National Operational Guidance

Multi-agency

Link to consultation:
https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Multi-Agency-NOG-consultation-Jul22/

Multi-agency 0.8 – for consultation

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Introduction

Purpose of guidance

Multi-agency fire control National Operational Guidance is aimed at fire and rescue services and writers of fire-control-related policies and procedures. It is intended to help fire and rescue services to establish effective arrangements to support fire control personnel, enabling fire control and other agencies to communicate effectively and consistently.

This guidance focuses on good practice and general principles, rather than specific incident types or events.

Structure of guidance

This guidance follows the style and format of fire and rescue service National Operational Guidance. It is designed to be viewed online once published, allowing readers to search for specific terms across the sections.

To give the reader a wider understanding of some topics in other contexts, some sections contain links to other pieces of guidance, which may be read in conjunction.

Hazards are what may cause harm or have a negative effect.

Control measures prevent or limit harm caused by a hazard.

Strategic actions are recommendations aimed at fire and rescue services, helping them to establish effective arrangements for fire control, such as introducing processes and equipment.

Tactical actions are specific actions that may help writers of fire control policies and fire control managers to establish effective policies, procedures and ways of working for fire control personnel.

Multi-agency incidents

Incidents and significant events regularly require a response from more than one agency; multiple agencies must work in collaboration. Some incidents may only require a response from blue light emergency services; others need different responders from a range of agencies.

Fire control plays a key role in the response to all incidents attended by the fire and rescue service and provides a critical link to other agencies during multi-agency incidents.

The JESIP Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework provides a standardised approach to multi-agency working across different responder organisations. JESIP principles are scalable and as relevant to minor multi-agency incidents as they are to major incidents. The doctrine recognises the role that fire control and other controls play in the safe resolution of an incident and outlines how the principles apply to fire control and incident commanders.

Category 1 and Category 2 responders are organisations listed in the Civil Contingencies Act as having specific civil protection responsibilities. Category 1 responders include:

- Ambulance
- Fire
- HM Coastguard
- Local authorities
- NHS primary care trusts
- Police

Category 2 responders, also known as co-operating bodies, include:

- Telecommunication providers
- Transport agencies
- Utility providers
- Voluntary agencies

Interoperability is defined as the extent to which organisations can work together as a matter of routine and it is essential for incidents of all sizes.

Intraoperability is the ability of a fire and rescue service to work with other fire and rescue services.

Methods of interoperable and intraoperable communication may also be referred to as 'methods of multi-agency communication' in this guidance.

Statutory resilience forums are partnerships of Category 1 and Category 2 responders within a local area. In England and Wales, these are known as local resilience forums; in Scotland, regional resilience partnerships; and in Northern Ireland, emergency preparedness groups.

A **tactical co-ordinating group (TCG)** is a group of tactical commanders that meet to discuss, decide, co-ordinate and deliver the tactical response to a multi-agency incident or event. If meeting physically, this location will be known as the tactical co-ordination centre (TCC).

A **strategic co-ordinating group (SCG)** is a group of strategic commanders that meet to co-ordinate the response to a multi-agency incident or event at a strategic level. If meeting physically, this location will be known as the strategic co-ordination centre (SCC).

Methods of communication mentioned in this guidance include those defined at the time the guidance was developed, such as Airwave interoperable talkgroups and Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT). The introduction of future technologies will result in future guidance changes.

Hazard – ~~Failing to effectively~~ Ineffective communication with other ~~between~~ agencies

NB This hazard is based on existing multi-agency guidance published on UKFRS, which has been incorporated into this new piece of multi-agency guidance.

Changes have been recommended to allow it to fit together with other hazards and control measures in this complete multi-agency guidance.

It is recommended that:

- *Text in grey remains unchanged*
- ***Text with a ~~strikethrough~~ is removed***
- ***Text in black is added***

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

~~Misinformation or a breakdown in communication can lead to unsafe systems of work, and uncoordinated or ineffectual activities being implemented, resulting in failing to achieve priorities and objectives. It can also lead to inefficient use of resources in the operational plan.~~

~~There is a risk of misunderstanding when an incident requires a multi-agency response, which may lead to a delayed or inappropriate response. This may be due to issues such as technical challenges or the use of varying terminology between agencies. Issues include:~~

- ~~Words, terms, phrases, symbols or graphics with different meanings or context~~
- ~~Words, phrases, symbols, or graphics with no meaning in other organisations~~

Ineffective communication

Ineffective communication between fire control and other agencies, including other fire and rescue services and fire controls, during multi-agency events may contribute to:

- A delayed or inaccurate response, resulting in failure to:
  - Protect people at risk
  - Limit damage to property
  - Prevent harm to the environment
- Ineffective use of operational resources
- Ineffective or unsafe systems of work at an incident
- Unnecessary responses, for example when a particular agency no longer needs to attend, but they are not informed

Factors that may contribute to ineffective multi-agency communication between control rooms include:

- A lack of understanding of the effective methods of multi-agency communication available
- Ineffective access to methods of multi-agency communication
- Ineffective policies and procedures supporting effective multi-agency communication
- The use of technical jargon, abbreviations or service-specific terminology
- Ineffective interpersonal communication
- Stress and emotions

- On-site commanders failing to co-locate, contributing to poor situational awareness

The questioning techniques used during the management of emergency calls may also impact the effectiveness of communication between agencies. For example, if emergency callers are not asked details, such as names or vehicle identification details, other agencies may be unable to identify and share relevant hazard information with fire control personnel, such as hazard information.

Ineffective communication systems

Fire control personnel have a range of ways to communicate with other agencies, such as electronic methods and interoperable talkgroups. Communication between fire control and other agencies is likely to be ineffective if:

- Communication methods require technology and resources that are not available to all participants
- Agreed methods of communication for the incident are not easily accessible to all relevant agencies
- There are multiple methods of communication available, but their order of priority is not shared and understood by relevant personnel
- Methods of multi-agency communication are not used regularly, leading to a lack of understanding and competence
- Inappropriate or ineffective methods are used, such as contact between operational personnel and other agencies that fails to include fire control effectively (when doing so would improve their situational awareness)

Telephone lines may not necessarily allow for the immediate, simultaneous sharing of information to a range of agencies in time-critical events. Making individual calls to one or more other agencies may be time-consuming for fire control personnel and reduce available emergency call-handling capacity. Establishing conference calls may reach a wider range of participants but may be time-consuming to establish.

If participating in a conference call requires the use of a mobilising workstation, emergency call-management capacity may be reduced.

Interoperability talkgroup access varies between agencies: not all agencies have access to all interoperability talkgroups. The use of talkgroups to share situational awareness between agencies will be ineffective if:

- The intended participants do not all have access to the nominated talkgroup
- The intended participants do not all understand how to access the nominated talkgroup
- The talkgroup selected cannot be instantly accessed and needs authorisation from the authorising organisation, such as the relevant police service

Some interoperability talkgroups may be accessible by a wide range of registered radio users, including those other than Category 1 and Category 2 organisations. As a result, they may not be appropriate for the broadcasting of sensitive information.

Technical jargon, abbreviations and service-specific terminology

Using technical jargon, abbreviations and service-specific terminology that may mean different things to different agencies – or not be understood at all – is likely to cause confusion and lead to an inaccurate understanding of the situation or an agency's response to it, including delayed or inaccurate mobilising of resources.

Other agencies, including other fire and rescue services, may not understand the call sign structure, technical jargon and local terms for operational resources. The use of call signs or informal terms – instead of plain language – to describe operational resources and capabilities could restrict clear communication and understanding between agencies.

Ineffective access to risk information

If the risk information provided to fire control personnel is difficult to access, not relevant or hard to understand, it will prevent fire control personnel from:

- Understanding the hazards and risks
- Acting on the information, such as changing the guidance they give to emergency callers
- Effectively sharing the information with other agencies, potentially leading to harm to people at risk, operational personnel and responders from other agencies

Control measure – Effective communication systems between agencies

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Fire control personnel should have a range of methods available to them to communicate with other agencies. The methods used will depend on the:

- Nature of the incident or event
- Urgency of the information
- Intended recipients
- Local arrangements in place
- Technology available in fire control

Telephone lines provide a method for fire control personnel to contact other agencies directly. They are likely to be the most frequently used method of communication because of the ease of access and interaction between participants, and because fire control personnel can use them discuss incidents with personnel from other agencies quickly.

Integrated communication control systems (ICCSs) that are configured to display telephone numbers for other agencies as direct-dial buttons enable fire control personnel to contact other agencies quickly, without needing to manually dial numbers. This simplifies information-sharing between fire control personnel and other agencies.

Some mobilising systems enable fire control personnel to initiate telephone contact with other agencies through shortcuts contained in action plans linked to an incident, making the process even quicker.

Conference calls allow more than two parties to join a telephone or virtual video call. The details for joining conference calls should, where possible, be pre-planned and available to fire control commanders in advance, minimising the time taken to join the conference call.

The provision of an additional workstation with access to the required technology may reduce the impact on emergency call-management capacity.

Interoperability talkgroups

Interoperability talkgroups provide a range of secure and resilient methods for multi-agency communication.

The **Emergency Services Inter-Control (ESICTRL) talkgroup** helps fire control personnel to share and receive situational awareness in critical situations with other emergency service controls in their region quickly and simultaneously.

Ambulance, coastguard, police and fire controls in England, Scotland and Wales should continuously monitor the ESICTRL talkgroup relevant to their region.

The **Emergency Service (ES) talkgroup** and **Incident Command (IC) talkgroup** are police-controlled, interoperable and restricted to Category 1 (and some Category 2 agencies that form part of the extended police family). They may therefore be suitable for sharing sensitive information.

Agencies that can access these talkgroups, once requested to do so, include:

- Ambulance
- Category A prison escorts
- Fire

- Highways agencies
- HM Coastguard
- Ministry of Defence
- UK Border Force

The **Inter-Agency talkgroup (IAT)** and the **Multi-Agency Mutual Aid (MAMA) interoperability talkgroup** are available to all registered Airwave users, following authorisation from the relevant police control.

The **National Talkgroup 20 (NTG20)** is an announcement talkgroup that enables instantaneous critical announcements by fire controls. Announcements on NTG20 will benefit other fire controls that are likely to receive emergency calls on an affected fire control's behalf, for example under a call redistribution plan, such as Operation Willow Beck. All fire controls in England, Scotland and Wales can receive announcements on NTG20.

Intraoperability talkgroups, such as fire service hailing talkgroups and fire service national talkgroups, provide fire and rescue services with methods to communicate with each other effectively.

For example, fire service national talkgroups provide an effective communication method between operational resources attending incidents outside of their normal area, such as those that may be deployed nationally, and the affected fire and rescue service they are attending.

Effective access to multi-agency talkgroups

Fire control personnel should, if required, be prepared to access and share details of relevant talkgroups with operational commanders once their use has been agreed.

ICCSs that are configured to provide access to multi-agency talkgroups help fire control personnel to share situational awareness with several relevant agencies quickly, without needing to use separate radio equipment. Communication through an ICCS is likely to be recorded, providing replay capabilities, as well as an audit trail that may be useful later.

Details of multi-agency talkgroups being used – including any speed dials – should be accurately recorded on the relevant incident logs. This information will help fire control personnel to recall the information easily later and support the shared situational awareness of:

- Other fire control personnel
- Fire control personnel in buddy and consortium fire controls
- Relevant operational personnel viewing the incident log remotely

Clearly defined methods for recording the talkgroups that are being used within incident logs will help fire control personnel to identify this information and share it with relevant operational personnel.

Electronic methods of communication offer a range of ways for information to be shared quickly and accurately between fire control and other agencies, including other fire controls.

Electronic methods of communication include:

- Digital incident-related information-sharing between emergency service control rooms, such as Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT)
- Secure, common information-sharing platforms, such as ResilienceDirect™
- Still image- and live video-sharing platforms, including those that can receive and share live footage of an incident from emergency callers or operational personnel with relevant agencies

Electronic methods of communication that are integrated with mobilising systems reduce:

- The time it takes to share information with other agencies
- Duplication of information entry
- The risk of human error, including:
  - Misunderstanding
  - Inaccurate assumptions

Some electronic methods of communication, such as MAIT, may help fire control personnel to:

- Identify the presence of risk information among other incident-related information received from other agencies, including other fire and rescue services
- Alert other agencies, including other fire and rescue services, to risk information associated with incident-related information they send

Agreeing methods of communication

An agreed method of communication between agencies should be established and tested regularly. Any change to pre-arranged information-sharing should be agreed by all parties.

Once established, the shared method of communication should be maintained until all parties agree it is no longer required. Appointing a single point of contact (SPoC) in fire control to support multi-agency communications links during significant multi-agency events, such as major incidents, should be considered. The SPoC should be suitably trained to undertake the role and should:

- Maintain the multi-agency communication link until all agencies involved agree it is no longer required
- Agree the intervals of communications
- Support joint understanding of risk and a co-ordinated response to the incident, by:
  - Sharing key situational awareness from other agencies with fire control personnel and relevant operational personnel
  - Sharing key situational awareness received from operational personnel with other fire control personnel and relevant agencies

Specialist advice

Many responder organisations – including ambulance, police, fire service and HM Coastguard – have **communications tactical advisers (CTAs)**. A CTA is trained to provide specialist support and advice in relation to emergency service communications and, in particular, the identification and suitability of multi-agency talkgroups in a range of scenarios.

If a fire and rescue service does not have a CTA available locally, fire control commanders may request CTA support from another fire and rescue service by contacting National Resilience Fire Control. Fire control command – Control measure – Specialist advice contains more information on the use of specialist advisers.

In addition to asking for specialist advice from a CTA, fire control personnel who have received training in emergency services communication systems, including multi-agency communication methods, are more likely to:

- Understand which methods of multi-agency communication are available to fire control and other agencies
- Use multi-agency talkgroups effectively and confidently during real events

Significant multi-agency incidents may impact the Airwave network capacity and the ability of responders to communicate effectively.

The **Airwave network monitoring centre (NMC)** should be informed of significant multi-agency incidents, such as major incidents, so that they can provide appropriate advice and information relating to network capacity and coverage, throughout a multi-agency incident. The NMC are continuously available and can be contacted by fire control or a CTA.

A **national inter-agency liaison officer (NILO)** is a vetted, trained and identifiable responder from the emergency services who is a tactical adviser. They can support pre-planned or spontaneous operations at strategic, tactical and operational levels, including facilitating interoperable working with partner agencies.

The role of a NILO is intended to:

- Bridge the intelligence and information-sharing gaps between agencies involved in an incident or event
- Improve inter-agency planning, operational preparedness, liaison and response to high-threat incidents or events, such as terrorist attacks
- Improve co-operation and understanding among agencies on matters of organisational capacity, capability and command
- Help reduce risk to the public, operational personnel and the environment

Continuity

Establishing and agreeing alternative communication processes will enable effective multi-agency communication to continue in the event of technical failures. Business continuity – Hazard – Fire control room equipment failure provides further information.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services must:

- Provide fire control personnel with contact information for relevant Category 1 and Category 2 agencies
- Provide fire control personnel with access to interoperability talkgroups

Fire and rescue services should:

- Configure integrated communications control systems to help fire control personnel to contact relevant agencies in as few steps as possible
- Consider providing fire control personnel with access to intraoperable and interoperable talkgroups through integrated communications control systems
- Consider configuring mobilising systems to integrate with electronic methods of communication
- Include the use of ESICTRL talkgroups in relevant policies and procedures, to support multi-agency communication during critical events, such as terrorist attacks
- Define and record in relevant procedures when fire control commanders should consider requesting advice from a communications tactical advisor during significant multi-agency incidents
- Define and record in relevant procedures when fire control personnel should inform the Airwave national monitoring centre about significant multi-agency incidents
- Define and record in relevant procedures when fire control personnel should inform a NILO about multi-agency incidents
- Reach agreement with other Category 1 and Category 2 agencies on the use of common electronic methods of communication during multi-agency events

- Consider including the use of a SPoC in fire control in relevant policies and procedures, to support multi-agency communication during significant incidents

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Ensure that communication methods agreed with other agencies are recorded and communicated to fire control personnel
- Consider informing the Airwave network monitoring centre of significant multi-agency incidents
- Consider seeking advice from a fire and rescue service communications tactical adviser during significant multi-agency incidents
- Consider seeking advice from a National Inter-agency Liaison Officer during significant multi-agency incidents

Fire control personnel should:

- Use available methods of communication to share situational awareness and achieve a joint understanding of risk with relevant agencies
- Record and share relevant information received from other agencies with operational personnel
- Record and share relevant information received from operational personnel with relevant agencies

Control measure – ~~Communication to support intraoperability and interoperability~~ Clear multi-agency communication

Due to their interdependency with this topic, this section should be read in conjunction with Fire control command – Control measure – Interpersonal communication and Fire control command – Control measure – Personal resilience .

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

~~The importance of a common approach includes the need to ensure operational risk information can be shared and understood by all agencies involved. There should be an integrated operational response, supported by intraoperability and interoperability arrangements. For further information refer to the JESIP publication, Joint Doctrine: The interoperability framework.~~

~~Information should be presented to ensure that the detail, level and content supports incident commanders, personnel and other emergency responders without overwhelming or overloading them. The information should be clear, concise and readily understood by all.~~

~~A successful exchange of information will lead to a clear understanding of hazards and risks, operational tactics, control measures and procedures being employed.~~

~~A common standard for terms and symbols is critical to effective intraoperability and interoperability.~~

Early identification of the need for a multi-agency response can save lives and reduce harm.

Fire control personnel can begin effective communication, co-ordination and virtual co-location through the agreeing and sharing of interoperable communication methods early during the incident – before all initial responding organisations are in attendance – to establish good working practices.

At any incident, no single responder organisation can appreciate all the relevant dimensions of an emergency straightaway. Shared situational awareness and joint understanding of risk need to be established to help all responding agencies understand:

- What is happening and what is being done about it
- What might happen next – or in the near future
- What effects the next steps may have

Initial contact between fire control personnel and other agencies, including other fire and rescue services, starts the process of sharing information about an incident. Communication between fire control personnel and other agencies should:

- Be an exchange of information, rather than a one-way broadcast
- Allow for clarification of information and language by all parties
- Be recorded for later replay and recall using:
    - Incident logs
    - Recording systems
- Remain open until jointly decided that it is no longer required (in the case of significant incidents, such as major incidents)

Fire control personnel should share all relevant information when discussing an incident or event with other agencies. This may include providing – and asking for – information about:

- The location of the incident and whether a safe route and safe approach have been identified

- Relevant hazards and risks, including information stored on the mobilising system
- Decisions made so far, such as whether an operational attendance is being made or not
- Which resources are being sent, their estimated time of arrival (if not already in attendance) and their general capabilities
- Whether resources will be going to the incident location, a rendezvous point or a holding area
- Where initial commanders should co-locate, when this information is known
- Any apparent limitations of the fire and rescue service response and any capabilities required from other agencies to support an effective response (for example, once operational personnel reach an injured animal, they may need a veterinary organisation to treat the animal)

Plain language and common terminology

The use of commonly understood, non-service-specific language, will help fire control personnel communicate effectively with other agencies and prevent misunderstanding.

Fire control personnel should communicate with other agencies:

- Using plain language
- Clearly and concisely, avoiding unexplained acronyms or technical jargon
- Using commonly understood terms, rather than call signs or local references for operational resources

Commonly agreed terms, abbreviations and symbols, such as those contained in the lexicon of UK civil protection terminology, can help fire and rescue services develop effective communication practices with other agencies.

Accessibility of risk information

Relevant risk information should be made available to fire control personnel so that they can access it and understand it as easily as possible. Critical information that needs to be seen and acted upon by fire control personnel – such as the need to advise people to evacuate a particular building immediately, rather than stay put – should be easily accessible through the mobilising system and be highlighted to fire control personnel for their immediate attention.

Risk information provided to fire control personnel should be written in plain language, be easy to understand and be current, so that it can be acted upon, shared and understood by other agencies involved.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish compatible terminology, abbreviations, communication systems and risk information for joint working with other agencies, including other fire and rescue services
- Agree commonly understood terms and symbols to use with other agencies
- Configure mobilising systems to provide fire control personnel with easy access to relevant and current risk information
- Configure mobilising system to highlight the presence of relevant risk information to fire control personnel
- Review policies and procedures to include the general responsibilities of other agencies and Category 1 and Category 2 responders and the roles fire control personnel

- Provide effective methods to record and retrieve communication between fire control and other agencies

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control personnel should:

- Use compatible terminology, abbreviations, communication systems and risk information, as agreed by their service, when working with other fire and rescue services
- Use common terms and symbols, as agreed by their service, with other agencies, Category 1 and Category 2 responders
- ~~If there is a lack of common understanding,~~ Use plain language to communicate information with other agencies
- Read and act upon risk information as necessary
- Share relevant risk information with other agencies

Hazard – Inaccurate situational awareness during a multi-agency incident

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

If fire control personnel do not effectively build or communicate shared situational awareness with other agencies, it is likely to lead them inadvertently towards a narrow, single-service view of an incident. This could lead to an ineffective operational response, potentially causing harm to the public and operational personnel.

If fire control personnel do not have a complete understanding of the circumstances, hazards or risks of an incident, they may inadvertently:

- Give advice to emergency callers that may not suit the circumstances
- Mobilise operational personnel who are insufficiently equipped to manage a situation safely (for example, a scenario requiring specialised skills or equipment)
- Miss opportunities to reduce risk by mobilising resources from other agencies that are better skilled or equipped to do the job

Fire control personnel may receive information from emergency callers and operational personnel that changes their understanding of an incident. Failing to share relevant information, such as hazards and risks, with other agencies could expose responders from other agencies to harm or delay their own effective response to the incident.

Structure of information

Inaccurate situational awareness may result from information that is:

- Incomplete
- Inconsistent
- Disjointed
- In a format that is not understood by all the agencies receiving it
- Passed on without getting confirmation it has been received

These types of communication may be misunderstood or overlooked, leading to important, current information being missed.

Co-ordinating groups and incident support rooms

Fire control personnel will usually communicate directly with other agencies during a multi-agency incident. However, during significant multi-agency incidents or events, operational personnel are likely to form part of:

- A tactical co-ordinating group (TCG)
- A strategic co-ordinating group (SCG)
- An incident support team

Fire control personnel will rely on relevant information being shared by the fire and rescue service personnel who form part of the TCG, SCG or incident support team. Communication processes between co-ordination groups, incident support teams and fire control are likely to be ineffective if they:

- Fail to consider:
    - The need for current and reliable information in fire control

    - The importance of the information that fire control commanders may be able to provide to co-ordinating groups, such as details of incidents and emergency call volumes
- Use methods of communication, such as mobile-phone-to-mobile-phone contact, where details cannot be effectively recorded, replayed or recalled

If fire and rescue services fail to establish effective communication processes between fire control personnel and the fire and rescue service personnel who form part of a TCG, SCG or an incident support room, fire control personnel may:

- Operate with out-of-date information or instructions
- Be unable to share the most relevant and time-critical information being received from emergency callers and operational personnel

Control measure – Information shared in a commonly understood way

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

M/ETHANE information structure

It is easier to understand information that is shared between agencies in a commonly understood form and structure. The M/ETHANE model (major incident, exact location, type of incident, hazards, access, number of casualties and emergency services present and required) is the agreed method of structuring incident information and will be recognised by all Category 1 and Category 2 responders. It may be used to organise information when communicating verbally or electronically.

Sending information in a M/ETHANE structure

The consistency of the M/ETHANE structure reduces the likelihood of missing out vital information.

If the incident is not major, the 'M' is not used and the message becomes an ETHANE message.

Operational and fire control personnel who routinely use the M/ETHANE information structure to gather and share incident-related information, such as sending informative messages to fire control or sharing information with other agencies (for all levels of incidents) are more likely to use it confidently and effectively during significant multi-agency incidents.

Receiving information in a M/ETHANE structure

Fire control personnel should be prepared to receive incident-related information from operational personnel and personnel from other agencies in the M/ETHANE structure.

Mobilising systems can help fire control personnel to record and retrieve M/ETHANE messages using an electronic incident log. Many mobilising systems allow fire control personnel to highlight vital information, such as M/ETHANE messages, using:

- Message categories
- Distinct colours
- Incident tags and labels

Such methods will help fire control personnel to:

- Effectively identify and retrieve information
- Clearly identify the time when information was received
- Identify and share relevant information with:
    - Operational personnel
    - Other agencies

Common briefing structure

Once commanders have made decisions and decided on actions, information should be shared in a commonly understood way that can be easily understood. Using the IIMARCH briefing structure (information, intent, method, administration, risk assessment, communications and humanitarian issues) as a guide, a brief may be prepared in a commonly understood way.

Fire control commanders may benefit from understanding and following the IIMARCH structure when they share information between:

- Operational personnel

- Commanders and supervisors in other emergency control rooms
- Other fire control personnel (for example, to communicate effectively during handovers; for more information, refer to Fire control command – Control measure – Effective communication)

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Effectively embed the use of the M/ETHANE message structure by fire control personnel when communicating with other agencies
- Consider configuring mobilising systems to provide prompts to help fire control personnel communicate with other agencies using the M/ETHANE structure
- Consider configuring mobilising systems to help fire control personnel effectively record, highlight and retrieve M/ETHANE messages
- Consider adopting the M/ETHANE message structure for operational personnel sending incident-related messages for all incidents to fire control
- Provide fire control commanders with the tools to effectively use the IIMARCH structure for preparing briefings
- Consider configuring mobilising systems to provide prompts to help fire control personnel recognise and formulate information in the IIMARCH structure
- Consider configuring mobilising systems to help fire control personnel effectively record, highlight and retrieve briefing information in the IIMARCH structure

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control personnel should:

- Record M/ETHANE messages received by other agencies on relevant incident logs using the methods provided
- Share M/ETHANE messages received from other agencies with relevant operational personnel

Control measure – Shared situational awareness between agencies

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Fire control personnel contribute to an effective fire and rescue service response to incidents through effective gathering and sharing of information between other agencies.

Effective sharing of information between agencies will build shared situational awareness and joint understanding of risk between fire control personnel and personnel from other agencies.

Information received from other agencies

Other agencies may share information, such as details about hazards, stored on their mobilising systems. Such information may alert fire control personnel to hazards and risks relevant to an incident to which they have mobilised operational personnel. It should be recorded and shared with relevant operational personnel because it may help them to adopt safe systems of work.

This information could be linked to:

- People
- Premises
- Vehicles
- Geographic areas

Fire control personnel may also receive information from other agencies that does not require an immediate operational response but may need to be shared with operational personnel because it may influence how fire and rescue services act.

This information could lead to:

- Plans being put in place due to:
    - Identified threats
    - Civil disturbance
    - Weather warnings
    - Water shut-offs
- Additional measures to protect personnel, such as temporarily relocating resources in response to an emerging hazard
- Alternative routes when responding to other incidents, due to road closures or other events

Sharing information to help other agencies

There are lots of types of information that, when shared effectively, are likely to help other agencies during the response to a multi-agency incident.

This may include information that is:

- Recorded on fire control mobilising systems, such as risk information
- Received during the management of emergency calls, such as:
    - Names of emergency callers or people at risk
    - Vehicle number plates
    - Hazards identified at premises
- Received from operational personnel, such as:

    - Details of safety cordons or safe approach routes round a hazard
    - Impacts on transportation infrastructure, including road and rail network closures due to fire and rescue service operational activities
- Pre-prepared guidance, such as wildfire survival guidance

Information shared may help other agencies to:

- Respond effectively
- Conduct their normal operations safely and effectively
- Alert fire control personnel to hazards that they may not have been aware of, such as warning markers

Share information about the fire and rescue services' ability to respond as normal

Multiple incidents or a major incident may affect the fire and rescue services' ability to respond to incidents normally. Sharing information about this with other agencies, including other fire and rescue services, will support shared situational awareness and joint understanding of risk, such as understanding that operational resources may take longer than normal to reach incidents or the likelihood that emergency calls may be answered by assisting control rooms, due to exceptional operational demand.

Recording the date and time that information is shared, and with whom, on relevant incident logs will allow:

- Fire control personnel to recall this information later
- Fire control commanders to monitor which agencies have been informed and which are still to be informed

Electronic methods of communication

Fire and rescue services may have arrangements in place to help fire control personnel to share and receive incident-related information using electronic methods of communication, including:

- Multi Agency Incident Transfer (MAIT)
- Email notifications sent:
    - Directly from mobilising systems of other agencies
    - From a mailing list of which the fire and rescue service is a member, such as weather warnings from environmental agencies
- Secure, common information-sharing platforms such as ResilienceDirect™
- Messaging platforms or applications, such as text messaging services

Electronic methods of information-sharing should complement verbal communication. Fire control personnel should still be able to discuss information with other agencies when it would be beneficial, such as to provide context and seek clarification.

Recording information from other agencies

Fire control personnel should accurately record relevant information received from other agencies, acting on it and sharing it with relevant operational personnel as necessary. The use of the mobilising system to record information by updating incident logs will help fire control personnel to:

- Accurately record the time information is received
- Record the rationale for key actions taken by them

- Share information electronically with operational personnel, for example through:
  - The mobilising system (to compatible electronic devices)
  - Remote incident logs
- Retrieve information later

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Review policies and procedures to outline when fire control personnel should inform other agencies and about which categories of information, incidents or events
- Configure mobilising systems to provide prompts for fire control personnel to inform other agencies about relevant information, incidents or events
- Consider providing fire control personnel with access to effective multi-agency electronic information-sharing methods
- Establish a process for fire control personnel to record information from other agencies when it is not linked to an existing incident log
- Consider providing operational personnel with access to technology capable of receiving information directly from the mobilising system

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Consider sharing relevant information about events that may affect the ability of the fire and rescue service to respond as normal with other agencies

Fire control personnel should:

- Accurately record relevant information received from other agencies
- Share relevant information from other agencies with operational personnel, helping them to adopt safe systems of work
- Share relevant information with other agencies that may support their safe and effective response

Incident commanders should:

- Inform fire control personnel if operational activities have led to the closure of transport infrastructure

Control measure – Effective communication between fire control and co-ordinating groups

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Significant multi-agency events, such as major incidents, are likely to require the establishment of tactical co-ordinating groups (TCGs) and strategic co-ordinating groups (SCGs), enabling commanders from relevant agencies to co-ordinate their responses. Operational personnel will form part of TCGs and SCGs, as required by the Civil Contingencies Act, as part of their responsibilities to statutory resilience forums.

Common Operating Picture

Fire control commanders will benefit from receiving regular, relevant information from multi-agency co-ordination groups about the incident or event for which they are managing fire control operations.

Information provided will help to build a shared understanding of events, often referred to as a Common Operating Picture, which may help fire control commanders to:

- Build their situational awareness of an incident by understanding:
  - Known hazards and risks
  - The response of other agencies
  - The resources and support other agencies have available
- Provide emergency callers with accurate advice and guidance based on current information, including signposting to other Category 1 and Category 2 agencies when appropriate

Fire control commanders may be able to help build the situational awareness of fire and rescue service personnel attending multi-agency co-ordinating groups by providing them with information relevant to the incident or event, including details of:

- The capacity of fire control, including emergency call volumes
- Incidents attended by the fire and rescue service
- The availability of:
  - Operational resources
  - Operational personnel
  - Equipment
- Further resources or support required by operational personnel

Fire control commanders will benefit from a clear line of communication with fire and rescue service personnel who are part of multi-agency co-ordination groups (if they are not already present themselves). Such communication may be:

- In person
- Through telephone calls, including video calls
- Through radio talkgroups
- By electronic communication methods, such as information summaries sent by email

Relevant information exchanged between fire control personnel and fire and rescue service personnel forming part of multi-agency co-ordination groups should be accurately recorded on relevant incident logs.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish procedures to provide fire control with regular updates from multi-agency co-ordinating groups
- Provide effective methods of communication between fire control personnel and the fire and rescue service personnel who form part of multi-agency co-ordinating groups

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Use the communication links provided to exchange relevant information with the fire and rescue service personnel who form part of multi-agency co-ordinating groups and to record such information
- Share relevant information received from fire and rescue service personnel who form part of multi-agency co-ordinating groups with fire control personnel and relevant operational personnel

Hazard – An unco-ordinated response to a multi-agency incident

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

Co-ordination between agencies responding to a multi-agency incident may be ineffective if it fails to:

- Share information about known hazards
- Communicate details about known rendezvous points or holding areas
- Agree effective methods of multi-agency communication
- Tell other agencies about hazards that may affect the route they take to an incident

Such ineffectiveness may contribute to:

- A delayed response, allowing the incident to escalate and increasing the risk to the public
- Delayed co-location of operational personnel and responders from other agencies because safe routes, rendezvous points and forward command points have not been discussed or agreed
- Ineffective communication between responding commanders because suitable interoperable communication methods have not been discussed or agreed
- Agencies duplicating work, creating confusion and wasting time; for example, two or more agencies may separately contact other agencies to seek their response to:
    - Close a part of the road or rail network
    - Isolate power supplies
- An inaccurate assumption that another agency has requested the response of other agencies or completed an important action themselves, such as stopping trains to allow responders to safely access the railway line

Ineffective co-ordination between agencies may also put operational personnel and responders from other agencies at risk because they may unintentionally:

- Access an incident by passing through an unsafe area, for example an area contaminated by a hazardous material
- Arrive first at an incident that they are not suitably equipped or skilled to manage safely, for example operational personnel arriving first at a civil disturbance

Control measure – Co-ordinated multi-agency responses to incidents

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

A co-ordinated response

A co-ordinated response by fire and rescue services to multi-agency incidents always begins with fire control personnel. When contact between fire control personnel and other agencies is first made, they can support a co-ordinated and effective multi-agency response by discussing:

- The reason for the agency's attendance if it is not already apparent
- The resources being mobilised, which may prompt further discussion (such as why police armed response resources are attending, if it is not already apparent)
- Any known hazards and risks
- Whether operational personnel and responders from other agencies should take a specific route, which may be safer and may avoid:
    - Hazards (such as an area contaminated by hazardous materials)
    - Incidents at risk of escalation if interrupted, such as police-led negotiations
    - Closed roads
    - Other unrelated ongoing incidents and events
- Where operational personnel and resources should locate themselves, if not directly at the location of the incident, for example, at a:
    - Rendezvous point
    - Forward command point
    - Multi-agency strategic holding area
- Whether the incident requires:
    - A response from other agencies, such as local authorities or environmental agencies
    - Multi-agency communication methods to be established, such as interoperable talkgroups
    - A co-ordinated approach to the management of media enquiries, including statements to the press or social media releases

Fire control personnel may benefit from using a commonly understood information structure, such as M/ETHANE, as a prompt consistently to guide them through the key points when exchanging incident-related information with other agencies.

Other prompts are also likely to help fire control personnel to share all necessary information with other agencies methodically. They may include:

- Alerts on the mobilising system, linked to specific incident types
- Action plans or lists on the mobilising system, linked to specific incident types
- Aide memoirs, easily accessible by fire control personnel

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Configure mobilising systems to provide questioning prompts to help fire control personnel to co-ordinate responses to multi-agency incidents

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control personnel should:

- Share information with relevant agencies to support a co-ordinated response to multi-agency incidents
- Share relevant information with operational personnel to support the co-ordinated response to a multi-agency incident

Hazard – Learning in isolation from other agencies

HAZARD KNOWLEDGE

Joint testing and training

Some fire control personnel may not be provided with opportunities to learn alongside operational personnel and personnel from other agencies, such as through shared training, testing and debriefing. They will be at a disadvantage when required to perform their roles during challenging multi-agency events, such as major incidents.

An absence of effective multi-agency training and exercising is likely to lead fire control personnel to:

- View their roles in isolation from other agencies during multi-agency events
- Be less aware of the capabilities of other agencies
- Be unaware of the priorities of other agencies during critical events, such as major incidents
- Be less aware of the needs of operational personnel and responders from other agencies, such as interoperable communication methods
- Be less prepared when responding to significant multi-agency events, such as terrorist attacks

Joint debriefing

If fire control personnel are not actively included in debriefing activities following multi-agency training events or incidents in which they were involved, fire and rescue services are likely to miss opportunities to assure their response and fail to identify learning opportunities.

If fire control personnel are not included in relevant debriefs, they may not gain a complete understanding of events, including the role fire control personnel had in the fire and rescue service response to a multi-agency event and important actions taken prior to resources being mobilised.

Fire control personnel who are not involved in multi-agency debriefs are likely to:

- Reflect on multi-agency training events or incidents from a single-service point of view
- Miss learning opportunities, including identifying possible improvements to:
    - Their own learning and development
    - Communication methods
    - Information-sharing processes
    - Ways of working
- Miss opportunities to build relationships with personnel from other agencies

Missed learning opportunities

Failure to review, identify, share and implement changes from learning following events – such as exercises, tests and real incidents between agencies – can lead to repeated failures and missed opportunities for shared improvement.

Fire and rescue services may fail to effectively identify solutions to foreseeable problems if fire control personnel do not have the opportunity to contribute to shared learning between agencies, including other fire and rescue services.

Fire and rescue services may fail to identify improvements, such as the need to:

- Change existing procedures
- Develop new procedures in response to emerging hazards
- Adopt innovative technology
- Review business continuity arrangements

Ineffective collaboration

The absence of collaborative forums involving control room managers from different agencies can prevent establishing professional relationships and inhibit the effective discussion of:

- Improvements to joint working
- Constructive feedback
- Shared experiences

Control measure – Joint training, testing and exercising with other agencies

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Training and exercising

Multi-agency training, testing and exercising opportunities help fire control personnel and fire control commanders to learn, develop and rehearse the knowledge and skills required during challenging multi-agency events. Fire control personnel may be involved in joint training and exercising through:

- Training courses, in person or virtually
- Tabletop exercises, in person or virtually
- Live play exercises, with fire control personnel:
  - Taking part, fulfilling their normal roles
  - Observing operational personnel and responders from other agencies
  - Observing from the control room of another agency
- Electronic learning packages

Fire control personnel should participate in multi-agency training and exercises from the earliest practicable point in their training and development and routinely after this. Fire control personnel and fire control commanders who participate in training, testing and exercises with personnel from other agencies have a better awareness of:

- The range of agencies involved in large-scale multi-agency incidents, such as major incidents
- The role of other agencies during multi-agency incidents, such as major incidents
- The priorities of other agencies during the earliest stages of multi-agency incidents, such as terrorist attacks
- The general resources and capabilities other agencies may have
- How to access and use interoperable communication methods, such as talkgroups or electronic communication systems
- The importance of commonly understood language and interoperable communications during multi-agency incidents

Fire control personnel who participate in multi-agency exercises that simulate significant multi-agency incidents, such as terrorist attacks, are likely to be more resilient and better prepared to provide an effective response during real events.

The inclusion of fire control personnel in multi-agency exercises provides operational personnel with a more complete and realistic training experience, helping them to understand the role and capabilities of fire control personnel in relation to:

- Establishing effective interoperable communication methods
- The sharing of situational awareness and understanding of risk with relevant agencies and operational personnel
- Supporting a co-ordinated response to multi-agency incidents

Multi-agency testing

Testing joint procedures, including testing methods of multi-agency communication, allows fire control personnel to practise skills, such as identifying and accessing multi-agency talkgroups.

Fire control personnel who participate in routine testing are more likely to identify and competently use suitable interoperable communication methods during multi-agency incidents.

Testing that includes alternative multi-agency communication options – such as telephone and conference calls – can help fire control personnel to use these methods with confidence should the primary method be unavailable during real events.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Include multi-agency training and exercising in the initial training and development for all new fire control personnel
- Establish plans to routinely test interoperable and intraoperable communication methods with relevant agencies
- Develop a programme of ongoing multi-agency training and exercising for fire control personnel and fire control commanders
- Consider developing a programme for fire control personnel and fire control commanders to observe the operational element of multi-agency exercises

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control personnel should:

- Test interoperable and intraoperable communication methods, in accordance with established procedures

Control measure – Joint debriefing with other agencies

Due to its interdependencies, this section should be read in conjunction with Hold debriefing or post-incident reviews.

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Multi-agency debriefing activities are important to identify good practice and opportunities to improve joint working following training or real events. The involvement of fire control personnel in multi-agency debriefs is beneficial to both fire control personnel and personnel from other agencies.

Fire control personnel who participate in multi-agency debriefs may be better prepared to fulfil their role in similar future incidents. They are also likely to increase their knowledge and understanding of other agencies. In particular:

- Priorities during the initial stages of significant incidents, such as terrorist attacks
- Capabilities, such as access to interoperable communication methods
- Operational resources

Personnel from other agencies benefit from the inclusion of fire control personnel in multi-agency debriefing activities, as it helps to improve their understanding of:

- The role and capabilities of fire control and fire control personnel
- The rationale supporting decisions made by fire control commanders
- The situational awareness of fire control personnel at various stages during an event
- The effectiveness of their own interactions with fire control personnel, such as sharing information during the event

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Equip fire control personnel with effective methods to participate in multi-agency debriefing activities
- Establish an effective process to communicate and implement lessons learned from multi-agency debriefs relating to fire control

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Use methods provided to participate in multi-agency debriefing activities

Control measure – Multi-agency learning

Due to its interdependencies, this section should be read in conjunction with Corporate guidance for operational activity – Operational learning.

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Identifying learning

Fire control personnel – including fire control commanders and fire control managers – are better able to identify opportunities to improve fire control processes and procedures when they are involved in multi-agency exercises and real incidents. The learning opportunities they identify may also be beneficial to other agencies, particularly fire and rescue services and fire controls who face similar issues. This may include identifying:

- Emerging hazards or trends, requiring:
  - Changes to procedures, such as changes to questions asked during the management of emergency calls
  - The need for additional training and development
- Benefits of adopting emerging technology in fire control, such as video streaming technology
- Examples of good and innovative practice

The **National Operational Learning (NOL)** process allows fire control commanders and fire control managers to share their experiences and learning with all other fire and rescue services and fire controls in the UK. They do this through their fire and rescue services' single point of contact (SPoC). The National Operational Learning: Good practice guide for fire and rescue services has been developed to support the NOL process.

Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) is a key part of The Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework. It facilitates multi-agency learning and is accessible to all Category 1 and Category 2 agencies through JOL Online.

JOL Online allows fire control commanders and fire control managers to share learning and notable practices involving multi-agency working and interoperability through their SPoC.

Fire and rescue services benefit from shared learning when they establish effective processes on NOL and JOL and share their own emergency control operations experience with others. The information they share may help other agencies, fire and rescue services and fire controls to:

- Become aware of new and emerging hazards
- Reduce the risk of foreseeable hazards
- Benefit from the sharing of:
  - Learning
  - Best practice
  - Recommended remedial actions

Fire and rescue services may find it beneficial to identify an operational learning lead for fire control, such as the fire control manager, who is in an informed position to:

- Collate and share learning with the fire and rescue service SPoC

- Receive learning relevant to fire control and suggest any improvements to the fire and rescue service

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Establish an effective process to enable fire control managers and fire control commanders to share relevant learning with other agencies, fire and rescue services and fire controls
- Establish an effective process to enable fire control managers to receive relevant learning and recommendations from other agencies, fire and rescue services and fire controls
- Support fire control managers to implement relevant recommendations in response to learning identified through National Operational Learning and Joint Organisational Learning

TACTICAL ACTIONS

Fire control commanders should:

- Use established procedures to share learning opportunities with other agencies, fire and rescue services and fire controls

Control measure – Collaborative multi-agency forums

CONTROL MEASURE KNOWLEDGE

Fire control managers may benefit from participating in local and regional multi-agency forums involving emergency service control managers from other Category 1 agencies, including other fire and rescue services. These forums provide fire control managers with opportunities to:

- Build mutually beneficial relationships
- Develop joint plans to effectively test interoperable communication methods
- Collaborate on arrangements for joint exercising, involving personnel located in Category 1 control rooms
- Share information with other agencies on subjects relevant to their area of experience, such as providing fire survival guidance in the event these calls are received by other agencies
- Discuss factors causing demand for specific agencies, such as local events increasing general emergency call volumes
- Reflect on:
    - Examples of good practice
    - Areas for improvement
- Improve their own awareness of general capabilities and resources available in other control rooms, including the provision of:
    - Communication tactical advisers
    - Live video streaming from emergency callers
    - Public information broadcasting systems, such as emergency alerts

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Fire and rescue services should:

- Consider establishing a collaborative forum of emergency service control managers from local and regional Category 1 agencies
- Consider providing fire control managers with the means to form part of local and regional collaborative forums

TACTICAL ACTIONS

This control measure has no tactical actions.