



National  
Operational  
Guidance

# Control measure

**Specialist advice**



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC

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### **Control measure knowledge**

As it is not possible for an incident commander to have in-depth knowledge of all types of incidents, they may need to request specialist advice from a competent person, subject matter expert (SME) or a tactical adviser (Tac Ad) to deal with an incident safely and effectively.

The extent and urgency for requesting specialist advice will be dictated by the size, complexity and type of the incident. The amount, quantity and quality of information required will depend on the incident. Fire and rescue services need to provide operational and fire control personnel with accurate and current information.

### **Competent person**

A competent person is someone who has sufficient training and experience or knowledge and other qualities to provide advice for an incident. The level of competence required will depend on the complexity of the situation and the type of advice required.

A competent person should be able to provide accurate and relevant information in their specific area of work. They should also be able to interpret and translate such understanding into information that would be useful to support operational priorities.

### **Subject matter expert**

A subject-matter expert (SME) is a person who is an authority in a particular area or topic. Incident commanders should ensure, so far as practicable, that the individual is an expert in the relevant field.

### **Subject matter adviser**

Subject matter advisers (SMA) are members of the fire and rescue service who regularly work with National Resilience capabilities. The SMA will provide detailed tactical capability advice to the incident commander. They can only be mobilised by the National Resilience Fire Control (NRFC).

### **Tactical adviser**

Incident commanders can request the attendance of tactical advisers (TacAds); they are trained and recognised specialists with specific references within local or National Resilience capabilities. They are available to provide advice and support to any incident irrespective of location. However, their

usual role is within their host fire and rescue service.

A tactical adviser has in-depth knowledge from a business and organisational perspective, which can significantly enhance performance when shared with others.

Tactical advisers are currently available from the following fields:

- National Inter-agency Liaison Officer (NILO)
- Urban search and rescue (USAR)
- High volume pumps (HVP)
- Flood response
- Hazardous materials
- Chemical, Biological, Radioactive, Nuclear (explosive) (CBRN(e))
- Radiation protection
- Marine
- Wildfires
- Waste fires
- Communications
- Fire investigation

If tactical advisers are present the incident commander still has ultimate responsibility for tactics, deployment and safety. Tactical advisers should not take command of an incident; they are there to advise and assist. They should ensure they understand the aims and objectives of the incident commander, and that any advice they provide is understood and recorded if appropriate.

Further information may be found in Incident command: Knowledge, skills and competence: [Organisation at an incident](#).

## **Strategic actions**

Fire and rescue services should:

- Develop arrangements and protocols with identified sources of specialist advice
- Maintain the details of sources of specialist advice and know how to request their attendance
- Ensure personnel are aware of the types of specialist advice available



## Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Consider requesting appropriate specialist advice
- Ensure specialist advisers are fully briefed on the aims and objectives for the incident
- Check for understanding of the advice received, and record if appropriate