Control measure

ARCHIVED - Incident ground safety management

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Control measure knowledge

The incident command system is an all-hazards approach that provides the incident commander with a structure they can adapt to every incident. The system helps to achieve a safe and efficient way of organising people and equipment. The incident commander at the scene is the nominated competent person. They can delegate some responsibilities to others; however, they remain responsible for health and safety at an incident.

Providing risk-critical information at an incident is an essential part of the planning process. It has a direct impact on safety. A lack of risk information, or failure to pass it on, can have a critical impact on decisions made by an incident commander. See National Operational Guidance: Operations - Information gathering.

Safety briefings

It will be necessary to organise safety briefings. As the incident develops or where the risk of injury increases those briefings should be more comprehensive. See Communication.

Safety officer

The incident commander or sector commander may appoint a safety officer at any time. This person should have suitable competencies for the role. A safety officer at larger incidents may be designated as the safety sector commander from that time they will co-ordinate the role of other safety officers.

Safety within sectors

Sector commanders are responsible for the health and safety of people in their sector. Due to the demands at an incident the sector commander might nominate a safety officer to assist them.

Although each safety officer should report to a sector commander, organisation of the safety officer(s) will be managed by the safety sector commander.

Emergency evacuation and tactical withdrawal

The incident command system provides two formal means of withdrawing personnel from the scene of operations:

- Emergency evacuation
- Tactical withdrawal

At every incident, the incident commander will apply a command structure. They must establish a safe system of work. This should include a plan for emergency evacuation or tactical withdrawal.

The fire and rescue service retains responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its personnel working in the risk area. It also has a duty to consider the effects of its actions on the safety of other people, including when undertaking emergency evacuation or a tactical withdrawal.

The plans they make should enable emergency evacuation or tactical withdrawal which:

- Evacuates people at highest risk while protecting escape routes
- Removes people from areas where the risk has become too high

Emergency evacuation is the term used to describe the urgent and immediate withdrawal of crews from a risk area.

The incident commander should inform everyone at an incident of the location of the muster point. At a prolonged incident the location of the muster point may change. They should ensure that everyone at an incident knows about this change. See The Foundation for Incident Command.

The evacuation should include a roll call at a suitable location. Additionally, the incident commander should make sure there has been a roll call of non-fire and rescue service personnel at the scene. Following an evacuation or an evacuation signal being given, no one should re-enter the hazard area without the permission of, or explicit instruction from the incident commander.

Where personnel remain unaccounted for after an evacuation, the incident commander will need to assess the risks and commence appropriate search and rescue procedures.

Tactical withdrawal is the term used to describe the systematic or staged withdrawal of crews from the risk area.

The incident commander may need to redeploy resources or move people from danger. This is a tactical withdrawal. They may also need to withdraw all or part of a sector. When a tactical withdrawal is taking place, an evacuation signal or full incident roll call may not be required. See The Foundation for Incident Command.

Provision of information

Provision of relevant information 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.

Fire control room operators will often be required to receive and communicate risk-critical information. Where risk-critical information is included on the initial turnout details, it should be easy to identify.

Where specific risk information is available, incident commanders should ensure this is disseminated to all appropriate personnel on the incident ground. This may include provision of information between agencies or organisations.

Strategic actions

Tactical actions

There are no tactical actions associated with this control measure.