

Initial response

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Police control room

The police control room is likely to be the initial point of contact when a major and/or critical incident occurs.

On initial contact, the control room supervisor should:

- organise sending first responders to the scene
- gather information from the first responder or initial commander about the incident using the [METHANE model](#)
- determine whether a major incident has been declared – for example, by first responders – or declare a major incident where METHANE indicates it is appropriate
- advise and support first responders where necessary
- advise partner agencies that a major incident has been declared, where appropriate
- if appropriate, establish a conference call with the fire and ambulance control rooms, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure shared situational awareness
- establish Airwave interoperability channel and appoint Airwave CTA
- activate force response framework or [local emergency plans](#)
- establish contact with the initial tactical commander
- prompt the initial commander to establish a forward command post (FCP, also known as forward command point) if necessary, and co-locate with other commanders – this should be included in the control room [action card](#)
- maintain a communications log that includes event information, as well as health, safety and welfare risk assessments
- consider the possibility of the incident involving hazardous or [chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear \(CBRN\)](#) (more information in the following section)

Suspected CBRN incidents

Officers and commanders responding to a suspected CBRN incident must adopt an immediate initial operational response (IOR) focused on preserving life, identifying hazards and establishing control. This includes conducting a structured risk assessment of risk (RAR) to balance the urgency of life-saving intervention against the potential exposure to hazardous materials.

To enable informed decision-making in a rapidly evolving environment, early situational awareness should be guided by recognition of CBRN indicators using the BADCOLDS principles:

- behaviour
- appearance
- devices
- casualties
- odour
- location
- dissemination methods
- symptoms

Commanders should prioritise the implementation of safe systems of work, including:

- appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- establishment of cordons
- the management of contaminated and non-contaminated zones

The initial response must also ensure effective multi-agency communication and coordination under JESIP, with clear command structures established at the earliest opportunity to support a safe, proportionate and effective response.

Force incident manager (FIM)

The FIM in major and/or critical incidents assumes initial command and control until formal structures are set up. They should provide supervisory oversight until then. The FIM should:

- establish an appropriate command structure for the incident
- maintain situational awareness of the incident by gathering a METHANE report from the control room and update these records as the incident progresses
- ratify any major incident declaration and ensure this is communicated to partner agencies

- maintain communication with other partner agencies, where relevant, and provide timely updates, via the Emergency Services Inter Control (ESICTRL) Talkgroup
- assess and record what is known about the incident using the national decision model (NDM) or joint decision model (JDM)

They should take informed and relevant actions in the initial response phase to:

- assess the seriousness of an incident
- check there is a relevant incident plan
- plan, manage and review operational activity
- employ resources

While it may not be possible to maintain a full overview of every incident, FIMs should ensure they are aware of all critical or high-impact incidents under management at any given time, moving resources as operationally required.

In addition to the influx of calls related to an incident in the initial phase, this can place significant demand on the FIM, particularly during the initial stages of a major incident. To mitigate this, they should consider implementing support measures, such as:

- allocating a staff officer
- controlling access to the control room
- other appropriate actions to manage demand and maintain operational oversight

The decision making involved in balancing demand versus resource can be assisted by:

- following the [Code of Ethics](#)
- using the [National decision model APP](#)
- prioritising resources using appropriate skills, guided by the [risk principles](#) in the Risk APP and any local force policies

In major and/or critical incidents, FIMs should do the following:

- Implement the strategic level of coordination.
- If appropriate, establish and identify a chair for a multi-agency tactical coordinating group (TCG). This should convene as early as possible and meet at regular intervals to maintain shared

situational awareness.

- Share and coordinate operational plans to allow for interoperability and understanding of initial priorities.
- Instruct corporate communications to issue early warning and informing messaging, where appropriate, and to initiate the major incident communications plan response.
- Document all decisions and their rationale in a decision log, command and control systems and consider using body-worn video (BWV), so that the audit trail is clear and complete.

The College of Policing [force incident managers course](#) provides training for FIMs.

First officer at the scene (initial incident commander)

The first officer at the scene, whatever their rank, should assume the role of initial incident commander until they are relieved. The role applies at the early stages of an emergency when control over the situation is being gained and response is being formulated. They should prioritise assessing the scale and nature of the incident and determine the appropriate response.

It is essential that as much information as possible about the incident is collected assimilated and disseminated (METHANE) to the control room.

The first officer should:

- consider their personal safety
- consider the requirement for emergency services to rescue casualties and survivors
- ensure that appropriate medical attention is given to those requiring it as soon as possible.
- use the [JESIP](#), where appropriate
- if the police are first on the scene, undertake an assessment using the [METHANE](#) model and report this in detail as required – for example, to the FIM
- if a METHANE message has been given by another partner agency, apply interoperability principles and use a joint METHANE model to ensure shared situational awareness
- establish a [rendezvous point](#) (RVP) for incoming personnel
- establish a [forward command post](#) (FCP), if safe to do so
- keep records of all decision making, including using [BWV](#) if available
- make a dynamic risk assessment of the scene using the information available

- maintain contact with the control room
- request additional resources if needed
- establish cordons, using tape
- protect and secure the scene to safeguard evidence and prevent unauthorised access
- identify possible witnesses
- identify and arrest suspects (consider cross-contamination)
- [commence scene log](#)

Initial commanders should ensure that all other emergency services attending the scene have been briefed. Where possible, all emergency agencies' initial commanders should co-locate and communicate with each other at the FCP.

Commanders' initial actions

The following actions for each level of command incorporate learning from [JESIP's joint doctrine](#).

Initial actions for operational (bronze) commander

The following initial actions apply to major and/or critical incidents, with or without partner agencies responding. Where interoperability is involved, operational (bronze) commanders should make decisions jointly with these agencies. Where necessary, they should agree who is the lead agency for that activity.

The operational (bronze) commander should do the following:

- Wear a tabard to identify the role of operational (bronze) commander and communicate that this is how the role is recognised to any other partner agencies responding. In practice, the tabard is labelled 'incident commander' (also known as incident officer – go to [Emergency responder interoperability: lexicon](#) for more information).
- Make an initial assessment of the situation, conducting a dynamic risk assessment. Ensure that appropriate resources are requested and, where appropriate, that a major and/or critical incident has been declared.
- Implement resources to specific roles or locations, such as cordons or traffic management. Where appropriate, arrange for further resources to be sent to an identified RVP.

- Coordinate the effective management of provision for members of the public at the scene. This may include victims depending on the specifics of the incident.
- At the earliest opportunity, carry out a briefing with personnel assisting in the implementation of the response and maintaining the security of the scene. This should follow a recognised [briefing model](#), such as [SAFCOM or IIMARCH](#). The message should be clear and repeated regularly.
- Implement the operational plan.
- Identify the triggers, signals and arrangements for the emergency evacuation of the scene or area within it, or similar urgent control measures.
- Update the tactical commander on any changes in the geographical or functional area of responsibility.
- Arrange for the support of Airwave communications tactical advisers (CTAs) and loggists at the scene. The amount and type of support should be determined by considering the nature of the incident.
- Plan for organisational post-incident procedures (PIPs), carrying out a hot debrief of staff where appropriate.

For incidents and events involving partner agencies, the operational (bronze) commander should do the following:

- Co-locate to use the [JDM](#) to establish shared situational awareness by agreeing a common view of the situation, its consequences and potential outcomes and the actions required for its resolution. This should be supported by timely, jointly agreed METHANE updates prompted by the FIM, if necessary.
- Attend joint meetings. Use the JDM to share and coordinate information, intelligence and operational plans.
- Use the JDM to construct a joint action plan and the priorities necessary for its execution. Provide sufficient detail on each service's future activities by nature, location and time.
- Use the JDM to conduct, record and share ongoing dynamic risk assessments. Establish control measures with appropriate actions, contingencies and reviews.
- Plan for how continually changing hazards and risks affect each organisation. Work with multi-agency colleagues to address these issues.
- Make and share decisions within the agreed level of responsibility, considering and accounting for the potential consequences of decisions and actions. Disseminate these decisions for action to multi-agency colleagues.

- Update the tactical commander on any variation in agreed multi-agency tactics within the geographical or functional area of responsibility.

Initial actions for tactical (silver) commanders

The following initial actions apply to all major and/or critical incidents, with or without partner agencies responding. Where interoperability is involved, tactical (silver) commanders should make decisions jointly with these agencies. Where necessary, they should agree who is the lead agency for that activity.

Tactical (silver) commanders should do the following:

- Assess the current situation and what has happened so far.
- Monitor the operational command structure, including functioning roles, maintaining regular communications with those commanders.
- Construct a plan detailing overall objectives.
- Regularly assess and disseminate the available information and intelligence through the appropriate communication links.
- Continuously evaluate threats to life, property or environment, hazards, vulnerabilities and own actions to support effective decision making and maintain situational awareness.
- Identify the communications lead and provide accurate and timely information to help notify and protect communities, and to help manage demand at scene where appropriate.
- In a multiple fatality incident, work with the scene evidence recovery manager (SERM) and disaster victim identification (DVI) scene coordinator.
- Ensure that all tactical decisions that are made, as well as the rationale behind them, are documented in a decision log. BWV is recommended in addition to logs to record decision making.
- Assist with, or make available, debriefing facilities. This includes supporting the operational (bronze) commander and [debriefing](#) them.
- Hand over the initial tactical command to another qualified officer, where appropriate. Where this occurs, provide them with an up-to-date briefing.

For incidents and events involving partner agencies, tactical (silver) commanders should do the following:

- Establish a common view of the situation between the partner agencies.
- Identify and agree a common multi-agency FCP for all operational commanders and remain suitably located. This helps to maintain effective tactical command of the incident or operation.
- Determine whether the situation requires the activation of a TCG and implement it at the earliest opportunity, agreeing a chair.
- Use a standing agenda for **TCG** meetings. An [example standing agenda](#) can be downloaded from the JESIP website.
- Construct and agree the overall objectives for a joint plan.
- Jointly and continuously evaluate threats, hazards, vulnerabilities and actions to maintain shared situational awareness.
- Monitor how changing threats and hazards affect each organisation. Work with multi-agency colleagues to conduct joint dynamic [risk assessments](#), applying mitigation and management arrangements.
- Share and coordinate tactical plans for multi-agency compatibility and understanding of both the initial tactical priorities and ongoing tactics.
- Where required, coordinate multi-agency resources and activities, providing a joined-up and directed response.
- Support the multi-agency communications group's warning and informing capability through provision of timely and accurate information in line with local protocols.

Tactical coordination centre (TCC)

The TCC should:

- be separate from the strategic coordination centre (SCC)
- contain the resources required to manage a fast-moving incident effectively
- include an intelligence cell linked to social media through unidentifiable channels

Use intelligence cells to gather information from social media users that can assist the incident response. Open-source information does not require a [Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000](#) (RIPA) authority. However, the tactical (silver) commander must continually review which information is being used and how to ensure that it remains open-source.

If the requirement for an authority arises, procedures set out in the [RIPA codes](#) or obtaining authority should be followed. This may occur where repeated and targeted monitoring of a person's

online activity or profile, even when it is open-source, could be classed as directed surveillance.

Tactical coordinating group (TCG)

The lead agency should bring all tactical commanders and representatives from each response agency to form a TCG. When deciding where the TCG is located, consideration should be given to accessing communications systems.

TCG meetings should be:

- held as frequently as required by the circumstances of the incident
- set within an agreed schedule to permit updates to be provided to the strategic coordinating group (SCG) and, where appropriate, national agencies
- auditable, with important actions allocated to the relevant agency, decisions and their rationales recorded
- concentrated on tactical issues ([a standard agenda](#) as an example is provided in resources)

In the initial stages of a spontaneous incident, information and intelligence needs to be regularly reviewed and shared because incident dynamics might change quickly. The [JDM](#) should be used to assist this process.

Initial actions for strategic (gold) commanders

Strategic (gold) commanders are the identified leads representing each organisation involved in the incident. They should not get involved in making tactical or operational decisions.

The following initial actions apply to all major and/or critical incidents, with or without partner agencies responding. Where interoperability is involved, strategic (gold) commanders should make decisions jointly with these agencies. Where necessary, they should agree who is the lead agency for that activity.

When planning and managing the command structure, strategic (gold) commanders should do the following:

- Set and agree command protocols with all relevant parties.
- Review the resilience and effectiveness of the command team.

- Identify where assistance from the wider resilience community is needed and manage this accordingly.
- Take overall responsibility within the command structure for ensuring compliance with the [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#), the [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Human Rights Act 1998](#), and for the completion of relevant impact assessments. This includes a community impact assessment (CIA), which is covered in the [humanitarian assistance](#) section.

In planning the response strategy, strategic (gold) commanders should:

- set, review and update the response strategy, based on available intelligence and the threat and risk
- consult appropriate partner agencies and community groups when determining the strategy
- set parameters within which the tactical (silver) commander can work
- secure strategic resources to resolve the incident and prioritise the allocation of resources
- plan beyond the immediate response phase for recovering from the emergency and returning to normality
- plan for the post-incident hot debriefs

Relevant to communication, strategic (gold) commanders should:

- ensure that effective and timely briefings and situational awareness updates are provided to tactical commanders and partner agencies, as appropriate
- ensure that appropriate communication mechanisms exist at a local, regional and national level, as appropriate
- take responsibility for the development of the initial communications plan, in liaison with the assigned communications lead

For incidents and events involving partner agencies, strategic (gold) commanders should:

- request that an SCG is set up through local force procedures.
- attend and, if appropriate, chair the SCG
- ensure that the SCG comes together in a timely and efficient manner
- ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place to provide alternatives to physical meetings for some or all members of the SCG using teleconferencing or video conferencing facilities

- ensure that there are clear lines of communication between Category 1 and 2 responders and all appropriate agencies
- alongside planning for hot debriefs, plan for a multi-agency [debrief](#)

Strategic coordination centre

The location of the SCC is determined in advance and included in the local resilience forum (LRF)'s plans. This is a separate location to the TCC.

The SCC provides an infrastructure to enable the SCG to coordinate their response. LRFs should have a flexible plan to open elements of an SCC to provide the necessary support.

The SCC should have the capability to provide the following:

- planning, intelligence, resources, logistics, finance and legal cells
- welfare or wellbeing cell
- mass fatalities coordination team
- recovery working group
- communication and information group (including the multi-agency communications group)
- environment, infrastructure and utilities group
- government liaison team
- [scientific and technical advice cell](#) (STAC) or emergency coordination of scientific advice (ECOSA)

For an overview about LRFs, please refer to the section in the [APP on Civil contingencies](#).

A more detailed guide, [The role of local resilience forums: A reference document](#), can be downloaded from the Cabinet Office.

The Cabinet Office's publication, [National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums \(LRFs\)](#), provides a detailed list of how to achieve good practice in preparing for and operating an SCC.

Strategic coordinating group

The SCG members should jointly agree the lead agency, agree the SCG chair and set strategy. The SCG chair should cascade this to the TCG. If the TCG forms before the SCG (or no SCG is required), it may fulfil both strategic and tactical planning functions.

Decisions on response strategy should include consideration of the views of those communities affected directly or indirectly by the incident or operation.

The SCG should agree on the media and communication plan and coordinate these functions.

In the event of a suspected terrorist incident, communications teams should work with Counter Terrorism Policing to agree which organisation is leading the communications, aligned with existing management protocols.

Where the incident has national implications, engaging with the NPCC communications team is required to ensure consistency in messaging.

[National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums \(LRFs\)](#) provides a detailed list of how to achieve good practice in preparing for and running an SCG.

Actions across all command roles

Strategic (gold), tactical (silver) and operational (bronze) commanders should:

- comply with the requirements of applicable memorandums of understanding
- determine the level of support required to manage the emergency or operation
- if required, delegate authority to a support officer at the relevant level of command (for example, a strategic support officer) to oversee the implementation of their command decisions
- document any transfer of roles in the command structure, including the date and time of transfer and confirmation that the new commander has been briefed

Training for interoperability

All initial responders and commanders should engage in continuing professional development to maintain the knowledge and skills needed to police responsibly.

This should include the training stated below:

- All responders should undertake annual [JESIP awareness training](#).
- All unarmed initial responders should undertake annual [Stay Safe](#) digital learning (you will need to log in to College Learn). Supervisors of unarmed initial responders should additionally complete the [Stay Safe – Supervisors](#) training on College Learn.

- All responders should undertake annual [Emergency Procedures](#) training on College Learn (you will need to log in).
- An additional multi-agency JESIP training input is required every three years for commanders at all levels, FIMS, control room managers and supervisors, as well as any person who may have to act up in these roles.

Tags

APP Critical incidents Major incidents