

Major Incident Procedures

What businesses and the voluntary sector need to know



Introduction

This guide is designed to increase the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the emergency services and local authority during a major incident and highlight considerations for writing Business Continuity Plans.

Major incidents require a special response which will usually involve a variety of agencies. For an effective response it is vital that these agencies work together in a co-ordinated manner. In London there is an agreed procedure for managing the response to a major incident.

Section One provides a summary of the information contained with the LESLP major incident procedure manual.

Section Two highlights a number of issues which businesses and voluntary sector organisations should consider when developing their business continuity arrangements. This section does not include all the issues which should be considered, but provides a number of the issues related to working with the emergency services and local authority during a major incident.

Section 1

What is a Major Incident?

A major incident is any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or all of the emergency services and will generally include the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of large numbers of people.

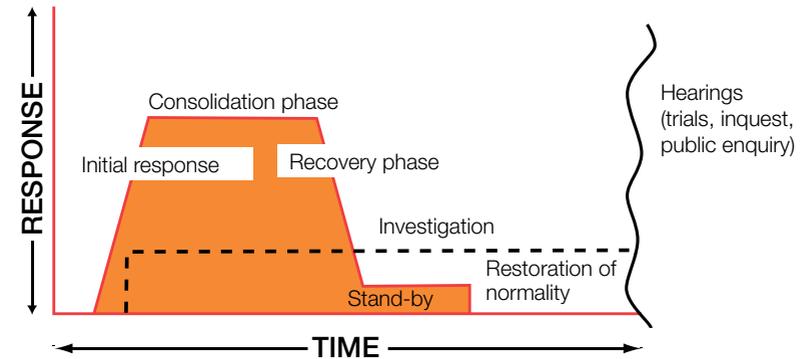
For example:

- the rescue and transportation of a large number of casualties;
- the large scale combined resources of the police, London Fire Brigade (LFB) and London Ambulance Service (LAS);
- the mobilisation and organisation of the emergency services and support services, for example local authority, to cater for the threat of death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people;
- and the handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated both from the public and the news media usually made to the police.

Stages

Most major incidents can be considered to have four stages:

- the initial response;
- the consolidation phase;
- the recovery phase; and
- the restoration of normality.



Roles and Responsibilities

Whilst individual organisations and agencies may have specific responsibilities 'the combined response' should seek to achieve the following objectives:

- To save life
- To prevent escalation of the disaster
- To relieve suffering
- To safeguard the environment
- To protect property
- To facilitate criminal investigation and judicial, public technical or other inquiries
- To continue to maintain normal services at an appropriate level
- To inform the public
- To promote self help and recovery
- To restore normality as soon as possible
- To evaluate the response and identify lessons to be learned

The Police Service

The primary areas of police responsibility at a major incident are:

- the saving of life together with the other emergency services;
- the co-ordination of the emergency services, local authorities and other organisations acting in support at the scene of the incident;
- to secure, protect and preserve the scene and to control sightseers and traffic through the use of cordons;
- the investigation of the incident and obtaining and securing of evidence in conjunction with other investigative bodies where applicable;
- the collection and distribution of casualty information;
- the identification of the dead on behalf of Her Majesty's (HM) Coroner;
- the prevention of crime;
- family liaison; and
- short-term measures to restore normality after all necessary actions have been taken.

The Fire Service

The primary areas of London Fire Brigade (LFB) responsibility at a major incident are:

- life-saving through search and rescue;
- fire fighting and fire prevention;
- rendering humanitarian services;
- management of hazardous materials and protecting the environment;

- provision of qualified scientific advice in relation to hazardous materials (HAZMAT) incidents via their scientific advisors;
- salvage and damage control;
- safety management within the inner cordon; and
- to maintain emergency service cover throughout the London Fire Brigade (LFB) area and return to a state of normality at the earliest time.

The Ambulance Service

The primary areas of responsibility for the London Ambulance Services (LAS) at a major incident may be summarised as:

- to save life together with the other emergency services;
- to provide treatment, stabilisation and care of those injured at the scene;
- to provide appropriate transport, medical staff, equipment and resources;
- to establish an effective triage sieve and triage sort system to determine the priority evacuation needs of those injured and to establish a safe location for casualty clearing i.e. triage sort area;
- to provide a focal point at the incident for all National Health Service (NHS) and other medical resources;
- to provide communication facilities for NHS resources at the scene, with direct radio links to hospitals, control facilities and any other agency as required;
- to nominate and alert the receiving hospitals from the official list of hospitals to receive those injured;

- to provide transport to the incident scene for the medical incident officer (MIO), mobile medical/surgical teams and their equipment;
- to arrange the most appropriate means of transporting those injured to the receiving and specialist hospitals;
- to maintain emergency cover throughout the London Ambulance Services (LAS) area and return to a state of normality at the earliest time; and
- to act as a portal into the wider health services.

Local Authority

The local authority acts in support and in partnership with the emergency services. Subject to statutory duties to provide certain services, the local authorities may be able to:

- provide support for the emergency services;
- provide support and care for the local and wider community;
- use resources to mitigate the effects of an emergency; and
- co-ordinate the response by organisations other than the emergency services.

Health Protection Agency

Regional Health Emergency Planning Advisors (HEPAs), and in the event of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) incident advise on the convening of the Joint Health Advisory Cell (JHAC), which will be able to advise and lead as far as health advice is concerned.

The Joint Health Advisory Cell (JHAC) The JHAC is a strategic group chaired by the NHS, composed of representatives from a range of

organisations and specialities who are able to give co-ordinated authoritative advice on the health aspects of an incident to the police Incident commander, the NHS and other agencies.

JHAC is activated through Health Protection Agency HEPA via London Ambulance Services (LAS) Control.

Command and Control

The LESLP procedure bases managing the response to a major incident on the strategic, tactical and operational command structure also known as Gold, Silver and Bronze. The management of incidents will normally be co-ordinated by the police.

Strategic (Gold) level deals with strategic issues which will include policy and priorities. The 'Strategic (Gold) Co-ordinating Group' is the title commonly used to describe the multi-agency combined command arrangements. This may typically be located at a police headquarters. This group should comprise representatives of each relevant agency, with authority to make decisions appropriate to the circumstances.

Tactical (Silver) level deals with tactical matters and control of the multiplicity of events at the scene and will generally be based at the joint emergency service control centre (JESCC) at the scene.

Operational (Bronze) control may comprise numerous officers with specialist responsibility at or near the scene. They are responsible for the implementation of tactical measures.

To explain the concept in another way, **“Gold”** sets goals or objectives, **“Silver”** devises the process for delivering those goals and **“Bronze”** actually produces the work to achieve those goals. A major incident will usually have these command structures replicated for each agency responding to it.

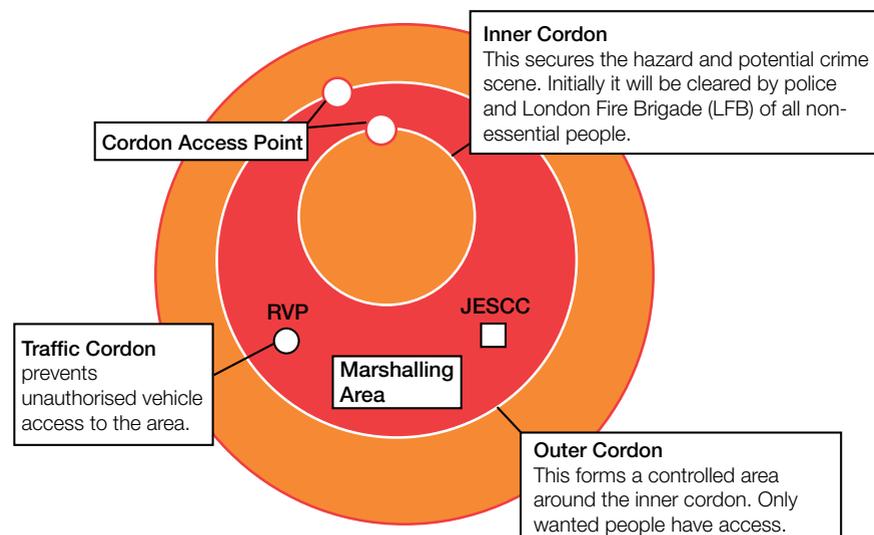
Scene Management

The type of incident will have a significant bearing upon the extent and nature of a scene and consequently the resources necessary to 'manage' it. It should also be noted that the nature of some incidents may result in more than one scene being identified.

In order to establish control of the incident scene, an **'Inner Cordon'** area will need to be initiated by police. This cordon will enable persons, not essential to the response, to be excluded and further access controlled. Safety of personnel within the inner cordon area will normally be a fire service responsibility. However, this does not negate the need for each agency to assess the health and safety risks in respect of its personnel working within a potentially hazardous environment.

An **"Outer Cordon"** area will also be established by the police. The size and extent of the cordon areas will be dependant upon the nature of the incident, but could result in a substantial area being inaccessible.

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Control of access to the cordon areas will be achieved by the identification of access points and the recording of the entry and exit of essential personnel.

Tactical commanders will seek to establish a JESCC, in order to provide a central point of contact. The JESCC may be provided by purpose built vehicles, or may be located in suitable accommodation near to the scene.

Whilst the principal emphasis must be on the response to and not the cause of incidents, there will be subsequent need for investigation. The police will regard the scene as a critical incident scene and a Senior Investigating officer will be nominated at an early stage. The fire service, health and safety executive and/or other relevant agencies, may have a duty of investigation, dependant upon the type of incident.

Recovery Management

The local authority will usually lead the recovery phase for the community by establishing a **"multi-agency"** Recovery Management Group which will work to consider the recovery issues from the emergency. All agencies as well as some community representation will be involved in this process. One of the key issues will be to establish good two way communication with the community including businesses and the voluntary sector.

When will you be allowed back in your property - Hand back process

Normally the emergency services will deal with the emergency phase of the incident. The normal hand back process is listed below:

- 1.** The fire service supported by the local authority, the environment agency and possibly specialist contractors will ensure that the scene is safe.
- 2.** If necessary the police will then gather all the evidence required for criminal or civil proceedings.
- 3.** The whole scene (or if it is large - sectors of the scene) will be released back to the local authority, who will co-ordinate the replacement of utilities and the infrastructure e.g. roads, lighting signs.
- 4.** The tenants / owners will then get their properties back. The local authority (LA) will normally be the point of contact for consultation and information during this process.

Section 2

Cordons

Cordons can be in place for days or weeks. In some cases it may be possible to arrange limited access to retrieve essential items, but this is not always possible. Access is extremely unlikely in the event of a terrorist incident or where the building is structurally unsafe.

The police manning the cordon or the local authority emergency planning Team will be able to advise whether access is going to be possible to arrange.

Things to consider:

- Do you have alternative accommodation?
- Do you have your suppliers/staff contact numbers?
- Do you have copies of essential records available elsewhere?

Information

If your business is the only business affected by an emergency, you can expect direct involvement and interaction with the emergency services. In the initial stages the emergency services are likely to want access to the following type of information

- Building layout/plans
- Confirmation that the building is empty
- Location and type of potentially hazardous materials.

Following this initial stage, they are likely to need to liaise with someone who can make key decisions on behalf of the organisation.

Things to consider:

- Who you will identify to liaise with the emergency services?
- What training might they need?

Should the incident affect a number of businesses, then communication and liaison will not be on an individual basis. The responding agencies will aim to get the information to as wide an audience as possible, using the following methods:

Media: The police and other responders have plans in place for getting vital information to the media quickly. In large incidents, both local news (e.g. from radio) or 24 hour news channels can be a good source of information.

Web-sites: The local authority, police and any affected utilities will post information on their corporate web sites.

Call Centres: Local authorities, police and affected utilities will have information available to the public available from their normal call centres, although they may publish a separate number specifically for the incident.

Information Points & Public Meetings: Sometimes there is a need for a direct “face to face” communication medium, and so the local authority may set up a permanent information point or organise a public meeting dependent on the needs of the incident.

Things to consider:

- Do you know the contact details for the local authority?
- Do you know the key websites, which will provide information during an incident?

Communications

As past experience has shown the mobile phone networks can become overloaded during an incident. The emergency services also have the option to request that access is limited to the networks, to permit emergency services, local authorities and other users with suitably enabled mobile telephones to have exclusive access to available channels.

Things to consider:

- How you will keep in contact with staff and stakeholders.
- Do you have access to the contact details you may need, if access to your workplace is unavailable.

Further information is available from?

Contacts

Camden Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Team:

Tel: 020 7974 5643

Fax: 020 7974 4374

Email: business.continuity@camden.gov.uk

Web Sites:

Further information may also be obtained from the following websites:

www.leslp.gov.uk

www.ukresilience.info

www.londonprepared.gov.uk

www.MI5.gov.uk