



National  
Operational  
Guidance

## Control measure

**Safe system of work: Waterway  
incidents**



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC

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### Control measure knowledge

Suspension of waterways operations may be beneficial for managing the incident. However, this could impact on business continuity and be detrimental to dealing with the incident.

### Joint working at waterway incidents

Appropriate communications will need to be set up and they should consider vessel size, location and interaction between all attending agencies and port authorities.

There may be memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between the fire and rescue service and the port authority to ensure the correct information has been collated at the earliest opportunity to improve the service response.

### Pre-planning

Pre-planning may help to identify the appropriate response for the fire and rescue service, and any other organisations that may be involved, when attending a waterways incident. Fire and rescue services should liaise with the responsible person or authority, to determine expectations and requirements at waterways incidents, including:

- The types of operations that are carried out, with their respective hazards and controls
- Access and egress points
- Rendezvous points (RVPs)
- Isolation points

Mutual aid arrangements or memoranda of understanding (MoUs) may provide assistance to an affected fire and rescue service if required.

Fire and rescue services should establish opportunities for personnel to visit private, commercial and military ports and docks to gain familiarisation, along with knowledge of any specific risks.

### Tidal impact

It is important to determine if tides may impact on the waterways incident. If the waterway is tidal, high and low tide times should be obtained and ongoing assessment of their impacts maintained throughout the incident

## Scene surveys

It may not be possible to walk around the incident ground because of its size, location or complexity, and the physical or geographical limitations of the waterway and surrounding terrain.

When carrying out a scene survey, information should be gathered, including:

- The number of passengers and crew involved
- The size, type and construction of the vessel
- Name of the vessel
- Tonnage
- Location, such as the quay or berth number
- Type and quantity of cargo
- Location and extent of any fire hazard

It may be possible to use other vessels to carry out a scene survey, such as:

- Tugboats
- Port or harbour vessels
- Water safety vessels
- Fire and rescue service vessels
- Police vessels

The vessels and crews should be appropriate to the water conditions and within their capabilities. It may also be possible to appoint an on-scene commander to a vessel to assist with the scene survey.

The provision of vessels for incident support may be covered by:

- A local agreement
- Mutual aid
- A memoranda of understanding (MoU), for example with port or harbour authorities
- A contractual agreement with private salvage or tugboat companies

## Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish opportunities for personnel to gain familiarisation of waterways
- Carry out pre-planning for waterways incidents



- Develop SSRI for waterways where appropriate, and share with relevant personnel
- Identify sources of specialist advice or assistance for waterways incidents
- Ensure fire control rooms are updated on the availability and contact information for specialist advisers for waterways incidents
- Establish mutual aid arrangements or memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for support at waterways incidents
- Make tidal information available via fire control rooms

## **Tactical actions**

Incident commanders should:

- Request specialist advice or assistance for waterways if required
- Refer to SSRI for waterways
- Consider requesting suspension of waterways operations
- Access tidal information for waterways if relevant