COMMUNITIES PREPARED

Guides for Community Emergency Volunteers

Incident Management Part 1

An introduction to emergency response

Rev A - November 2019

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Originally created for Cornwall Community Flood Forum by Charles Richards.

Introduction

This module is an introduction to what you can expect from the emergency services in your role as a Community Emergency Volunteer responding to emergencies in your community.

You will gain an overview and understanding of the structure and roles that are undertaken to allow you to understand where your role fits in and who you should be communicating with on the ground.

Aims and objectives

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Identify the three characteristics that define an emergency as described by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- Name the three levels of command and control and identify which level you operate within.
- Name the three categories of emergency responders and give an example of each.
- Describe how your role as a Community Emergency Volunteer fits in with the emergency services.
- Describe the powers you have when staffing or supervising a cordon.
- Describe the powers you have during an evacuation.

This module deliberately uses the type of language and terms employed by members of the emergency services, or blue lights, so you, as a volunteer, will be better prepared to provide support when needed.

What is an emergency?

An incident, such as a localised fire or flood, may be a highly significant event to those affected and will undoubtedly require the assistance of the emergency services to deal with. However, few incidents are of the scale that would fit within the definition of an emergency as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 defines an emergency as:

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom.
- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom.
- War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

What is a major incident?

When emergencies become, or are likely to become, significantly larger or protracted you may hear members of the emergency services or the media use the words 'major incident' or suggest that a 'major incident has been declared'.

Major incidents are determined by size or impact and require increased human resourcing and specialist assets to ensure an effective response and a successful outcome. Events of this type will have considerable implications for those directly affected as well as local communities; it is likely to take a significant period of time for those affected to return to normality or a 'new normal'.

Once a major incident is declared, the local emergency response is escalated and managed through a tried and tested multi-level command and control structure. As such, the authority to declare a major incident has only been given to certain emergency response agencies.

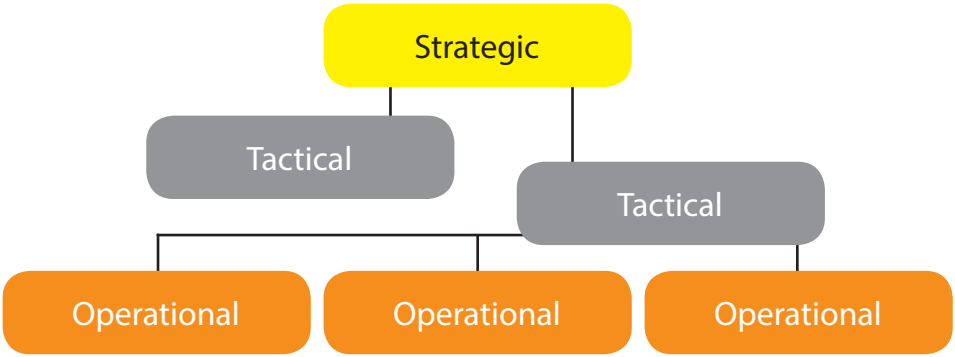
Examples of major incidents include:

- Boscastle flash flood, Cornwall, August 2004
- Westminster terror attack, London, March 2017
- Grenfell tower fire, London, June 2017

"Pass to all emergency services. This is a major incident, repeat major incident. We request all the standby aircraft available and all available land-based emergency crews as we are in danger of losing Boscastle and all the people in it."

Cptn. Pete McLelland's radio transmission to RAF Kinloss from Rescue helicopter 193.

Incident command and control



Strategic, tactical and operational represent the three different levels of command and control within which the emergency services operate. In the past, you may have heard these levels referred to as gold, silver and bronze.

Each command level represents a team of responders; therefore they are referred to as the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) and Operational Group.

Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)

This team of emergency response professionals are responsible for coordinating the incident from a distance. The group ensure that any decisions they make and directions necessary to resolve the incident are communicated and carried out by the tactical coordinating group who are sited at your local police force's headquarters.

The chair of this group is usually a senior police officer known as the Strategic Commander. The remainder of the group is represented by senior executives from category 1 and category 2 responding agencies, senior military personnel and a government liaison officer.

Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)

The Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) are a team of local emergency response professionals who will act as a link between the Strategic Coordinating Group and local emergency response teams at the incident. A TCG is led by a senior police officer, known as the Tactical Commander who your group coordinator may be expected to engage with.

The TCG is responsible for interpreting the decisions and directions that they receive from the SCG. From this information they will coordinate activities and resources in the area where the incident or emergency is, which the operational team will undertake.

Although there are pre-determined locations for the TCG to operate from, in the early stages of an emergency or a major incident a senior police officer at the scene may assume the role of Tactical Commander. You can identify this person by their blue and white tabard.

The main objective of the Tactical Commander is to ensure that timely actions are taken to save lives, minimise harm and mitigate the effect of an incident.

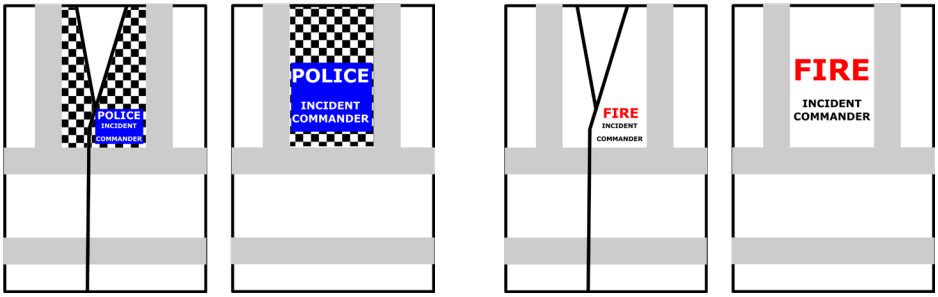
Operational Group (OG)

As a Community Emergency Volunteer (CEV) you sit within this level of command, under the direction of the Operational Commander; usually a police officer, although it could be a Fire and Rescue Service officer or Coastguard rescue officer, depending on the incident.

CEV coordinators will need to identify themselves to the Operational Commander at an early stage and be able to give a comprehensive overview of the emergency situation at present.

Tactical or Operational Commanders attending the scene of the incident may also be referred to as the Incident Commander rather than Tactical or Operational Commander.

Their tabards are designed to reflect this and as such the tabard may read 'Police Incident Commander' or in the case of the Fire and Rescue Service 'Fire Incident Commander'. If in doubt of their role, ask.



Who responds to incidents?

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 establishes clear roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response. The Act divides responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each. There is also a third type called non-category.

Category 1 responders

Those in Category 1 are organisations at the core of the response to most emergencies:

- Police, Fire & Rescue Services, Ambulance Trust, HM Coastguard, Local Authority, NHS Service Trusts, Public Health England, Environment Agency

Category 1 responders are subject to a comprehensive set of civil protection duties and have a legal duty to respond to incidents.

Category 2 responders

Category 2 responders are organisations known as cooperating bodies:

- Electricity Distributers, Gas Distributers, Water & Sewerage Undertakers, Telephone Service Providers, Network Rail, Highways England, Train / Airport Operators, Port / Harbour Authorities

They will be heavily involved in incidents that affect their own sector and have a duty to assist Category 1 and other Category 2 responders where required.

Non-category responders

Non-category responders includes agencies and organisations that do not have a duty to assist Category 1 and 2 responders but who have specialist skills, knowledge or resources that would aid a response; voluntary organisations for example:

- Community Emergency Volunteers, Voluntary Search & Rescue Teams, RNLI, Military, British Red Cross, St Johns Ambulance, RVS, RAYNET, etc

Who does what?

Organisation	What they do…	What they don't do…
Police	• Provision of overall command, control and coordination of an incident or emergency • Management of the media • Establishment and maintenance of cordons • Undertaking of evacuations	• Do not enter the water to undertake rescues • Do not provide security for evacuated or damaged properties • Cannot force people to evacuate their homes or places of work
Fire and Rescue Service	• Provision of rescue • Establishment and maintenance of cordons • Pumping out where there is a risk to life • Technical rescue ability (swift water and flood rescue)	• Do not pump out where there is no risk to life • Do not provide generators • Do not provide back-up lighting
Ambulance Service	• Casualty triage and treatment • Remove casualties to definitive care (hospital) • Technical rescue ability (swift water and flood rescue)	• Do not remove deceased persons from the scene of an incident • Do not transport non-urgent cases to definitive care (hospital)
Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)	• Coordinate response to maritime incidents • Manage and deploy local Coastguard Rescue Teams • Provide public safety measures (cordons) • Technical rescue ability (swift water and flood rescue)	• Do not provide sandbags
Local Authority	• Public safety measures (warning and informing) • Provide and maintain humanitarian assistance (rest centres) • Lead the recovery process to rehabilitate communities • Write emergency plans	• Do not usually provide sandbags
Environment Agency	• Issue flood warnings • Predict the location, timing and magnitude of flooding • Operate its flood defence assets to protect communities and critical infrastructure • Investigate the cause of the incident and consider enforcement action • Seek remediation, clean-up or restoration of the environment	• Do not provide sandbags in all cases of flooding

Information sharing

The volunteer coordinator role has been identified as the person who is expected to liaise directly with the Operational Commander and share the details they have obtained from their local knowledge, plans already written and reports received from others.

Operational Commanders will need to have a comprehensive overview of the situation so far, so when collecting and sharing information you should consider the details on the following page (although the list is not exhaustive).

Checklist for Community Emergency Volunteers

1. What has happened so far?
2. What is happening now?
3. What properties have been affected and have the occupants evacuated?
4. What dangers are you and your team aware of?
5. What plans are already in existence?
6. Are there vulnerable people or casualties to consider?
7. Are there any issues affecting access, e.g. flooded road, fallen trees?
8. How many volunteers are available and how many are deployed – what tasks and where?
9. Are you aware of any local assets that may assist, e.g. tractors or chainsaws?
10. Who have you warned or advised already?
11. Any other important details?

Cordons

Cordons are an effective way to prevent people from entering an area of danger. Similarly, cordons can also be used to ensure that people do not leave an area of safety. Usually, colourful ticker tape or traffic cones are used to define a physical cordon at waist height. There are two types of cordon usually in use at incidents and emergencies; the inner cordon and outer cordon.

Inner cordon

Inner cordons are put in place in areas where an increased risk has been identified. Staff that operate within that cordon are usually the Fire and Rescue Service who are better equipped to manage the dangers. To allow the staff within the inner cordon to work safely and efficiently an outer cordon is placed around the inner cordon to protect it.

Outer cordon

The outer cordon is usually staffed by police, who have common law powers to stop anyone (including Community Emergency Volunteers) from trying to enter the cordon. Between the outer cordon and inner cordon casualties may be receiving treatment, equipment may be stored or sorted and emergency responders may be receiving briefs, preparing to respond or taking a break.

If you feel you have a justifiable reason for entering a cordon, you must receive permission from a member of the uniformed emergency services authorised to allow you access, prior to your attempt.

Attempts to enter a cordoned area without explicit permission could leave you liable to arrest and could severely jeopardise the effectiveness of operations.

As a Community Emergency Volunteer, you may be asked to assist in staffing or supervising a cordon. If this is the case you must to be aware that:

- Only the police have the power to enforce a cordon. You do not have these powers.
- If somebody attempts to breach the cordon you are staffing or supervising you must immediately report the attempt to a member of the uniformed emergency services.

Evacuation

Emergencies and major incidents frequently require areas to be cleared of people for their own safety. An evacuation is planned and coordinated by the police who may ask you to assist.

You must be aware of three key pieces of information to effectively assist:

- You do not have the powers to remove people from their homes or places of work. This means that you cannot force someone to leave, even if they are in immediate danger. Usually, once the circumstances become known people understand the situation and leave their home or places of work voluntarily. They may go to a friend or relative, but you must ensure they are aware of any emergency rest centres or safe places that have been established by the local authority or police.

- Evacuation is stressful, especially for vulnerable people, families with small children and residents with pets. If you are assisting to evacuate you will need to prompt people to consider some basic things, e.g. remind people to bring essential medication.

- Record properties visited and the response you received. When assisting with evacuations usually the police will give you a basic form to complete which captures critical details such as who was in the property at the time of calling and what they chose to do, e.g. stay in the property or evacuate to a rest centre. Be thorough with your note taking as lives may depend on it if the situation escalates. Also be aware of the sensitive nature of this information and only share it with the emergency services (see GDPR note page 19).

An evacuation is planned and coordinated by the police who may call on you to assist.

Media and information handling

The media can be a valuable asset in terms of sharing key messages and information with local and national communities, particularly during large scale emergency situations. However, the media do need to be managed, which is the responsibility of the Tactical Coordinating Group.

You and the media

As part of your role as a Community Emergency Volunteer responding to local emergencies you may become aware of sensitive information through your interactions with other agencies at the operational level.

Any information you do receive must remain confidential unless you have explicit permission obtained from the Operational Commander or Tactical Commander (if in attendance).

This will prevent unanticipated action or reaction from the public or other responders which may complicate or frustrate the efforts of the operation.

GDPR and your group

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018 were introduced to protect an individual's personal information being used for purposes they have not agreed to. Due to the sensitive nature of the information you may be told this may well be covered by GDPR legislation. Any notes of individuals and their contact details given to you, or you note down as part of your duties with other responder agencies should be destroyed after you have dealt with that person and should on no account be used for any other purposes or added to another database. For more information on GDPR see www.gov.uk and search 'guide to general data protection regulations.'

Summary

Having completed this handbook and associated course you should now have a good appreciation of:

- The difference between an emergency and a major incident
- Types of incidents
- How the emergency services control an incident and where you fit in
- The different roles of the emergency services during an incident
- The sort of information you might need to collect and how this should be shared safely
- What a cordon is and who is responsible for setting them up
- How evacuations are organised and how you could help
- Handling the media and sensitive information

Notes

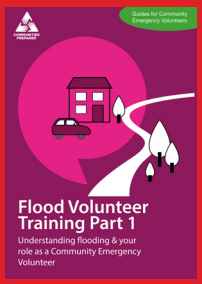
Notes

Notes

This guide is an introduction to what you can expect from the emergency services when you are deployed in your role as a Community Emergency Volunteer.

This information pack is intended as a guide only. Whilst the information it contains is believed to be correct, we can take no responsibility for actions taken based on the information contained in this pack.

Other booklets in this series include:



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