National Operational Guidance

Section

Introduction

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A 'person at risk' is defined as a person involved in any situation that exposes them to a risk of death, injury or illness. Those falling into this category may include bystanders, casualties and those involved in performing rescues, including fire and rescue service personnel. This extends to those involved in scene preservation and post-incident activities being carried out whilst the fire and rescue service is still at the scene.

A person may remain 'at risk' even after being rescued. For example, where somebody has been extricated or has self-extricated from a vehicle following a road traffic collision, but is required to remain at the roadside awaiting an ambulance.

A rescue is defined in the [Cabinet Office UK Civil Protection Lexicon](#) as the:

"Removal, from a place of danger to a place of relative safety, of persons threatened or directly affected by an incident, emergency, or disaster"

This guidance is for incidents where the fire and rescue service personnel will conduct search and rescue operations. This includes both fire and non-fire incidents. For fire incidents, some elements of this guidance will be supported by the hazards and control measures contained in National Operational Guidance: [Fires and firefighting](#)

The performing rescues hazards and control measures should be read in conjunction with the 'all incident' and 'context' guidance. In particular, the hazards in the 'Transport' context and the control measures that enable responders to operate safely.

National Operational Guidance looks to share good practice; an example of this is the recommendation that search techniques may be enhanced by the use of audio or optical equipment and/or the use of canine resources.

The satisfactory identification and management of people at risk requires a combination of incident pre-planning, incident management and incident debrief functions, beginning with a service-wide appreciation of which incidents the organisation can and will respond to.

Fire and rescue services should use all available specialist knowledge to assist with rescue of casualties. This knowledge may be available from within the fire and rescue service either locally or regionally, external agencies or the owner/occupier.

Fire and rescue services should clarify the range of rescue and other functions they will provide and more importantly, which functions they are not able to deliver. This should inform the

organisation's risk management plan. Where activities are identified that require the assistance of another fire and rescue service or agency (blue light, private sector, voluntary, etc.), clear, unambiguous agreements should be drawn up. These too should inform and be reflected in the risk management plan.

When drawing up the risk management plan and underpinning agreements, fire and rescue services should consider how information, intelligence and data can and should be shared among and between the command, control and communications elements for planning, co-ordinating, integrating and executing response operations.

Agreements should include:

- The span of activities to be undertaken
- Clarity of what roles and activities are to be performed and by whom
- A defined, clear, understood chain of command
- What resources are required
- The mechanisms for co-ordination of operations
- Suitable controls to cover the span of operations and resources deployed
- How access to the scene of operations (cordoned or not) is to be controlled and by whom
- Which roles, tasks and activities the fire and rescue service will have fulfilled before departing from the scene including:
    - Rescue of trapped persons
    - Provision of initial medical care to casualties
    - Assistance with casualty handling and body recovery
    - Extinguishing fires
    - Dealing with released chemicals, fuels and contaminants
    - Managing health and safety activity
    - Co-ordination with other agencies

Agreements should consider the provisions for co-operation and communication between the responders and agencies involved and/or present. Agreements should identify the measures required to effect formal handover of responsibilities as and where appropriate.

Where possible and appropriate, fire and rescue services should seek to gather Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI) to inform their response arrangements. This information, together with local arrangements, agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) should be tested and reviewed to ensure suitability and accuracy through a programme of exercises and debriefs involving relevant agencies.

Operational response should be underpinned by prevention and protection initiatives, delivered in partnership with local communities and a wide range of other relevant partners, locally, regionally and nationally.

In some incidents, it is important to determine the point when the fire and rescue service's duty to protect people from harm has been fulfilled.

Fire control rooms should ensure they employ robust information gathering wherever possible and pass this information on to mobilising crews. This information gathering process supports the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework](#).

A more accurate picture of the situation can be developed through liaison with other agencies and information gathering from members of the public. This includes information about the number of people involved, their last known position (LKP) or point last seen (PLS). The information gathering process should continue throughout the incident and will inform the nature of operational response.

Risk management plan

Each fire and rescue authority must develop their strategic direction through their risk management plan. To determine the extent of their firefighting capability, strategic managers will consider their statutory duties and the foreseeable risk within their area.

Work to identify risk and prepare operational plans should consider all stakeholders, including local emergency planning groups and the fire and rescue service risk management plan.

Legislation

[Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004](#)

[Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (The Scotland Act)](#)

[Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 (The NI Order)](#)

[The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007](#)

[Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007](#)

[Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Northern Ireland) Order 2011](#)

[Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

[The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) Regulations 2005 (The 2005 Regulation)](#)

[The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 (The Scotland Regulation)](#)

[The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (The 2012 Regulation)](#)

[The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework](#)

[Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)

Responsibility of fire and rescue services

Fire and rescue services are responsible, under legislation and regulations, for developing policies and procedures and to provide information, instruction, training and supervision to their personnel about foreseeable hazards and the control measures used to mitigate the risks arising from those hazards.

This guidance sets out to provide fire and rescue services with sufficient knowledge about the potential hazards their personnel could encounter when attending incidents. Fire and rescue service should ensure their policies procedure and training covers all of the hazards and controls contained within this guidance.