



National
Operational
Guidance

Control measure

Risk assessment at an incident



NFCC
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Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Control measure - Risk assessment at an incident | 3 |
|--|---|



Control measure - Risk assessment at an incident

Control measure knowledge

An incident ground is an operational workplace and the law requires fire and rescue services to assess and reduce the risk to personnel as far as is reasonably practicable. As well as this duty of care to fire and rescue personnel, there is also a duty to safeguard others.

The objectives for fire and rescue services are to resolve incidents with minimal impact to the community, and to prevent or minimise harm to people and the environment.

A safe working area should be established as soon as is practicable. In order to ensure this, incident commanders will need to:

- Identify any hazards or risks
- Select the most appropriate control measures
- Consider the benefits of proceeding with actions, taking account of the risk
- Take into account any time constraints

Safe systems of work must be put in place, and personnel must ensure they develop, maintain and review these systems throughout the incident. To perform an effective risk assessment, incident commanders should understand the following concepts:

- Hazards: Events or situations with the potential to cause:
 - Death
 - Physical harm
 - Psychological harm
 - Damage to or loss of property
 - Damage to or disruption of the environment
 - Disruption to economic, social and political structures
- Risks: A risk is the likelihood that a hazard will actually cause its adverse effects, together with a measure of the effect
- Control measures: Measures to reduce the likelihood of exposure to a hazard from a given risk, or to reduce the impacts of that exposure

The [HSE hierarchy of control](#) gives further examples of how control measures can be applied at an incident.

Risk assessment at incidents breaks down into a number of parts:

- Individual risk assessment
- Dynamic risk assessment
- Analytical risk assessment

Further information about risk assessments is provided in Incident command: [Knowledge, skills and competence](#).

Individual risk assessment

Individual risk assessment helps personnel remain safe when working unsupervised.

Further information may be found in Incident command: Knowledge, skills and competence: [Risk assessments](#).

Dynamic risk assessment

Dynamic risk assessment (DRA) describes the assessment of risk in a rapidly changing environment at an incident where decisions are sometimes made in fast-moving situations, with incomplete or inaccurate information. Elements of the DRA process include:

- Evaluating the situation, including consideration of who might be harmed and how
- Benefits of actions proportionate to risk
- Selecting systems of work
- Declaring the tactical mode
- Tactical control
- Additional or alternative control measures

The outcome of the DRA will contribute to the incident commander's operational plan. It helps to inform whether personnel should be operating in the hazard area. This in turn determines the tactical mode.

Analytical risk assessment

Analytical risk assessments (ARA) form the basis of a more detailed incident risk assessment as the incident progresses or becomes more complex. They should be formally recorded and carried out as soon as time or resources permit and at suitable intervals thereafter.

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Have systems and methods in place to support the carrying out, sharing and recording of risk assessments

Tactical actions

Incident commanders must:

- Carry out a dynamic risk assessment, identify hazards, evaluate risk and implement safe systems of work
- Identify and communicate the hazard area and establish a safe working area as soon as is practicable
- Continually review the risk assessment using situational awareness gathered as the incident progresses

Incident commanders should:

- Carry out and formally record analytical risk assessments at suitable intervals
- Communicate findings of analytical risk assessment to all personnel and other agencies
- Ensure that all personnel are briefed on the current hazards, risks, control measures and tactical mode