



National  
Operational  
Guidance

## Section

### Roles and responsibilities



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

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The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2017 amends Article 2 of the Order to include a duty to prepare for and respond to flooding and rescues from inland waters. The Fire (Additional Function) (Scotland) Order 2005 and The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011, sets out a duty for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service to prepare for and respond to serious flooding. This includes any flooding that causes or is likely to cause a person to die, be seriously injured or become seriously ill.

For legal responsibilities of fire and rescue services relating to flooding see National Operational Guidance: Legal register. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ([Defra](#)) is the lead government department for major flooding in England and Wales, the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency ([SEPA](#)) in Scotland. However, responding agencies report to a range of government departments, requiring co-ordination in the event of flooding over a wide area.

The management and engagement of national flood rescue assets in England and details of how agencies will respond to flooding are detailed in Defra's [Flood Rescue Concept of Operations](#).

The Ministry of Defence may be requested to provide assistance during flood events. A guide to military assistance during emergencies is set out in Military aid to the civil authorities ([MACA](#)).

The police are responsible for co-ordinating search and rescue on land and on inland waters. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency ([MCA](#)), through HM Coastguard (HMCG) will respond to rescues at sea, on the coastline, within tidal waters and in certain delegated inland waters. HMCG are responsible for co-ordinating search and rescue at sea. Local arrangements may exist for governing responsibility between HMCG and the police in certain areas.

HMCG's search and rescue teams have the following capabilities:

- Search
- Water rescue
- Mud rescue
- Rope rescue

HMCG and the police can call on various search and rescue assets, for example, fire and rescue services, lifeboats, helicopters, ambulance, cave rescue, mountain rescue and lowland search and rescue. Fire and rescue services will often provide an initial response or offer support in HMCG's



statutory area of responsibility.

The ambulance service is responsible for the clinical care of casualties in the pre-hospital environment. It has a unique legal duty of care towards individual casualties from search and rescue activities that is not shared by other responding agencies. Hazardous Area Response Teams (HART) and the Special Operations Rescue Team (SORT) have skills and equipment that enable them to work with rescue agencies and gain access to patients within the hazard zone. However, sometimes ensuring the safety of the ambulance personnel, including HART and SORT, mean it would be safer for the patient to be brought to the ambulance service. In these circumstances communication between personnel and the medical specialists should be maintained.