

Specialist resources

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This section provides guidance on the specialist resources and capabilities that may be involved or activated during a major incident.

For further information, see [Chapter 3 of the Emergency Response and Recovery guidance](#).

This outlines the roles and responsibilities of the main agencies and sectors that are likely to become engaged in the response to, and recovery from, emergencies at the local level.

Further information on major incidents that involve fatalities can be found in the sections on [Incidents involving fatalities](#), [Casualty Bureau](#) (which can apply both with and without fatalities) and [Excess death](#).

Fire and rescue services

The primary areas of fire and rescue responsibility at a major incident are:

- the saving of life through search and rescue
- firefighting and fire prevention
- rendering humanitarian services
- detection, identification, monitoring and management of hazardous materials (HAZMAT) and protecting the environment
- provision of qualified scientific advice in relation to HAZMAT incidents via their scientific advisors
- salvage and damage control
- safety management within the inner cordon
- to maintain emergency service cover throughout and return to a state of normality at the earliest time

Ambulance service

The primary areas of ambulance service responsibility at a major incident are to:

- save life together with the other emergency services
- provide treatment, stabilisation and care of casualties at the scene
- provide appropriate transport, medical staff, equipment and resources
- establish an effective triage sieve and sort system, prioritising the needs and evacuation requirements of the injured and establish a safe location for casualty clearing
- provide a focal point at the incident for all National Health Service (NHS) and other medical resources
- nominate and alert receiving hospitals for the injured and inform other agencies
- arrange the most appropriate means of transporting the injured to hospitals
- maintain emergency cover throughout the local ambulance service area and return to a state of normality at the earliest time
- act as a portal into the wider health services including UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England)

National interagency liaison officers (NIOs)

National interagency liaison officers (NIOs) are security vetted, trained and identifiable emergency responders from the fire and rescue service, ambulance service, HM Coastguard, military and police.

They may operate in either a command, tactical advisor or service specific role. They can support pre-planned or spontaneous operations at strategic, tactical and operational levels, including facilitating interoperable working with partner agencies.

Hazardous area response team (HART)

Hazardous area response teams (HART) are specially recruited and trained personnel, equipped to provide the ambulance response to high-risk environments and complex emergency situations.

HARTs are based in each NHS Trust in England and Wales, providing cover across the whole of the each country. In some cases they may work together on specific, large scale or high-profile incidents, either accidental or deliberately caused.

HARTs work alongside the police and fire and rescue services within the inner cordon (or 'hot zone') of a major incident. The job of the HART is to triage and treat casualties and to help save lives in very difficult circumstances.

They are also there to look after other emergency personnel who may become injured while attending these difficult and challenging incidents.

Urban search and rescue (USAR) teams

Urban search and rescue (USAR) are a functional support sector for the fire and rescue service. USAR respond to incidents involving unstable and collapsed structures resulting from deliberate or accidental causes. They search, detect, locate and rescue trapped casualties and support the recovery of the deceased. This includes working in environments that are difficult to access such as underground, in restricted spaces or at heights. They also respond to serious transportation incidents involving trains, trams and aircraft.

Within these challenging environments, USAR teams have various specialised methods and an array of equipment allowing them to conduct:

- technical searches
- breaking and breaching
- lifting and moving
- propping and shoring to stabilise structures and prevent further collapse

Their capability in England and Wales includes:

- fully trained responders
- prime movers
- equipment modules
- national tactical advisors
- canine search capability within each USAR zone

The National Fire Chiefs Council and the National Police Chiefs' Council have a memorandum of understanding to support policing in mass fatality incidents.

Tags

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