Breathing apparatus entry control procedures
Breathing apparatus entry control procedures

BA entry control procedures are designed to provide a consistent method for the safe and effective command and control and management of BA operations and to ensure the safety of firefighters.

BA entry control must be fully aligned with incident command system principles and practices. BA entry control procedures and provisions should be proportionate to the scale and complexity of the BA operations at an incident, the overall incident plan and any known or reasonably foreseeable hazards and risks to BA wearers.

The BA entry control point is the designated position at which BA deployment and command and control is managed and forms an integral part of the incident command structure.

Disciplined adherence to BA entry control procedures, briefings and instructions is critical to the safety and effectiveness of BA operations and BA teams.

Operational practice

The BA entry control procedure adopted will be consistent throughout the entire incident and will not vary for different BA entry control points.

All relevant emergency responders should be made aware of the BA entry control procedures, and any additional procedures, in use at the incident, particularly those in a position of command.
The level of BA entry control in use should be communicated to fire control rooms to enable monitoring officers to gather relevant information.

Suitable and sufficient systems and processes for logging and recording all relevant BA command and control information should be established prior to deploying BA wearers. Additional operational procedures and relevant command decisions should be recorded in an incident log as soon as practicable.

Establishing and maintaining effective communications between the BA entry control point and the BA team is essential, as is exchanging timely and regular information throughout the command team.

Personnel qualified by virtue of a suitable and sufficient local fire and rescue service development process can carry out the role of BA entry control operative, although overall responsibility for BA entry control rests with the incident commander.

BA entry control operatives must be nominated for each BA entry control board. The BA entry control operative will undertake specific tasks in relation to BA entry control only (BA entry control operative role and responsibilities), under the command and direction of the person responsible for the BA entry control point.

The allocated tasks of BA wearers should be confirmed, communicated and recorded before deployment. BA wearers deployed into risk areas should be informed of their tasks, such as firefighting, search and rescue, guideline laying or other specific tasks. Following a suitable and sufficient assessment of risk, tasks may be combined, for example, firefighting and search and rescue.

**Designation and siting of BA entry control points**

BA entry control points should be established in a safe position, in safe air, near the scene of operations.

The working platform of an aerial appliance should not be used as a site for a BA entry control point.

BA entry control points should be designated and identified at the incident by means of suitable referencing using the phonetic alphabet. The first BA entry control point established at the incident will be designated ‘Alpha’, the second ‘Bravo’, and so on.

BA teams deployed from the BA entry control point will be identified by a sequential numbering system. For example, at BA entry control point Alpha, the first BA team will be designated ‘BA team Alpha 1’, the second team ‘BA team Alpha 2’, and so on.

**Bridgehead or forward BA entry control point**

This arrangement allows an incident to be dealt with by deploying BA wearers from a safe-air environment within a structure while being as close as practical to the scene of operations. This may be considered necessary by an incident commander where there is a need to establish a BA
entry control point at a distance from the first point of access to a building or risk area, such as in high-rise building or large, complex structure such as a shopping mall.

The location of the BA entry control point in these circumstances will be determined by the incident commander based on the incident plan and the outcome of a risk assessment.

Some of the factors that should be taken into account when determining the location of a bridgehead or forward BA entry control point are:

- The potential for an escalation of the incident
- The safe-air environment necessary to start up BA
- The best access to and egress from the scene of operations
- Crew safety and welfare
- Effective communications with BA wearers
- Effective communications with the incident commander
- The level of supervision and support necessary for the BA entry control operative
- The distance from the initial point of access to the BA entry control point

**Stage 1 Breathing Apparatus entry control**

Stage 1 BA entry control procedures are used to monitor the safety of BA wearers at incidents where the numbers of BA wearers is small and BA operations are limited and not complex.

**Operational practice – Stage 1 breathing apparatus entry control**

Stage I BA entry control procedures apply where:

- The nature of BA operations is limited and not complex
- The incident requires no more than one BA entry control point
- The incident requires no more than six BA wearers to be deployed to the risk area at any one time
- BA guidelines are not required

The BA team must receive and confirm their understanding of a clear briefing and instructions. The briefing should include, for example, the task to be achieved, information regarding hazards, risks and control measures, methods of communication and emergency arrangements. Under Stage 1 BA entry control, the incident commander should ensure suitable and sufficient emergency arrangements. See Emergency arrangements.

**Stage 2 Breathing Apparatus entry control**

Stage 2 BA entry control procedures apply when a greater level of control is required to manage and monitor the safety of BA wearers in complex BA operations, or where the criteria for Stage 1
have been exceeded.

**Operational practice - Stage 2 breathing apparatus entry control**

Stage 2 BA entry control procedures apply where:

- The nature of BA operations are complex and require a greater degree of control and supervision
- The incident requires more than one BA entry control point
- The incident requires more than six wearers to be deployed to the risk area at any one time
- BA guidelines are required

Under Stage 2 BA entry control, the incident commander and BA entry control operatives should ensure suitable and sufficient emergency arrangements are established at all BA entry control points. See Emergency arrangements.

Each entry control point should establish and maintain communications with all other BA entry control points at the incident.

The initial BA entry control operative should, where possible, remain in place when moving from BA Stage 1 to Stage 2. A nominated person with the appropriate level of managerial authority, training and experience should supervise the BA entry control operative.

When an existing BA entry control operative at a BA entry control board is replaced, this should be done at a time when no BA wearers are committed through that particular board. A structured exchange of information should take place between BA entry control operatives under the strict supervision of the person responsible for the BA entry control point.

The incident commander should determine the need for additional resources to manage the BA entry control points and associated functions.

**Breathing Apparatus entry control point supervision**

The incident or sector commander should consider the need to implement an appropriate level of supervision as the risks and demands of the incident increase. It may therefore be necessary to appoint a manager to provide additional BA entry control point supervision. This manager will be known as the BA entry control point supervisor and should have the appropriate level of managerial authority, training and experience to ensure that they can effectively manage the required resources dictated by the incident plan.

**Operational practice – Breathing apparatus entry control point supervision**

The BA entry control point supervisor provides a greater degree of control and co-ordination
between incident command, incident sectors, additional BA entry control points and other agencies where necessary (including neighbouring fire and rescue services). In practice, the BA entry control point supervisor will perform co-ordination and logistical tasks associated with BA entry control point operations. This will enable the BA entry control operative to focus on the monitoring of BA wearers deployed within the risk area.

**Role and responsibilities of the BA entry control point supervisor**

The BA entry control point supervisor will:

- Receive a detailed brief and implement the incident, operations or sector commander's incident plan for breathing apparatus operations
- Brief and debrief all BA wearers
- Regularly update the incident, operations or sector commander on BA operations undertaken from the BA entry control point
- Ensure that a co-ordinated search is carried out in liaison with the search co-ordinator and that a record is kept of areas that have been searched or require searching
- Ensure that sufficient, fully equipped BA emergency teams are rigged and standing by at the BA entry control point
- Determine the time and/or cylinder pressure at which a BA team is expected to return to the BA entry control point
- Supervise BA communications for the BA entry control point

**Breathing Apparatus sector**

The purpose of establishing a breathing apparatus sector is to provide additional support for co-ordinating BA resources and logistics, particularly where the incident is large or complex or where there is more than one Stage 2 BA entry control point.

The BA sector commander should have the appropriate level of managerial authority, training and experience to ensure that they can effectively manage the logistical requirements of a BA sector. The full extent of their role will depend on the complexity of the incident and the number of BA wearers deployed. Where necessary, the BA sector commander may be supported by assistants.

The location of the BA sector should be communicated to all relevant emergency responders.

**Operational practice – Breathing apparatus sector**

Where a BA sector is in place, BA entry control operatives should establish and maintain effective communications with the BA sector commander and report all relevant information, including information from BA team briefings and debriefings, and submit requests for resources and support in a timely manner.
Role and responsibilities of the BA sector commander

The BA sector commander will:

- Be appointed by, and report to, the incident commander
- Be clearly identified by suitable wording on their sector commander tabard
- Provide BA emergency team resource requirements to BA entry control points
- Be responsible for BA resources and logistics
- Be responsible for BA wearers’ welfare, and establish appropriate rest and recuperation areas
- Operate within the command support structure and work alongside and closely with other command support colleagues
- Establish and maintain communications with all BA entry control points
- Identify the location of each BA entry control point and record the name of each BA entry control operative
- Establish and record the availability of BA, associated equipment and personnel at the incident
- Take account of any time variations between BA entry control board clocks
- Establish and record the requirements for relief teams of BA wearers
- Ensure that there are sufficient BA wearers to comprise the relief teams required by each BA entry control point, and ensure they arrive at the BA entry control point at least five minutes before required
- Maintain suitable and sufficient records

Rapid/initial deployment

Suitable and sufficient pre-planning, including task and resource analysis, will assist incident commanders in deploying the appropriate resources required to provide safe systems of work applicable to an incident that may require breathing apparatus. In circumstances where immediately available resources are unable to deliver the full incident plan but where there is an opportunity to preserve life or take action that will prevent an incident deteriorating, rapid/initial deployment of BA may be used under strict criteria.

Operational practice - Rapid deployment

Rapid/initial deployment will only be undertaken on the instructions of the incident commander following a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks versus the likely benefits. Under rapid/initial deployment protocols, no more than two BA wearers will be in the risk area.

The incident commander may personally adopt the role of monitoring BA wearers following a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

As soon as resources become available, stage 1 BA entry control procedures must be implemented as a minimum level of control.
In addition to duties outlined in BA Operational Procedures – all incidents, the following responsibilities apply:

**Role and responsibilities of the incident commander**

The incident commander will:

- Initiate the use of rapid/initial deployment BA procedures following a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks versus the likely benefits. See National Operational Guidance: [Incident command](#)
- Inform fire and rescue control that rapid/initial deployment procedures are in use
- Request further resources to establish the appropriate level of BA entry control
- Ensure arrangements for communication between BA wearers, the person monitoring BA wearers and the incident commander
- Implement appropriate BA entry control procedures as soon as resources allow

**Role and responsibilities of the crew member monitoring the BA team**

The monitoring crew member will:

- Establish and maintain communications with BA wearers and the incident commander
- Record ‘time in’ on the BA entry control board
- Ensure that BA tallies with suitable and sufficient details are placed in the BA entry control board, automated rapid/initial deployment board, or telemetry board if established
- Undertake other essential duties as required
- Provide a handover to any subsequent BA entry control operative

**Role and responsibilities of the BA wearer**

BA wearers will:

- Ensure that all BA tallies and gauges are checked and that tallies are placed in the BA entry control board, with ‘time in’ recorded by themselves or through an automated board