar expectations of each other's contribution in relation to the operational plan, and the likely impact of each other's activities. It can improve their ability to adapt to changing demands and to co-ordinate efforts. It will help individuals to anticipate the needs of the task and other team members. A commander can encourage this with clear and concise briefing at incidents, together with sharing relevant information.
- 3.41 An important element of shared expectations is the tempo of the fire and rescue service activities. The commander should make it clear what pace they are setting for the incident, which will depend on the urgency of actions, and the type, size and complexity of the incident. National Operational Guidance defines this setting and maintaining of an appropriate tempo throughout the stages of an incident as 'battle rhythm'.

### **Remote situational awareness**

- 3.42 Decision-makers may be remote from the scene of operations, at locations such as:
- A remote tactical command point.
  - A strategic co-ordination centre.
  - Brigade Control.
  - Strategic Response Arrangements (SRA) structures.
- 3.43 The reliability of elements contributing to their situational awareness can vary. They should question any assumptions they have and constantly review the accuracy of their situational awareness.
- 3.44 If appropriate and feasible, they may wish to visit the scene of operations to confirm the accuracy of their mental picture, taking care to avoid creating a command gap where they are unavailable or unable to effectively perform their command role.

### **Tactical actions**

- 3.45 Incident commanders:
- Should gather information from available sources to gain accurate situational awareness and understanding.
  - Should validate and record information appropriately in support of situational awareness.
  - Should confirm any assumptions made are accurate to support situational awareness.

- Should organise on-scene command support resources to minimise distractions and assist with information management in support of situational awareness.
- Should use situational awareness to anticipate the likely development of the incident and evaluate the potential consequences of a range of actions.
- Should maintain situational awareness and identify changes during the incident through active monitoring.
- Should regularly brief and debrief others using the structured briefing model to support situational awareness.
- Should use the decision making model to ensure situational awareness is maintained when transferring command.
- Consider using a wide range of methods to overcome communication barriers when gathering information in support of situational awareness.

3.46 All personnel:

- Should provide all relevant information on a timely basis to the incident commander to support accurate situational awareness.

## 4. Decision making

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4.1 National Operational Guidance defines a decision for the fire and rescue service as:

- 'Anything which could be construed as having chosen a course of action that could affect the outcome of an incident in either a positive or a negative way'.

4.2 Decision-making is essential to the development and implementation of an incident plan. Incident plans are formed out of a number of decisions beyond deciding what will be done, including how it will be done, in what order, with what and who will do it.

4.3 Decision-making is a fundamental command skill which can have far-reaching consequences. The ability to make sound decisions, based on the characteristics of an incident which can be dynamic and time-pressured, requires an accurate, overall interpretation of the situation. Sound decisions lead to assertive, effective and safe incident command.

4.4 If an incident commander is unable to make sound decisions this will affect all aspects of their command, for example:

- Health and safety.
- Incident management.
- Confidence and trust in their leadership.
- Situational awareness.
- Interpersonal relationships.
- Teamwork.
- Interoperability: co-operation, co-ordination and communication.
- Confidence.
- Personal resilience.



- 4.5 Decision-making, like any complex skill, needs practice and understanding. It is the responsibility of fire and rescue services to adequately train, develop and support commanders in their decision-making processes and capabilities. This should result in having commanders who are able to make decisions at incidents, and effectively operate in a complex decision-making environment. This environment is uncertain, with competing demands and problems that can affect many aspects of the scene. Commanders should be competent and confident to make effective command decisions under such pressures.
- 4.6 It should be recognised that incidents may occasionally require a decision to be made that is the least worst option.
- 4.7 Incident commanders make decisions in relation to a wide variety of issues throughout an incident. These include:
- Identifying problems
  - Assessing risks
  - Identifying and prioritising objectives
  - Deciding tactical priorities
  - Developing and communicating a plan
  - Active monitoring
- 4.8 It is important to acknowledge that decision-making processes and traps apply to all decision makers on the incident ground. They have equal relevance from a breathing apparatus wearer to an incident commander developing their plan.
- 4.9 Decision-making does not only happen at the incident ground; decisions are also made in the fire control room and by other agencies. It is critical that all decision makers are aware of this and the impact that each can have on the other.

### **Decision-making strategies**

- 4.10 There are a number of decision-making processes that incident commanders may use to reach decisions. They can be broadly grouped into two main strategies:
- Intuitive decision-making, which may include conditioned processes and recognition primed decision-making.
  - Analytical decision-making, which may include rule selection, option comparison and creating new solutions.
- 4.11 The difference between the two main types is the time and effort it takes to make a decision. Intuitive decision-making is fast and invoked without consciously thinking. It may be driven by cues and clues that can automatically and directly trigger a decision or response. Cues are direct triggers that prompt a response, or example seeing something specific happen. Clues are indirect triggers, for example seeing something that makes the viewer believe something specific is happening. Analytical decision-making is consciously done and takes time and effort to do, as it involves developing and comparing a number of options based on knowledge, understanding and past experience of the situation.
- 4.12 It is critical that all personnel are aware of the processes that drive their decision-making. Although the method of decision-making is not always a conscious choice, it is important for commanders to be aware of the processes that might drive their decision-making. They should be aware of the potential decision traps. Decision controls should be used.
- 4.13 To resolve the incident, incident commanders should:
- Understand their starting position.

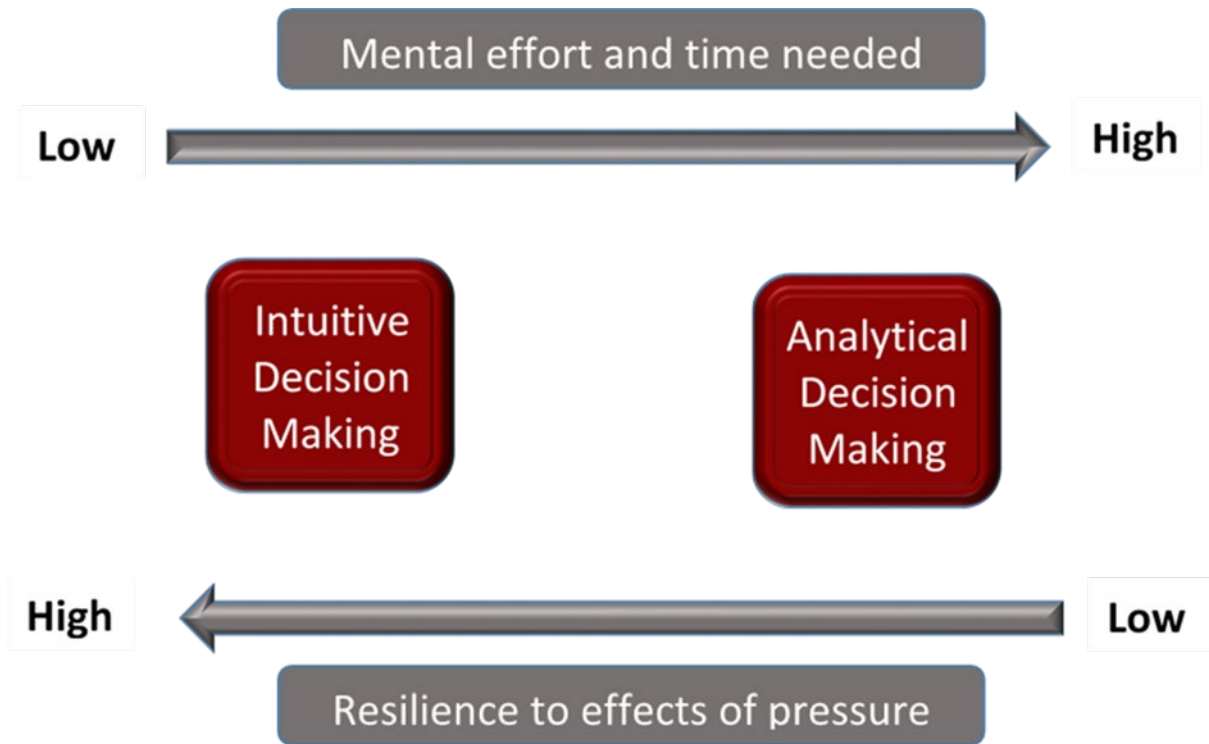
- Know their desired end position.
- Develop a plan that gets from one position to the other.

4.14 To do this well, all decision makers should understand the factors that are likely to influence the way they make decisions.

4.15 The table below shows some factors that might influence decision making in the operational context:

Situational Factors	Emotional Factors	Cognitive Factors	Organisational Factors
Time Pressure	Anxieties over:	Mental capacity	No clear policy
Moral Pressure	Accountability	Competence	Policy too restrictive
Stress or fatigue	Public scrutiny	Confidence	Organisational culture
High stakes	Peer scrutiny	Technical expertise	Safety culture
Uncertainty over:	Legal scrutiny	Risk perception	Organisational risk acceptance or risk aversion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncontrollable characteristics of the incident</li> <li>• Uncontrollable factors of incident command</li> </ul>	Experiencing/anticipating negative emotions	Distraction	
	Trust	Information overload	
	Complacency	Understanding of role	
Accuracy of information		Uncertainty of options	
Missing information		Multiple goals	
Changing environment		Incident goals	
Ill-structured problems		Organisational goals	
Familiarity with situation or specific premise		Other agency goals	
		Competing priorities	

4.16 Factors in the operational context, such as high pressure situations, may affect the way people reach a decision. In particular, analytical decision-making (AD) processes that are relatively reflective need more time and mental effort than other processes. It takes time to evaluate and select a course of action. AD processes can be more susceptible to the effects of excessive pressures and they reduce the capacity for mental processing.



**Figure 2: Decision-making strategies**

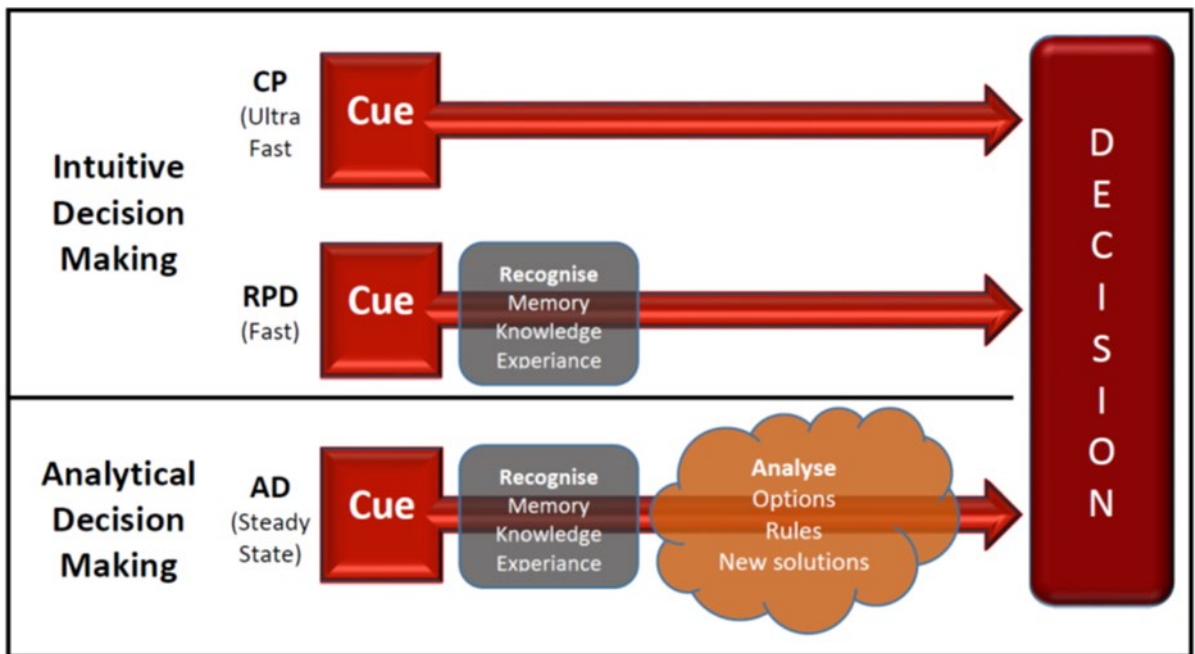
### **Intuitive decision-making**

- 4.17 These are rapid, reflexive processes that are experienced as relatively automatic. Some decisions can be very reflexive. Such intuitive processes are fast and are invoked without consciously thinking. They may be driven by cues and clues that can automatically and directly trigger a decision or response.
- 4.18 Cues that may drive intuitive decision-making include those associated with:
- Hazards and safety, such as hazardous materials and extent of fire.
  - Environmental conditions, such as wind strength and nature of the location.
  - Observed emotions in others, such as panic or pain.
  - Specific aspects of the incident, such as the number of casualties involved and the nature of their injuries.
- 4.19 Commanders can react to elements of the situation, such as the cues and clues that act as triggers. This might be via conditioned processes (CP) or a recognition primed decision (RPD) approach.
- 4.20 A CP approach is very automatic, so does not involve explicit planning. This means that the rationale is not considered at the time, making it difficult to articulate the reasons that action is taken.
- 4.21 An RPD approach is a similarly reflexive process whereby elements of the situation may prompt the commander to recognise, remember and select the responses they made to similar situations in the past. Because this process is also fast it feels like an automatic response. There is little conscious deliberation.
- 4.22 An RPD approach may be useful for decision makers operating in a relatively familiar and routine situation. Such processes are less likely to be useful at less common or more unusual incidents where there may be less experience to draw on.

- 4.23 Commanders should also be aware that because an RPD approach involves matching cues from the current situation to one that the decision maker recognises, it might encourage them to look for evidence to support their interpretation of the situation.
- 4.24 The actual situation may not reflect the interpreted situation. A commander should be aware of these possibilities and should consider using decision controls before they implement a decision. This will help them avoid decision traps.

**Analytical decision-making**

- 4.25 Analytical decision-making (AD) takes more time and mental effort than intuitive processes and can be more susceptible to the effects of excessive pressures that reduce the capacity for mental processing.
- 4.26 These more reflective processes involve a greater degree of conscious mental effort, as the situation is analysed. The commander may draw on their knowledge, memories and experience that relates to the situation or problems faced, and then consider what to do. They might:
  - Use a rule-based process, for example, selecting a standard operational procedure, which should be the default approach when commanding incidents.
  - Compare and evaluate possible options.
  - Create a completely new solution to an unfamiliar problem by applying operational discretion.



**Figure 3: Decision-making strategies**

**Decision traps**

- 4.27 Decisions made by incident commanders may be subjected to a number of decision traps. A decision trap can be described as an errant thought process that can lead to an incorrect decision being made; this may result in a situation worsening. The intuitive decision-making process is subject to biases; this process can be affected by stress that can impair a number of thought processes.
- 4.28 Uncertainty is a primary stressor for incident commanders of which there are two main types:
  - Intra-incident uncertainty: uncontrollable characteristics of the incident; sources of uncertainty can include:
    - Too much information.

- Insufficient information.
- Extra-incident uncertainty: characteristics of the command system beyond the incident and outside of the control of the commander; sources of uncertainty can include:
  - Insufficient depth of understanding about the roles of others.
  - Limited provision of information about inter-agency arrangements.

4.29 There are a number of types of decision traps that may make decisions in the operational context less effective, including when:

- A decision does not fit with the objectives, tactical priorities or incident plan - One of the pitfalls of some of the more reflexive, intuitive process is that sometimes the planning processes are bypassed. This means that an action might be intuitively or automatically implemented without considering the actual incident objective, goal or tactical plan. There may be times when the response selected might not fit with achieving the wider goal for an incident.
- A decision is made on the basis of part of the situation, such as a cue or a goal, while not taking account of the overall picture - A great deal of decision-making occurs on the incident ground, from operational personnel to those with commanding roles. The operational context is complex and there may be a requirement to make decisions on a wide variety of issues. There are times when decisions are made that relate to very narrow or specific elements of the situation, such as a particular cue or goal. However, there is a danger of unintended consequences if decisions are made on these elements in isolation, without considering the impact on other activities, objectives or the incident as a whole.
- A decision is based on the wrong interpretation - Poor situational awareness can lead to an interpretation of the incident that does not match the reality of the situation. A decision made on the wrong interpretation may lead to unintended consequences.
- There is decision aversion - decision inertia is a failure to make a decision. High risk, high pressure and rapid change can create uncertainty about what to do. Decision makers may also be uncertain about possible alternatives and consequences. This may be challenging if the stakes are high and they have to choose what to do.
- There has been a failure to actively monitor and review the situation - Decision makers may not be aware of the progress of an incident. If they fail to monitor and review the impact of their decisions, it can affect their situational awareness. If they are not aware of progress it is difficult to make good predictions about what is happening. It also makes it harder to understand how the situation might develop.

### **Decision-making model**

4.30 Incident commanders and the command team are accountable for the decisions they make. They should be able to provide reasoned justifications for what they did and why. This is supported by the use of the decision making model (DMM). The model also assists incident commanders to mitigate against the likelihood of falling into a decision trap.

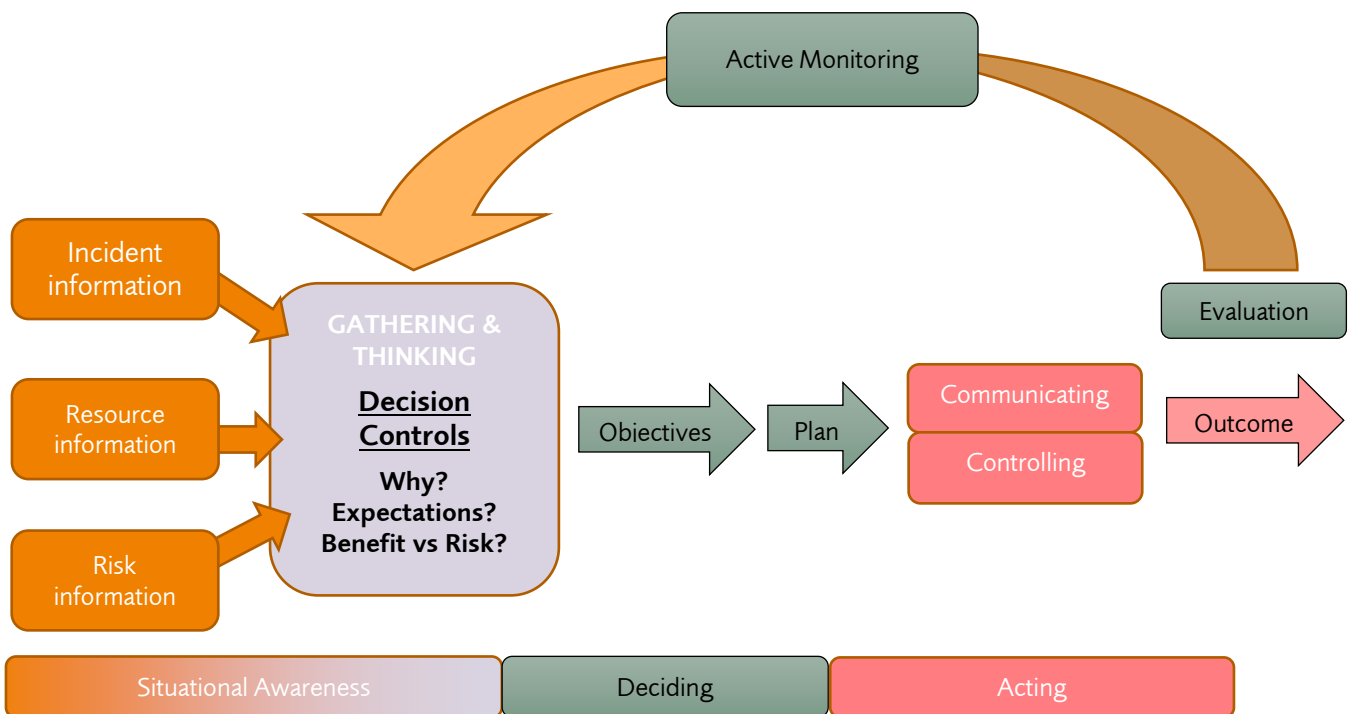
4.31 The DMM is scalable. It can be applied to basic decisions made on the incident ground for a task or problem. It can also scale up for use in planning the resolution of an entire incident. It complements the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Decision Model for multi-agency decision-making, particularly for assessing risk and developing a working strategy. The cyclical nature of the DMM allows it to be applied throughout the incident.

4.32 Under some circumstances, decision makers will respond rapidly and directly to an element of the situation, moving from situation assessment to action. This may happen when a cue prompts an intuitive decision. The DMM presents some safeguards against potential decision traps. It also accounts for the slower and more reflective analytical type decision processes where plans are explicitly formulated.

4.33 The way an individual will make a decision may not be consciously selected. It depends on a number of factors related to the incident, perceived and actual time pressures, and the command role adopted. For example, a senior commander planning the resolution of a large-scale incident may be more likely to reach a decision using an analytical process. However, a commander who is first in attendance at an incident where there is a threat to life is less likely to use this type of process and more likely to use intuitive decision-making.

4.34 The model consists of five stages. These are:

- Situational awareness; incident intelligence.
- Gathering and thinking, including decision controls – a rapid mental check that decision is appropriate and safe.
- Deciding; based on situational awareness.
- Acting; implementation of plan.
- Evaluation, including active monitoring.



**Figure 4: Decision making model**

4.35 Incident commanders should actively monitor and evaluate the situation and ensure their plan remains suitable and is making progress in accordance with expectations. Monitoring, assurance and Operations Review Team (ORT) officers can aid commanders in maintaining accurate situational awareness and confidence in their plan.

**Situational awareness**

4.36 Commanders base their decisions on the way they interpret a situation. Good situational awareness is key to understanding the situation in a coherent way and helps to predict likely developments. By assessing the situation, the incident commander can understand the current characteristics and details of an incident and consider the desired end state.

4.37 Commanders should continually be assessing the situation to support an accurate awareness. They should gather relevant information whilst making the best use of the time available, including:

- Incident information:

- The current situation.
- What led to the current situation.
- How the situation might develop.
- Resource information:
  - The available resources.
  - The resources required to deal with the current situation.
  - What resources will be required, based on the expectations of how the incident will develop.
- Risk information:
  - The hazards.
  - Who is at risk.
  - What is at risk.
  - What control measures can be used.
  - What the potential benefits of a course of action are.

4.38 Incident commanders should identify the resources currently available and those likely to be required to deliver a safe and effective incident plan. Appropriate internal and external resources should be requested via Brigade Control in a timely way; Brigade Control should be regularly updated on availability and predicted length of deployment. The time from request to arrival should be considered when developing incident plans and available resources should be deployed effectively at all times.

4.39 When requesting resources, incident commanders should consider:

- Personnel.
- Appliances.
- Equipment.
- Time and location of their arrival.
- Specialist skills and expertise.
- Tactical and specialist advisers.
- Police, ambulance and other Category 1 and Category 2 organisations (for more information on these responders see LESLP Manual Section 2).
- National Resilience capabilities.
- Relief crews.
- Voluntary sector groups.

4.40 There are also technological resources that can directly support situational awareness and assist with decision-making, including:

- Thermal Image Cameras.
- Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) Instruments.
- Brigade Drones (classified as a type of unmanned aircraft system by the Civil Aviation Authority).
- National Police Air Service (NPAS) Helicopters.

- Specialist software, for example Hazard Manager, FireMet or ChemMet software to predict smoke or vapour plume dispersal.

4.41 For specific incident types, early requests for specialist advice or assistance may be advantageous. For further information refer to **Specialist resources**.

### **Deciding - objective setting and planning**

4.42 After assessing the situation, the commander should understand the current situation and their desired outcome. From this they can identify their objectives and develop an incident plan.

4.43 These objectives need to be prioritised, especially in the early stages of an incident possibly before all the required Brigade resources are in attendance. It is likely that the objectives and prioritisation will change during the course of an incident as objectives are achieved, or as new information is received.

4.44 Due to the nature of the work carried out by the Brigade, it may not always be possible to achieve the desired objectives. It is important that the objectives set by the IC are realistic and achievable. This ensures that the targets are relevant to the incident and the likelihood of success is not outweighed by the risk.

4.45 When developing the plan, it is unlikely that ICs will be able to simply consider achieving their set objectives in isolation. There may be a number of conflicting priorities such as safety issues, correct level of resources and involvement of other agencies and their objectives. All of these conflicting priorities need to be reflected and accounted for in the plan. It is likely that the plan will set a number of primary tasks that, once achieved, can be built upon to achieve the final objectives.

4.46 Once the IC has set and prioritised their objectives they must then devise a plan to achieve them.

4.47 The incident plan may include:

- The incident objectives and goals.
- The tactical priorities.
- The operational tactics, including operational procedures and operational discretion.
- How personnel are going to achieve the operational tactics.
- Whether specialist assistance will be required.
- What equipment will be required.
- The location for the operational tactics to take place.
- The expected outcome and timings.
- Contingency arrangements.

4.48 The incident plan should be regularly reviewed and updated based on active monitoring of how effectively it is delivering the expected outcomes. Active monitoring should be used to evaluate the situation to ensure the plan remains suitable and is making progress in accordance with expectations.

4.49 The incident plan should be adapted in accordance with changes to the situation if there are unexpected developments in the incident.

### **Gathering and thinking – including decision controls**

4.50 Evidence from incidents shows that decisions are not always made in a linear way. The decision controls recognise this to support practical decision-making at an incident. The decision controls represent a safety mechanism to guard against decision traps within the DMM. They build in reflective thinking ahead of decisions being made and get incident commanders to ensure they understand:

- Why they want to make the decision.



- The goals it links to.
- The rationale.
- What they expect to happen.
  - Anticipate the likely outcome of the action, in particular the impact on the objective and other activities.
  - How the incident will change as a result of the action.
  - What cues are expected.
- Whether the benefits are proportional to the risks.
  - Consider whether the benefits of proposed actions justify the risks that would be accepted, once reduced to as low as reasonably practicable.

## Acting

- 4.51 This involves implementing the decisions that have been made. Wherever feasible, decision controls should be applied before this phase, or as soon as possible afterwards. The two elements of this phase are:
- Communicating the outcomes of the decision effectively, by issuing instructions and sharing risk-critical information; this may also involve providing updates on the situation, on progress, or other information about what is happening at an incident.
  - Controlling how the activities are implemented to achieve the desired outcomes; This may require delegating responsibility where this will help increase or maintain control.

## Evaluation - active monitoring

- 4.52 The incident commander should be actively monitoring and evaluating the situation, including progress being achieved against what is expected, to ensure their situational awareness remains accurate.
- 4.53 Incident commanders should consider whether their tactics or incident plans are suitable, sufficient and safe; they should consider and question any areas of uncertainty, especially where they have made assumptions. Monitoring, Assurance or ORT officers can support incident commanders in maintaining accurate situational awareness.
- 4.54 Progress information should be considered, including:
- Actual progress; what progress has actually been made.
  - Expected progress; how does this compare to the expected progress.
  - Predicted progress; what further progress is predicted.
  - Comparison of what happened to what was envisaged to happen; what is now predicted.

## Operational discretion

- 4.55 Operational discretion involves the use of professional judgement to make decisions in relation to incidents that are extremely unusual and not reasonably foreseeable, or a combination of circumstances that have not been predicted. Most situations that incident commanders are faced with are not unique and are foreseeable. In resolving an incident, commanders use their own experience and knowledge of policy, procedure and guidance, together with that of the command team and personnel.

- 4.56 On the rare occasion that operational policy, procedure and guidance does not meet the needs of the incident, or where following policy would be a barrier to resolving the incident, incident commanders can exercise operational discretion. This allows incident commanders to adapt or move away from an operational policy, but only where this is necessary and justifiable in terms of risk versus benefit. Such incidents will be novel and unfamiliar to an incident commander characterised by ambiguity and uncertainty.
- 4.57 Situations where the use of operational discretion may be appropriate include:
- Saving human life.
  - Taking decisive action to prevent a rapid or serious escalation of an incident.
  - Incidents where taking no action may lead others to put themselves in danger.
- 4.58 The Brigade recognises that such circumstances may lead to increased stressful working conditions for incident commanders and other personnel because of the hazards and risks involved.
- 4.59 These incidents may be challenging to resolve and place significant demands on the personal resilience of those involved. Incident commanders in these situations must be able to accurately assess the risks and benefits involved in taking unusual or unorthodox actions while under significant pressure.
- 4.60 The situations where operational discretion may be appropriate are likely to impose significant moral or public pressure on all those involved in responding to the incident. Incident commanders need to be able to exercise high levels of control over personnel in these circumstances to ensure assertive, effective and safe leadership.
- 4.61 Incident commanders need to be sufficiently aware of operational procedures, the skills and qualities of personnel, and the capability of the available resources.
- 4.62 To resolve incidents of this type, the Brigade expects incident commanders to draw heavily upon previous operational experience and knowledge, the use of the Decision Making Model (DMM) and appropriate decision controls. Incident commanders need to recognise and share the fact that they might not know what to do.
- 4.63 The Brigade expects that where incident commanders need to produce creative and innovative decisions these should be analytical decisions, made consciously and with effort. This is where options are considered and the optimum one selected.
- 4.64 The Brigade accepts such decisions take time which may not be available in situations that require the application of operational discretion. It understands that these situations will demand more urgent action as they involve the saving of life, preventing incident escalations, or people from taking action that might cause them harm.
- 4.65 The Brigade expects that incident commanders should be certain that in their opinion the potential benefit of taking unusual, unorthodox or innovative action justifies the risk. It is important for incident commanders to apply operational discretion for the minimum time necessary and only until they have achieved their objective.
- 4.66 Additionally, when exercising their professional judgement, it will be to make decisions that are beyond the range of operational procedures, which may be at odds with the Brigade's organisational practice and culture. This will place them in a unique and uncomfortable position that will also induce stress. Acute stress will impact upon a commander's performance, including their judgement and decision-making. Incident commanders should use their personal resilience skills to manage their stress.
- 4.67 Incident commanders should recognise the possibility that when under such pressure they may use intuitive or rule-based decision-making strategies due to the complexities involved and the high levels of cognitive processing required.

- 4.68 As a result, they will need to make use of all available resources as they may have the right knowledge and expertise to assist with problem-solving or other types of assistance. Resources may include personnel, responders from other agencies, outside organisations or members of the public.
- 4.69 Incident commanders will need to solve difficult problems and should know and use problem solving techniques. Incident commanders will deal with ill-defined problems. Even though the goal may be clear, for example, save life, the initial situation and methods to solve the problem may be unclear.
- 4.70 It is important to represent or frame a problem to help find solutions. Framing a problem allows commanders to bring into mind knowledge and previous experience. This will depend on:
- Task similarity; the extent to which the tasks to solve a previous problem resemble those that might solve the current one.
  - Context similarity; the extent to which the problem solving environments are the same.
  - Time interval; how long since an earlier problem was solved in a similar way.
- 4.71 This approach becomes problematic where there is little or no directly related knowledge and experience to draw upon. Therefore, reframing the problem may overcome such an impasse by creating access to knowledge and experience from other partially related events.
- 4.72 The opportunity to change how a problem is framed may occur:
- When additional information about the problem becomes available.
  - By removing constraints which inhibit what is regarded as permissible, such as the need to follow operational procedures.
  - By re-interpreting some aspect of the problem, such as improvising with equipment.
- 4.73 Leadership skills are also important when commanding personnel operating outside of operational procedures. It is vital that personnel trust the incident commander and are willing and motivated to achieve their objective, as they will be exposed to higher risks. An incident commander must ensure additional control measures are provided to ensure safety.
- 4.74 As the application of operational discretion may assist with local, regional or national learning, the Brigade expects incident commanders to participate in reviews of operational policies and procedures following the application of operational discretion.

### Joint decision-making

- 4.75 Decision-making at an incident ground may also be carried out by other responders. At multi-agency incidents the **Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Decision Model** is the process that emergency responders have agreed to use for joint decision-making.
- 4.76 The decision making model supports the JESIP joint decision model. Commanders use the decision making model to develop their incident plan, which will then be shared with other agencies when applying the joint decision model. Agencies will jointly agree the multi-agency objectives, with each having an understanding of their role in achieving these.
- 4.77 These multi-agency objectives will need to be translated into actions and incorporated in each service's incident response plan. Brigade incident commanders will consider these collective objectives, and consider the tactical priorities and operational tactics required, integrating them into their incident plan using the decision making model.

### Decision logs

- 4.78 Incident commanders and the command team are accountable for the decisions they make. They should be able to provide reasons for what they did and why. Appropriate records should be kept at incidents to log key events, critical decisions and the thinking behind the actions taken.

- 4.79 A decision log should record actions which influence the incident plan, even if there is uncertainty over how important a decision might turn out to be.
- 4.80 The method of recording and amount of detail will depend on the size and scale of the incident. For smaller incidents it may be enough to use informative messages, tactical modes and records made in notebooks.
- 4.81 Key decisions are decisions to apply operational discretion, or that may have significant impact on members of the public, the environment or other agencies. These decisions should be formally recorded, along with the supporting rationale and risk assessment made by the incident commander.
- 4.82 Certain incidents are more likely to involve an incident commander making key decisions or are more likely to be subject to post-incident review, or scrutiny. These include Major Incidents declared by either the Brigade or other agencies, or any incidents which may have significant organisational, political or reputational implications for the Brigade. Incident commanders should ensure a contemporaneous record of decisions at these incidents is made. The incident commander should request the attendance of a loggist to do this.
- 4.83 At larger incidents, where sector commander or operations commander roles have been allocated, they may be given authority to manage, determine or amend aspects of the overall operational plan. Therefore, operations or sector commanders may be in a position to make a key decision. If they do so, they should ensure those decisions are logged appropriately.
- 4.84 A decision log provides:
- An accurate, 'at the time', record of decisions made, including those where no action is taken.
  - An audit trail of decisions, along with the reasons for making them based on the information available at the time.
  - A record of new information or changes in the situation.
  - A record of risk-critical information from other services or agencies.
  - A way of helping the handover between commanders.
- 4.85 It is important to record the rationale behind each decision. This will help those who may examine the decision-making process in the future. A decision log is not designed to record every action taken; however, if there is any uncertainty over how important a decision might turn out to be, it should be recorded.
- 4.86 The dynamic nature of some incidents may mean that it is not possible for a decision log to be started immediately. However, key decisions are to be recorded as soon as reasonably practicable. There are body worn video (BWV) cameras on each Command Unit which can be used to capture these decisions.
- 4.87 If this information is not recorded, post-incident debriefs will not have a decision-making audit trail to review. This may limit the lessons learned from an incident and may not provide effective feedback to aid operational improvement. Decision logs and/or body worn video footage may also form part of the evidence in the event of an investigation.
- 4.88 Decision logs should not be confused with an individual's contemporaneous notes.
- 4.89 Figure XXX shows the considerations that guide which decision logging methods should be used based on the nature of the incident or decision being made:

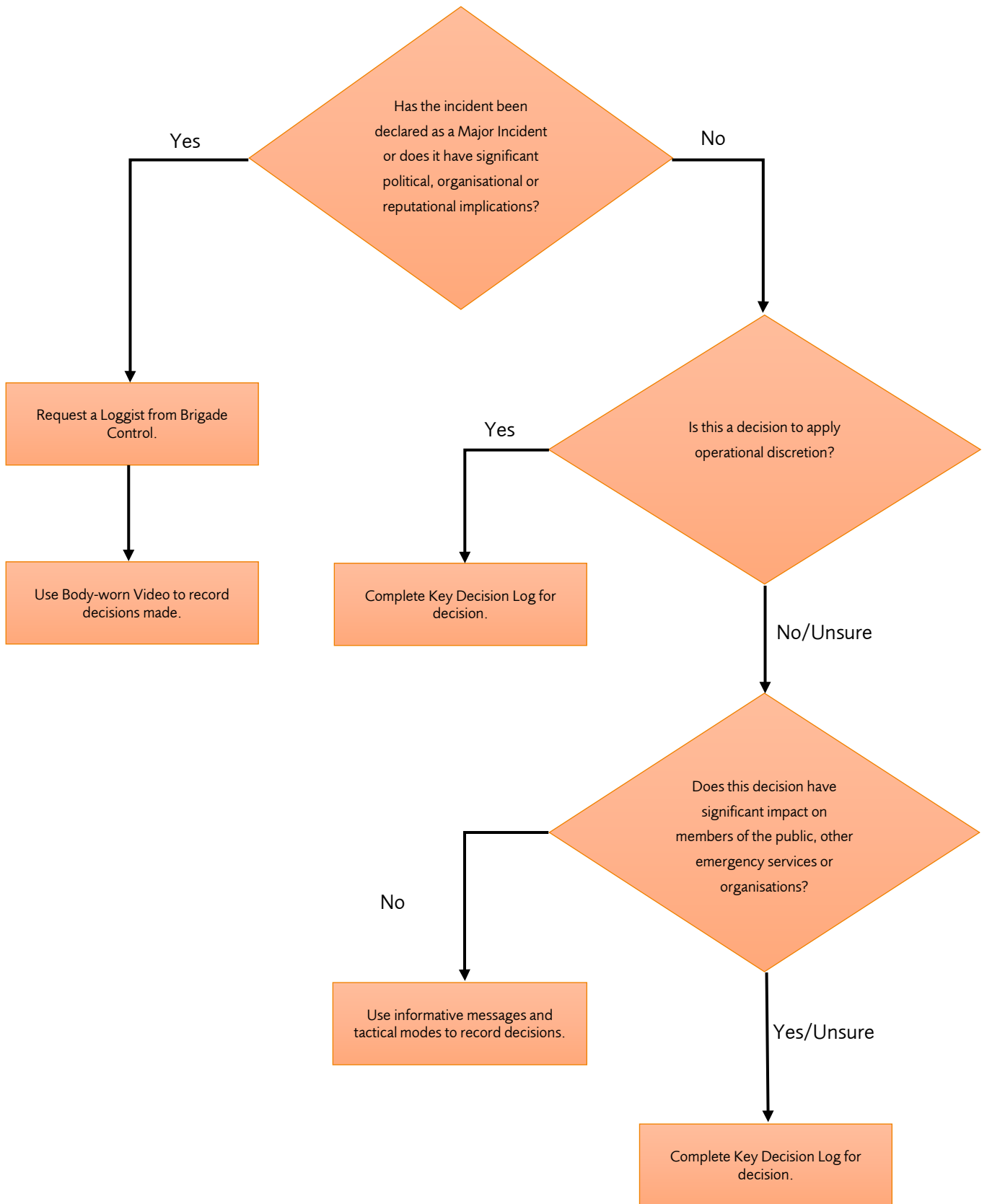


Figure XXX: Decision logging flowchart

## Decision logging methods

### Key Decision Log (KDL)

- 4.90 Form 6182, which is kept on all pumping appliances and command units. The IC should use this to record the rationale and risk assessment that support any key decisions. They may nominate a person on their behalf to record the decision. If a CU is in attendance at the incident, these decisions can be recorded electronically within the CU Key Decision Log. The KDL captures:
- Decision number.
  - Time entered.
  - Name of the person making the decision and their role at the incident.
  - The location to which the decision refers.
  - The proposed decision/action.
  - The reasoning that supports the decision.
  - The benefits of carrying out the action.
  - The associated hazards and risks of carrying out the proposed action.
  - The additional control measures implemented to minimise the risk to people.
  - An overall risk ranking of the planned activity.

### Loggist

- 4.91 A person trained to capture decision making and rationale, through decision logs, during an incident. The loggist will be required to make a record of decisions made by the incident commander or decision maker, which should include the outcome of any risk assessments carried out, and the rationale behind the decision. Incident commanders can request a loggist via Control, who will mobilise a suitably trained officer.

### Loggist book

- 4.92 Each loggist book should be used for one incident only. The book will be given an identification number and cross referenced with the incident. If the loggist completes a book, subsequent books should follow sequentially. The loggist book should only be filled in by a trained loggist.

### Body worn video (BWV)

- 4.93 A camera with a recordable function for capturing an incident commander's decisions and rationale at an incident while working on the Command Unit (CU). BWV equipment is available on all command units, and should be deployed at Major incidents, whether declared by the LFB or partner agencies. It should also be deployed at incidents that present a significant organisational, political or reputational risk to the Brigade.
- 4.94 BWV is provided to capture video and voice recording data for the incident commander, or a National Interagency Liaison Officer (NILO). These recordings are for the purpose of:
- Post-incident review or learning- to assist commanders in reflecting on their performance and organisationally to improve future service delivery.
  - Sharing of best practice where appropriate.
  - Gathering evidence of decision making and rationale for any potential investigation or inquiry and support incident commanders in creating any statements or giving evidence.

- 4.95 BWV has the potential to capture significant amount of personal data as defined by the Data Protection Law. The Data Protection Law controls how your personal information is used by organisations, businesses or the government. The Data Protection Law is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). BWV use must be proportionate and legitimate for the purposes defined above and therefore should not be used routinely to record and monitor all general activities on a continuous basis.
- 4.96 In order to comply with our responsibilities under the Data Protection Law, BWV must only be used overtly. Users must wear full London Fire Brigade uniform or PPE and be easily identifiable as employees of LFB. It should be attached to the tunic or surcoat of the incident commander, and each camera has a small 'recording in progress' surcoat insert that should be placed in the front of the IC's surcoat. The camera also has flashing red LED lights to make it clear that recording is taking place. There are also signs on the Command Units that should be deployed to advise that recording is taking place. Before switching the camera on, the user should make it clear to personnel or others in the vicinity that audio and video recording is about to commence, and briefings of staff or partners that take place subsequently should also include this.
- 4.97 Recordings should normally continue until the incident has concluded. The user has discretion to stop recording if they believe that recording is no longer proportionate or legitimate. BWV usage may also be suspended if a different recording system takes primacy. To ensure the security of the data captured, the cameras are encrypted and the recordings cannot be accessed or viewed at the incident ground. This is to ensure the footage is not retrievable if the camera is lost or stolen.
- 4.98 The use of body worn video cameras as outlined above is the subject of a memorandum of understanding between the Fire Brigades Union and the London Fire Brigade. The content of the memorandum of understanding can be found in ORP – Decision Logging Procedure.

### **Voice recorder**

- 4.99 Specialist or support officers may be provided with a voice recorder to allow the capturing of audio data. As with BWV, this equipment can also capture personal data as defined in the Data Protection Law. The usage of voice recorders should also be subject the same usage considerations and principles as BWV outlined above.
- 4.100 If any of the above decision logging methods are used at an incident, the incident commander should ensure that completed decision logs are delivered to the Incident Command Policy team at Brigade Headquarters within 72 hours. BWV cameras and/or voice recorders should also be delivered to this team to allow the recordings to be downloaded and stored securely.
- 4.101 Further guidance on this process can be found in ORP – Decision Logging Procedure.

### **Tactical actions**

- 4.102 Incident commanders:
- Should make decisions that support the responsibilities of the fire and rescue service including the safety of personnel, other responders and the public.
  - Should select appropriate actions by applying the decision controls to avoid decision traps.
  - Should identify and prioritise the objectives required to resolve the incident.
  - Should develop and communicate an incident plan to relevant personnel, including Brigade Control.
  - Should regularly review, update and communicate changes to their objectives and the incident plan.
  - Should use appropriate technology to support their decision-making.

- Should identify the resources currently available to take immediate action, and request those likely to be needed to deliver a full incident plan.
- Should consider requesting appropriate assistance and support that is available through local, regional, national or international arrangements.
- Should apply the joint decision model process to ensure effective joint decision-making at multi-agency incident.
- Should log key decisions using KDL forms or CSS tools and send completed logs to the Incident Command Policy team.
- Contemporaneously record the rationale for the decisions made at Major Incidents or incidents which may have significant organisational, political or reputational implications for the Brigade by requesting a loggist and using a body-worn video camera.
- Should ensure that any completed decision logs or recordings are provided to the Incident Command Policy team within 72 hours.
- Should consider applying operational discretion where the benefit of taking unusual, unorthodox or innovative action justifies the risk.
- Should use their professional judgement when deciding the appropriate unusual, unorthodox or innovative actions to take.
- **Must** ensure that any deviation from the relevant operational procedures are the minimum required to achieve the objective.
- **Must** ensure that all control measures at their disposal are implemented to reduce the risk of injury to firefighters and others who might be affected by fire service operations, to as low as reasonably practicable when exercising operational discretion.
- Should ensure all personnel know what actions are being taken and why when applying operational discretion and inform control by sending the priority message 'operational discretion in use', including their tactical mode declaration.
- Should contemporaneously record their rationale for deciding to apply operational discretion utilising a Key Decision log (KDL) and completing the risk ranking matrix.
- Should send a full informative message as soon as possible detailing the situation and actions being taken.
- **Must** return to operational procedures as soon as practicable after applying operational discretion, when the objective has been achieved, confirming this in a further informative message or stop message as appropriate.
- Should arrange for the completed KDL to be sent to the Incident Command Policy Team at Brigade Headquarters to inform the review of organisational policies and procedures.
- Should participate as required in any review of operational policies and procedures following the application of operational discretion.

## 5. Interpersonal communication

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- 5.1 The purpose of communication is to provide other people with information. This typically involves three factors:
- The meaning of the message from the sender.



- The actual message passed.
  - The meaning of the message as understood by the recipient.
- 5.2 Good interpersonal communication skills are essential for effective incident command; communication is the tool used by commanders to facilitate many aspects of their role. Interpersonal communication skills are used to transfer information between incident commanders and other people. Effective use of these skills will ensure that what is said and emphasised is supported by the way it is said and the body language of the speaker.
- 5.3 Effective communication between incident commanders and others is of primary importance at an incident (link to Section 5 and 21 of All Incident Policy). The quality of communication moderates the degree to which people communicate, co-operate and co-ordinate with each other.
- 5.4 The commander should be aware of their own assumptions and those of the person with whom they are communicating. They should test assumptions and make information clear. They should make sure the other person has accurately understood the message.
- 5.5 Effective interpersonal communicators should:
- Actively listen to others.
  - Communicate with clarity and confidence.
  - Adopt the most appropriate communication style for the situation.
  - Verify information communicated to them to avoid making assumptions.
  - Avoid barriers to effective communication.
  - Ensure their verbal and non-verbal communication aligns.
  - Check for confirmation of understanding.
- 5.6 The manner in which an incident commander communicates may affect the perception of them in terms of their competence, confidence and trustworthiness. A commander who communicates confidently and in a calm manner when under pressure will instil trust and confidence in others, enable them to understand the situation they are confronted with, make them more resilient to pressure and less likely to operate outside of the incident plan. This perception can influence the actions and behaviours of others, which may impact on several important aspects of command, including:
- How information is managed in support of incident commanders.
  - How information is received by others.
  - The quality and frequency of information that is shared with incident commanders.
  - The transfer of command.
  - The extent of personal, team and organisational learning from incident reviews.
- 5.7 Communication can be a direct one-way process such as an order, which may need to convey a sense of urgency, or it can be a simple two-way process that involves an exchange of information. Effective interpersonal communication skills can be used to ensure that the information received has also been understood, by using active listening and confirmatory questions.
- 5.8 There are times when direct one-way communication is appropriate. The sender will deliver a message with no opportunity for feedback. This form of communication is rapid and puts the sender in control of the message. However, the lack of feedback from the recipient means that they cannot confirm their understanding.

- 5.9 Two-way communication offers the receiver the opportunity to feed back to the sender; information flows between them. While this often takes longer than one-way communication, it can be more accurate because it provides an opportunity to confirm the intended meaning.
- 5.10 It is important to maintain open and effective communications. There may be many lines of communication and they are a major aid to control. Examples include direct or indirect reports from personnel, crews or sectors.
- 5.11 Other emergency services, assisting agencies and fire control rooms will also be communicating. When assessing the span of control, the management of communications should also be considered, taking into account the pressure this may put on a commander. It is critical to share communications in a way that will support a common picture of the incident.
- 5.12 The commander should be able to cope with the flow of information. It is important to limit direct communication and information flows to manageable levels. Failure to keep communication manageable can have a negative effect at an incident. It could result in poor communication of risk-critical information or overlooking it.
- 5.13 It is best to keep the span of control for tactical roles as narrow as possible. Commanders should limit their span of control to the number of individuals to whom they can give enough attention.
- 5.14 Effective communication is fundamental to achieving successful and safe resolution of incidents. It provides the commander with knowledge about the situation and progress of tasks. Obtaining accurate and timely information is crucial to underpin situational awareness and subsequent decision-making. It helps the commander perform the role in a confident and determined manner and thereby assert their leadership and authority.
- 5.15 Communication is vital for co-ordinating activities, completing tasks and handover of command. Sharing accurate and timely information is also critical for helping others to have a common understanding of the situation, what is happening and what needs to happen next. Even the most effective plans will only work if the people putting them into practice understand them.
- 5.16 Commanders should be aware that messages are not always understood in the way they are intended. Problems with messages arise because the sender often assumes the person receiving their communication has gained the same understanding. Sometimes this is not the case, because the person receiving the message extracts meaning in a way that makes sense to them. Commanders should check the other person's understanding of important communications to ensure there is a shared understanding of the information.
- 5.17 Communication helps develop and maintain shared situational awareness across a command team and with responders from other agencies. For example, a common understanding of the situation, what is happening, and what needs to happen next, is particularly important at major incidents involving multiple agencies. Likewise, it is important to obtain an accurate assessment of the needs of all agencies to develop an effective incident plan.
- 5.18 As well as exchanging information, good communication helps to establish trust and build relationships. This is important to enable individuals to be effective in carrying out their tasks to resolve the incident. Commanders should be aware that effective communication is essential for good leadership and makes it easier for people to follow instructions, understand briefings and have confidence in what is being stated.
- 5.19 When transferring command, briefing or debriefing, incident commanders should communicate clearly and concisely and follow the structured briefing model. This assists others, including personnel, command support functions, fire control rooms and other agencies, to engage, follow and understand the information and to identify when something may have been inadvertently omitted.

## Qualities of effective communication

5.20 Effective communication is when information has been exchanged and is understood in the way it was intended. Quality, relevance and clarity of interpersonal and radio communication is essential, for example when relaying information on the incident ground and to fire control rooms.

5.21 Qualities of effective communication include:

### **Style:**

A commander should judge which style to adopt in order to optimise the information exchange necessary for a given situation. For example, in pressurised situations an assertive style will convey urgency.

### **Credibility:**

Information is received and confirmed as being from a reliable and credible source before being acted on. For example, using Brigade social media accounts to emphasise the advice and information that if shared across social media platforms would benefit community response and resilience.

### **Clarity:**

Avoids ambiguity by using commonly understood terms. This is especially important when working with other agencies or members of the public as some terminology may have different meanings. Following a structure will also help to communicate clearly.

### **Relevance:**

Information communicated is relevant, appropriate, and concise and keeps to the point. This is essential during high pressure situations. Incorrect information can overload the receiver and the meaning can be lost; information should only be exchanged with relevant individuals. For example, providing relevant and informative communications to the public to ensure their compliance with a decontamination process.

### **Timeliness:**

Communications should be made at an appropriate point in time. To avoid distractions from critical tasks commanders should consider how urgent the information is and the current task demands of the receiver.

### **Understandable:**

Understanding should be confirmed to prevent misunderstanding and differences in shared situation awareness.

### **Questioning of assumptions:**

Assumptions are questioned as senders and receivers of information may have assumptions about the information. Commanders should question and clear up assumptions to ensure what they say is what the other person hears and understands.

### **Assertiveness:**

There is a clear benefit to being assertive to clarify meaning and test assumptions. Confidence and status can affect the ability to be assertive under pressure. It is important for a commander to be able to distinguish between being passive, assertive and aggressive. If a commander is passive, they may fail to represent their views effectively so that others take note of them. If a commander is aggressive, they may ignore the views of others, be defensive and act in a superior manner. However, an assertive commander will respect the views of others and remain objective. Features of assertiveness are asking questions to acquire information and advocating a particular point of view.

**Actively listen:**

The environment at an incident can make it more difficult to communicate. Noise, adverse weather conditions and heightened levels of activity can be distracting and make listening difficult. It is important to concentrate on content rather than delivery, as preconceptions about the status of the person who is communicating may also affect listening. Commanders should not interrupt or complete the sentences of the other person. They should be supportive and patient with them. To listen actively, a commander should adopt positive body language, make eye contact, ask questions and paraphrase.

**Matched words and behaviour:**

People are constantly communicating, even when not using words. When verbal and non-verbal messages match, it helps people to make sense of the message. For example, a calm approach reinforces a reassuring message.

**Forms of communication**

5.22 Communication at incidents can occur in different forms:

- Verbal.
- Non-verbal, such as facial expressions and body language.
- Written, for example Operational Risk Database (ORD) information, tactical fire plans or procedures.
- Electronic, such as via mobile data terminals (MDTs) or the internet.

**Verbal**

5.23 Most communication at incidents is verbal, either directly or through radio communications. Commanders should be aware that verbal communication is important for building a common understanding for teams to complete tasks.

5.24 Discretion should be used when verbally conveying sensitive or distressing information, to avoid it being overheard by unintended recipients. For example, information relating to persons involved in an incident or details of any injuries sustained.

**Non-verbal**

5.25 People are constantly communicating, even when not using words. Non-verbal communication can be used to complement or reinforce verbal communications and is also a major signal of emotional state. The use of non-verbal information may be intentional or unintentional, and may include:

- Facial expressions and eye movement.
- Body movement and gestures.
- Voice characteristics and qualities.

5.26 The manner in which a commander communicates verbally and non-verbally with others influences the development of relationships and the creation of a positive team working environment.

5.27 The commander should consider how their non-verbal communication is likely to be perceived when commanding an incident. It should be consistent with their message, which is important when briefing personnel or liaising with other agencies. Non-verbal communication is particularly important when interacting with members of the public in an emergency situation; they may be highly sensitive to the emotional states of others. The commander's non-verbal behaviour should match their verbal message.

**Written**

5.28 When written information is captured on the incident ground, care should be taken to ensure it is accurate, clear and relevant. This may involve a variety of personnel from a command support team

member, to a loggist who will contemporaneously record the decisions and conversations of a commander. Close attention by the commander to the written records generated is essential to avoid misunderstandings.

**Electronic**

- 5.29 Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs), the Command Support System (CSS), digital cameras, and mobile telephones may provide a commander with visual as well as written information about an incident; sources could include the Brigade drone, NPAS helicopter downlink, the ORD or social media websites. Further details of sources of information can be found in situational awareness. Equally, such systems may allow a commander to share information with members of the command team, responders from other agencies, and personnel remote from the incident.
- 5.30 When visual information is used, it is important for the receiver to understand the context surrounding it to avoid misunderstanding; for example, the meaning of symbols on a plan, or the nature of materials involved in a fire determining the operational tactics on view.
- 5.31 Having visual and other electronic information does not mean that other forms of communication are no longer required. Just because a commander has sent pictures of the incident via an email to a remote colleague does not mean that a shared understanding of the situation has been achieved. Such information should be supported by verbal or written communication to ensure the context and message the commander wishes to convey is understood.

**Barriers to communication**

- 5.32 There are many barriers to communication, which may lead to misunderstandings that impact on the effectiveness and safety of incident operations. The table includes examples of barriers to communication:

Form of communication	Barrier to communication
<b>Verbal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remote from receiver</li> <li>• Inappropriate language</li> <li>• Language difference</li> <li>• Inability to hear</li> <li>• Noise</li> <li>• Interference</li> <li>• Adverse weather conditions</li> <li>• Distraction due to high-level of activity</li> <li>• Poor listening skills</li> <li>• Pre-conceptions about the status of the person who is communicating</li> </ul>
<b>Non-verbal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotions</li> <li>• Body language does not reflect the message</li> <li>• Unable to see or interpret body language</li> <li>• Voice level</li> <li>• Status</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Stereotyping</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> </ul>
<b>Written</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language difference</li> <li>• Poorly written script</li> <li>• Spelling errors</li> </ul>

Form of communication	Barrier to communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctuation errors</li> <li>• Poorly formatted documents</li> <li>• Time constraints</li> </ul>
<b>Electronic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hardware failure</li> <li>• Software failure</li> <li>• Communications network failure</li> <li>• Over reliance on electronic communication</li> </ul>

## Structured briefing model

- 5.33 Briefings are a key method of communication that incident commanders use to ensure control of deployments and resources. Clear briefings that result in shared situational awareness and understanding of the role or task to be undertaken ensure the most effective use of resources. It will help ensure that activities undertaken are in line with the incident commander's objectives.
- 5.34 Debriefing of personnel when they return from a deployment or withdraw from the hazard area is vitally important in maintaining situational awareness, the information they may have could directly influence the incident plan. Structured debriefs should be used to gain operational intelligence and safety-related information from personnel who have withdrawn from the hazard area.
- 5.35 Incident commanders must ensure that the personnel they lead are briefed on the tasks, and any hazards and risks they face. Their briefing must share all available safety critical information. The briefing may also highlight the safest way to complete the task. Commanders must communicate effectively and confirm that personnel understand the briefing, including when and what to report back.
- 5.36 Incident commanders may also hold briefings on the way to an incident. The extent of the briefing will depend on the type and scale of the incident. If personnel have little experience of the incident type, or there is high risk, a comprehensive briefing should be provided.
- 5.37 To ensure a consistent standard of briefing and debriefing on the incident ground, they should use the structured briefing model – SHOP AC. This model can be used for task-based briefings, or when delegating responsibility and authority, for example to a sector commander. It should also be used when debriefing the result of deployments or in providing periodic updates from a sector, to ensure a consistent and concise format for communications.

- 5.38 The structured briefing model consists of 6 areas:

### Situation

- 5.39 The briefing should first provide an overview of the situation – the incident commander's awareness of what is happening, the nature and implications of the incident, and how they anticipate the incident developing. This will help to build a shared understanding of the incident environment in which the task or role is to be performed.

### Hazards

- 5.40 Any safety critical information relating to the incident should be provided. This should always include the location of the hazard area and details of access, egress and escape routes.
- 5.41 Briefings must include significant hazards, including their location, that could impact on the recipient or their area of responsibility, to inform their **individual or dynamic risk assessment**. Significant hazards are those that present an increased risk, either through likelihood or severity of harm occurring, that would not be mitigated by the application of expected safe systems of work for the incident type or context. This may be as a result of the dynamic environment, such as degradation to a building's structure, or the effects on the individual, for example the level of harm that may be caused. There should also be communication of any control measures that should be used to reduce the risk.

For example, while a briefing may not mention the risk of slips, trips or falls and safe movement techniques in a well-constructed and maintained domestic property subject to a small fire with good internal visibility, it should be highlighted if committing BA teams into a smoke-filled environment, or a structure showing signs of degradation, such as a derelict building.

- 5.42 The briefing should highlight the any relevant outcomes of the incident commander's risk assessment, normally through the sharing of the tactical mode for the sector or incident. The briefing should also indicate why they believe the benefit to be obtained justifies the risk.

### **Objectives**

- 5.43 To ensure the recipient understands the overall goals of the incident commander, the briefing should contain information on the overall objectives to be achieved, and how the incident commander has prioritised them. It should also highlight the contribution the role or task will make to these objectives.

### **Plan and resources**

- 5.44 The briefing must provide sufficient detail on the actions or tactics to be employed. This may include outlining the safest way to achieve the objectives, the specific safe systems of work and equipment that should be used. It should also confirm the resources available to the recipient, and the means by which further resources can be requested as needed.

### **Any questions**

- 5.45 In order to reduce any assumptions that may arise between the person providing the briefing and the recipient, an opportunity should be given for either party to ask questions to clarify their understanding of the information that has been presented. This will help to ensure that what has been said has been understood.

### **Confirmation and communications**

- 5.46 Finally, the briefing should conclude by confirming the understanding of both parties. This would normally be achieved by asking the recipient to verbalise their understanding of the briefing. It should also confirm what information the sender requires as the task or role is performed, and the frequency and method by which they should be provided.
- 5.47 The following tables provide examples of task and tactical briefings and debriefings using this model:

	Task Briefing	Debriefing
<b>Situation</b>	This is a terraced house of two floors. Fire is in front bedroom on the first floor. 2 persons are believed involved, last known location is first floor rear bedroom.	Fire in front bedroom extinguished but hotspots remain. One person rescued.
<b>Hazards</b>	Utilities are both electric and gas, neither have been isolated. Fire is ventilated but appears to be approaching flashover	Level 6 hoarding identified throughout first floor of property
<b>Objectives</b>	Control the Fire Rescue the two persons involved Extinguish the fire	Fire Controlled Search partially completed Fire not yet extinguished
<b>Plan and resources</b>	Take 45mm jet and TIC through front door and up the stairs. Firefight from position of safety outside compartment. Once you have isolated or extinguished fire, rescue casualties using fire escape hoods. I will be committing a second BA team to isolate utilities and hose manage for you as soon as resources arrive	Search completed of front bedroom and rear bedroom. Second person remains unaccounted for, full search of upstairs not completed. Third bedroom and bathroom require searching.
<b>Any questions?</b>	Do you have any questions?	Do you have questions?
<b>Confirmation and Communications</b>	Feed information on your progress and any new hazards back on radio channel 11 via the ECO. To confirm understanding, repeat this briefing back to me.	Confirm you've understood my debrief

Table: SHOP AC Task Briefing and Debriefing example



	Tactical Briefing	Debriefing / Update
<b>Situation</b>	This is a well-developed fire on the 8th floor of a 17 storey block of flats. It started in flat 82 but has spread into the communal corridor. 2 persons are believed involved in the fire flat and we've received multiple FSG calls from floors 10 upwards.	Fire in corridor has been extinguished but severe smoke logging remains on 8 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> floors and staircase. BA teams have control of fire in flat 82 and are working to extinguish. 2 persons have been rescued from the fire flat and 6 persons led to safety from floors 8 and 9. Minor vertical fire spread into Flat 92 has been extinguished by BA teams.
<b>Hazards</b>	Electrical cables have reportedly dropped from the ceilings of the affected area and pose a significant risk to FF safety.  The safe system of work for this incident is high rise procedure, in addition to this due to the dropped cables ensure all BA teams have working cable cutters before committing them. I have declared Tactical Mode Oscar as my risk assessment determines the benefit of saving life to justify the risk involved.	All hanging cables have been removed by BA teams to prevent any entanglements.  High rise procedure is implemented.
<b>Objectives</b>	My current key objectives are to rescue the life risk involved, extinguish the fire, ventilate the building and prevent unnecessary damage.	Objectives partially completed.
<b>Plan and Resources</b>	The objectives for your sector are to rescue the two persons in the fire flat, and complete a systematic search of the remaining flats on floors 8 and 9. I also want you to extinguish the fire by deploying 45mm jets to floor 8, and prevent further vertical spread by deploying a 45mm to floor 9.  In 30 minutes, I would like you to have rescued the occupants of the fire flat, commence your systematic search, and also have deployed the 3 jets and gained control of the fire.  I have made this a 12 pump fire. I have allocated 4 pumps worth of teams and equipment to your sector that are available and will provide a further 2 teams when they arrive. Please let me know how many BA teams you will require for the next 60 minutes of operations.	Search completed of fire flat and all flats on floor 8. Flats 91 and 92 have been fully searched, 2 further flats being searched on 9 <sup>th</sup> floor. 3 jets are deployed and working. Vertical fire spread has been prevented and BA team is maintaining a watching brief.  Fire will be extinguished in 20 minutes and systematic search will be complete in the next 30 minutes.  In addition to the resources I have available at the bridgehead, I will require a further 10 BA teams to complete the systematic search and maintain firefighting operations for the next 60 minutes.
<b>Any Questions?</b>	Do you have any questions?	Do you have any questions?
<b>Confirmation and Communications</b>	You will report directly to me as IC on channel 19 of the handheld radio. Please provide me an update on progress, conditions and resources every 15 minutes, or immediately if risk critical.  Please confirm your briefing.	Confirm you've understood my debrief.

## Tactical actions

### 5.48 Incident commanders:

- Should use interpersonal communication skills and behaviours to demonstrate their competence, instil confidence, and foster trust with others.
- Should value and support others to establish open, two-way communication to gather and share information using interpersonal communication skills.
- Should, using interpersonal communication skills, apply the most appropriate communication style to suit the audience or situation.
- Should use interpersonal communication skills when communicating objectives, priorities and tactics to be adopted to resolve an incident.
- Should provide regular situation updates to all responders by using interpersonal communication skills and protocols, such as M/ETHANE.
- Should apply interpersonal communication skills and use the structured briefing model when briefing or debriefing.
- Should apply interpersonal communication skills and use the decision-making model (DMM) when transferring command.

### 5.49 All personnel:

- Should use interpersonal communication skills and the structured briefing model when debriefing the result of deployments.

## 6. Personal resilience

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6.1 An incident can be a challenging environment to work in. The location, tasks and uncertainty of what might happen puts pressure on commanders and personnel. An appropriate level of pressure can have a positive effect by increasing alertness. However, excessive pressure can cause acute stress, which may limit the ability to think, communicate and operate effectively.

6.2 Stress is caused by a mismatch between the demands placed on an individual and their ability to cope. Working in demanding or challenging environments may also lead to physical and mental fatigue. Incident commanders are exposed to a variety of potential sources of stress, including stressors associated with the two types of stress.

- Chronic stress is a response to persistent, poorly managed pressures, usually over a prolonged period of time. It may occur when there are long-term demands and pressures over which an individual has or believes they have no control. This can include work life or organisational factors, such as shift patterns, workload or culture. It can also include factors in a person's private life, such as relationships or bereavement. Such stress may lead to serious health conditions such as anxiety, insomnia, and high blood pressure.
- Acute stress is a reaction to sudden, unexpected events. It may occur when there are short-term demands and pressures associated with recent or on-going events. This includes the decision-making, planning and communicating expected of incident commanders. Stressors can also result as a consequence of the working environment, for example, uncertainty, extreme temperatures, exposure to traumatic events or life-threatening situations. Such stress can involve significant physiological, psychological and behavioural effects, often referred to as the 'fight, flight or freeze response'.

- 6.3 Fatigue is a physical or mental state of feeling tired and weak. Physical fatigue results in an inability to continue functioning at normal levels of physical ability. Mental fatigue affects concentration and thought processes. Although mental and physical fatigue are different, they often occur at the same time. Physical work, and extremes such as temperature and weather, can have an impact on personnel.
- 6.4 The Brigade will provide effective training and development programmes to ensure commanders are aware of the factors that affect their personal resilience and be able to recognise when they or others are becoming stressed or fatigued. Incident commanders should understand the difference between chronic and acute stress. They should know the causes, symptoms, and effects on performance of fatigue and chronic and acute stress.

### Types of pressure

- 6.5 Some typical demands or impacts that may cause acute stress are detailed in the table below:

Demands	Impacts
<b>Working environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Noise</li> <li>• Heat</li> <li>• Reduced visibility</li> <li>• Weather conditions</li> <li>• Emotional reactions from the public</li> <li>• Moral pressure</li> <li>• Upsetting scenes</li> <li>• Conflict</li> <li>• Physical or psychological fatigue</li> </ul>
<b>Uncertainty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple or conflicting goals: Complex incidents may generate critical situations that require multiple goals, which may result in conflicts between objectives, including those of other agencies; this may lead to indecision and hesitation about prioritisation and the actions to be taken.</li> <li>• Incomplete or inaccurate information: This may result in a low level of situational awareness; the subsequent uncertainty will make it more difficult to anticipate what may happen next, especially in relation to risk-critical actions.</li> <li>• Unexpected event: An incident that alters in an unexpected way, or where indicators of progress or incident type do not fit with current situational awareness, may breach expectations.</li> </ul>

Demands	Impacts
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New, unfamiliar or unusual situation: A situation where the commander has no experience or recognised procedures to draw on to decide what actions are appropriate, such as the need to apply operational discretion.</li> <li>• Failed plan or control measure: Expectations about the sequence of events are not met, which introduces uncertainty about the situation; this may occur because of system, procedure, or equipment failures, or as a result of human error.</li> </ul>
<b>Tasks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time pressure: This is the need to take risk-critical actions within a short timeframe versus the having the resources and ability to carry out those actions; this may occur if immediate life-saving actions need to be taken, or in a rapidly changing situation.</li> <li>• Hazards and risks: the level of risk presented by the hazards at an incident may provoke acute stress or fear.</li> <li>• Performance anxiety: Fear that is triggered when being required to carry out the role of commander, or the anticipation of undertaking the role.</li> <li>• Workload management: A high workload that is not appropriately managed can lead to an inability to deliver assertive, effective and safe incident command.</li> <li>• Spans of control: If spans of control are too broad, it may result in the commander becoming overwhelmed.</li> <li>• Consequences of failure, including ‘no win’ situations where harm will be caused whatever action is taken.</li> <li>• Threat to life: there may be a threat to the life of those involved incident, which can escalate the demands placed on the commander to resolve the incident successfully.</li> </ul>

### Recognising the effects of stress and fatigue

- 6.6 Based on training provided, Incident commanders should understand and recognise the effects of acute stress in themselves and others. Some effects can be subtle changes from normal behaviour. However, there is no definitive list of behavioural indicators.
- 6.7 The significant factors associated with acute stress that may affect an incident commander, may also affect members of their teams. Even one team member who is affected in a negative way can be enough to affect the way a team function. Commanders should be aware of the symptoms that suggest stress and pressure are damaging how the team works together. Further information on this topic can be found in policy 915 – recognising and coping with potentially traumatic events.

6.8 Typical indicators of stress and fatigue can be broadly categorised as behavioural, emotional, physical and cognitive:

	Impact	Signs and Symptoms
<b>Behavioural Indicators</b>	A change in a normal pattern of behaviour can indicate acute or chronic stress or fatigue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyperactivity</li> <li>• Irritability</li> <li>• Aggression</li> <li>• Becoming withdrawn or detached from situation.</li> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Less expressive or reduced communication.</li> <li>• Difficulty in expressing self.</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional Indicators</b>	Experiencing stress can lead to emotional distress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerability or a feeling of loss of control</li> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Fear of situation</li> <li>• Fear of failure</li> </ul>
<b>Physical Indicators</b>	Situations that feel stressful can result in the body releasing Adrenaline. This can result in some physical changes that can indicate stress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased heart rate</li> <li>• Pupil dilation</li> <li>• Sweating</li> <li>• Dry mouth</li> <li>• Butterflies in stomach</li> <li>• Trembling</li> <li>• Impaired motor skills</li> <li>• Poor timing</li> <li>• Failure of co-ordination</li> </ul>

	Impact	Signs and Symptoms
<p><b>Cognitive (thought process) Indicators</b></p>	<p>In manageable amounts, some stress may enhance cognition through clearer thinking and improved memory. However, in unmanageable amounts stress can have negative effects on thought processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disrupted concentration.</li> <li>• Difficulty prioritising objectives or tasks.</li> <li>• Narrow focus or tunnel vision.</li> <li>• Lack of focus on relevant cues.</li> <li>• Memory impairment Information overload leading to forgetting.</li> <li>• Task overload due to the limited capacity to undertake tasks resulting in tasks being dropped or not completed.</li> <li>• Easily distracted.</li> <li>• Focuses on information that supports mental picture of the situation, whilst ignoring other pieces of information.</li> <li>• Forgetting to carry out an intended action at the time it was due to be done.</li> <li>• Impaired decision-making.</li> <li>• Blank mind.</li> <li>• Resort to familiar or drilled routines.</li> <li>• Impaired thought processes.</li> <li>• Difficulty in adapting to changes.</li> <li>• Lowered creativity.</li> </ul>

	Impact	Signs and Symptoms
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance of lower standards of behaviour.</li> </ul>

**Impact of stress**

6.9 Appropriate levels of acute stress benefit performance as it increases alertness, but excessive acute stress will adversely affect cognitive performance, and sustained periods can lead to fatigue. Mental and physical fatigue are associated with feelings of tiredness and weakness and affect physical and cognitive skills.

6.10 Stress may lead to:

- Impaired situational awareness: Impairments such as a narrow focus and becoming easily distracted may result in difficulties with scanning the scene. People may struggle to assimilate the information presented so they can understand the situation fully.
- Impaired decision-making: Failure to consider all of the relevant issues, due to 'tunnel vision', can lead to poor decisions being made.
- Impaired communication: The negative behavioural and emotional effects of stress, such as anger and irritability, may make communicating clearly with others difficult.
- Impaired teamwork: If team members experience stress it can impair how the team functions. Stress can cause teams to communicate less effectively, which can:
  - Affect team situational awareness.
  - Lead to errors.
  - Result in a reduced level of shared understanding about the situation, objectives and plan.
  - Result in team members starting to focus on specific tasks, rather than on team objectives.
- Impaired performance: Individual and team performance may decline due to stress, with an increased likelihood of errors being made.
- Impaired leadership: Negative emotional responses are likely to be detected by others and are known to elicit similar emotions. This can result in a breakdown of trust and relationships, and confidence may be lost.

**Managing stress**

6.11 The impact of stressors on performance is not inevitable. Instead, it depends on an individual's capacity to cope with them, their personal resilience. Personal resilience consists of an individual's evaluation of potential stressors and their access to coping strategies to manage them. Personal resilience may be thought of as the capacity of an individual to cope with stress and fatigue without it affecting their performance.

6.12 The amount of pressure that can lead to stress will differ between individuals. It depends on an individual's expertise and personal resilience; that is the outcome of an evaluation of the pressure they feel and their access to coping strategies to manage it.

6.13 Experts have greater personal resilience for many reasons, including:

- Extensive subject matter knowledge.
- Ability to perceive meaningful patterns from environmental cues because of the organisation of their knowledge.

- Possessing a good working memory when under pressure due to high levels of skill automaticity, freeing up storage and processing capacity.
- Possessing a good long-term memory containing their experiences with established links between them, making information retrieval an efficient process.
- Possessing strong self-monitoring skills that enable them to detect errors or recognise when they do not understand something.

6.14 Based on training provided, Incident commanders should understand what affects their personal resilience and capacity to cope with stress and fatigue. The following factors help build individual and team resilience to stress:

**Awareness of stress indicators:**

6.15 Personnel should, as a result of training, be able to identify the symptoms of stress that can be detrimental to their own performance and that of others. Individuals should feel able to say when an overload of stress is impairing their ability to carry out their function without fear of stigma.

**Shared knowledge, understanding and expectations:**

6.16 For effective co-operation and co-ordination of tasks and activities, shared understanding and expectations are essential and requires effective communication between those involved. For example, if a team member lacks understanding about a situation or role they have been assigned, critical information may not be shared because they do not perceive it as important. This may lead to the incident commander experiencing an unanticipated incident development that is at odds with their expectations. Training that familiarises personnel with a range of functional command roles and tasks likely to be encountered will strengthen understanding of the likely impact of a team member's actions on the activity of others and the co-ordination of operations.

**Team flexibility and adaptation:**

6.17 Factors such as time pressure and uncertainty can bring about changes to plans and activities to complete the task or achieve the goal. Teams that can adapt activities as the situation demands will be more likely to be effective in the face of situational pressures.

**One-to-one command support:**

6.18 Support in the form of a colleague, including Monitoring, Assurance or ORT officers, can assist an incident commander by listening to their concerns and ideas. They can highlight overlooked command activities, or actions that ought to be considered as part of an incident plan. The opportunity for an incident commander to discuss their intentions as well as their vulnerabilities may assist in alleviating some of their stress.

**Good team communication skills:**

6.19 Training that exercises effective communication in a pressurised operational environment can enhance skills and build resilience. Good communication is essential for effective co-operation and co-ordination of activities.

**Comprehensive knowledge base:**

6.20 Developing a deep, broad knowledge base in relation to incident command, command skills and key operational policies can make the unfamiliar more familiar by virtue of having access to a greater mental network of information.



**Confidence:**

- 6.21 Frequent practise of command skills under pressure may build confidence and resilience. Training should correct errors and build learning in line with operational procedures. It also builds confidence in the team because it helps them to behave in the way others expect.

**Positive outlook:**

- 6.22 A positive outlook has a moderating effect upon how stressed an individual feels. It assists and incident commander to deal with challenging incidents and recover from setbacks.

**Automation of skills:**

- 6.23 Frequent training and practise of command skills and other incident command-related skills will automate any actions involved. Automatic responses do not impact upon cognitive capacity, which frees up thinking space to consider and deal with other issues associated with an incident. For example, thinking how to behave as a leader when trying to lead will take thinking capacity away from working out how to safely resolve an incident.

**Perception of the predictability and controllability of an incident:**

- 6.24 A commander who is knowledgeable and situationally aware will be less likely to perceive they are unable to predict and control aspects of an incident. Incidents that prevent a commander from seeing what is going on are particularly problematic as they are reliant on the words of others to build up a mental model. This can be overcome by using the Brigade Drone capability or the NPAS Helicopter down-link.

**Physical fitness:**

- 6.25 Incident commanders who are physically fit will be better able to cope with the psychological and physiological responses to stress.

**Coping strategies during an incident**

- 6.26 Incident commanders should, based on training provided, recognise their own physiological, psychological and behavioural changes in response to stressful situations. This self-awareness will enable them to take action to manage the impact of stress upon their own performance.
- 6.27 Commanders need to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and fatigue in order to know when they are beginning to affect their performance and that of others. They need to know and understand what actions to take before stress or fatigue begins to reduce performance, in order to maintain safety.
- 6.28 The following are some coping strategies that can be used by commanders and personnel during an incident:
- **Prompt detection:** Being able to recognise the indicators of stress in self and in others, will enable corrective action to be taken
  - **Creating time to think:** Standing back and taking an opportunity to review activities may reduce feelings of being overwhelmed, which may help to process the information and facilitate continued functioning
  - **Seeking one-to-one support from others:** This may confirm a perception of a situation is accurate and decisions are sound
  - **Resting, rehydrating and eating:** If suitable breaks to recover from the effects of stress and fatigue are taken, it can minimise any impact on performance

- **Actively monitoring time:** This can help identify the duration of exposure to stress for commanders and personnel, to allow other coping strategies to be used
- **Requesting reliefs:** For commanders or personnel undertaking tasks or functions, when it has been identified that stress is harming ability to perform
- **Remaining calm under pressure:** This will affect the behaviour and performance of those supporting an incident commander and the confidence they have in a commander's leadership
- **Workload and communication management:** Effectively managing spans of control by delegating work and command roles to others, and implementing a communication strategy
- **Information management:** Commanders should ensure information is managed effectively by command support personnel and displayed in a manner that suits them so that it is available when required. For example, a commander may wish for a timeline to be drafted indicating key time points, such as informative messages, and request to be prompted when one is due.

## Tactical actions

### Incident commanders:

- Should manage their working environment and workload to mitigate the effects of stress and fatigue, and to optimise their personal resilience.
- Should recognise the symptoms of stress and fatigue in themselves and others and the negative affect they may have on performance, by understanding the varying levels of personal resilience.
- Should implement actions that will reduce the effects of stress and fatigue on themselves and others before performance is affected, based on the varying levels of personal resilience.

## 7. Teamwork

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7.1 A team may be defined as two or more people with clearly defined roles temporarily working together interdependently toward achieving a common goal that exceeds individual or organisational goals.

### Intraoperability

7.2 Intraoperability means the ability of a fire and rescue service to work with other fire and rescue services.

### Interoperability

7.3 Interoperability is defined as the extent to which organisations can work together coherently as a matter of routine. Multi-agency interoperability is essential for incidents of all sizes.

7.4 Effective teamwork, intraoperability and interoperability, is the extent to which organisations can work together coherently as a matter of routine; it enables the consistent delivery of Brigade operational procedures and **JESIP policies and procedures**.

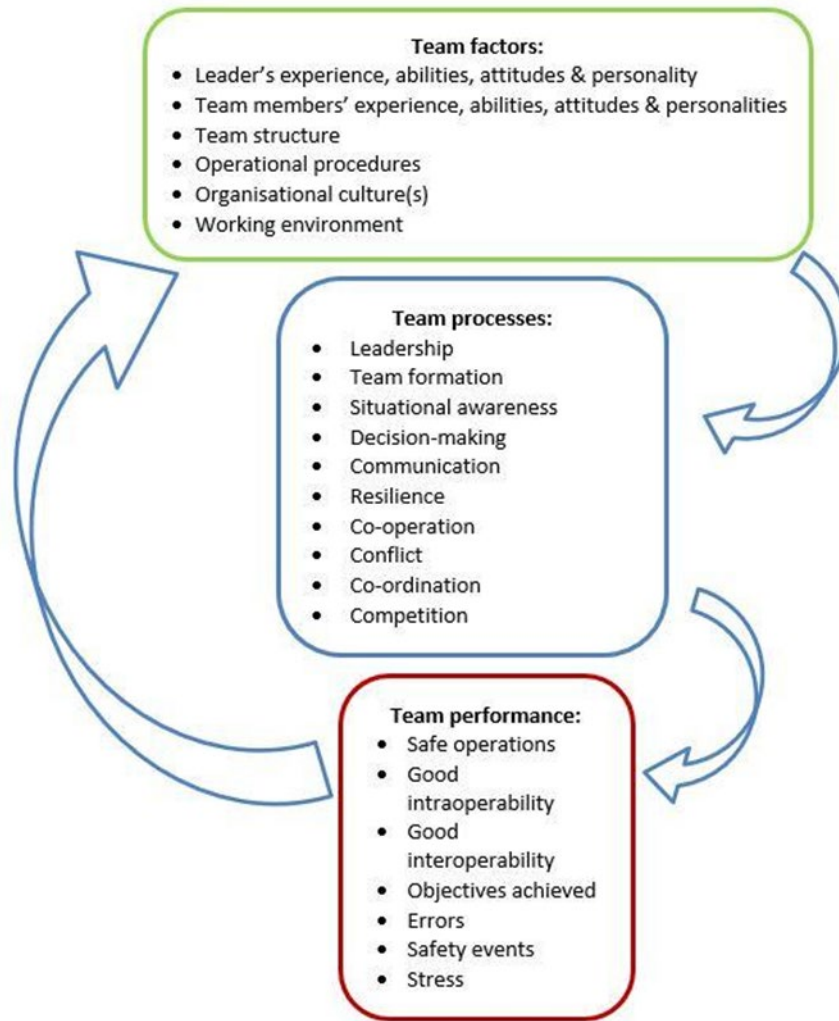
7.5 Incident commanders take on the role of team leader at an incident in order to create their command structure and team and exercise their leadership skills. On some occasions they may also lead a multi-agency team or be a member of such a team under the leadership of another agency.

7.6 An essential skill for effective incident command is the ability to command and control teams of people. Understanding team dynamics is essential to get the best out of individuals and teams. Team dynamics involves processes that drive how people affect each other, how this affects the team and its performance.

- 7.7 Incident commanders will need to use their teamwork skills to form a command team based on their priorities and the demands of an incident. These include:
- Whenever possible matching the knowledge, skills and attitude of individuals to the required team roles or tasks.
  - Communicating effectively to establish and maintain trust between themselves and other team members.
  - Co-operating with command team members and the team members of other agencies
  - Co-ordinating the actions of their command team and also with those of other agencies.
  - Supporting others to carry out their role or task.
- 7.8 Effective teamwork is essential for the safe resolution of incidents; it is also essential when intraoperability or interoperability is in use. Based on training provided, Incident commanders should know and understand how different elements of team working can affect team performance. They should recognise that effective teamwork enables the consistent application of Brigade and **JESIP** policies and procedures.
- 7.9 Teamwork engages command team members, gains their commitment, and can contribute to lower levels of stress. It also facilitates intraoperability between fire and rescue services, and interoperability between other emergency services and responders at complex or major incidents.
- 7.10 Incident commanders should understand the different responsibilities of the generic roles they may assign to personnel, such as sector commander or safety sector commander. They should also understand specialist roles, such as tactical advisers and fire investigators.
- 7.11 Incident commanders should be aware of the stages of team formation. When forming their command team incident commanders should recognise that team membership is based on the resources available at an incident and often in what order they arrive. The incident commander may not know the team members, so may not be familiar with their levels of experience, knowledge and skills. This can compromise traditional team management techniques such as matching the knowledge and skills of an individual to a role.
- 7.12 Incident commanders may also become the fire and rescue service team member of a multi-agency team at complex or major incidents. When incident commanders form part of a multi-agency team they will be required to be team leader in circumstances where the Brigade is the lead agency. In all other circumstances they will be a team member.
- 7.13 Based on training provided, Incident commanders should understand the roles, responsibilities and capabilities of other emergency services and of other agencies who respond to incidents, such as local authorities. It is likely that an incident commander will not know the other members of a multi-agency team or be familiar with their experience, knowledge and skills.
- 7.14 Incident commanders should recognise the importance of trust between themselves and members of their command team, or multi-agency team members, especially when team members are unknown to them. Under such circumstances establishing trust is paramount, for example, in each other's abilities to perform their respective roles.
- 7.15 Incident commanders should recognise how effective communication and co-operation benefits teamwork. They should understand the impact trust has on co-operation, co-ordination and communication and in turn the affect these may have on shared situational awareness and decision-making.
- 7.16 All personnel should be prepared to function effectively as a team member and to perform an appropriate role within the command structure.

**Factors that influence teamwork**

- 7.17 There are many factors that influence teamwork, and these are represented in the basic team performance model below. It illustrates how team factors such as individual experience and operational procedures influence team processes such as resilience, decision-making and coordination, which then affect team performance.



**Figure 5: Basic team performance model**

- 7.18 An individual's abilities depend on their knowledge and skills as well as their experience, attitudes and personality. Team structures will be hierarchical and vary in size and composition of different roles. They may also be multi-agency or contain members of the public with expertise that is required, such as the owner of a business involved in a fire. It is important for an incident commander to pay attention to and support individual team members to ensure they are able to carry out their role.
- 7.19 The working environment is an influential team factor. Along with the type of incident, its complexity will dictate the composition of a command or multi-agency team.
- 7.20 The command skills of leadership, situational awareness, decision-making, interpersonal communication, communication strategy and personal resilience, feature prominently within team processes. Team formation is a key process completed by an incident commander. It involves creating a command team from available resources and then developing and adapting it as the incident develops or as additional resources become available.
- 7.21 The performance of a team is reflected in incident outcomes while a commander is in charge. These may be regarded as a measure of a team's effectiveness and includes stress which has a detrimental effect on teamwork, intraoperability and interoperability. Highly-motivated and well-trained teams will be more resilient to stress, which can adversely affect individual and team performance; refer to Personal resilience.

## Team development stages

7.22 There are several stages of team development:

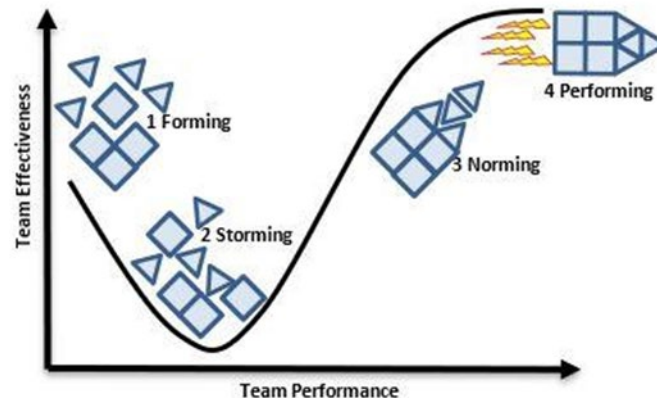


Figure 6: Stages of team performance

### Forming stage

7.23 An incident commander is expected to create a team that will effectively and safely resolve an incident. Yet, the urgent nature of an incident may limit the ability of an incident commander to match each role with the ideal team member. This may result in a team that consists of personnel who do not know each other or have no experience of, or the right knowledge and skills for their role. The team may not possess shared situational awareness and its members may be unclear about the relationships between the different roles in the team. However, when forming a team an incident commander should consider the following factors:

- Knowledge matching: Consider individual and team knowledge and match this to the required function. An incident commander may support this knowledge with a clear briefing. They may provide additional support or additional monitoring.
- Skills matching: Consider the existing skills of the individuals and teams in relation to the tasks needed by the incident plan. It may be possible at some incidents to also consider the need for developing skills or expertise. If the situation allows, commanders may wish to consider managing the exposure of personnel to situations or tasks which will build their skills and experience.
- Attitude matching: Some aspects of attitude contribute to a team working well together, being cohesive and motivated. Such attitudes might be stable personality traits, or they may come and go, affected by mood. The way a person reacts to pressure and stress at an incident can affect both of these. The commander may wish to consider these factors when allocating tasks to individuals or teams. Attitude can affect how likely they are to work well together and achieve the intended result.

7.24 When incident commanders have more time, or if the situation allows, they should replace team members with those who have the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude.

7.25 To help overcome some issues with team formation, and the storming stage, an incident commander should know and understand the different responsibilities of the generic roles they may assign to team members, for example sector commander and safety sector commander. They should also know and understand the technical and specialist roles such as tactical advisers and fire investigators. Clarity of roles and responsibilities and their relationships reduces conflict between team members so, clear briefings are essential. Refer to **Roles and responsibilities** for further information.

### Storming stage

7.26 Potential conflicts may arise during this stage, as the team gets to know each other. Conflict may arise from a lack of trust between team members over each other's abilities or team members may question

the commander's plan. This stage may see a team struggling to co-ordinate its activities and progress with implementing a plan may be slow. Throughout this stage a commander may need to be assertive and persistent when dealing with team members. This will not only secure commitment from them, but it may also be used to get all engaged in discussions and empower them to challenge others or ask for help. Remaining objective, and focusing on the facts, will assist commanders to accept criticism as feedback and intelligent use of humour can ease tension.

### **Norming stage**

- 7.27 During the norming stage team members will communicate openly with each other in a friendly and supportive communication style and actively listen to each other (see Interpersonal communication). They should adopt recognised communication protocols and operate in accordance with operational procedures.

### **Performing stage**

- 7.28 The performing stage is hallmarked by effective co-ordination of team activities that achieve objectives within the incident plan. This is enhanced by team members monitoring and supporting each other's performance and effectively sharing information. In turn this may result in fewer errors and safer operations due to the reduced likelihood of miscommunication, or a lack of communication leading to an uncoordinated response. It also means the team is capable of taking innovative actions.

### **Adjourning stage**

- 7.29 This stage will normally arise at the conclusion of the incident when the team may disband. It is important to support team member welfare at this stage and provide appropriate closure, **Post-incident debriefs** should be held to provide team members the opportunity to identify potential lessons or improvements and to recognise the achievements of the team and contributions of individuals.

## **Team effectiveness**

- 7.30 Mutual trust between team members is essential for effective communication and co-operation, which drive co-ordination, as they both affect shared situational awareness and decision-making.
- 7.31 Communication is the mechanism to exchange information between team members and how information is communicated will inform attitudes, understanding and behaviours. Shared situational awareness is essential for teamwork to be effective. For example, it is important for incident commanders to articulate their goals and expectations and to effectively monitor time, to ensure they are achieved by predetermined deadlines.
- 7.32 Co-operation, or working together to achieve a common goal is motivated by attitudes, beliefs and feelings towards teamwork. For example, if a team member feels undervalued they are less likely to contribute during team briefings.
- 7.33 Co-ordination means organising the activities of two or more groups so that they work together efficiently and know what the others are doing. It involves the use of knowledge, skills and behaviours to turn planned activities into actions to achieve a common goal. For example, briefing one sector commander about internal firefighting conditions to ensure they brief and commit sufficient breathing apparatus teams to safely extinguish a fire, while also briefing another sector commander to set up a water tower to prevent fire spread in an adjacent sector, making sure it does not attempt to extinguish the fire due to the presence of breathing apparatus teams firefighting inside the building.
- 7.34 Effective teamwork involves team members monitoring and supporting each other. A team that monitors its performance will detect gaps and inconsistencies and adapt until they can be overcome. It will be more likely to change tactics when current ones become ineffective or are not working. Team members will freely provide and accept feedback and help from other team members.
- 7.35 To summarise, effective teamwork between command team members or members of a multi-agency team and an incident commander results in:

- Mutual trust between team members.
- Positive working relationships between team members.
- Consistent application of Brigade operational procedures and JESIP policies and procedures.
- High quality briefings of team members about a role they are required to perform.
- Open communication and co-operation between team members.
- Effective co-ordination of actions by team members on the incident ground.
- Monitoring of the team's performance by its members.
- Shared situational awareness within a team or between teams.
- Effective decision-making.

### **Team decision-making**

7.36 Team or joint decision-making involves team members working interdependently to make decisions to achieve a common goal. It is dependent on many factors, including:

- Individual or organisational agendas.
- Motivation.
- Shared situational awareness.
- Dominant personalities.
- Group think.
- Failures to challenge.
- Poor communication.
- Status.
- Organisational culture.

### **Tactical actions**

7.37 Incident commanders:

- Should form their command structure in accordance with the priorities and demands of an incident.
- Should match the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes of personnel with a command role when possible.
- Should communicate effectively with members of their command team and with multi-agency team members to engender trust.
- Should support the members of their command team or multi-agency team in accordance with their individual or organisational needs.
- Should co-operate with members of their command team or with multi-agency team members.
- Should co-ordinate the actions of their command team in support of their plan.
- Should co-ordinate fire and rescue service actions with those of other emergency services and agencies to support a multi-agency plan.



# Document information

## Dates

Issue status	Date
Issued	1 March 2022
Reviewed as current	
Last amended	29 September 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 57	RA date added.	26/06/2023
Throughout	Radio channels updated from 6 to 11 and 7 to 19.	29/09/2023

## Related policies

Listed below are all the related policies:

Policy number	Name of policy
PN986a	Operational discretion - SOP