



# National Operational Guidance

## Section Introduction



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

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## Introduction

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This guidance is for incidents where fire and rescue service personnel need to search for people, rescue casualties or provide casualty care. Additionally, it includes evacuation functions where personnel directly assist with the evacuation of people or lead them to a place of relative safety.

Local arrangements, such as memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other organisations, should consider the benefits of co-operation and communication between emergency responders involved. This should include the handover of casualties at the scene of the incident to the appropriate organisation or responsible person.



## Phases of search, rescue and casualty care

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A search and rescue can be broken down into four phases; not all incidents will require all four. The four phases, and how they are delivered using this guidance, are defined in the 'LAST' acronym:

- Locate – Locating a casualty is covered in the [Search](#) control measures
- Access – Accessing a casualty is covered in the [Rescue](#) control measures
- Stabilise – Stabilising a casualty is covered in the [Rescue](#) and [Casualty care](#) control measures
- Transport – Transporting a casualty is covered in the [Casualty care](#) control measures

The nature and complexity of the situation should determine the phases required and the scale of the operations. This in turn will determine the levels of resources, management and control needed.

The overall responsibility for search and rescue operations should rest with the appropriate lead agency. A competent person from the lead agency should be nominated as soon as possible at the incident to co-ordinate resources and activity for the search and rescue. The [JESIP principles for joint working](#) should be applied whenever there is a multi-agency response, regardless of the type, size or complexity of the incident.

Search, rescue and casualty care operations will usually fall into one of the following categories:

- In the built environment, such as a collapsed structure
- When using breathing apparatus (BA), such as a fire in a building; procedures are located in

the [Foundation for breathing apparatus](#)

- In the natural or open environment, such as on unstable ground or for a wide area search
- Involving modes of transport or the transport infrastructure

Any search or rescue incident could involve working at height or be in a confined or complex environment.

## Structure of this guidance

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This guidance has been divided into:

- Generic guidance that should be considered and applied at all incidents involving search, rescue or casualty care
- Guidance that is specific to the type of incident

## Safety officers

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Due to the complex nature of search, rescue and casualty care incidents, it will often be beneficial to appoint a safety officer. Their responsibilities are referred to from appropriate sections of the guidance, but for further information about this role, refer to [Incident command – Safety officers](#).

## Risk management plan

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Each fire and rescue authority must develop their strategic direction through their risk management plan. To determine the extent of their services, 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.



## Responsibility of fire and rescue services

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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 reduce 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 services should ensure their policies, procedures and training cover all of the hazards and control measures contained within this guidance.