



# National Operational Guidance



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

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## Contents

Hazard - Ineffective strategic response arrangements to support major incidents .....	3
<i>Control measure - Local emergency planning group arrangements</i> .....	3
<i>Control measure - Strategic co-ordinating groups</i> .....	5
<i>Control measure - Tactical co-ordinating groups</i> .....	6
<i>Control measure - Additional resources: Major incidents</i> .....	8

## Hazard - Ineffective strategic response arrangements to support major incidents

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### Hazard Knowledge

Major incidents are likely to be complex, protracted, and involve many different agencies in their resolution. The scale of such incidents, the impact on large numbers of people over a wide area and the potential demand this will put on local resources mean that additional levels of response arrangements will be required. Without a higher degree of co-ordination, communication and command and control ensuring effective joint working at every level of the incident, the risk to the public, responders and to the successful resolution of the incident will be increased.

Strategic co-ordination arrangements are designed to support and compliment tactical and operational command, not replace them. Strategic co-ordinating groups should always operate at an appropriate level and degree of detail to be effective.



### Control measure - Local emergency planning group arrangements

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#### Control measure knowledge

The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) and Framework (or devolved equivalent) places requirements on responding agencies to make arrangements for the strategic co-ordination of major incidents and places emergency planning at the heart of the civil protection duty on Category 1 responders. The Act requires Category 1 responders to maintain plans for preventing emergencies, reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies and taking other action in the event of emergencies. They should draw on risk assessments and have regard to the arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public at the time of an emergency.

See Control Measure - [Warn, inform, instruct and update people: Major incidents](#)

Local plans should determine whether an emergency has occurred and make provision for training and exercising of key staff. Category 1 responders should involve Category 2 responders. They are also specifically required to have regard to the activities of relevant voluntary organisations not subject to the Act's requirements to ensure developed plans are effective. Procedures should also

be put in place to ensure that the plan is reviewed periodically and kept up-to-date.

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services must:

- Develop a procedure for determining whether an emergency has occurred
- Make provision for training key staff; and provision for exercising the plan to ensure it is effective
- Participate in their local emergency planning group

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure that the plan is reviewed periodically and kept up-to-date
- Train all relevant personnel in the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) and Framework (or devolved equivalent)
- Train all relevant personnel in the role of co-ordinating groups
- Embed the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) in their ways of working
- Train all relevant personnel on the current National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) arrangements and the range of local and national resilience assets and other specialist assets that can be deployed as a national capability
- As part of the emergency planning group, ensure an adequate programme of multi-agency training, exercising and planning
- Ensure that an appropriate level of planning for foreseeable major risks is in place

## Tactical actions

Strategic commanders should::

- Access appropriate local plans during a major incident to influence decision making
- Work with tactical incident commanders and other members at the co-ordinating group to develop a common operating picture (COP) and joint understanding of risk based on related local emergency planning assumptions.

Tactical incident commanders should:

- Access the appropriate level and type of support from strategic commanders at major incidents
- Share situational awareness with tactical and strategic commanders to inform a common operating picture (COP)



## Control measure - Strategic co-ordinating groups

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### Control measure knowledge

At a major incident the co-ordination of multi-agency resources will be the most effective way of resolving the situation. All emergency planning groups are required to have arrangements for the strategic coordinating groups. These groups are established at a pre-agreed strategic coordination centre (SCC) and comprised of strategic leaders from all the response and recovery agencies that are or may become involved. In this guidance we refer to these as co-ordinating groups. Such a group, operating under the auspices of the Civil Contingencies Act and Framework (or devolved equivalent) and with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles at the centre of their thinking and actions will ensure the best possible response to and recovery from the incident, enhancing public and responder safety and improving the outcomes. A co-ordinating group will usually be chaired and managed by the police strategic commander but may be led by other agencies as appropriate depending on the nature of the incident. This group will also co-ordinate any requests for national assets, including military assistance. They will also ensure that both the

response and recovery phases of the incident are given equal importance and the transition is managed effectively.

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Identify, train, exercise and equip personnel to operate in a strategic co-ordinating environment, in line with National Operational Guidance: [Incident command](#)
- Ensure that strategic commanders are familiar with co-ordinating group establishment and ways of working, and that they can support the establishment and continuation of a co-ordinating group for as long as is necessary
- Ensure that strategic commanders who are sent to a co-ordinating group have an appropriate level of authority to make decisions on behalf of their organisation

## Tactical actions

At the strategic co-ordinating group, commanders should:

- Delegate appropriate actions to tactical incident commanders to deliver the groups' objectives

Tactical incident commanders should:

- Carry out delegated actions to deliver co-ordinating groups' objectives



## Control measure - Tactical co-ordinating groups

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### Control measure knowledge

At a major incident, a co-ordinating group at the tactical level should be established to ensure

tactical commanders or managers communicate and co-ordinate effectively with each other and with strategic and operational functions.

Tactical coordinating groups can be convened at the scene of an incident or a remote location (e.g. a police building); this will depend on the type of incident and speed of escalation. They will include appropriately qualified commanders of each agency committed within the area of operations who have relevant decision making powers and will undertake tactical co-ordination of the response.

Although each of the most senior officers at the tactical level will have specific service or agency responsibilities, they should together deliver tactical multi-agency management of the incident. They should ensure that operational commanders have the means, direction and co-ordination required to deliver successful outcomes. Unless there is an obvious and urgent need for intervention, they should not become directly involved in the detailed operational tasks being discharged at the operational level.

The chair of the group must create time for regular briefing, consultation and tasking meetings with counterparts and key liaison officers. To support the chair and other members in these functions, responders may consider the creation of a support group to assist with administration.

## **Strategic actions**

Fire and rescue services should:

- Identify, train, exercise and equip personnel to operate in a tactical co-ordinating environment in line with National Operational Guidance: Incident command
- Ensure that tactical commanders both remote and on-scene are familiar with coordinating group establishment and ways of working, and that they can support the establishment and continuation of a co-ordinating group for as long as is necessary
- Ensure that tactical commanders who are sent to a coordinating group have an appropriate level of authority to make decisions on behalf of their organisation

## **Tactical actions**

At the tactical coordinating group, tactical commanders should::

- Assess significant risks and use this to inform tasking of operational commanders



- Plan and co-ordinate how and when tasks will be undertaken
- Obtain additional resources if required
- Establish effective communications with both on-scene commanders and any strategic coordinating group

Incident commanders should:

- Determine priorities for allocating available resources



## Control measure - Additional resources: Major incidents

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### Control measure knowledge

Protracted or widespread major incidents will involve large numbers of fire and rescue service personnel, vehicles and equipment over prolonged periods of time. This requires significant resilience and logistical arrangements to be managed successfully. This scale of operations is likely to be outside of that normally experienced by crews at an incident, including fire control room(s) and normal incident support arrangements that are in place for day to day activities. Operational support for ongoing major incidents requires an additional level of support to manage the incident successfully. This will require scalable support arrangements and systems, including command support as well as sufficient numbers of trained personnel to sustain extended periods of operation. See National Operational Guidance: [Incident command](#).

### Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure that they have scalable command support arrangements for all incidents, however large or protracted



- Consider the provision of a major incident room or support cell to provide additional support to fire control, and strategic, tactical and operational commanders
- Ensure that sufficient resources are available and considered within risk management plans and that planning assumptions and exercising includes preparation for major incidents

## **Tactical actions**

Tactical incident commanders should:

- Ensure that they are aware of the type and level of support that an ongoing major incident will receive and how the structural arrangements work
- Plan ahead at the incident to predict and request resource requirements as far in advance as practicable
- Establish clear lines of communication with all the relevant parties that are in place to assist them