



Control measure - Clearly defined command roles and responsibilities, incorporating multi-agency arrangements 2



Control measure - Clearly defined command roles and responsibilities, incorporating multi-agency arrangements

Control measure knowledge

Levels of command

Fire and rescue services should ensure that commanders at all levels achieve and maintain appropriate command competence. The [CFOA Command Training, Assessment and Qualifications Fire and Rescue Service Guidance](#) provides further information about the four nationally agreed levels of command qualification for fire and rescue service operations:

- Level 1: Initial. Command and control operations at a task-focused supervisory level, or a more senior level, at a serious escalating incident.
- Level 2: Intermediate. Command and control operations at a tactical middle manager level, or a more senior level, for large or significant incidents.
- Level 3: Advanced. Tactical command at the largest and most serious incidents, either at the scene or at a remote location.
- Level 4: Strategic. Strategic command associated with commanding in a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), or its equivalent in devolved administrations.

Agencies may use one of three levels of command and control at a multi-agency incident:

- Operational (Bronze)
- Tactical (Silver)
- Strategic (Gold)

These levels are role related and the titles may not reflect seniority of rank. Instead, they show the function carried out by that particular person or group.

Interoperability and intraoperability

Multi-agency interoperability is essential for incidents of all sizes. The [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles Joint Doctrine](#) aims to promote greater consistency across blue light services. This includes the use of key terms and common terminology. There is no legislation that states the primacy of one agency over another. The Joint Doctrine gives further guidance on co-ordination between emergency services.

The key principles of effective joint working are:

- Co-location
- Communication
- Co-ordination
- Joint understanding of risks
- Shared situational awareness

A number of commercial or industrial sites will have their own fire and rescue services, for example, airports or oil refineries. Fire and rescue services should develop local arrangements that define the roles and responsibilities of each agency attending an emergency, for example, transfer of command.

For the incident command system to work, the incident commander and other roles should be clearly identifiable. A system for identifying command roles visually is outlined in [The Foundation for Incident Command](#).

The incident command system provides a structure that ensures a competent person is responsible for command and control at operational, tactical and strategic levels. Crews, sectors and functions should be appropriately supervised to achieve the incident plan. The system should be flexible enough to meet the demands of each type of incident.

The transfer of command should be a formal handover process that is acknowledged and communicated. This is equally important when an incident escalates or scales down.

Everyone in the command structure should be informed of changes of incident commander. This includes the fire control room, who can advise others. This should be appropriately recorded at the incident, as well as by the fire control room. There should be no doubt as to who is in command.

It is important that fire and rescue services can provide an effective response to local, cross-border and national incidents. The national frameworks support the principles of national resilience. Fire and rescue services need an understanding of resources and capabilities available to them.

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Have policies which clearly define the levels of command and the skills required to fulfil them. These policies should identify roles suitable for the four levels of command competence in the fire and rescue service, together with the three levels of multi-agency command. These policies should reflect the national occupational standards.
- Develop local arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other agencies that define their roles and expectations. Where appropriate, those arrangements may assign lead responsibilities and/or primacy to an agency. They might base this on the nature of the incident or other relevant factors. This may need to change to reflect the changing phases of an incident.
- Have a policy for clear briefings and handover of information to ensure that all personnel have a good understanding of their part in the incident command system
- Have regular contact with neighbouring services to ensure that appropriate cross-border

plans are in place. They should test these plans under realistic conditions. Joint training is also valuable and will help to find differences in policy or procedure to avoid confusion at incidents.

- Ensure that JESIP principles have been adopted and embedded in service procedures
- Periodically test cross border and multi-agency arrangements under realistic conditions and amend inaccurate assumptions to improve future performance

Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider the JESIP principles at all incidents involving multi-agency operations
- Keep contemporaneous records and/or decision logs to capture key events, critical decisions and rationale
- Assign team roles and communicate to other responding agencies
- Share situational awareness and establish a joint understanding of risk with other agencies