National Operational Guidance

Fire control command guidance

National Operational Guidance

Introduction 2

The incident command system and the role of fire control officers in charge 2

Command skills and the role of the fire control officer in charge 4

Selection, training and revalidation of fire control officers in charge 6

Legislation 6

PECS Code of Practice 7

Risk management plan 7

Resourcing 8

Responsibility of fire and rescue services 9

Intra-operability and interoperability 9

Hazard – Ineffective command of the fire control function 11

Control measure – Leadership 16

Control measure – Situational awareness 18

Control measure – Decision-making 24

Control measure – Interpersonal communication 38

Control measure – Personal resilience 39

Control measure – Teamwork 41

Hazard – Overwhelmed emergency call handling capacity 44

Control measure – Additional call handling capacity: Fire control personnel 45

Control Measure – Additional call handling capacity: Emergency call redistribution 46

Control Measure – Changes to call handling procedures by the call handling agent 48

Hazard – Ineffective management of fire control 49

Control measure – Effective communication 50

Control measure – Organisation of the fire control function 53

Control measure – Specialist advice 55

Control measure – Command roles and responsibilities 57

Hazard – Ineffective safety management 60

Control measure – Positive safety culture 61

Control measure – Risk assessment of fire control activities 62

Control measure – Emergency call supervision 64
Control measure – Hold debriefing or post-incident reviews 65

National Operational Guidance

Fire control command guidance

Fire Control Command 1.0 Full consultation

June 2021

Introduction

This guidance has been produced to help fire and rescue services ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the strong and resilient leadership of fire control incident command.

Responding to incidents can be hazardous and stressful. To ensure a successful conclusion, an efficient fire control working in conjunction with the incident ground is essential. Effective information gathering, strong leadership, critical decision making and proportional and swift action by both fire control personnel and incident commanders ensure an effective conclusion of the situation. Some incidents need only simple actions and procedures as risks are low. Others can be more challenging and may quickly increase in size, complexity and duration. A resilient and skilled fire control that can dynamically adapt is essential to ensure the safe resolution of the incidents to which the fire and rescue service is called.

Fire and rescue authorities must plan for health and safety in the fire control environment in order to fulfil their legislative and regulatory duties. The application of risk assessment and control measures should not prevent the delivery of fire control room functions.

Three other sections of National Operational Guidance should also be considered during incidents: business continuity, emergency call management and multi-agency.

The incident command system and the role of fire control commanders

In extending the incident command system and its operational, tactical and strategic levels of command to fire control, fire and rescue services are provided with a method of ensuring robust command of the fire control function.

The incident command system is an all-hazards approach, providing a progressive, scalable and flexible system of command, control and organisation. Using the system will help fire control commanders manage and fulfil their plans for the safe and efficient delivery of all activities of the fire control function. It encourages a controlled and systematic approach to managing incidents and situations in fire control.

The fire control commander is the person responsible for the management of the activity of the fire control function. This role is normally carried out by a supervisory manager. Responsibility for tasks and actions may be delegated to another suitably experienced person, however overall responsibility cannot be delegated.

Fire and rescue services should decide the level at which the fire control command function is carried out, and in doing so should consider the provision of fire control command at operational, tactical and strategic levels, ensuring appropriate selection and development processes are in place.

The fire control manager is the person responsible for the overall management of the fire control function and they may fulfil a command role in line with tactical or strategic incident command. Where this is the case fire and rescue services should ensure that command competence, training, accreditation, and revalidation appropriate to this level is achieved and maintained. The fire control manager may also maintain additional tactical adviser skills, for example Communications Tactical Advisor or National Inter-agency Liaison Officer. In doing so enhanced resilience may be achieved

during complex situations, multi-agency or major incidents.

Fire control workloads can vary widely with the competing demands of operational incidents. The fire control function is required to manage its workload and support operational incidents across all types and contexts including:

- Single incident
- Multiple incidents
- Multiple calls
- Spate conditions, for example during wildfires, widespread flooding and other extreme weather conditions
- Major incidents
- Planned major events

This list is not exhaustive and any of these situations may happen simultaneously. In addition to the core function of emergency call management, response mobilisation and the provision of operational response support, fire control may manage other activities to support the day-to-day functioning of the fire and rescue service. This requires the fire control commander to be proactive and dynamic in their approach to the command of the fire control function and the management of tasks and actions.

The critical nature of decision-making skills required when fire control commanders manage emergency call handling requires the ability to cope with stressful situations under sustained pressure, for example when overseeing and managing:

- The provision of life-saving advice
- The mobilisation of resources
- Support to an incident
- Multiple calls
- Multiple incidents
- Complex incidents or situations

Fire control command can involve the management of simultaneous incidents and situations. This additional complexity means that it is essential that command competence, skills, selection, training and revalidation processes are applied to fire control commanders.

The key components of the incident command system include:

- Clear, defined and visible lines of command
- Manageable spans of control
- A communications infrastructure
- Appropriate responsibility and authority

- Clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities

It is the role of the fire control commander to effectively and safely manage the fire control function at a tactical level to support the best resolutions to operational incidents and all fire control activities. It is the role of all fire control personnel to be familiar with the requirements of the fire control command structure and know how to operate safely and effectively within it. This applies equally to those who will perform a command role and those who will be operating under the command of others.

Incident command and support activities start from receipt of the emergency call in fire control and continue to the conclusion of the incident.

Activities in fire control should be well-organised and controlled. All fire control room personnel should understand their responsibilities regarding health and safety and must ensure these policies and procedures are implemented.

Fire control commanders should be aware of becoming overburdened and having too broad a span of control and should consider the issues of team dynamics to get the best from the resources available to them. Fire control commanders should be aware of the support that is available to them and how to request it.

Fire and rescue services have a responsibility to provide their fire control commanders with the necessary support, training, equipment and resources to effectively apply the incident command system to any incident or a number of incidents in the fire control environment.

Command skills and the role of the fire control commander

The use of command skills by fire control commanders is important to ensure the effective delivery of the fire control function. Command skills complement technical skills and knowledge and understanding of policies and procedures and are essential for the assertive, effective and safe command of fire control.

It may be appropriate in some circumstances for a fire control commander to use their command skills, experience and situational awareness to inform their professional judgement and apply dynamic mobilising strategies if appropriate. Dynamic mobilising may include the augmentation of the level of response to an incident prior to the arrival of operational crews. This may be considered where information is being received indicating incident escalation, the need for additional specialist resources or the need for additional resources to assist with access. There may also be occasions where dynamic mobilising strategies are applied to reduce a response. Further information on this subject is included within the Hazard ‘Ineffective command of the fire control function’.

Command skills are the social, personal and cognitive skills that come under the heading of human factors. They enable fire control commanders to function effectively when in command of activities in the fire control room. The safety-critical command skills are:

- Leadership
- Situational awareness

- Decision-making
- Interpersonal communication
- Personal resilience
- Teamwork

The fire control environment can be fast-moving and pressurised. During the early stages of an incident or situation the fire control commander may need to perform their role with incomplete information. They should use their knowledge and experience to build their situational awareness of the incidents and activities that are ongoing and use their command skills proficiently to gather and interpret information and to plan the use of fire control resources to meet the requirements of current activity.

Fire and rescue services should recognise the importance of fire control commanders having effective command skills. With good command skills a fire control commander will have the ability to successfully apply their technical knowledge to command fire control. When performed well, the effective use of command skills contributes to safe and effective operations.

For example, when a fire control commander demonstrates assertive, effective and safe leadership this may result in others trusting their judgement or competence. This will enhance the communication, co-ordination and co-operation of fire and rescue service personnel or members of other agencies.

The application of command skills and the implementation of elements of the incident command system may be regarded equally as control measures to ensure safe and effective incident command.

Fire control commanders should have a range of qualities, and effectively use command skills, to deal with the wide-ranging nature of incidents. Effective fire control commanders:

- Are confident and self-aware
- Are well-trained and competent
- Are able to effectively build 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 and challenging situations
- Are calm and controlled
- Are able to instil trust in their team
- Are able to delegate effectively

Fire control commanders should possess the technical knowledge and command skills to underpin

their judgements, decisions and behaviours. They should be able to adapt their communication style appropriately in different situations and have the confidence to seek the views of others and consider them when formulating plans.

The application of these skills is key to a well-run fire control and the effective management of all fire control activity and will assist incident ground safety and the resolution of incidents. Services should have systems in place to support decision-making in fire control to reduce the risk of human factors affecting safety.

The effective practice of these skills is enhanced within a learning culture that encourages empowerment and the acceptance of responsibility. This includes systems and processes to actively monitor the performance of command skills by fire control personnel in training and during all fire control activities.

Post-incident reviews and safety event investigations should examine the use of command skills by fire control personnel to highlight the impact of human factors on fire control activity and operational outcomes. Similarly, a service's policies and procedures should be consistent with its approach to fire control command and incident command. Its command ethos should be clearly articulated to help ensure fire control commanders are aware of the service's expectations.

Selection, training and revalidation of fire control commanders

Fire and rescue services should establish robust selection processes to identify suitable personnel to be developed for supervisory roles in fire control. The processes should ensure that people who perform the role of fire control commander are capable of doing so under the expected pressures of fire control activity and can deal with situations where there is sustained pressure and stress.

Fire and rescue services should ensure they appropriately train, assess and revalidate their fire control commanders, to ensure they understand and practise the skills they need for the command of fire control. Fire and rescue services should also equip fire control commanders with the knowledge that is required to resolve the full range of foreseeable incidents and activities.

Legislation

Fire and rescue services should assure themselves that all relevant legislation and regulations for their area are considered when developing policies, procedures and training. For further information on this topic refer to National Operational Guidance: Legislation.

Legislation and regulations may affect operational and fire control decisions; some of the key pieces for incident command and fire control activity include:

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Fire (Scotland) Act 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services (Northern Ireland) Order 2006
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007
- Civil Contingencies Act

- Civil Contingencies Act (Contingency Planning) Regulations
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Emergency Services (Obstruction) Act
- Emergency Workers (Scotland) Act
- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland)
- Human Rights Act
- Water Resources Act
- Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations
- Water and Sewerage Services (Northern Ireland) Order
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act
- Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act
- Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order

PECS Code of Practice

The Public Emergency Call Service (PECS) Code of Practice sets out the methods that are used for passing emergency calls between the call handling agent and the emergency authority. Fire and rescue services should ensure that the content is considered when developing policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel.

Risk management plan

Each fire and rescue authority must develop their strategic direction through their risk management plan. To determine the extent of their services, 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.

Fire and rescue services will decide on the appropriate level of response for the types of calls that it receives. This may be achieved using a task analysis or similar methodology to determine the number and type of resources that will be needed for the safe resolution of incidents and will inform the basis for the pre-determined attendance that is mobilised to incidents by fire control personnel. It is therefore essential that fire control personnel have an understanding of risk management at this level.

Resourcing

As part of their risk management plan each fire and rescue service should consider the resources they need to provide the resilient command of the fire control function.

For fire control command the risk management plan may include:

- The role and level at which the fire control function will be commanded
- The number of personnel required for the safe and effective command and operation of the fire control function
- The types of equipment required to support the fire control command function, such as incident logs, call supervision and monitoring facilities and access to communications equipment and appropriate radio talk groups
- The arrangements for increasing the capacity of the fire control function
- The arrangements for enhancing the level of command within fire control and the circumstances where this may be required, for example during multiple fire survival guidance situations, major incidents or spate conditions

Responsibility of fire and rescue services

Fire and rescue services are responsible, under legislation and regulations, for developing policies and procedures and for providing information, instruction, training and supervision to their personnel about foreseeable hazards and the control measures used to mitigate 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 carrying out activities within the fire control function. Fire and rescue services should ensure their policies, procedure and training covers all hazards and control measures contained in this guidance.

Intra-operability and interoperability

Other agencies may base their expectation of the fire and rescue service response to multi-agency incidents on the incident command system contained in this guidance. Therefore, adoption of this guidance will support intra-operability and interoperability.

Using common language and components will ensure fire and rescue services can more effectively resolve local, cross-border and national incidents.

Intra-operability

Intra-operability is the ability of a fire and rescue service to work with other fire and rescue services.

Clearly defined roles, particularly the specialist roles performed by personnel from dedicated departments such as fire control or hazardous materials, will support intra-operability and the establishment of effective command teams.

Risk management plans, and other pre-planning, should consider incidents that may involve working with the resources or assets of other fire and rescue services, or the National Resilience capabilities.

Interoperability

Interoperability is defined as the extent to which organisations can work together as a matter of routine. Multi-agency interoperability is essential for incidents of all sizes.

Interoperability is delivered through 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 pre-planning for all incidents they may attend.

In addition to the community risk register, personnel have a wealth of local knowledge of risks or potential scenarios that would benefit from a multi-agency response. This information may be contained in Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI) for example.

It is essential that all components of fire and rescue services, including fire control commanders and their teams, operational planning departments and incident commanders, identify and liaise with relevant partner agencies. This ensures that in the event of responding to different incident types, all agencies are fully aware of the assistance available to maximise operational effectiveness.

Working together, control rooms start the principles for joint working, playing a vital role in information gathering and the sharing of situational awareness during incidents. Fire and rescue services must ensure that policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel consider JESIP and the Control Room Supporting Principles of the joint doctrine.

Fire control commanders should ensure that risk critical information is shared with other emergency control rooms at the earliest opportunity and in accordance with the common agreed principles set out in JESIP so that shared situational awareness can be established.

As well as the common agreed principles contained within JESIP, there is a legal framework to share information between responders in an emergency situation. This will generally come from common law for the saving of life or property, the Crime and Disorder Act or the Civil Contingencies Act. There may also be formal information sharing agreements (ISAs) between agencies.

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, 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 intra-operability and interoperability at the pre-incident stage are captured above, and this should be read in conjunction with the Control Room Supporting Principles contained in the JESIP doctrine.

Hazard – Ineffective command of the fire control function

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

The fire control commander should possess the appropriate technical knowledge and command skills in emergency control room management to underpin their judgements, decisions and behaviours. The absence of these skills and knowledge will have the potential to lead to a lack of situational awareness and may result in inappropriate decision making, failure to ensure the mobilisation of appropriate resources and to communicate critical information with the incident ground and other agencies.

Causes of ineffective command may include:

- Personal factors, such as:
    - Insufficient training
    - Lack of exposure to a wide range of incident types
    - Physiological stress
    - Psychological stress
    - Failure to effectively use a command skill
- Insufficient, inadequate or incorrect information, for example:
    - Incorrect information being passed to fire control personnel
    - Incorrect information being passed to an incident ground
    - Difficulty in obtaining information from members of the public
    - Difficulty in obtaining information from other agencies
- Resource factors, such as:
    - Insufficient personnel
    - Insufficient or inadequate equipment or technology
    - Equipment failure
    - Insufficient or inadequate technical support
- External factors, such as:
    - Size and complexity of incidents
    - Call volumes or multiple incidents
    - Unfamiliar or unconventional incident
    - Moral pressure to act
    - Public pressure to act
- The working environment, including:
    - Poor ergonomic conditions

    - Unfamiliar working conditions, for example when working in a fallback environment
    - Noise
- Organisational factors, including:
    - Ineffective fire control command selection process
    - Inadequate policies and procedures
    - Ineffective development and preparation of fire control commanders
    - Inadequate information management and systems
    - Ineffective operational assurance
    - Ineffective organisational learning processes
    - Inappropriate organisational culture

Ineffective command of the fire control function amplifies the potential impact of the hazards present which could result in:

- Failure to mobilise appropriate resources
- Delays in attendance at incidents

The impacts of these could in turn result in:

- Harm to people
- Harm to communities
- Damage to or loss of property
- Damage to the environment
- Reputational damage
- Loss of public confidence

Ineffective leadership

If fire control commanders are unable to effectively lead others it will impact on their ability to:

- Command the fire control function safely
- Comply with relevant legislation and regulations
- Instil confidence
- Motivate and inspire others
- Collaborate and co-operate effectively with operational personnel and other emergency responders

The role of fire control personnel is as risk critical as that of operational personnel. The leadership of a fire control commander is exercised under pressure and may directly influence the effective resolution of incidents.

Inaccurate situational awareness

Inaccurate or ineffective situational awareness may lead to fire control commanders potentially overlooking information when they make decisions or implement plans and may delay the sharing of critical information with operational incident commanders and other responding agencies. Some of the factors for this occurring include:

- The fire control commander being unable to effectively process information
- The fire control commander being unable to effectively manage information
- Inaccurate information being provided to the fire control commander
- A delay in information being provided to the fire control commander
- Poor or inadequate information provided from an incident ground.
- Poor communication
- Lack of co-operation or co-ordination between personnel or other agencies

If a fire control commander is unable to obtain and maintain their situational awareness this may affect their ability to:

- Assess risks
- Make decisions
- Develop a plan
- Devise contingency plans
- Determine resource requirements
- Assess the impact to other service activity and the effective operation of the fire control function

Inappropriate decision-making

Decision-making is a complex skill which is influenced by the situations that confront the individual. Some decisions are made rapidly with little or no conscious thought, while others involve a conscious and intensive thought process that compares options and takes time.

Different situations may elicit different decision-making strategies. Poor decision-making may lead to a deterioration of the fire control function and may be negatively influenced by inaccurate or ineffective situational awareness, along with other contributory factors.

The decision-making skill of fire control personnel is one of the essential components of effective command and control in emergency response. Fire control commanders and the fire control personnel in their teams may have to make critical decisions involving the application of dynamic mobilising strategies, by exercising professional judgement to decide on and implement a plan. The inability or unwillingness of fire control personnel to appropriately implement dynamic mobilising strategies may prevent an effective response to an incident. Effective use of dynamic mobilising strategies can provide experiential learning from their use, and through audit and review processes,

may be used to inform the development of response plans and pre-determined attendances, policies and procedures, providing shared learning with fire control personnel, incident commanders and other fire and rescue services.

Fire and rescue services should decide the level at which mobilising decisions including those of dynamic mobilising are made and ensure appropriate policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel are in place. It should ensure fire control personnel understand their role and responsibilities when making mobilising decisions.

The inability to appropriately implement dynamic mobilising strategies may be influenced by:

- Poor communication between the fire control commander and fire control personnel
- Lack of situational awareness
- Lack of ability to make appropriate decisions
- Unfamiliarity with policies and procedures
- Decision inertia
- An organisational culture that does not genuinely empower fire control personnel to apply dynamic mobilising strategies
- An organisational culture that does not encourage or seek to understand and learn from the performance and outcomes of incidents

Ineffective interpersonal communication

The use of interpersonal communication skills affects the way information is received and understood by others. Fire control personnel should recognise the detrimental impact of ineffective or poor communication to their teams and the fire control function and apply appropriate skills to avoid this occurring.

If fire control commanders are unable to communicate effectively with others it will impact on their ability to:

- Foster trust
- Motivate others
- Gather and share information
- Issue instructions to others
- Ensure compliance with instructions
- Obtain situation reports
- Assess and provide for the needs of other agencies
- Carry out risk assessments
- Brief and debrief others

- Co-operate and co-ordinate actions with others

Lack of personal resilience

Personal resilience is the capacity of an individual to cope with stress and fatigue without it affecting their performance. Both stress and fatigue may have detrimental effects on all aspects of the performance of fire control personnel, from decision-making and judgement to equipment operation and communication.

If fire control personnel are unable to manage their stress and fatigue it will impact their:

- Cognitive skills, for example:
    - Reduced attention span and situational awareness
    - Impaired memory, planning, judgement and decision-making
    - Inability to switch strategy
- Motor skills, for example:
    - Impaired hand-eye co-ordination
    - Impaired timing
- Communication skills, for example:
    - Impaired interpersonal communication skills
    - Impaired speech
- Social skills, for example:
    - Becoming increasingly distracted and irritable
    - Becoming less tolerant of others, affecting leadership and teamwork

Ineffective teamwork

Ineffective teamwork between fire control personnel, the fire control commander or members of operational and multi-agency teams may lead to:

- A breakdown of trust between team members due to a lack of or poor communication, co-operation or co-ordination
- Mistrust, resulting in conflict
- Inconsistent application of:
    - Service policies or procedures
    - Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)
- Poor quality briefings of team members about a role they are required to perform
- Poor communication and co-operation between team members

- Poor co-ordination of actions by fire control personnel
- Different levels of situational awareness within a team or between teams, resulting in different perceptions of an incident or of fire control activity.
- Poor decision-making, including that which is counter-productive to achieving a common goal

Control measure – Leadership

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Framework sets out the importance of leadership in the broad context of achieving a healthy, enjoyable workplace culture and managing performance to improve service delivery. The framework consists of four quadrants of leadership: personal impact, outstanding leadership, service delivery and organisational effectiveness. Fire and rescue service leaders are expected to be capable of:

- Engaging others
- Leading across boundaries such as functions and other organisations
- Adapting to change
- Using their emotional intelligence
- Dealing with the present and anticipating future trends
- Empowering leadership at all levels
- Promoting and fostering a learning organisation
- Embracing inclusion, diversity and innovation
- Demonstrating compassion while ensuring accountability and improvement

The framework is based on operational and professional expertise. All fire control personnel who may fulfil the role of fire control commander are leaders of the fire control function. Leadership in the context of fire control is about the difference made to people affected by the performance and outcomes of the decisions, actions and behaviours of a fire control commander.

Fire and rescue services should consider their organisational culture and its influence on the command of fire control, as the leadership relationship begins prior to the receipt of an emergency call. The organisational culture can influence behaviours during all states of fire control activity and in all situations. This may affect the way in which fire control commanders lead their teams and the way in which personnel respond. Services should also ensure relevant policies reference the factors of leadership.

An effective fire control commander should understand the influence of the following factors on their leadership:

- Self-awareness of personal limitations
- Valuing and supporting others

- Displaying and instilling confidence
- Demonstrating and fostering trust
- Fostering open, two-way communication
- The use of authority and different styles of leadership
- Setting expectations and standards
- Safety leadership
- Competence

Successful leadership means:

- Adopting the appropriate leadership style to suit the situation
- Having the courage and ability to make decisions with incomplete or ambiguous information when under pressure
- Using technical knowledge and interpersonal communication skills to gather and understand information, to develop and maintain situational awareness
- Using technical knowledge and interpersonal communication skills to develop and implement a plan
- Forming teams of the right people with the right expertise to safely resolve an incident or event
- Using interpersonal communication skills to establish trust between the fire control commander and the people and teams they engage with
- Using technical knowledge and interpersonal communication skills to inspire and motivate others
- Collaborating and co-operating effectively with others
- Valuing the contribution of others and looking after their welfare
- Demonstrating safety leadership by setting standards of performance and behaviour
- Displaying confidence and using personal resilience skills to effectively manage stress and fatigue
- Being responsible and accountable for decisions taken and plans implemented when in command
- Not being afraid to make or highlight mistakes and using them to learn and improve

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the fire control command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for leadership
- Ensure their organisational culture supports leadership relationships

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Understand the factors that influence their leadership
- Use their leadership knowledge, skills and behaviours to instil confidence, foster trust and manage safety
- Understand how valuing and supporting others, and having open and two-way communication will contribute to their leadership
- Understand how the influence of using their authority appropriately will contribute to their leadership
- Understand the factors that influence their leadership
- Apply the most suitable leadership styles to resolve incidents

Control measure – Situational awareness

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Situational awareness represents the perception and understanding a fire control commander has of the activity of the fire control function. This includes all ongoing incidents, subsequent emergency calls and the impacts of supporting workloads that result from these and other activities. It also consists of how the fire control commander anticipates a situation will develop taking into account their actions. Good situational awareness is fundamental to being able to make effective decisions. It is important for fire control commanders to ensure when handing over command that the level of situational awareness is maintained.

The three stages of situational awareness are:

- Information gathering
- Understanding information
- Anticipation

In accordance with the three stages of situational awareness, fire control commanders should:

- Know the typical sources of information available to them; this will assist them to obtain and maintain situational awareness

- Be able to interpret the information they have gathered, together with their knowledge and past experience, into a coherent picture to understand the situation; this process will continue throughout all aspects of fire control activity
- Be able to anticipate how fire control activity will develop and change based on their understanding and past experience; in particular, they should be able to predict the impact of their actions on fire control, incidents and subsequent activity

Fire control commanders need to be aware of the factors that can assist them to obtain and maintain effective situational awareness. They should understand how to put in place the means to monitor the fire control environment to detect changes and maintain an accurate understanding of the situation. This may include the use of:

- An appropriate command structure
- Effective communication
- Command support resources
- Operational assurance
- Active monitoring arrangements

Effective situational awareness ensures that the interpretation reflects the actual situation. Fire control commanders should be aware of the factors likely to adversely affect their situational awareness. These may include:

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Biases that affect decision-making, memory recall and interactions with others
- Poor communication, for example unstructured briefs and debriefs
- Excessive spans of control
- Distractions during critical tasks
- Assumptions that are not confirmed as accurate
- Poor information management, for example, a failure to record or validate information

Information gathering

To accurately perceive a situation a fire control commander should gather and understand information to enable them to anticipate how a situation may develop and what impact the actions taken by fire control personnel may have.

The gathering, assessment and provision of risk-critical information by fire control personnel is essential to ensure the safe resolution of incidents. Command decision-making can be significantly affected if there is a lack of risk information or where information has not been passed on. The fire control commander should establish effective communications and awareness of roles within their

team in order to ensure that information received from an incident ground, other control rooms, members of the public and other agencies is appropriately shared and recorded on incident logs in a timely manner.

One of the tasks of the fire control commander is to apply suitable control measures. To be able to do this they must be able to gather all available information about an incident or event. This is likely to include information from the pre-planning stage, such as risk information.

Fire control personnel will gather information from a variety of sources to gain accurate situational awareness. Fire control is the primary source of information for responding personnel and information gathering begins prior to the arrival of crews at an incident. Fire and rescue services should ensure that fire control personnel have access to all the available and necessary information, such as risk information, to assist this process.

The following sources of information should help to inform situational awareness throughout all fire control activity:

- Incident Logs
- Resource availability systems
- Calls from members of the public
- Personnel:
    - Fire control personnel
    - Operational personnel
    - Subject matter experts
- Other Category 1 and Category 2 responders and control rooms
- Other agencies
- Safety information
- Operational intelligence
- Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI)
- Site information such as:
    - Layout plans
    - Evacuation strategies
    - Emergency plans
- Environmental forecasting tools such as:
    - UK Met Office weather forecasting
    - UK Met Office Fire Severity Index
    - Environment Agency flood information and river/sea levels
    - Scottish Environment Protection Agency information

    - NIDirect flood maps
- Information and briefings provided by Local Resilience Forums
- Audio and visual equipment, including:
    - Closed-circuit television (CCTV)
    - Aerial resources such as helicopters, satellites and drones (classified as a type of unmanned aircraft system by the Civil Aviation Authority)
    - Technologies allowing the streaming of video footage from callers, other responders and FRS personnel
    - Call Recordings

Social media may provide a useful source of information, however the reliability of the information should be questioned and checked for accuracy.

Visual equipment such as CCTV and aerial resources is only of benefit if the downlink is available and accessible for fire control personnel to view when gathering information about the incident.

The type of information that may be obtained includes:

- Previous incident history at the location
- The development of the incident
- Numbers and locations of people missing or unaccounted for

Sources of information may need to be referred to at any time during all fire control activities to ensure the information is still relevant and up to date. The accuracy of all information should be assessed and confirmed where possible, prior to using it for decision-making. Incident logs should be used to record the information gathered.

There may be barriers to information gathering, including:

- The reliability of information received from callers
- Failure of technology, such as telecommunications
- Lack of availability of resources, such as audio or visual systems

Contingency arrangements should be considered and put in place for the failure of technology or the lack of availability of resources.

Other barriers to information gathering may be due to the inability to communicate effectively with callers. This includes those who may:

- Be affected by the incident and showing signs of distress or confusion
- Have disabilities that impair communication
- Not have English as their first language

Situational awareness responsibilities for all personnel

As fire control personnel carry out their tasks, they may gain new information about hazards or risks. Each person has a responsibility to record this information on incident logs, to inform the fire control commander, and to ensure it is relayed to operational incident commanders as appropriate. This new information may affect incident plans and the safety of people, property or the environment. Therefore, it is important that fire control personnel are aware of their responsibilities for identifying hazards and assessing risk, to support accurate situational awareness.

Fire control personnel should be aware of the additional facilities available to them when handling emergency calls, such as interpreting services or geographical location tools. Fire control personnel should also be able to identify when additional call handling support is needed and how to alert the fire control commander, another supervisory manager or competent team member.

Remote situational awareness

Fire control commanders are remote from the incident and should therefore consider the reliability of elements contributing to their situational awareness. They should question any assumptions they have and constantly review the accuracy of their situational awareness, taking into consideration factors such as messages received from the incident ground, information received from other category 1 and category 2 responders and the consistency and reliability of information being received from callers.

Intra-operability

There may be situations where other fire controls receive emergency calls for another fire and rescue service, for example during spate conditions resulting from extreme weather conditions or a major incident. Fire control commanders should be aware of the methods for managing these situations and for communicating situational awareness and critical information with fire controls that may be receiving such calls.

Interoperability

Control rooms play a vital role in managing the early stages of a multi-agency incident. Swift and concise communication with other Category 1 control personnel is essential for the sharing of situational awareness. It is therefore important that a dialogue between control room supervisors is established as soon as possible. Fire and rescue services should ensure that methods for the joint sharing of situational awareness are established and that fire control personnel are aware of JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles. Fire and rescue services should also consider the provision of joint training activities with Police, Ambulance and Maritime and Coastguard Agency control personnel. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the JESIP Joint Doctrine – Edition Two and the JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the fire control command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for situational awareness
- Establish methods for the sharing of situational awareness between fire control personnel and other Category 1 responder control rooms
- Ensure fire control personnel have access to sources of information that can inform situational awareness
- Ensure fire control personnel have access to resources that can assist them to manage information in support of situational awareness
- Establish appropriate contingency arrangements for the failure of technology or the lack of availability of resources that support situational awareness
- Ensure fire control personnel have access to methods of communicating with callers who cannot understand questions or instructions, or provide information in support of situational awareness
- Consider how technology may assist fire control personnel to obtain and maintain their situational awareness
- Consider providing joint training activities for fire control personnel and other Category 1 responder control personnel

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Ensure that appropriate methods are used to share situational awareness with other Category 1 responder control rooms
- Ensure that appropriate methods are used to share situational awareness with other fire control rooms
- Confirm any assumptions made are accurate to support situational awareness
- Organise fire control resources to minimise distractions and assist with information management in support of situational awareness
- Use situational awareness to evaluate the potential consequences of a range of actions
- Maintain situational awareness and identify changes through active monitoring
- Regularly brief and debrief others in a structured manner to support situational awareness
- Ensure situational awareness is maintained when transferring command
- Consider using alternative methods to overcome communication barriers when gathering information in support of situational awareness

All fire control personnel should:

- Gather information from available sources to gain accurate situational awareness; this may require having appropriate and accessible equipment or technology in place
- Use appropriate methods to share situational awareness with other Category 1 responder control rooms
- Validate and record information appropriately in support of situational awareness
- Provide all relevant information on a timely basis to the fire control commander to support accurate situational awareness

Control measure – Decision-making

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Fire control commanders need to have the ability to make sound decisions based on the elements that make up an individual incident, as well as having an accurate overall interpretation of the activity within the control room.

Decision-making is essential to the development and implementation of plans in fire control. The environment within fire control is at times fast-moving with competing demands and will be subject to multiple incidents and situations all requiring simultaneous decision-making processes. Plans are formed out of a number of decisions beyond deciding what will be done, including how it will be done, in what order and who will do it.

Decision-making is a fundamental command skill which can have far-reaching consequences. The ability to make sound decisions, based on the characteristics of an event or situation which can be dynamic and time-pressured, requires an accurate, overall interpretation of the situation. Sound decisions lead to assertive, effective and safe command of the fire control function. Sound decision-making will support positive outcomes in all aspects of fire control command, for example:

- Health and safety
- Fire control management
- Incident management
- Confidence and trust in their leadership
- Situational awareness
- Interpersonal relationships
- Teamwork
- Interoperability: co-operation, co-ordination and communication
- Confidence
- Personal resilience

Decision-making, like any complex skill, needs practice and understanding. Fire and rescue services should ensure they prepare fire control commanders and fire control personnel by providing ample opportunity for them to practice and develop this critical skill. The inclusion of fire control commanders and their teams in fire service exercises will support this learning and development through practical application.

Fire control commanders make decisions in relation to a wide variety of issues throughout all aspects of fire control activity. These include:

- Identifying problems
- Assessing risks
- Identifying and prioritising objectives
- Deciding tactical priorities
- Developing and communicating a plan
- Active monitoring

It is important to acknowledge that decision-making processes and traps apply to all decision makers. Decision-making happens in fire control, at the incident ground, and by other agencies. It is critical that all decision makers are aware of this and the impact that each can have on the other.

Decision-making strategies

There are a number of decision-making processes that fire control commanders may use to reach decisions. They can be broadly grouped into two main strategies:

- Intuitive decision-making, which may include conditioned processes and recognition primed decision-making
- Analytical decision-making, which may include rule selection, option comparison and creating new solutions

The difference between the two main types is the time and effort it takes to make a decision. Intuitive decision-making is fast and invoked without consciously thinking. It may be driven by cues and clues that can automatically and directly trigger a decision or response. Analytical decision-making is consciously done and takes time and effort to do, as it involves developing and comparing a number of options based on knowledge, understanding and past experience of the situation.

Decision traps

Decisions made by fire control commanders may be subjected to a number of decision traps. A decision trap can be described as an errant thought process that can lead to an incorrect decision being made; this may result in a situation worsening. The intuitive decision-making process is subject to biases; this process can be affected by stress that can impair a number of thought processes.

Uncertainty can be a stressor for fire control commanders of which there are two main types:

- Intra-incident uncertainty: uncontrollable characteristics of an incident or situation; sources of uncertainty can include:
    - Too much information
    - Insufficient information
- Extra-incident uncertainty: characteristics of the command system beyond the incident or situation and outside of the control of the fire control commander; sources of uncertainty can include:
    - Insufficient depth of understanding about the roles of others
    - Limited provision of information about inter-agency arrangements

Decision inertia is one type of decision trap and uncertainty has been linked to this redundant deliberation to decide to take action or not because of anticipated negative consequences.

There are a number of other types of decision traps that may make decisions in fire control less effective, including when:

- A decision does not fit with the objectives, tactical priorities or incident plan
- A decision is made on the basis of part of the situation, such as a cue or a goal, while not taking account of the overall picture
- A decision is based on the wrong interpretation
- There is decision aversion
- There has been a failure to actively monitor and review the situation

Decision control process

Fire control personnel are responsible for the decisions they make. They should be able to provide reasoned justifications for what they did and why. This is supported by the use of the decision control process (DCP). The process also assists in mitigating against the likelihood of falling into a decision trap.

The DCP is scalable. It can be applied to basic decisions made for a task or problem. It can also scale up for use in planning the response and support to multiple incidents. It complements the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Decision Model for multi-agency decision-making, particularly for assessing risk and developing a working strategy.

Evidence shows that decisions are not always made in a linear way, as represented in other decision-making models. The DCP recognises this to support practical decision-making within the fire control environment.

Under some circumstances, decision makers will respond rapidly and directly to an element of the situation, moving from situation assessment to action. This may happen when a cue prompts an intuitive decision. The DCP takes account of the way people naturally make rapid decisions. It presents some safeguards against potential decision traps. It also accounts for the slower and more reflective analytical type decision processes where plans are explicitly formulated.

The way an individual will make a decision may not be consciously selected. It depends on a number of factors related to the situation, perceived and actual time pressures, and the command role adopted. For example, a senior commander planning the resolution of a large-scale incident may be more likely to reach a decision using an analytical process. Time constraints and the type of calls being received will impact the way fire control personnel may reach decisions. For example, initial mobilising decisions need to be made rapidly and often with limited information, however when deciding on the actions to be taken to fulfil relief crew requirements or operational cover moves, more time can be taken to reach decisions and to put appropriate plans in place.

The process consists of four stages that are actively monitored. These are:

- Situation; incident intelligence
- Plan; based on situational awareness
- Decision controls; rapid mental check that decision is appropriate and safe
- Action; implementation of plan

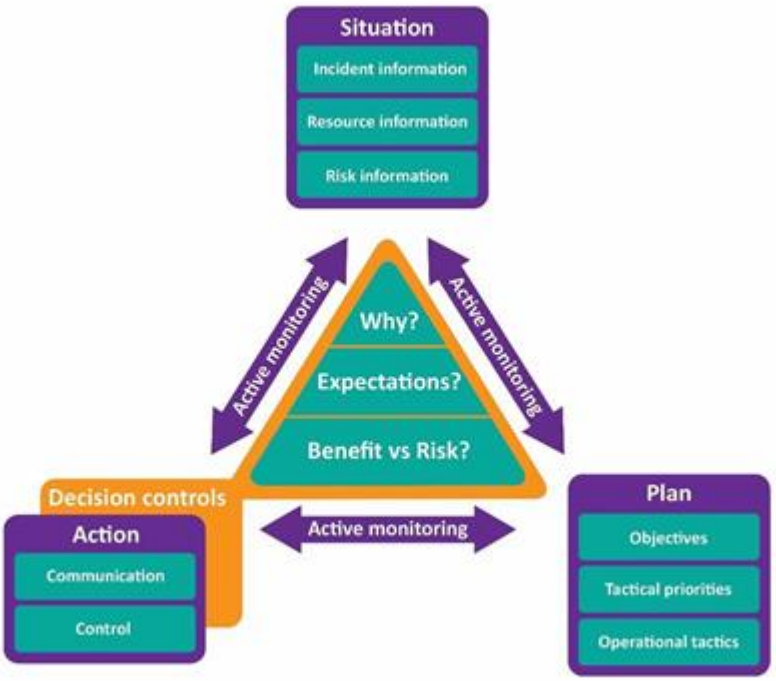

Figure: Decision control process

Fire control commanders should actively monitor and evaluate the situation and ensure their plan remains suitable and is making progress in accordance with expectations.

Situation

All commanders base their decisions on the way they interpret a situation. Good situational awareness is key to understanding the situation in a coherent way and helps to predict likely developments. By assessing the situation, the fire control commander can understand the current characteristics and details of an incident, event or situation and consider the desired end state.

Fire control commanders should continually assess the situation to support an accurate awareness, reviewing their plan and the information used to formulate it. They should gather relevant information while making the best use of the time available, including:

- Incident information:
    - The current situation
    - What led to the current situation
    - How the situation might develop
- Resource information:
    - The available resources
    - The resources required to deal with the current situation
    - What resources will be required, based on the expectations of how the situation will develop
- Risk information
    - The hazards
    - Who is at risk
    - What is at risk
    - What control measures can be used
    - What the potential benefits of a course of action are

Fire control commanders should identify the fire control resources currently available to them and those likely to be required to deliver the fire control function safely and effectively. Appropriate methods to increase the capacity of the control room should be considered, implemented and managed in a timely way. The time it will take for additional fire control personnel to arrive, or for the implementation of alternative call handling arrangements should be considered when developing plans, and available resources should be managed effectively at all times.

There are technological resources that can directly support situational awareness and assist with decision-making, including specialist software such as those available via weather forecasting services, environmental and government agencies.

For specific incident types, events or situations, early identification of the need and requests for specialist advice or assistance may be advantageous.

Plan

After assessing the situation, the fire control commander should consider the plans needed. They should understand the current situation and the factors that are affecting fire control activity. From this they can identify their objectives and develop a plan.

Their plans may include:

- The objectives and goals for the incident, event or situation
- The priorities of the fire control function
- The call handling resources available
- The levels of skills and experience of fire control personnel
- Welfare arrangements for fire control personnel
- Information received from operational incidents
- How personnel are going to achieve the priorities
- Whether specialist assistance will be required
- What equipment or additional processes will be required
- The expected outcome and timings
- Contingency arrangements

Plans should be regularly reviewed and updated based on active monitoring of how effectively objectives are being met. Active monitoring should be used to evaluate the situation to ensure plans remain suitable and are making progress in accordance with expectations.

Plans should be adapted in accordance with changes if there are unexpected developments in the incident, event or situation, or in the overall fire control activity.

Planning and review should be done in conjunction with the incident commander and command support officers to ensure that it is understood whether incident ground requirements are being met.

Decision controls

Decision controls represent a safety mechanism to guard against decision traps within the decision control process. They build in reflective thinking ahead of decisions being made and support fire control commanders in ensuring they understand:

- Why they want to make the decision
    - The goals it links to
    - The rationale

- What they expect to happen
    - Anticipate the likely outcome of the action, in particular the impact on the objective and other activities
    - How the incident, event or situation will change as a result of the action
    - What cues are expected
- Whether the benefits are proportional to the risks
    - Consider whether the benefits of proposed actions justify the risks that would be accepted

Action

This involves implementing the decisions that have been made. Wherever feasible, decision controls should be applied before this phase, or as soon as possible afterwards. This applies whether decision makers move to Action from Plan, or directly from Situation assessment. The two elements of this phase are:

- Communicate the outcomes of the decision effectively, by issuing instructions and sharing information; this may also involve providing updates on the situation, on progress, or other information about what is happening at an incident
- Control how the activities are implemented to achieve the desired outcomes; This may require delegating responsibility where this will help increase or maintain control

Active monitoring

Fire control personnel should actively monitor and evaluate the situation, including progress being achieved, to ensure their situational awareness remains accurate. The fire control commander should ensure this takes place and that situational awareness is shared.

Fire control commanders should consider whether their plans are suitable, sufficient and safe; they should consider and question any areas of uncertainty, especially where they have made assumptions. An active monitoring process by fire control commanders and their teams is essential to aid situational awareness during ongoing incidents.

Progress information should be considered, including:

- Actual progress: what progress has actually been made
- Expected progress; how does this compare to the expected progress
- Predicted progress; what further progress is predicted
- Comparison of what happened to what was envisaged to happen; what is now predicted

Operational assurance arrangements can help maintain accurate situational awareness. Due to the limitations of available personnel in fire control, operational assurance activities may not be feasible during incidents, however they should be considered during incident management where possible.

Operational audits in fire control may provide a source of information for learning both within the

fire control function and in the wider fire and rescue service, however, in order to be effective they should be carried out by personnel who are appropriately trained to assess and monitor the performance of others.

For further information refer to Corporate guidance for operational activity: Operational audits.

Dynamic Mobilising

Dynamic mobilising is a concept that deals specifically with the use of professional judgement by fire control personnel when deciding on the level of response that is mobilised to an incident based on the information being received. It is defined as 'the ability to achieve the best match between incident need and resources available at the earliest opportunity to ensure those in need receive a safe and appropriate service'.

Fire and rescue services should be aware that dynamic mobilising is terminology that may also be adopted by some suppliers of mobilising systems to describe technologies that use automatic vehicle location systems to identify and propose a resource for mobilisation. This is distinct from the use of the term in this guidance. Dynamic mobilising in this context refers to the professional judgment and human intervention made by fire control personnel based on intelligence being received from emergency callers and other agencies.

Fire and rescue services will decide in advance on the appropriate level of response for each incident type that it can foreseeably anticipate attending. The level of response will be decided based on a task analysis or similar methodology that assesses the number and type of resources that it needs for the safe resolution of incidents. This information provides the initial predetermined attendance that is used within the mobilising system. It is therefore essential that fire control personnel understand this process and select the most appropriate incident type based on the type of call and the information gathered. This will form the basis of their risk assessment when deciding on the level of response to be mobilised.

Dynamic mobilising enables fire control personnel to utilise all available information at the point of call to decide upon the most appropriate response according to the risk. As more information is obtained from callers and other responding agencies the fire control commander should assess the situation and may alter or amend the level of response or pre-determined attendance and initial mobilising decisions. Accurate situational awareness and continuous assessment is essential to ensure the most appropriate response.

Most situations that fire control personnel are faced with are not unique and are foreseeable. In managing incidents, fire control commanders use their own experience and knowledge of guidance, pre-determined attendances, response plans and action plans, together with that of fire control personnel and the operational command team. Fire and rescue services should ensure that fire control personnel are sufficiently aware of policies and procedures, and the capability of the available resources.

In all situations where dynamic mobilising strategies are used it is essential that the rationale for the decision and any subsequent decisions and actions is recorded on the incident log and the fire

control commander informed at the earliest opportunity.

Fire control personnel may also consider reallocating resources already en route to an incident when the new incident type is of a higher priority. In this situation it is essential that the fire control commander is informed, that the resource is replaced, and the incident log is completed with the decision-making rationale.

When overseeing the implementation of dynamic mobilising strategies, the fire control commander should consider:

- Level of skills and experience of fire control personnel tasked with the mobilisation of resources
- Supervision needs of fire control personnel
- Location of available resources
- Travel time of resources to the incident
- Access to the incident
- Any additional or conflicting information received from emergency callers
- The availability and location of specialist equipment
- The need for specialist skills and expertise
- Tactical and other specialist advisers
- Police, Ambulance and other Category 1 and Category 2 responders

Operational discretion

Operational discretion relates to unusual circumstances where strictly following an operational procedure would be a barrier to resolving an incident, or where there is no procedure that adequately deals with the incident. When incidents occur for which no policy exists and that require fire control personnel to make innovative or unorthodox decisions, it is essential that the decision-making rationale is recorded and all appropriate actions are taken.

These actions should include:

- The informing of the fire control manager
- The informing of the incident commander
- The informing of other officers responsible for operational events such as duty officers
- Recording of the decision-making rationale
- Recording of all resulting actions

Fire and rescue services should foster an organisational and operational culture that encourages and empowers the appropriate use of dynamic mobilising strategies and operational discretion in fire control. The aim should be to instil confidence in fire control commanders to share their experiences, and to value the lessons learned. Services should ensure that all personnel understand why it may be appropriate for dynamic mobilising strategies and operational discretion to be applied by fire control personnel.

Fire and rescue services should develop their fire control personnel by testing their personal resilience and decision-making under pressure; appropriately using both of these command skills is essential when applying dynamic mobilising strategies and operational discretion.

The application of dynamic mobilising strategies and operational discretion may assist with local, regional or national learning; for further information refer to National Operational Learning: Good practice guide for fire and rescue services. Fire control commanders should be prepared to participate in reviews of policies and procedures following the application of operational discretion.

Joint decision-making

Decision-making during incidents may also be carried out by other responders. At multi-agency incidents the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Decision Model is the process that emergency responders have agreed to use for joint decision-making.

In addition to the fire and rescue service decision control process, the joint decision model aims to determine:

- If there is a common understanding and position on the situation and response held by the multi-agency team of commanders
- If the collective decision is fit for purpose for each of the commanders

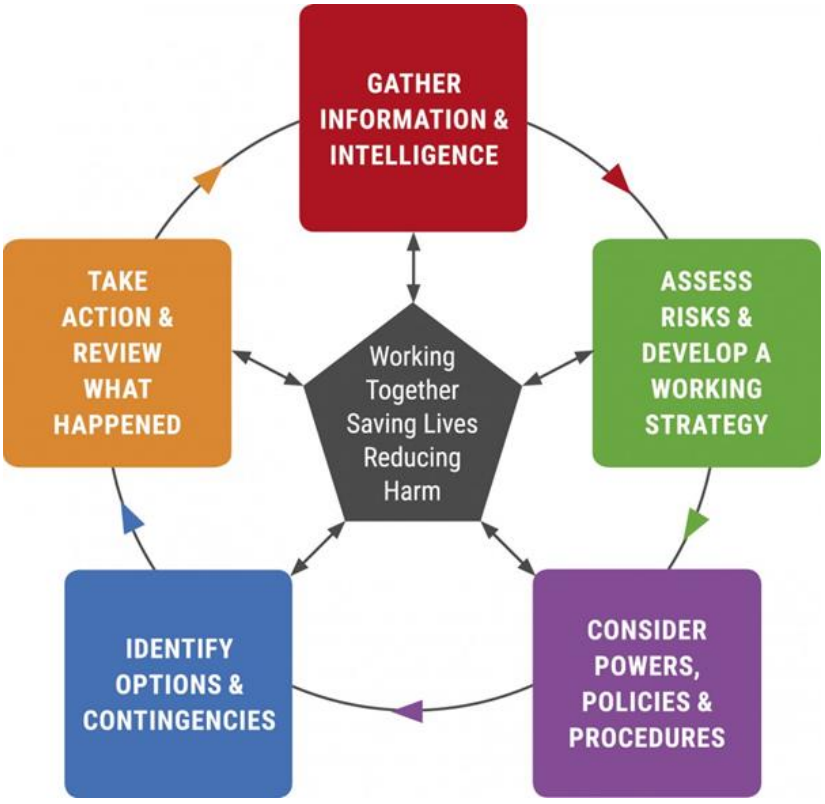

Figure: JESIP joint decision model

The decision control process supports the JESIP joint decision model. Commanders use the decision control process to develop their incident plan, which will then be shared with other agencies when applying the joint decision model. Agencies will jointly agree the multi-agency objectives, with each having an understanding of their role in achieving these.

These multi-agency objectives will need to be translated into actions and incorporated in each service's incident response plan. Fire incident commanders will consider these collective objectives, and consider the tactical priorities and operational tactics required, integrating them into their incident plan using the decision control process.

The JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles provide the framework for the sharing of situational

awareness between control rooms, and the mechanism for the setting up of multi-agency interoperable voice communications. Once established, multi-agency talk-groups or other methods such as conference calls will allow responding commanders and control rooms to share situational awareness and the decisions made.

Decision logs

It is essential that fire and rescue services consider the methods of recording the decisions made in fire control.

It is the role of fire control personnel to record all actions carried out and decisions taken in fire control in connection with the incidents managed. The electronic incident log generated by the mobilising system provides an adequate method for recording actions and decisions, however fire and rescue services may also consider the use of separate decision logs in some circumstances, for example during business continuity events.

Electronic incident logs generated by mobilising systems should be maintained and updated, recording key events and actions in addition to the recording of all messages and routine incident activity. The electronic incident log provides a method of accurately maintaining a time-stamped record of the actions taken by fire control personnel, however this should be considered when recording decisions and decision-making rationale. The time the decision was actually taken, and by whom, should also be recorded.

Fire and rescue services may consider the configuration of the incident narrative log to provide methods for inputting information that identifies the type of message. This will aid information management during an incident and provide a clear record to review in the post-incident phase.

The incident log should record all decisions made which influence an incident, even if there is uncertainty over how important a decision might turn out to be. It is important to record the rationale behind each decision and the context in which it was made as it can be very difficult to recall this context once time has passed. This will help those who may examine the decision-making process in the future.

The entries to the incident log must include:

- The time that the decision was taken
- A description of the decision and the rationale behind it
- A description of other options that were available and why these were discounted
- The name of the person or people making the decision – if it was a shared decision the names of all involved in the decision-making should be included
- Resulting actions including who the decision was shared with or communicated to

The incident log provides:

- An accurate, ‘at the time’, record of decisions made, including those where no action is taken
- An audit trail of decisions, along with the reasons for making them based on the information available at the time

- A record of new information or changes in the situation
- A record of the actions taken relating to the incident
- A record of risk-critical information from other services or agencies
- A way of helping the handover between fire control personnel

To support the recording of decision-making rationale during larger or more complex incidents, fire and rescue services may consider providing fire control officers in charge with access to technological solutions such as body worn cameras or voice recorders. Fire and rescue services may also consider using voice recording methods included within fire control mobilising systems to allow fire control personnel to capture their decision-making rationale. Information from such devices may then be retained and accessed in line with the fire and rescue service's own data retention and information management policies. Fire and rescue services may also consider providing fire control personnel with additional loggist training to support them in identifying and appropriately recording the decisions made.

The information recorded within incident and decision logs and voice recording systems provides post-incident debriefs with a decision-making audit trail to review, enabling lessons to be learned from an incident and providing effective feedback to aid operational improvement.

There may be occasions where fire control comamnders or fire control personnel are called upon to provide evidence at formal inquiries or legal proceedings. This may be as a result of their involvement during a major incident or because of the nature of an emergency call and the circumstances of the situation. It is therefore vital that all material relating to an incident, including audio recordings, handwritten notes and records of debriefs, are retained in accordance with the fire and rescue service's data retention policies.

All incident and decision logs and audio recordings, including material relating to other incidents ongoing at the time, will be admissible as evidence in any subsequent criminal, inquisitorial or coronial process that follows. Care should therefore be taken to ensure that appropriate language is used and that accounts are written in such a way that they will be understood at a later date.

Further information regarding attendance at coroners court, public inquiry or the equivalent can be found in:

- Corporate guidance for operational activity – Legal proceedings.
- Fires and Firefighting – Attendance at coroners court (or equivalent)

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish fire control command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for decision-making, including the application of dynamic mobilising strategies and operational discretion
- Establish appropriate methods for carrying out operational assurance activities in fire control

- Ensure that policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel consider the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) Joint Decision Model
- Ensure that policies and procedures are sufficiently flexible to support the application of dynamic mobilising strategies in fire control
- Review operational policies and procedures and share any lessons learned post-incident and following the application of dynamic mobilising strategies and operational discretion
- Have appropriate systems in place that enable fire control commanders to record the reasons and rationale that support their decision-making
- Consider the provision of technological solutions to support the recording of decisions made and their rationale

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Make decisions that support the responsibilities of the fire and rescue service including the safety of personnel, other responders and the public
- Select appropriate actions by applying the decision controls to avoid decision traps
- Develop and communicate plans for the delivery of the fire control function to relevant personnel
- Regularly review, update and communicate changes to plans
- Use appropriate technology to support their decision-making
- Identify the fire control resources currently available to take immediate action, and request those likely to be needed to fulfil the activities of fire control
- Use incident or decision logs to contemporaneously record the rationale for the decisions made during all incidents
- Consider applying dynamic mobilising strategies to achieve the best match between incident need and resources available
- When applying dynamic mobilising strategies , ensure all personnel know what actions are being taken and why
- Participate in reviews of operational policies and procedures following the application of dynamic mobilising strategies or operational discretion

All fire control personnel should:

- Be aware of the different types of decision-making processes, and the factors that may influence which process they are likely to adopt
- Use appropriate methods to record their actions, decisions and decision-making rationale
- Use incident typing to support consistent and sound decision-making when mobilising resources to incidents

- Identify the operational resources currently available to take immediate action

Control measure – Interpersonal communication

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Good interpersonal communication skills are essential for effective fire control command; communication is the tool used by commanders to facilitate many aspects of their role. Interpersonal communication skills are used to transfer information between fire control commanders and other people. Effective use of these skills will ensure that what is said and emphasised is supported by the way it is said and the body language of the speaker.

Communication can be a direct one-way process such as an order, which may need to convey a sense of urgency. Communication can be a simple two-way process that involves an exchange of information; effective interpersonal communication skills can be used to ensure that the information received has also been understood, by using active listening and confirmatory questions.

Effective communication between fire control commanders and others is of primary importance in fire control. The quality of communication moderates the degree to which people communicate, co-operate and co-ordinate with each other.

Effective interpersonal communicators should:

- Actively listen to others
- Communicate with clarity and confidence
- Adopt the most appropriate communication style for the situation
- Verify information communicated to them to avoid making assumptions
- Avoid barriers to effective communication
- Ensure their verbal and non-verbal communication aligns
- Check for confirmation of understanding

Fire and rescue services should be aware that the culture of their organisation can influence behaviours. This may affect the way in which fire control officers in charge communicate with others and the way in which personnel respond.

The manner in which a fire control commander communicates may affect the perception of them in terms of their competence, confidence and trustworthiness. This perception can influence the actions and behaviours of others, which may impact on several important aspects of command, including:

- How information is managed
- How information is received by others
- The quality and frequency of information that is shared with incident commanders and responding agencies

- The transfer of command
- The extent of personal, team and organisational learning from incident reviews

Fire and rescue services should reference the important characteristics of effective interpersonal communicators in relevant policies.

When transferring command, briefing or debriefing, fire control commanders should communicate clearly and concisely, following a recognised structure. This assists others to engage, follow and understand the information and to identify when something may have been inadvertently omitted. Fire control officers in charge should check the other person's understanding of important communications to ensure there is a shared understanding of the information.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the fire control command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for interpersonal communication skills
- Ensure their organisational culture supports the use of good interpersonal communication between all personnel

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Use interpersonal communication skills and behaviours to demonstrate their competence, instil confidence, and foster trust with others
- Value and support others to establish open, two-way communication to gather and share information using interpersonal communication skills
- Using interpersonal communication skills, apply the most appropriate communication style to suit the audience or situation
- Use interpersonal communication skills when communicating objectives, priorities and tactics to be adopted to resolve an incident or situation
- Provide regular situation updates to all responders by using interpersonal communication skills and protocols, such as M/ETHANE
- Apply interpersonal communication skills and use a recognised structure when transferring command, briefing or debriefing

Control measure – Personal resilience

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Stress is caused by a mismatch between the demands placed on an individual and their ability to cope. Fire control officers in charge are exposed to a variety of potential sources of stress, including stressors associated with chronic and acute stress.

Chronic stress may occur when there are long-term demands and pressures over which an individual believes they have no control. This can include work life or organisational factors, such as shift patterns, workload or culture. It can also include private life factors, such as relationships or bereavement.

Acute stress may occur when there are short-term demands and pressures associated with recent or on-going events. This includes the decision-making, planning and communication skills expected of fire control commanders. Stressors can also result as a consequence of the working environment, for example, uncertainty, rapidly changing situations or exposure to traumatic events.

Fire control commanders should understand the difference between chronic and acute stress. They should know the causes, symptoms, and effects on performance of fatigue and chronic and acute stress.

Appropriate levels of acute stress benefit performance as it increases alertness, but excessive acute stress will adversely affect cognitive performance, and sustained periods can lead to fatigue. Mental and physical fatigue are associated with feelings of tiredness and weakness and may affect physical and cognitive skills.

The impact of stressors on performance is not inevitable. Instead, it depends on an individual's capacity to cope with them; their personal resilience. Personal resilience consists of an individual's evaluation of potential stressors and their access to coping strategies to manage them. Personal resilience may be thought of as the capacity of an individual to cope with stress and fatigue without it affecting their performance.

Fire control commanders should understand what affects their personal resilience and capacity to cope with stress and fatigue. Factors that enhance personal resilience include:

- Experience of fire control command
- Workload management
- Training which ensures aspects of performance are automated
- Perception of the predictability and controllability of stressors
- Confidence
- Positive outlook
- Social support
- Physical fitness

Fire control commanders need to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress and fatigue in order to know when they are beginning to affect their performance and that of others. They need to know and understand what actions to take before stress or fatigue begins to reduce performance, in order to maintain safety. This may include:

- Creating time to think
- Maintaining an effective span of control

- Resting, rehydrating and eating
- Recording thoughts and information for use later
- Actively monitoring time
- Consulting with others

Fire and rescue services should ensure post-incident reviews and safety event investigations explicitly consider the impact of stress and fatigue on fire control commanders, incident commanders, operational and fire control personnel, and others involved.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for personal resilience
- Ensure post-incident reviews and safety event investigations consider the impact of stress and fatigue on fire control personnel

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Manage their working environment and workload to mitigate the effects of stress and fatigue, and to optimise their personal resilience
- Recognise the symptoms of stress and fatigue in themselves and others and the negative affect they may have on performance, by understanding the varying levels of personal resilience
- Implement actions that will reduce the effects of stress and fatigue on themselves and others before performance is affected, based on the varying levels of personal resilience

Control measure – Teamwork

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

A team may be defined as two or more people with clearly defined roles temporarily working together interdependently toward achieving a common goal that exceeds individual or organisational goals.

Fire control commanders take on the role of team leader in fire control in order to create their command structure and team and to exercise their leadership skills. To support teamwork during incidents fire control commanders and fire control personnel should be considered to be part of the operational team or wider multi-agency team and should receive appropriate updates and briefings in a timely manner.

Fire control commanders will need to use their teamwork skills to lead fire control personnel based on their priorities and the demands of fire control activity. These include:

- Communicating effectively to establish and maintain trust between themselves and other team members
- Co-operating with operational incident command team members and the team members of other agencies
- Co-ordinating the actions of their team and also with those of teams on the incident ground and in other agencies
- Supporting others to carry out their role or task

Effective teamwork is essential for the safe resolution of incidents; it is also essential when intra-operability or interoperability is in use. Fire control commanders should know and understand how different elements of team working can affect team performance. They should recognise that effective teamwork enables the consistent application of service and JESIP policies and procedures.

Teamwork engages team members, gains their commitment, and can contribute to lower levels of stress. It also facilitates intra-operability between fire and rescue services, and interoperability between other emergency services and responders.

Fire control commanders should understand the different responsibilities of the roles they may assign to personnel, such as radio operator or emergency call taker. To support teamwork and communication with the incident ground they should also understand operational command and specialist roles, such as tactical advisers and fire investigators

Fire control commanders should be aware of the stages of team formation. The fire control commander will usually know their team members, however there may be occasions when they are required to form a team with people they are not familiar with, and so should ensure effective communication with individuals to understand their levels of experience, knowledge and skills in order to avoid their team management being compromised.

Teamwork in the wider context of the relationship between fire control and incident grounds should also be considered. Working relationships and practices will be strengthened through the engagement, commitment and trust of all team members and the understanding of their roles.

Fire control commanders may also be required to form part of a multi-agency team during complex or major incidents, or during spate conditions, particularly during the early stages of an incident until a senior fire control manager or operational commander can assume the role. During this phase the fire control commander may be required to form or join a team using technologies such as radio talk groups or conference call facilities. JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles describe the elements of interoperability between control rooms and fire control personnel should be familiar with the doctrine.

Fire control commanders should understand the roles, responsibilities and capabilities of other emergency services and of other agencies who respond to incidents, such as local authorities. It is likely that a fire control commander will not know the other members of a multi-agency team or be familiar with their experience, knowledge and skills, however it is essential that they use effective teamwork and communication techniques to foster a positive working relationship.

Fire control commanders should recognise the importance of trust between themselves and

members of their team, and of the wider operational team or multi-agency team members, especially when team members are unknown to them. Under such circumstances establishing trust is paramount, for example, in each other's abilities to perform their respective roles.

Fire control commanders should recognise how effective communication and co-operation benefits teamwork. They should understand the impact trust has on co-operation, co-ordination and communication and in turn the affect these may have on shared situational awareness and decision-making.

All fire control personnel should be prepared to function effectively as a team member and to perform an appropriate role within the command structure.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the fire control command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for teamwork

TACTICAL ACTIONS:

Fire control commanders should:

- Form their command structure in accordance with the priorities and demands of an incident or situation
- Communicate effectively with members of their team, incident command teams and with multi-agency team members to engender trust
- Support the members of their team, incident command teams or multi-agency teams in accordance with their individual or organisational needs
- Co-operate with members of their team, incident command teams or with multi-agency team members
- Co-ordinate the actions of their team in support of their plan
- Co-ordinate fire control actions and tasks with those of other emergency services and agencies to support a multi-agency plan

Hazard – Overwhelmed emergency call handling capacity

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

As part of their risk management plan each fire and rescue service should consider the fire control resources they need to mobilise to an incident to support effective incident resolution and command, and to fulfil all foreseeable activity required of the fire control function.

However, there may be occasions where the call volume and subsequent workloads being experienced in fire control exceed the capacity of the personnel immediately available. This can happen when fire control personnel leave the control room for welfare breaks or planned activities such as training or personal development. It can also happen as a result of unexpected spate or spike call volume conditions.

The ability of fire control commanders to effectively manage emergency calls and mobilise resources may be key to the success or failure of an incident commander's strategy or plan to resolve incidents. Any failure or delay in the mobilisation of sufficient and appropriate personnel, equipment, specialist skills and other agencies to an incident may:

- Delay operational intervention
- Increase the risk to the public, including people at risk and casualties
- Reduce the safety of personnel or other emergency responders
- Result in loss of or damage to property
- Have a detrimental effect on the environment
- Affect the reputation of the fire and rescue service
- Impact on levels of public confidence
- Delay community recovery

The ability of the fire control commander to select the most appropriate method to manage the situation using the options available to them is therefore essential to ensure the resilient delivery of the fire control function.

Control measure – Additional call handling capacity: Fire control personnel

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

As no two situations are the same it is imperative that fire control commanders are able to correctly identify the resources available to them to take immediate action and should begin assessing the need to apply measures to augment call handling capacity where possible as soon as call volumes begin to increase.

Their assessment, which may give an indication of the required resources, should be based on the number and type of calls being received, the predicted duration of incidents and likelihood of incidents being protracted, together with other ongoing operational incidents and fire control activity.

Fire control commanders should have a thorough knowledge of the methods of achieving increased call handling capacity and of how to select appropriate methods.

The methods of achieving increased call handling capacity may include:

- Recall of on duty fire control personnel from welfare breaks
- Recall of on duty fire control personnel from training or other activities
- Recall of off-duty fire control personnel
- Requesting assistance from other suitably trained and competent personnel
- Consideration of the use of buddy emergency call handling arrangements
- Consideration of the use of call filtering methods by Call Handling Agents (BT)
- Consideration of the use of call redistribution methods by Call Handling Agents (BT)

The fire control commander should be aware of the number and location of on duty fire control personnel and the methods for recalling them to fire control from welfare breaks or other activities. In addition, the fire control commander should be aware of the location and availability of other suitably trained and competent personnel, such as fire control personnel carrying out supporting day duties roles that do not form a part of the duty shift or watch.

When assessing levels of fire control activity and related workloads it is essential that the fire control commander takes into consideration the welfare of fire control personnel and puts measures in place for sufficient rest and meal breaks to be taken, giving consideration to any interruptions to breaks as a result of increased workloads.

During sustained periods of increased activity, such as during spate conditions resulting from extreme weather, or a major incident, where it can be predicted that increased fire control capacity is required beyond that immediately available, the fire control commnader may consider recalling off duty fire control personnel. When selecting this option, the time that it will take for additional fire control personnel to arrive should be considered.

Where advance notice is received of extreme weather or other conditions where increased emergency call volume can be predicted, the fire control commander should ensure their management teams are made aware so that emergency call handling capacity can be assessed and increased in advance if necessary.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for additional call handling capacity
- Provide methods of recall of on-duty fire control personnel and other suitably trained and competent personnel
- Consider providing methods of recall of off-duty fire control personnel and other suitably competent personnel
- Identify personnel who are competent to carry out emergency call handling
- Ensure methods are in place to obtain intelligence for events or situations that may increase emergency call volumes
- Ensure methods are in place to increase call handling capacity during events or situations that may increase emergency call volumes

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Have an awareness of the options available for increasing emergency call handling capacity
- Select the most appropriate method to recall fire control personnel and other suitably personnel
- Consider the welfare needs of fire control personnel when planning call handling capacity

Control Measure – Additional call handling capacity: Emergency call redistribution

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Fire control commanders should be aware of the methods of emergency call redistribution and how these may affect their command and management of fire control.

Fire and rescue services should ensure contingency arrangements are made for the redistribution of emergency calls during periods of increased demand such as spate or spike conditions or a major incident. These arrangements may include a buddy arrangement with another emergency service for the handling of emergency calls.

The term ‘buddy’ is defined as ‘a pre-nominated fire control room to be used by the call handling agent for the distribution of calls in times of unexpected pressure’ (PECS Code of Practice 2020). The call handling agent (BT) will automatically divert calls to the buddy if unanswered by the home

control room for a defined period.

The extent of the support that a buddy arrangement provides may vary, but all will allow for emergency call taking and the transfer back to the home control of emergency call data.

Where mobilising systems are suitably linked or other systems provided, it may be possible for the redistribution of emergency calls to a buddy without the intervention of the call handling agent.

It is essential that the fire control commander is aware of any such arrangements and can identify when calls are being handled by a buddy emergency control room. They must ensure the mobilisation of resources is carried out and that the buddy is informed of any specific advice or survival guidance to be passed to emergency callers.

During periods of exceptionally high demand the number of emergency calls may exceed the capacity of the home fire control and the buddy arrangement. In such instances the call handling agent may redistribute emergency calls to emergency control rooms beyond the prenominated buddy arrangement, and this may include passing calls to Police and Ambulance control rooms.

When this becomes necessary the call handling agent will inform the home fire control using their critical contact number. The fire control commander should then consider the use of national and regional talk groups to share situational awareness, which will include but is not limited to, any change in survival guidance.

The call handling agent may also use the critical contact number if there are extended delays in calls being answered by fire control or where there are delays and they have an exceptionally critical call waiting.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for additional call handling capacity: emergency call redistribution
- Provide the call handling agent with a critical contact number for fire control
- Consider the use of buddy arrangements to manage the redistribution of emergency calls
- Provide the call handling agent with details of buddy arrangements
- Provide access for fire control personnel to regional and national talk groups

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Understand the emergency call redistribution methods that may be used by the call handling agent and when they may be used
- Understand the buddy arrangements in place and the process for receiving or handing back incident data

- Identify when emergency calls are being handled by another fire control or other emergency control
- Ensure situational awareness and any change to advice is shared with the prenominated buddy and other emergency control rooms
- Ensure situational awareness is shared with operational incident commanders
- Ensure all appropriate mobilising actions are carried out for emergency calls handled by a buddy or other emergency control room
- Consider the use of national and regional talk groups to share situational awareness and any change to advice with other controls

Control Measure – Changes to call handling procedures by the call handling agent

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

The Public Emergency Call Service (PECS) Code of Practice deals with the method of handling '999/112' public emergency telephone calls between the call handling agents and the emergency authorities. In addition to the procedures that will be followed when connecting calls to emergency control rooms, PECS also provides information regarding contingency arrangements. Fire and rescue services should therefore consider the PECS Code of Practice when developing policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel.

In the event of excessive call volumes as a result of spate or spike conditions or a major incident the Call Handling Agent may be able to provide assistance including the redistribution of emergency calls received via 999/112 to a prenominated buddy control room, or by applying agreed call-filtering questions.

The call handling agent may be contacted to assist with call queue or filtering arrangements and a statement agreed between fire control and the call handling agent for the duration of the incident or event in question.

For example, on connecting a call the call handling agent may agree to say: "(EA name) is very busy with calls relating to (incident details) at (location). I will try to connect you".

If specifically requested by a fire control trying to prioritise calls, for example where many flood-related calls are being received, the call handling agent may agree to ask further simple questions before connection in an effort to filter-out non-emergency cases on behalf of the fire control room.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish the command competencies, training, validation and revalidation required for changes to call handling procedures by the call handling agent
- Consider the PECS Code of Practice when developing policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel
- Provide contact numbers for the Call Handling Agent with the appropriate level of priority

- Provide information on the facilities available through Call Handling Agents (BT) for call filtering and redistribution

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Understand the additional call management assistance methods offered by the call handling agent
- Consider the use of additional call management assistance methods offered by the call handling agent
- Understand how to contact the call handling agent to request additional call management assistance

Hazard – Ineffective management of fire control

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

Communication

Communication can be ineffective or fail when information is not shared at the right time or is not understood by the receiver. This can lead to:

- Incorrect or inappropriate information being used to assess a situation, resulting in:
    - Poor individual situational awareness
    - Inconsistent shared situational awareness
    - A faulty perception of events unfolding
    - Wrong decisions being taken for the actual situation
- Failure to co-ordinate team activities, causing task conflicts between personnel or other agencies
- 'Freelancing' because of a breakdown in leadership and confidence
- Increased risk of accidents because risk-critical information is not shared or understood

Throughout all aspects of communication, fire and rescue services and their employees need to be aware of the potential for misuse of information, and mindful of the legal requirements placed on them, by legislation such as the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Spans of control

Unless spans of control are maintained at manageable levels, fire control commanders may be overloaded with information, which may impact on:

- Gaining effective situational awareness
- Appropriate decision-making

- Effective communication
- Ability to maintain effective command of fire control

Methods of sectorisation may be considered to support effective communication, effective fire control command and the management of activities and tasks.

Control measure – Effective communication

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Fire control commanders usually manage multiple incidents at any given time. They will lead their teams to manage and support multiple incidents and situations while also undertaking other fire control activities. Effective communication within the fire control team and with the incident grounds they support is therefore essential.

Effective communication is fundamental to achieving successful and safe resolution of incidents. In fire control, it provides the fire control commander with knowledge about incidents, the situation and progress of tasks. Obtaining accurate and timely information is crucial to underpin situational awareness and subsequent decision-making. It helps the fire control commander perform their role in a confident and determined manner and to ensure that all incidents and associated fire control activities are supported safely and effectively.

Communication also plays a vital role in co-ordinating activities, completing tasks and handover of command. Sharing accurate and timely information is also critical for helping others to have a common understanding of the situation, what is happening and what needs to happen next. Even the most effective plans will only work if the people putting them into practice understand them.

As well as exchanging information, good communication helps to build relationships between people. These relationships are important so that people are effective when they carry out their tasks to resolve the incident. Fire control commanders should be aware that effective communication is essential for good leadership and makes it easier for people to follow instructions, understand briefings and have confidence in what is being stated.

Effective communication should:

- Provide information that is:
    - Clear
    - Relevant and concise
    - Timely
- Be easily understood
- Be delivered confidently
- Include active listening
- Ensure verbal and non-verbal communications are aligned
- Ensure assumptions are questioned

Key principles should be considered in maintaining an effective communication strategy in fire control:

- That information received in support of incidents and shared with an incident ground is accurate, appropriate and timely
- That information is obtained from a reliable and credible source, or if not that it is checked and verified
- That information received from an incident ground is recorded accurately using incident logs
- That appropriate methods of communicating information are used if there are security implications, or the need to relay sensitive or distressing information
- The appropriate recipients are provided with relevant information, via a suitable method
- The relevance of the information

A good flow of information is essential to ensure the effective management of fire control activities. The fire control commander should ensure they:

- Gather information, issue instructions and receive situation reports
- Ensure that information received is understood, including differences in terminology
- Challenge information to confirm that it is current and valid
- Identify conflicting information and confirm what is correct
- Issue instructions to personnel
- Receive situation reports from all incidents or ongoing activities
- Assess and provide for the needs of other agencies
- Brief personnel about the tasks they need to perform
- Thoroughly brief personnel to share any safety critical information

For multi-agency incidents the M/ETHANE message protocol should be used to exchange information about the incident with other responders and agencies' control rooms.

Fire control commanders should ensure suitable arrangements for communications with operational incidents are established and maintained. At an incident it is usually the role of command support under the guidance of the incident commander to establish arrangements for communications, which will include communication with fire control.

The fire control commander should consider the extent of the communications required to meet the activities of fire control, and this may include:

- Ensuring effective communication and information flow between fire control personnel
- Maintaining communications links with incidents grounds.
- Ensuring radio channels and call signs are correctly assigned
- Establishing communications with other agencies

- Establishing communications with other control rooms
- The use of talk groups
- Requesting the support of a communications tactical adviser
- Ensuring effective communication with other officers and personnel not at an incident ground
- Ensuring the JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles are prioritised appropriately during multi-agency incidents

Effective handover

Ensuring there is an effective handover between fire control commanders is a crucial step in the handing over of command. It is an important stage in the formation of the new fire control commander's situational awareness, which will be partially based on the situational awareness of the current commander and will be further developed from the range of information that will be gathered. Failure to conduct an effective handover can lead to poor situational awareness and can result in inappropriate or ineffective decisions being made.

There may be occasions where a more senior fire control manager or operational officer is called upon and who may decide to take command. In such situations they should be briefed on current situational awareness by the fire control commander. Where command of the fire control room is handed over this should be made clear by both parties and incident logs updated where appropriate.

Fire control commanders should ensure an effective handover at the change of each shift and that fire control personnel are appropriately briefed. This may be achieved by one-to-one handover between fire control personnel, team briefing or other suitable method, but must ensure that information and situational awareness are shared effectively while also maintaining the activities of the fire control function.

Handovers should include:

- Information on all ongoing incidents including command structure and communication lines
- The most recent M/ETHANE messages received for ongoing incidents
- Information on any other incidents which may have or require additional actions or which may generate social media or other interest from members of the public
- Information on the resources currently deployed to incidents
- Information on operational cover including resources at standby locations
- Information on any other local, regional or national resources in use
- Information on reports made to National Resilience Fire Control via the reporting tool
- Information on any specific plans or arrangements for emergency call management

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure methods are in place for effective handover of fire control command
- Ensure there is resilience in operational communication strategies and equipment
- Test the compatibility of communications equipment, systems and processes with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other agencies
- Ensure that they have appropriate communications systems in place between fire control and incidents
- Have contingency arrangements for reinstating operational communication, in the event of equipment or strategy failure

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Ensure communication with incident grounds is maintained
- Ensure the exchange of information about the incident with the incident ground in a timely way
- Ensure regular situation updates are provided to all responders
- Ensure appropriate updates via the national reporting tool
- Establish resilient telecommunications with other responding agencies and consider talk groups
- Deliver clear, concise and timely briefings to personnel
- Ensure the M/ETHANE message protocol is used to exchange information about the incident with other responders
- Provide an effective handover when handing over command
- Receive an effective handover when taking over command
- Ensure an effective handover between fire control personnel
- Ensure that an accurate record of information received is maintained

Control measure – Organisation of the fire control function

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Managing and supervising fire control personnel is an essential part of the safe system of work that encompasses all aspects of fire control activity. Incident command in the fire control context allows the fire control commander to adapt and to organise the resources available to them to deal with incidents safely and effectively.

The incident command system provides the fire control commander with a framework to structure and organise fire control activity in a controlled manner. It is essential that the fire control commander carries out a continuous review of progress to maintain their situational awareness and that measures to support communication and the sharing of information are put in place. Taking these steps will prevent the fire control commander from becoming overloaded with information, which supports effective situational awareness and decision-making. This way the fire control commander can maintain control under conditions of high pressure and rapid change.

The fire control commander should carry out continuous review and assessment of fire control workloads to organise their team effectively, taking into account the welfare needs of fire control personnel and the availability of additional support.

Sectorisation

Understanding the span of control concept is important when managing a large amount of activity and information. The fire control commander will usually be managing multiple incidents at any given time, and they may have a large team of fire control personnel passing information to them about different incidents or needing to gain their attention. Fire control commanders should prioritise the designation and delegation of specific tasks, communicating clearly and confirming understanding.

To maintain manageable spans of control fire control commanders may consider methods of implementing sectorisation when planning the activities of the fire control function. A simple form of sectorisation may be achieved by allocating a task to specific fire control personnel. For example, two team members could be tasked with working through an action plan for an incident. In a more complex situation, they might deal with the allocation of a response to batches of incidents during spate conditions. The designation of such tasks can support an effective reporting structure. Where possible the designation of responsibilities should be identified as part of an operational plan, however it is acknowledged that in some circumstances it is not possible to pre-plan. Any form of sectorisation in fire control should only be used if necessary and fire control commanders should keep the structure as simple as possible. In doing so, the potential barriers to the flow of information between the fire control commander, fire control personnel and operational incident commanders is reduced.

The use of buddy emergency call handling arrangements may provide an additional method of sectorisation. The extent of what can be achieved will depend on the type of buddy arrangements and available technology. When considering the use of buddy arrangements as a form of sectorisation it is essential that appropriate methods of communication and resource mobilisation are agreed between partners and the effectiveness of the plan is monitored throughout the event or situation.

Sectorisation may not be achievable due to reduced numbers of fire control personnel, for example in fire controls where team sizes are smaller. In such instances it is essential that the fire control commander makes an early assessment of the workload, selecting the most appropriate method to manage the situation.

Even when tasks are delegated, the fire control commander remains responsible for overall incident management. They should remain focused on command and control, the use of resources, incident

planning and the co-ordination of any sectorisation or delegation and designation of tasks.

To support the scope of the work of fire control, fire and rescue services need to identify the roles likely to be performed by fire control personnel. These will include the level of skills and appropriate responsibilities for each fire control role and function.

Establishing joint working protocols with neighbouring and buddy fire and rescue services, and other agencies, may help to support the sectorisation or designation of tasks during a larger scale or multi-agency incident. To ensure the flow of information and sharing of situational awareness, fire control personnel should also be aware of operational command team roles and functions and establish single points of contact through which information can be easily and quickly relayed.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider establishing joint working protocols with neighbouring and buddy emergency controls
- Identify the roles and competencies required to deliver the fire control function

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Organise fire control using appropriate structure and personnel
- Establish sectorisation or designation of tasks appropriate to the type, size and complexity of the incident or situation
- Ensure fire control personnel understand the roles assigned to them and the allocation of tasks
- Ensure that single points of contact with operational command teams for the sharing of information are established

Control measure – Specialist advice

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

The types of incident or situation that are reported to fire control are many and varied, and as it is not possible for the fire control commander to have an in-depth knowledge of all types of incident, they may need to request advice from another member of their team, fire control manager, operational personnel, subject matter expert or tactical advisor. It is therefore essential that fire control commanders can recognise such situations and select the most appropriate solutions.

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

accurate and current information.

Subject matter expert

A subject-matter expert (SME) is a person who is an authority in a particular area or topic. Fire control 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 an incident commander.

Tactical adviser

Fire control commanders can request the support 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 or control room.

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

When consulting a tactical adviser or other qualified person, the fire control commander should ensure that their decision-making rationale and any following actions and information is recorded within the incident log.

When nominating individuals to receive specialist training fire and rescue services should consider

the nomination of fire control managers in the specific fields that may enhance the resilience of the fire and rescue service and the service that the fire control function provides, such as NILO and Communications Tactical Adviser roles. This will also provide an enhanced level of support to operational incident commanders and to other agencies during major incidents and periods of joint organisational working.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Develop arrangements and protocols with identified sources of specialist advice
- Consider nominating fire control subject matter experts to appropriate tactical adviser roles
- 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

Fire control commanders should:

- Understand when and how to request specialist advice
- Ensure specialist advisers are fully briefed on the aims and objectives for the incident or situation
- Check for understanding of the advice received, and record if appropriate
- Ensure incident logs are updated with all actions and decisions
- Ensure information is shared with the incident commander when appropriate

Control measure – Command roles and responsibilities

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

It is important to have clearly-defined command roles and responsibilities for all incidents and situations in fire control.

The declaration of a major incident may instigate the requirement for additional resources from multiple agencies and hence additional strategic management which would be established both at an incident ground and at remote locations and this may have an impact upon the roles and responsibilities within fire control. Following the declaration of a major incident the fire control commander may be required to participate in briefings or conference calls, and so may delegate the supervision of the activity of the fire control function to another member of their team.

Levels of command

It is the responsibility of fire and rescue services to ensure that fire control personnel achieve and maintain command competence appropriate to their role.

Incident command system

The incident command system provides a structure that ensures a competent person is responsible for command and control at operational, tactical and strategic levels. Fire control personnel should be appropriately supervised to maintain the safety and effectiveness of the fire control function.

In fire control, the fire control commander is the person nominated to take charge of the fire control function and is usually the person on duty in the fire control room holding the highest rank. They may delegate authority for some of the activities of the fire control function, including responsibility for tasks. However, the fire control commander remains the nominated competent and responsible person, including having responsibility for the mobilisation of resources and for the health and safety of fire control personnel.

During more complex incidents or situations the fire control commander may call upon a more senior person for support and advice. This may be the fire control manager or an operational officer. Where this happens the more senior person should assess the situation before deciding to assume command of fire control. It may be more important to maintain continuity of fire control command, rather than automatically handing this over on the arrival of a more senior officer. This arrangement will allow the senior officer to take a variety of other roles, including providing tactical advice, mentoring and monitoring. When making this decision, the on-coming senior officer should assess whether the existing fire control commander is sufficiently capable to remain in that role, based on the type, size and complexity of the incident or situation.

Transfers of command in fire control should be kept to the minimum needed to resolve the incident or situation and to manage welfare. The transfer of command should be a formal handover process that is acknowledged and communicated. This is equally important when an incident or situation escalates or scales down.

All fire control personnel should be informed of changes of fire control commander. This should be recorded on the incident or decision log as appropriate. There should be no doubt as to who is in command.

Interoperability and intraoperability

Multi-agency interoperability is essential for incidents of all sizes. The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles Joint Doctrine aims to promote greater consistency across emergency services. This includes the use of key terms and common terminology, which helps to develop a common understanding of the situation. Also refer to the UK Civil Protection Lexicon

Emergency control rooms play a vital role in managing the early stages of a multi-agency incident. The JESIP Joint Doctrine provides specific control room guidance in the interoperability framework and builds consistency into the procedures and working practices of emergency service control rooms. The JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles for joint working are divided into three sections:

- Communications
- Shared situational awareness and joint understanding of risk
- Co-ordination and co-location

Emergency control rooms generally operate from separate fixed locations and therefore cannot feasibly co-locate. They can, however, help in co-locating responders and commanders by jointly agreeing the initial multi-agency rendezvous points.

There is no legislation that states the primacy of one agency over another. The Joint Doctrine gives further guidance on co-ordination between emergency services.

The key principles of effective joint working are:

- Co-location
- Communication
- Co-ordination
- Joint understanding of risk
- Shared situational awareness

A number of commercial or industrial sites will have their own fire and rescue services, for example, airports or oil refineries. Fire and rescue services should develop local arrangements that define the roles and responsibilities of each agency attending an emergency, for example, transfer of command. Fire control personnel should be made aware of any such arrangements and methods for communication between fire control and the commercial or industrial fire and rescue service should be considered, together with any specific arrangements for the mobilisation of resources to the site.

It is important that fire and rescue services can provide an effective response to local, cross-border and national incidents. The national frameworks support the principles of national resilience. Fire and rescue services need an understanding of resources and capabilities available to them.

Pre-planning should include developing local arrangements with neighbouring fire and rescue services and other agencies. Those arrangements may assign responsibilities or primacy to a lead agency. They might base this on the nature of the incident or other relevant factors. This may need to change to reflect the changing phases of an incident. To ensure effective communication and flow of information between agencies, it is essential that the fire control commander is made aware of any such arrangements and that they are communicated to fire control personnel. Pre-planning should also include the development of arrangements for emergency call taking and the sharing of situational awareness with other fire control rooms, neighbouring fire and rescue services and other agencies.

Cross-border and multi-agency arrangements should be periodically tested under realistic conditions. Such tests must include fire control and consider all aspects of the fire control function in processing and managing incidents of this type. The outcomes of these exercises should be used to continuously improve future performance.

Fire and rescue services should ensure that policies, procedures and training for fire control personnel consider the Control Room Supporting Principles of the JESIP Joint Doctrine. They should identify joint training opportunities with other emergency service controls and responders. Joint training is valuable in helping fire control personnel practice the setting up and use of communications methods such as talk-groups and conference calls to share situational awareness.

This will help to avoid confusion during incidents and to develop teamwork and interpersonal communication.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Develop local arrangements with neighbouring and buddy fire and rescue services and other agencies, that define command roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Ensure that JESIP principles for command roles and responsibilities have been adopted and embedded in procedures
- Ensure that JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles have been adopted and embedded in procedures
- Ensure the fire control is included in cross-border and multi-agency exercises and training events

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Designate tasks and communicate to other control rooms and agencies as appropriate.
- Ensure a formal handover process is used whenever command of fire control is transferred
- Ensure all appropriate personnel are informed of any change of fire control commander
- Record the details of the transfer of command within incident logs
- Consider the JESIP principles for command arrangements at all multi-agency incidents
- Ensure the JESIP Control Room Supporting Principles are considered during all multi-agency incidents

Hazard – Ineffective safety management

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

In planning, organising and preparing for the safe resolution of incidents, a Fire and Rescue Authority must comply with legal requirements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees and the health and safety of others while ensuring an effective emergency service.

The ability of fire control personnel to operate safely with appropriate levels of supervision is essential to the delivery of the fire control function that receives calls, manages the first stage of incident intelligence, mobilises operational crews to incidents and provides operational crews with safety critical support throughout the incidents they attend.

It is essential that fire control commanders maintain an understanding of all activities of the fire control function and ensure the ability of fire control personnel to respond to the activity in a safe manner. They should consider the fire control personnel available and the methods available to

them to achieve additional capacity to safely and effectively prioritise and manage all fire control activity. It is also essential in carrying out their assessment of call volumes and workloads to consider their own personal resilience and welfare arrangements for fire control personnel.

Control measure – Positive safety culture

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

The effective delivery of the fire control function is essential to ensure support of the application of health and safety law and regulations at operational incidents.

The fire and rescue service has developed a strong culture of safety through policies which support the application of health and safety law and regulations to the incident ground. This has been achieved in consultation with, and with the assistance of, the Health and Safety Executive.

A culture that encourages incident commanders to act in accordance with the intentions of the Health and Safety Executive publication 'Striking the balance between operational and health and safety duties in the Fire and Rescue Service' should be promoted. Fire and rescue services should be aware this can be undermined by the introduction of procedures that have restrictive elements, which prevent incident commanders from being able to apply their professional judgement.

To promote a positive operational safety culture, fire and rescue service operational risk principles have been developed. All personnel should be made aware of these principles, which should be considered as a guide to making and managing risk-critical decisions during incidents:

Principle 1: A willingness to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty is a core need for all members of the fire and rescue service.

Principle 2: The primary consideration for making decisions is the safety of individuals and communities.

Principle 3: Risk acceptance involves judgment and balance, with decision makers required to consider the value and likelihood of the possible benefits of a particular decision against the seriousness and likelihood of the possible harm.

Principle 4: Harm can never be totally prevented. Risk-critical decisions should therefore be judged by the quality of the decision-making, not by the outcome.

Principle 5: To reduce risk aversion, improve decision-making and avoid decision traps, a culture is required that learns from successes and failures. Good application of risk management which allows for positive operational outcomes should be identified, celebrated and shared, preferably through operational learning and debrief of outcomes.

Members of the fire and rescue service who make decisions consistent with these principles should receive the encouragement, approval and support of their organisation.

Fire and rescue services should recognise that every incident and situation will present its own challenges. Its incident commanders, command teams, fire control commanders and fire control personnel will need to be able to use knowledge, skills, systems and equipment to bring the incident

to a safe conclusion.

Fire control commanders have a responsibility to promote a positive safety culture through:

- Safe systems of work
- Appropriate supervision
- Effective communication

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Provide the necessary systems and equipment to safeguard the safety and welfare of fire control personnel
- Ensure all personnel responsible for the management of health, safety and welfare are aware of their responsibilities and the means for discharging them

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Promote a positive safety culture during all fire control activities

All fire control personnel must:

- Understand their responsibilities within health and safety regulations

Control measure – Risk assessment of fire control activities

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

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 service 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.

Fire control personnel should carry out the process of continuous risk assessment during all aspects of fire control activity. This will ensure that appropriate resources are mobilised to incidents based on situational awareness, response plans and professional judgement, and that fire control resources are appropriate to ensure delivery of the fire control function while considering fire control personnel welfare.

The fire control commander should ensure that the risk critical activities of fire control are prioritised and allocated appropriately while also considering the other activities required of the fire control function. They should ensure appropriate methods are used to share situational awareness with incident commanders and that incident logs are updated appropriately.

It is essential that radio operation and the monitoring of national and regional talk groups is maintained. Incident ground and firefighter safety relies on this link to ensure appropriate resources can be requested, including in the event of a firefighter emergency or water emergency. The monitoring of national and regional talk groups allows resilience in the sharing of situational awareness between fire control and other emergency controls, and so should be prioritised appropriately.

When deciding upon pre-determined attendances and level of response to incidents, fire and rescue services will use task analyses or similar appropriate methodology to ensure that the level of response fulfils all the requirements of the incident while also considering the safety of firefighters and members of the public. It is essential that fire control personnel consider this when applying dynamic mobilising techniques, as this may have an impact on the safety of firefighters and members of the public.

The fire control commander should continually assess fire control activity, considering the varying levels of skills and experience of fire control personnel. All fire control personnel should understand and be aware of their own abilities and limitations, to assess a situation and know how and when to request additional support or supervision.

Emergency call handling and management can be very stressful and at times traumatic, and fire control personnel should be offered access to appropriate methods of post incident support.

The needs of individuals must also be understood and considered when planning activities to ensure appropriate rest and meal breaks are included. If this is over-looked it may lead to poor communication and decision making and a breakdown in the effectiveness of the fire control function.

Where sustained increased fire control activity is anticipated, such as during a major incident or spate conditions as a result of extreme weather, the welfare needs of personnel should be considered when planning crewing arrangements. It is essential that the fire control commander considers their own welfare needs in addition to those of their team members.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Ensure systems and methods are in place to support the carrying out, sharing and recording of risk assessments
- Ensure fire control personnel can access appropriate post incident support mechanisms
- Provide fire control personnel with access to appropriate rest facilities

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders must:

- Carry out continuous review of their risk assessment using situational awareness gathered throughout fire control activity

- Ensure that information is appropriately communicated and recorded on incident logs, including confirmation of it being shared with an incident commander

Fire control commanders should:

- Ensure that all fire control personnel are appropriately briefed on any changes to situational awareness and plans for the resolution of fire control activities
- Share situational awareness with incident commanders
- Ensure suitable arrangements are made for rest and meal breaks for fire control personnel
- Consider call volumes and potential for prolonged sustained fire control activity when planning crewing arrangements
- Monitor the welfare of fire control personnel and signpost to post-incident support mechanisms when appropriate

Control measure – Emergency call supervision

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Emergency calls are received in various ways and sometimes under difficult situations. Calls from the public can be challenging if not handled correctly. Poorly handled calls can delay resources attending an incident putting members of the public at risk.

To avoid delay and to ensure accurate mobilisation of resources, call handling supervision may be required by fire control personnel. Call handling supervision may include visual or audio monitoring, or both, of the handling of an emergency call, by the fire control commander or another supervisory manager or suitably experienced member of the team.

During the supervision of an emergency call the fire control commander or other member of the team may provide prompts and support to fire control personnel when needed, for example by assisting with the location of the incident, advising on the questioning of a caller or assisting with the allocation and mobilisation of appropriate resources. This may be necessary during any emergency call, but particularly in more complex situations such as fire survival guidance calls.

It is important that appropriate methods of communication are used when supervising emergency calls. Fire control personnel should be provided with a level of support that is appropriate to their level of experience and competence and which does not delay the gathering of information or prevent the building of rapport with the caller.

The development of all fire control personnel will continue through exposure to a variety of incidents, situations and continuous training. Fire and rescue services should have processes in place to assess the development of fire control personnel to decide when they are considered to have acquired the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding to deal with all stages of an emergency call. This includes mobilising resources without direct supervision.

Fire control commanders should be aware of the stages of development, skills and experience of all fire control personnel they work with and ensure that appropriate call handling supervision is applied when necessary.

The need for additional monitoring and supervision of the work of fire control personnel in development or during acquisition of skills training should be considered, and appropriate methods of support put in place. The method of support selected will depend on the individual circumstances, but may include:

- Audio and visual monitoring of emergency call handling
- Audio and visual monitoring of other work activities
- Training activities to support learning and development
- Mentoring activities to support learning and development

Where fire control personnel are undergoing the initial acquisition of skills phase of their training, or are otherwise deemed not yet competent, the fire control commander should ensure appropriate emergency call supervision is considered.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Provide means for audio and visual supervisory monitoring of emergency calls

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control officers in charge should:

- Be aware of the levels of skills and experience of fire control personnel
- Ensure appropriate methods are in place for emergency call handling supervision to be requested by fire control personnel
- Ensure emergency call handling supervision is provided when appropriate
- Ensure appropriate methods of communication during emergency call supervision

Fire control personnel should:

- Understand how to alert the fire control commander or other team member to a need for additional emergency call handling supervision
- Take responsibility for their own learning and development

Control measure – Hold debriefing or post-incident reviews

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Debriefing, also referred to as post incident review, can be formal or informal. Debriefing can range from 'hot debriefs', which occur directly after the incident, to large multi-agency debriefs or a public inquiry following major incidents. They are an important part of improving personal and

organisational performance. They should take place whenever there is an opportunity to improve service delivery. Active monitoring during fire control activity can inform and support this process.

Due to the scope and nature of fire control activity it may be appropriate to consider holding debriefs following periods of spate or spike conditions or following business continuity events such as a loss of mobilising system or other situations resulting in the use of fallback facilities.

Structured debriefs should be used to gain operational intelligence and safety-related information obtained during emergency call management and subsequent information gathering.

Debriefing forms an essential part of the management of health and safety. In fire control debriefing will identify any significant information or lessons learned. Whenever possible, the fire control commander should debrief fire control personnel as soon after the incident or situation as is practicable. Systems of work, equipment, PPE and training can all be improved as part of this performance management system. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publication, Managing for Health and Safety (HSG65), provides further guidance on the principles of effective health and safety management in the workplace.

Debriefing is an important part of reviewing and improving performance. There should be a debrief whenever there is a chance to improve standards of service delivery. Fire control commanders should choose an appropriate format for the review. They should conduct it in a way which encourages open, supportive and constructive discussion. If the review covers individual performance, discuss it against the standards for that role and acknowledge good performance and conduct worthy of merit. Fire control commanders should also carry out a process of self-reflection on their own performance during incidents and fire control activity.

Debriefs should be used to review the performance, decisions and actions of individuals and teams against relevant standards with effective performance and meritorious conduct being acknowledged where appropriate. Debriefs can be used to highlight any unconventional system or procedures used that were successful or made the working environment or situation safer. The recording, monitoring and review of incident debriefs and the outcome of investigations can support the identification of trends to support future learning.

Considerations should include whether existing information held about premises or locations should be reviewed, or whether there is a need to add a new premises or locations to mobilising system records.

Incident reviews may also support National Operational Learning; for further information refer to National Operational Learning: Good practice guide for fire and rescue services.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Have post-incident debriefing procedures suitable to a range of incident sizes that consider multi-agency involvement and the fire control room at all levels
- Provide methods to facilitate debriefing in fire control

- Promote and support operational learning at local, regional and national levels
- Effectively communicate lessons learned from debriefs and operational learning to relevant personnel

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Conduct a structured debrief at a level appropriate to the incident or event
- Record and share significant findings from incident debriefs

Fire control personnel should:

- Undertake a post-incident process of self-reflection on their performance in resolving an incident
- Participate in, and be receptive to, operational learning