Introduction

The guidance supports fire and rescue services to put in place a system for an all-hazards approach to incident command. It is an essential guide to the safe systems of work needed at an incident and is aimed at policy writers in each fire and rescue service to support them in producing their local guidance and procedures. This policy guidance is accompanied by The Foundation for Incident Command, which provides further detail and is essential reading for all fire and rescue service incident commanders and other personnel, including firefighters and fire control room operators.

Other emergency agencies will base their expectation of the fire and rescue service response to multi-agency incidents on the incident command system contained in this guidance. For this reason, fire and rescue services are expected to adopt this guidance. The guidance is likely to be considered as national best practice in any review or enquiry following a significant incident.

The guidance provides details of specific hazard and control measures that have been developed following a literature review. The control measures support a fire and rescue service in delivering assertive, effective and safe incident command.

The incident command system provides the incident commander with a clear framework to structure, organise and manage an incident. It can be adapted to all sizes and types of incident and will help them deploy and use resources in an efficient and safe way. The incident command system allows the incident commander to use health and safety arrangements, including operational guidance tailored to the characteristics of an emergency. Fire and rescue services should therefore ensure their policies and procedures are based on it. This helps the incident commander to achieve an appropriate balance between the benefit of undertaking planned actions and the risks associated with them.

National Operational Guidance: Operations gives guidance on operational planning and the storage and dissemination of risk information to the incident ground. Fire and rescue services should also refer to that guidance when preparing policies and procedures relating to the command of incidents.

Operational response is hazardous and firefighters respond to thousands of incidents each year. Some incidents need only simple actions and procedures to be dealt with effectively and safely, as risks are low. Others are more challenging and may quickly increase in size, complexity and duration. The Health, safety and welfare framework for the operational environment (the Framework) provides guidance to fire and rescue authorities to assist with planning the delivery of their health and safety responsibilities. It contains the safe person principles on which fire and rescue services should base their policies. The Framework and the application of risk assessment and control measures should not prevent fire and rescue service operations from taking place.
Commanding operational situations is different to managing controlled and defined situations or workplace scenarios. Commanders need a range of qualities together with command skills to deal with the wide-ranging nature of emergencies. Therefore, fire and rescue services must provide their incident commanders with the necessary training, equipment and resources to effectively apply the incident command system to any incident.

Assertive and effective commanders:

- Are confident and self-aware
- Are well-trained and competent
- Have sound situational awareness
- Are able to lead, direct and instruct others
- Can communicate effectively
- Are able to plan and implement
- Can apply sound judgement and effective decision-making
- Are able to adapt to changing situations
- Are calm and controlled

Fire and rescue services must have selection processes that ensure personnel who are responsible for performing command functions are capable of doing so. They should appoint incident commanders that are able to demonstrate clear potential to deal with stressful situations where there is sustained pressure. Once appointed they should periodically be required to demonstrate competence in their role.

Fire and rescue services must ensure they appropriately train and assess their incident commanders. They should ensure incident commanders understand and have sufficient time and facilities to practice the skills they need for command. Fire and rescue services must equip them with the operational knowledge and understanding needed to resolve the full range of reasonably foreseeable incidents and enable them to adapt to those that are not.

More details can be found in the CFOA [Command Training, Assessment and Qualifications Fire and Rescue Service Guidance](#) and the [National Occupational Standards for Fire and Rescue Services](#).

---

**Risk management plan**

Each fire and rescue authority must develop their strategic direction through their risk management plan. To determine the extent of their firefighting capability, 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.
As part of their risk management plan each fire and rescue service should consider the resources they need to mobilise to an incident to support effective incident command at operational events. Their plans should be developed with regard to the guidance in this document.

For incident command the risk management plan should include:

- The role and level at which incidents will be commanded, for example, Level 1 incident, crew manager and watch manager
- The types of equipment to provide command support functions, such as command boards and control units, and the size of incidents at which each will be used
- The arrangements for command teams and any support vehicles
- The need for competent and skilled officers to be available for command support and functional or support sectors, such as water, foam or inter-agency liaison

Responsibility of fire and rescue services

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.

Intraoperability and interoperability

Intraoperability

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England says: "Each fire and rescue authority must produce an integrated risk management plan that identifies and assesses all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect its community, including those of a cross-border, multi-authority and/or national nature. The plan must have regard to the Community Risk Registers..."
produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other risk analyses as appropriate”.

This should include the intraoperability of resources and assets in individual and bordering fire and rescue services as well as National Resilience assets available through the National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) arrangements.

Interoperability

Interoperability is linked to the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) doctrine. Fire and rescue services should be aware of the aspects of interoperability that exist when identifying, assessing and preplanning for all incident types and eventualities they may attend.

In addition to the community risk register, firefighters retain a wealth of local knowledge of risks or potential scenarios within station areas that would benefit from a multi-agency response and that may not be captured in the broader community risk register. This information may be contained in Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI) or similar formats.

It is essential that all components of fire and rescue services, including fire control staff, operational planning departments and incident commanders, identify and liaise with relevant partner agencies. This ensures that in the event that they are required to respond to different incident types, all agencies are fully aware of the assistance available to maximise effectiveness in saving lives and reducing harm.

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)

The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework advocates the use of the M\ETHANE mnemonic for information gathering and sharing between emergency responders, their control rooms and other agencies.

This mnemonic should be used when passing information between emergency responders, their control rooms and other agencies so that shared situational awareness can be established:

- Major incident declared?
- Exact location
- Type of incident e.g. explosion or building collapse
- Hazards present, potential or suspected
- Access - routes that are safe to use
- Number, type and severity of casualties
- Emergency services now present and those required

The broader principles of intraoperability and interoperability at the pre-incident stage are captured above, and the principles will be augmented by the on-scene interoperability information contained in the JESIP doctrine.