



# SHROPSHIRE

## Fire and Rescue Service

<b><u>CONTENTS</u></b>	<b>Page No</b>
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REVIEW</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>DEFINITION OF MAJOR INCIDENT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OUTLINE FUNCTION OF RESPONSIBLE ORGANISATIONS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>COMMAND &amp; CONTROL AT THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SCENE MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CASUALTY CLEARANCE</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>HELICOPTER INVOLVEMENT &amp; 'NO FLY' ZONES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>SUPPORT ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>INVESTIGATION</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>MEDIA LIAISON</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>OCCUPIERS ACCESS TO A SCENE</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>COMMUNITY REASSURANCE</b>	<b>18</b>
Appendix A – Internal Contingency / Emergency Plans	

**BRIGADE ORDER  
OPERATIONS  
NO. 1**

**PART 8**

**MAJOR  
EMERGENCY  
PLANS**

## PART 8 – MAJOR EMERGENCY PLANS

### PURPOSE

This Order sets out the definition of a general Major Incident and explains what the Fire Service and other agencies should consider during these events

### STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This Order supports:

Strategic Aim 1 – “Reduce the risk to life and material loss from fire and other emergencies in the community” and associated Corporate Objective 1 – “Reduce the incidence of deaths and injuries in the community”.

Strategic Aim 2 – “Protect life, property and the environment from fire and other emergencies” and associated Corporate Objective 6 – “Minimise the effect of our intervention actions on the environment”.

And Strategic Aim 3 – “Secure the highest level of safety and welfare for all staff by providing effective supervision, training, equipment and systems of work” and associated Corporate Objective 8 – “Ensure that all members and employees are competent and able to perform their role”.

### ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND REVIEW

The **Head of Operational Response** is responsible for ensuring this Order is implemented across the Brigade.

**The Head of District Performance** will be responsible for the day to day operation of the Order.

The **Head of Operational Response** and the **Head of District Performance** will review this Order biennially in *September* and as and when organisational changes take place.

## INTRODUCTION

Major incidents (fortunately) occur only comparatively rarely. However, if and when, such an incident does occur the emergency services and partner agencies will need to work together with a degree of strategic and tactical co-ordination beyond that which most personnel will be used to. There will be extra demands in terms of communication, information flow and shared decision-making, which people will have to adapt to in real time. There will also be a heightened local and national media interest as well as need to answer and address the genuine concerns from members of the affected communities (both residential and business).

A major incident will also generate a large political interest and the needs of both the local and national politicians will need to be addressed. Last, but by no means least, all activities both before, during and post incident may be subject to further scrutiny such as a public inquiry. As a result all aspects of operational tactics could be questioned and officers may be called to explain the reasons behind their actions and decisions. Whilst these are factors which officers attending any major incidents will need to consider clearly, not all incidents that are declared as a major incident will be subject to all of the matters outlined and officers should **not** allow any of the factors to unduly influence sound operational decision. However, it would be prudent for them to be mindful of the potential implications of those decisions.

## DEFINITION OF MAJOR INCIDENT

A major incident is any emergency (including known or suspected acts of terrorism) 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, fire, and ambulance services
- 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
- 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.
- large scale damage to the environment or disruption to the community

If it appears to a senior officer of one of the emergency services, or one of the other Category 1 responders (See Brigade Order on Civil Contingencies Act which contains a definition), that any of the above criteria may have been satisfied, that person should declare a major incident and communicate the declaration to the other relevant agencies.

(Note: each agency has specified the rank or roles to make such a declaration – within Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service the Incident Commander at the scene (Level 1, 2 or 3) will make the declaration as long as the incident falls into one of the criteria above).

A formal declaration of a major incident is an important step. Firstly, it serves to change the mindset of people involved to emphasise the need for **strategic co-ordination** and secondly it triggers specific responses by individual agencies. It is better to declare a major incident at the outset and subsequently scale down the response rather than risk a slow or deficient response. Each agency will respond to the formal declaration of a major incident even if the incident is of a type which does not meet the definition of a major incident for that agency in isolation. In cross-border major incidents each agency will take responsibility for informing its opposite number for the neighbouring area.

### **Stages of a Major Incident**

Most major incidents can be considered to have four stages:-

- The initial response
- The consolidation phase
- The recovery phase, and
- The restoration of normality

An investigation into the cause of the incident, together with the attendant hearings, may be superimposed onto the whole structure.

## **OUTLINE FUNCTIONS OF RESPONDING ORGANISATIONS**

Rescue will most frequently be the prime function required of the emergency services. Responsibility for the rescue of survivors lies with the Fire and Rescue Service. The care and transportation of casualties to hospital is the responsibility of the Ambulance Service. The Police will support these operations by co-ordinating the emergency services, local authorities and other agencies.

### **FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

The primary areas of the Service's responsibility at a major incident are:-

- Rescue of trapped casualties
- Prevention of further escalation of the incident by firefighting measures
- Dealing with released chemicals or other contaminants in order to save life, and rescue, or protect people from imminent danger.
- Responsibility for health and safety of all personnel of all agencies working within the incident inner cordon.
- Assessment of hazards, gathering and provision of information to other agencies for use in decision making.
- Liaison with Incident Medical Officer and ambulance service re assistance at ambulance loading points and priority evacuation of injured persons
- Liaison with the Police Incident Officer

- To assist with body recovery if required
- Consideration on environmental impact and actions to be taken to minimise effects
- Participation in appropriate investigations and preparation of reports and evidence.

## **POLICE**

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; securing and preserving evidence and the identification of witnesses, in conjunction with other investigative bodies where applicable.
- The collection and distribution of casualty information
- The identification of the deceased on behalf of Her Majesty's (HM) Coroner
- The prevention and detection of crime
- Short-term measures to restore normality after all necessary actions have been taken

## **AMBULANCE SERVICE**

The primary areas of responsibility for the Ambulance Service at a major incident are:-

- To save life together with the other emergency services
- To provide treatment, stabilisation and care of those injured at the scene and to arrange the most appropriate means of transporting those injured to the receiving and specialist hospitals
- To establish effective triage points and systems and determine the priority evacuation needs of those injured and to provide appropriate transport, medical staff, equipment and resources
- To provide a focal point at the incident for all Health Service staff and other medical resources, to nominate and alert the receiving hospitals from the official list of hospitals to receive those injured and to provide communication facilities for medical resources at the scene, with direct radio links to hospitals, control facilities and any other agency as required
- To provide transport to the incident scene for the Medical Incident Officer (MIO), mobile medical/surgical teams and their equipment

## **LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

In the aftermath of a major incident the principal concerns of the local authorities are to provide support for the emergency services, continue normal support and care for the local and wider community, use resources to mitigate the effects of the emergency and co-ordinate the response of organisations other than the emergency services.

This may include the provision of the following services:

- Emergency feeding
- Emergency temporary accommodation
- Emergency traffic management
- Dangerous structures advice
- Environmental health advice
- Emergency counselling
- Temporary mortuary establishment

Initial contact with any of the local authorities in an emergency situation is via the Emergency Planning Department, which maintains a 24 hour duty officer system.

Good liaison between the emergency services and the local authority(ies), particularly at the scene, is essential and will be enhanced by the presence of a local authority Forward Liaison Officer (FLO) at the Forward Command Point. Consideration should be given to requesting a FLO at the outset of the incident. It is in the later stages of a major incident (the recovery period and return to normality) that the local authority's involvement may be prolonged and extensive.

## HEALTH AUTHORITIES

The health authorities have a duty to protect and promote the health of the public and, therefore, have a central role in planning for and responding to any incident with major consequences for health or health services. The key roles and responsibilities of the health authorities in the event of a major incident can be summarised as follows:-

- Assessing the impact on health and health services of every potential major incident (looking beyond immediate casualties)
- Provide input to the multi-agency strategic management of a major incident and provide the strategic management of the NHS response where appropriate
- If required by the police, to convene a Joint Health Action Cell. (JHAC) and if required advise police commanders on the health considerations of a decision to evacuate people, as against advise them sheltering indoors.
- Liaise as appropriate with NHS regional offices, The Department of Health and other agencies e.g. Chemical Incident Response Service
- Manage some incidents directly (e.g. outbreaks of infectious diseases)
- Provide health advice and reassurance where appropriate, to the public and other agencies e.g. about the toxic effects of released chemicals
- Arrange epidemiological follow-up if necessary and continue to monitor longer-term health effects of the incident

The NHS does not have a command structure analogous to the emergency services but relies on effective communication between its constituent parts. The key point of contact for the health authorities in the event of a major incident is the ambulance service.

Primary carers, including GPs, practice nurses, health visitors, etc, provide continuity of care for registered patients, including prescription of medicines. In a major incident they would continue this role and may need to provide general services for an evacuated population.

These services would also manage patients with less severe injuries, or health effects such as worsened asthma in a chemical incident. Primary Care Practitioners can give information and counselling on a one to one basis.

In the event of a major incident the health authority will communicate details to these services.

## **ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

The Environment Agency (EA) has primary responsibility for the environmental protection of land, water and air in England and Wales. The EA's role in the response to a major incident can be summarised as:-

- Maintaining and operating flood defences on rivers and coastlines and giving warnings to those who may be at risk from flooding
- Advising and assisting in the prevention and/or mitigation of the effects of pollution arising from an incident
- Advising on the proper disposal of hazardous substances and waste
- Advising and assisting in the restoration and monitoring of the environment following an incident
- Gathering evidence to support any prosecution or enquiry

Early notification and involvement of the Environment Agency will help to identify, mitigate and contain the effects of possible pollution arising from an incident.

## **COMMAND AND CONTROL AT THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS**

### **INITIAL CONTROL**

At the outset of a major incident the various agencies will respond under their own normal command and control arrangements. Early liaison between the Officers in Charge of the emergency services' Command Centres/Control Rooms is important.

The following command structure should be established as quickly as possible.

### **GOLD, SILVER AND BRONZE COMMAND STRUCTURE**

'Gold', 'Silver' and 'Bronze' are titles of functions adopted by each of the emergency services and are role related not rank related. These functions are described as 'Strategic', 'Tactical' and 'Task' in fire and rescue terminology. In summary the roles of each can be described as:-

#### **GOLD (STRATEGIC)**

Gold is the commander in overall strategic command of the incident. The role of Gold is:

- to establish a framework of policy within which the tactical (Silver) commander(s) will work,
- to give support to the tactical commanders by the provision of resources,
- to consider the prioritisation or requests from tactical commanders and others, and
- to determine plans for the restoration of normality once the incident is brought under control.

In a major incident where more than one agency is operating at the strategic level, the use of the term 'Gold Command' is confined to the location where joint strategic co-ordination takes place. In the first instance this will usually be Police Headquarters, Hindlip Hall, Worcester unless another location has been agreed.

In Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service this role is normally undertaken by one of the Executive Officers.

## **SILVER (TACTICAL)**

Silver is the tactical level of command, the purpose of which is to determine priority in allocating resources, to plan and co-ordinate when a task will be undertaken, and to obtain additional resources via Gold as required.

Most, but possibly not all tactical functions will be discharged at the scene of the incident. It is the responsibility of each responding agency to ensure that their Silver (Tactical) Commander is identifiable as such to the other organisations.

In Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service this role would normally be undertaken by one of the Area Commanders operating as a Level 3 Incident Commander.

## **BRONZE (TASK)**

Bronze Commanders will control and deploy the resources of their respective Service within a geographical sector or specific role and implement the tactics defined by Silver.

In Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service this role would normally be undertaken by one of the Incident Commanders operating at Level 2.

## **INTER-AGENCY RESOURCES**

Any Service may request the temporary assistance of personnel and equipment of another agency. In these circumstances while the supporting Service will relinquish the immediate control of those resources to the other Service for the duration of the task, it will nevertheless keep overall command of its personnel and equipment at all times. Personnel from one Service, who help another in this way, should only be given tasks for which they are trained and provided with suitable personal protective equipment (PPE). For instance, Police officers may be directed to become stretcher-bearers to release fire-fighters for rescue work. They should not undertake hazardous rescue work themselves.

## **STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL CO-ORDINATION GROUPS**

The formation of both Strategic and Tactical Co-ordinating Groups has proved to be of great value in dealing with major incidents. There will, inevitably, be some delay in these Groups being set up, but this should be kept to a minimum.

## **STRATEGIC (GOLD) CO-ORDINATION GROUPS**

Major incidents are likely to require a multi-agency response at the strategic level to affect a resolution. This Strategic Co-ordination Group will, in effect, be an extension of the Local/Regional Resilience Forums. It will normally fall to the Police Gold Commander to convene and chair the initial meeting of the Strategic Co-ordination Group. This may be of his/her own volition or on the request of a Chief Officer/Chief Executive of another Service or agency. Depending on the type of incident it may be possible that another agency will call and chair the first meeting (e.g. a slow-time incident such as flooding). However, in order to avoid confusion at the strategic level this should only be done by agreement with the Police duty Chief Officer. Agencies should normally be represented at meetings of the Group by their overall incident commanders. If represented by a deputy then that person should have full authority to commit his/her organisation to strategic decisions.

The Strategic Co-ordination Group will meet at a location completely detached from the scene with suitable communications and meeting facilities. For the Shropshire area this will normally be at Police Headquarters, Hindlip Hall Worcester, or other suitable location.

The agenda for the Strategic Co-ordination Group meetings will be decided by the Group at the time and will depend upon the type and scale of the incident. At the outset the Strategic Co-ordination Group will determine the strategic issues relevant to the incident, including the management of the aftermath of the incident and the return to normality. The Group will also decide the frequency of its subsequent meetings.

## **TACTICAL (SILVER) CO-ORDINATION GROUP**

This Group will consist of the Silver commanders of the agencies represented at the scene, including a local authority Forward Liaison Officer (FLO) if one has been provided. In addition the Police Senior Investigating Officer' (SIO) (where applicable) will attend. The Police Silver Commander will chair the meeting and provide a minute taker.

The first meeting should take place as soon as is reasonably practicable. (However, tactical commanders should not wait for a formal meeting to begin liaison with one-another). Subsequent meetings of this Group may be arranged at the first meeting, or convened earlier if circumstances so require at the request of one of the members of the Group.

The Silver Co-ordination Group should initially meet close to the scene; as the operation progresses subsequent meetings may be held further from the scene at more suitable, better equipped premises.

At incidents concerned with fire, the danger of fire or involving rescue, the Fire Service will give the Silver Group professional advice on matters of safety within the inner cordon.

Each Service should briefly describe the situation as it affects its own operations and, if necessary, mention those matters for which it requires the assistance or co-operation of others.

Priorities are essential to create a cohesive joint strategy. Each Service will have objectives to meet within its own area of responsibility. It is important to establish which of these should have priority at the particular stage the incident has reached. In that way, inter-Service difficulties may be avoided and each may concentrate on those actions which contribute most to the success of the operation.

The Group should give consideration to the requirements of later phases of the operation, including the identification of actions that need to be taken in advance so that appropriate matters can be referred to the Strategic Co-ordination Group.

## **COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

Currently within the West Mercia Police area, not all of the emergency services and Category 1 responders have compatible radio communications systems. That is not to say that they cannot communicate but certain procedures may need to be followed. The Incident Command vehicles are equipped with a number of hand held multi-channel UHF radios. These will operate on the inter-agency command channel using Channels 69 and 70 (National Channel Plan). In addition the Airwave radio service allows for inter-Service communication on several different talk groups. These radios are intended for command use only by the Silver Commanders for liaison purposes and not for general inter-Service use. In practice mobile phones are more likely to be used for inter-agency communication.

Emergency Service Mobile phones are generally registered with ACCOLC. ACCOLC is a control programme which the cellular radio network providers have agreed to implement at the request of the Police or Cabinet Office to ensure that, in an emergency, the public safety services and other relevant authorities will have priority access to cellular radio systems which might otherwise become congested by non-essential users. If Officers require this facility they must discuss this with the senior police officer present.

## **TERRORISM**

At known or suspected terrorist incidents radios should be kept switched on. The obvious benefits in being able to communicate at a major incident far outweigh the remote risk of activating a device through radio transmission. Only when an unexploded suspect device has been located should personnel withdraw to at least 10 metres from the device before transmitting on personal radios. This distance should be increased to 50 metres when vehicle based radios are used.

It should be borne in mind that digital mobile telephones and some radio systems (TETRA) permanently transmit as part of their normal operating procedure. When a device is discovered then advice should be sought on appropriate cordon size and the use of mobile communications items should not be allowed within the hazards zone which will be a minimum of 50 metres as mentioned above.

## SCENE MANAGEMENT

Because of the scale and nature of most major incidents it is essential that the scene is properly secured and managed. All major incidents need to be treated as major crime scenes and established procedures for dealing with major crimes followed. To this end, cordons and controlled access to the scene should be established as soon as practicable.

The co-operation of all personnel is required in properly reporting their own arrival and departure, and challenging anyone who is seeking to or has gained unauthorised access.

It should be noted that unauthorised access to the site of a major incident could jeopardise both the rescue and investigation. Any difficulties with identification should be referred immediately to the appropriate control vehicle at the Rendezvous Point (RVP).

In the case of hazardous sites where site-specific plans have been prepared, it may be that locations for cordons, RVPs, marshalling/staging areas and the forward command point have been pre-determined. Site-specific plans, where applicable, should always be consulted. However, the actual locations may have to be different in light of changed circumstances and dynamic risk assessment.

Cordons are established around the scene for the following reasons:-

- to guard the scene
- to protect the public
- to control sightseers
- to prevent unauthorised interference with evidence or property
- to facilitate the operations of the emergency services

Up to three cordons will be established by the police, in consultation with other agencies.

**Inner cordon** – provides security of the hazard area and potential crime scene

**Outer cordon** – seals off an extensive area around the inner cordon

**Traffic cordon** – set up at or beyond the outer cordon to prevent unauthorised vehicle access to the area surrounding the scene.

In terrorist or suspected terrorist incidents it is a criminal offence to contravene a prohibition or restriction imposed under Section 36 of the Terrorism Act 2000. This includes the crossing of a police cordon.

For all known or suspected terrorist incidents all personnel should be aware of the possibility of secondary devices. Police will be responsible for checking RVPs, marshalling areas and cordon points for suspicious objects.

**The Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for safety management of all personnel within the inner cordon.**

At terrorist incidents the police will consult the Anti-Terrorist Branch of the Metropolitan Police on safety issues. The information provided will then be shared with the other services at the scene, so that changes to cordons and further safety sectors, if required, can be established. Once cordons are set up, any persons who do not have a role and are not part of the emergency response teams, or who are wearing inappropriate clothing, must be directed to leave the cordoned area.

To aid with identification of personnel authorised, suitably clothed and briefed to be in the inner cordon, the Cordon Officer will record all personnel already in, entering or leaving the **inner cordon**. The Fire Service is responsible for the health and safety of all agencies working within the inner cordon, and will liaise with the Police about who will be allowed access to ensure they are properly equipped, trained and briefed.

Police will control all access and exit points to the **outer cordon**. Non-emergency service personnel requiring access through the **outer cordon** will be vetted at the RVP.

The command/control vehicles of the emergency services must be positioned between the **inner and outer cordons**, as will the RVP and marshalling area (see below).

The **traffic cordon** may be established to restrict vehicle access to the area surrounding the scene. Immediate action must be taken to ensure the free passage of emergency traffic to and from the scene of the incident and to prevent congestion at and around the scene.

The **Rendezvous Point (RVP)** will be established within (preferably just inside) the **outer cordon** and will be under the control of a Police officer. All emergency, specialist and voluntary services will be directed here in the first instance. The Police officer will advise the appropriate Service command vehicle of the resources arriving. Any not immediately required may be directed to a marshalling area.

A **marshalling area**, (this is a phrase used by several Cat 1 responders to identify a staging area) under the control of an officer from each Service, wearing appropriate reflective tabards, may be established. The actual location will be agreed after consultation between the emergency service Silver (Tactical) commanders. This area is for resources not immediately required at the scene, or which, having served their purpose, are being held for future use. It should, therefore, be an area suitable for accommodating large numbers of vehicles and equipment.

A **marshalling area** (Staging Area) may also be used to provide briefing/debriefing areas and recuperation facilities for personnel involved in arduous work at the scene. As the event is scaled down the utilities and other contractors will need to maintain the **marshalling area** for the duration of the recovery phase.

The Police, Fire and Ambulance Control/Command vehicles will form the **Forward Command Point** from which the major incident will be managed. These vehicles, together with the other responding agencies, will be located as close to one another as can practically be achieved. The Silver (Tactical) Commanders will jointly exercise their authority from this point in a co-ordinated manner.

The importance of this joint control function is critical, and effective information flow between agencies must be maintained. If in the event of an incident involving fire, or explosion, where the Incident Command vehicle has initially been situated much closer to the scene than those of the Police and Ambulance, it is imperative that either a) agreement is reached to bring the command vehicles together, or b) the Fire Service commander sends the Inter-Service Liaison Officer to the Police command vehicle.

## EMERGENCY EVACUATION SIGNAL

The Fire Service has an emergency evacuation signal which all personnel, working in the inner cordon, must be aware of and respond to if the area becomes hazardous. The Fire Service officer will blow several short, REPEATED sharp blasts on a whistle and declare a safe point to withdraw to. People entering the **inner cordon** must be aware of this signal.

## FACTORS AFFECTING THE SITING OF VEHICLES

Experience has shown that where the location of all the command vehicles has not been correctly considered by the officers in charge of those vehicles and in choosing their sites they have failed to consider the siting of other emergency service command vehicles then this has led to operational difficulties and has not assisted the smooth running of the incident.

In considering the site consideration should be given to:-

- is there enough space to accommodate all anticipated agency controls
- is it away from the hazards of the scene, but close enough to maintain control over it
- is it the most appropriate in case of escalation of the incident as relocation may prove extremely difficult

Ideally the site would be served with good access, lighting and toilets and have telephone facilities close by. Realistically this may not be easily achievable but should be considered never the less.

Wide thoroughfares or surface car park make ideal locations and may be used as the location for Forward Command Point. This is where the second Level 3 Incident Command vehicle would co-locate with the other emergency services (Cat 1 responders) thereby allowing the Level 2 Incident Command vehicle to set up closer to the scene of operations.

**Note:** This is only suggested guidance on the best location for each vehicle and obviously this may be subject to change, following consultation with the other services at the scene.

To aid identification, the blue, red or green identifying lights on each of the main control vehicles of the emergency services will be switched on. The identifying lights on all other vehicles must be switched off, except during incidents on open motorways or elsewhere where they are necessary to avoid accidents.

## CASUALTY CLEARANCE

A primary responsibility of the emergency services at a major incident is the recovery and documentation of casualties. Casualties fall into one of four categories. :-

- Immediate Priority - 1
- Urgent Priority - 2
- Delayed Priority - 3
- Deceased

These may be witnesses/victims, or even suspects, and carry evidence or hazards on their clothing, particularly in terrorist incidents.

## **UNINJURED**

These people will have been involved in the incident, but will not necessarily want or require medical attention. They too must be removed from the hazard (see below). The Ambulance Service will have little involvement with these casualties other than perhaps to render first aid.

They will all be witnesses, however, and the Police Service will need to collate their details for the benefit of the Casualty Bureau as well as the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO). This can be done at suitable premises nearby, called the Survivor Reception Centre, which will be established and operated by the local authority and Police.

## **INJURED**

These people need to be rescued from the scene as quickly and safely as possible by the Fire and Rescue Service, who must be mindful of the requirement of the ambulance and medical teams on site. Ambulance paramedics and technicians then need to be able to administer the appropriate pre-hospital treatment before the patients are taken to the receiving hospitals. To work an effective triage system on scene and to minimise delay in evacuation by lengthy documentation, it is essential that all casualties are prioritised and labelled in accordance with the nationally accepted casualty triage label. Ambulance/medical personnel will carry this out.

Police should liaise with the Ambulance Service to maintain a count of all persons processed with details of hospitals to which they have been taken. Police officers will be deployed to the casualty departments of these hospitals to perform the role of hospital security and documentation teams.

## **DECEASED**

The deceased should not be moved unless it is the only way of reaching a live casualty, or if the body is likely to be lost or further damaged. Otherwise bodies must be left in place until the evidence gathering stage begins. The need to gather evidence is secondary to saving life. It should be borne in mind that the Coroner, pathologist or any other investigating agency may wish to view bodies in situ and they must therefore be consulted before recovery of the deceased begins.

The deceased will be marked using the nationally agreed NHS labelling system. The Fire Service will, on request, assist Police with body recovery. If it is necessary for bodies to be labelled on behalf of the Police, then the national identification label system will be used.

Once recovered, bodies will be removed in the first instance to a body holding area where they will be collated before transfer to the mortuary. At the mortuary, teams of Police officers work with the pathologist and other specialists to establish the identity of the deceased and cause of death, and to provide security. It is important that the deceased be moved from the scene to a body holding areas as soon as practicable to avoid undue delay to the identification and notification of the next of kin.

All the emergency services have a legal obligation to HM Coroner to provide evidential continuity of the handling of a body from its location at the incident, through its recovery to the post mortem examination. If only one officer has handled the body then continuity is simple to establish. If several officers, perhaps from different Services, have handled the body then they must provide statements and continuity evidence about that body.

## **EVACUEES**

Some emergencies may require the evacuation of a large surrounding area because of the danger to life from environmental or structural hazards. The decision to evacuate will be taken by the police Silver Commander usually on the advice of the Fire Service Silver Commander and the health authority. In some circumstances, personnel from all Services may have to assist in carrying it out.

The Police Silver Commander will appoint an Evacuation Officer to take charge of the evacuation and will establish a suitable evacuation assembly point. The local authority will provide rest centres or other temporary accommodation. Personnel from the local authority and from voluntary agencies will staff rest centres. The centres will provide security, welfare, communication, catering and medical facilities. Evacuees should be documented by the local authority and details passed to the Casualty Bureau.

## **SURVIVORS**

The term 'survivors' in this context is used to refer to those who have had a close involvement in the incident but are not classed as 'injured'. They are a distinct group from 'evacuees' who are not so closely involved. At the Survivor Reception Centre, which will be established by the local authority, the voluntary aid societies may supply support and counselling, telephone calls can be made, and investigators can begin to interview witnesses and determine whether it is necessary to document every single survivor. The Centre needs to provide shelter, first aid treatment, welfare support, communications and room for documentation. Police may provide a security and documentation team to assist. Details of survivors should be passed to the Casualty Bureau.

## **FRIENDS AND RELATIVES OF CASUALTIES**

The local authority, on request, should give consideration to establishing a secure area where friends and relatives of casualties can be directed for information.

## **CASUALTY BUREAU**

Police will establish a Casualty Bureau where details on all deceased, casualties, survivors and evacuees will be collated. At the same time they will take enquiries from friends and relatives of people who are believed to be involved in the incident. Full details of how the Bureau operates etc will be contained within the relevant plans.

**Note:** Casualty figures must only be released by the Police following consultation with the Gold Command. No other Service may give out these figures unless it has been approved by Gold.

## HELICOPTER INVOLVEMENT AND NO FLY ZONES

Helicopters can be used to provide the following:-

- Immediate overview of scene, including the size of affected area, ancillary factors and so on;
- Casualty search/assessment of numbers;
- Casualty evacuation
- Identification of present or potential hazards;
- Weather conditions, including wind direction at scene;
- Area containment, including cordon deployment/infringement;
- Traffic Management/route planning schemes

**Emergency Flying Restrictions** - Police have the facility, through the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), to request the imposition of temporary emergency flying restrictions over the scene of an incident under certain circumstances. The most likely reason would be the safety of those in the air or on the ground. Requests for temporary emergency flying restrictions should be made via Gold Command.

## SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Major incidents may prove to be very traumatic and the welfare needs of operational crews and staff attending the scene must be considered and their needs addressed in the most appropriate way. Options available include Critical Incident Debriefing, referral to Occupational Health or pastoral care from the Brigade Chaplin.

## DEBRIEFING

As with many incidents the Services and agencies involved may hold a series of debriefs. Initially these will be confined to each particular Service but a multi agency debrief will also be held at which time any lessons learnt will be identified and incorporated into policies and procedures as appropriate. Debriefs should not interfere with, or comment on, investigations into the incident carried out by investigative or judicial authorities. It is important to realise that such debriefs and related documents would be disclosable to individuals involved in legal proceedings.

## INVESTIGATION

Every major incident will be the subject of an investigation, whether for HM Coroner, a public inquiry, the competent authority (Health and Safety Executive and Environment Agency) under the Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1999 or civil or criminal court proceedings. As a result the evidence collected should be of the best possible quality. Such evidence can only be gathered if the scene is secured as soon as possible and anything which can be reasonably anticipated to be required as evidence is preserved and not damaged, moved or disposed of without reference to the Senior Investigating Officer

Photography will help throughout the incident in the recording of the scene for evidential purposes and any photographs taken during the incident will have to be made available to the Police or agency conducting the investigation. A log of decisions made by the Incident Commander(s) and message log from Fire Control will also need to be made available.

## **SPECIAL CASES**

In all suspected terrorist related incidents West Mercia Police are likely to invite the Metropolitan Police Service Anti-Terrorist Branch to lead the investigation and advise on safety.

In railway incidents, other than those involving terrorism or murder, British Transport Police will be responsible for investigating the incident. Where the incident is of such a scale or there are special reasons, a joint team of BTP and local Police should be formed, following discussions between senior officers of both forces.

## **MEDIA LIAISON**

As stated in the introduction, a major incident involving the joint work of the responding agencies will attract a significant and sustained interest from both national and international media. In accordance with the protocols within the West Mercia Local Resilience Forum (LRF) relating to media liaison, the press officers of responding agencies will communicate on a personal basis to provide for a strategic co-ordinated response.

The co-ordinated media policy will be in place within one hour of the major incident being declared. Unless circumstances suggest otherwise, West Mercia Police will take on a co-ordinating role in the early stages of the incident. The lead role may change from one organisation to another as the situation develops.

Support may be sought from the Central Office of Information (COI), and/or the Central Government News Centre (CGN) which are Government agencies that can provide experienced press officers.

Once a major incident has been declared, all the agencies involved will be under pressure to provide an immediate statement. At the earliest opportunity a holding statement will be agreed and disseminated by the Police press officer. No information should be provided to the news media in relation to a terrorist incident without authority of the Anti-Terrorist Branch.

Press officers attending the scene of the incident should seek out their counterparts at the earliest opportunity and establish regular liaison so that contentious or conflicting information can be clarified before release to the media. This information should then be passed to their own press offices.

If the incident is of a sufficiently serious nature, (i.e. involving a high number of casualties and/or continuing rescue operations) and the operation is likely to run beyond twelve hours, then consideration will be given to setting up a joint press office. If the Silver Commanders consider it beneficial to hold a joint press briefing, the senior Police press officer at the scene will liaise with them to agree a suitable format, to identify any contentious issues and how they can be dealt with.

The following division of areas of responsibility is suggested for the briefing:-

**Police** - Overall response to the incident; the number of casualties; how the emergency services coped/are coping; Casualty Bureau telephone number (if issued); any criminal investigations (except incidents on the railway); local disruption (past and continuing); praise for local people who may have assisted in rescue operations; commendable actions by police officers.

**Fire Service** – The rescue operation; how many people were trapped and in what circumstances; the level of its response in terms of appliances and personnel; what equipment was needed to free people and (where relevant) specific information related to flooding, fires or chemical incidents; commendable actions by Fire officers.

**Ambulance Service** – The nature and seriousness of those injured; where casualties were taken; how many ambulances and medical staff were involved; commendable actions by ambulance personnel.

**British Transport Police (BTP)** (incidents on railway only) – Details of any criminal investigation, disruption to the railway, details about potential public inquiries, commendable actions by BTP and railway staff.

**Local Authority** – Actions taken to support the emergency services and to support the affected community. Use of resources to mitigate the effects of the incident; rehabilitate the community and the environment.

## **MEDIA CENTRES**

If the incident is on a large scale and is likely to attract a significant media presence for days or even weeks, press officers should consider whether it would be beneficial to establish a media centre near the scene. Such a Centre gives journalists a base to operate from, shelter from the elements and (ideally) provides toilet and refreshment facilities. The advantages to the emergency services include improved communications and speedy organisation of briefings and interviews.

Local authorities will assist in identifying a suitable venue such as a school or church hall, preferably with a large exterior area where heavy equipment such as outside broadcasting units can be parked.

## **OCCUPIERS ACCESS TO A SCENE**

The occupiers of premises within a cordoned area will wish to regain access to their premises as soon as possible once the incident appears to them to have been dealt with. The rate at which this can be achieved is, however, subject to two constraints.

Firstly, the area is a potential crime scene and the Police and others need to carry out a painstaking enquiry to gain evidence. This will take time and during this period, people will be excluded from the area so that vital evidence is not lost.

Secondly damage caused may make the area unsafe to enter. It may be considered unsafe to allow owners to move in and attempt to deal with their properties. In such cases and in the interest of public safety, the local authority may engage approved contractors to board up and commence repair work.

The Police will aim to reduce the cordon boundaries so that, at any time, only areas not yet confirmed safe are within it. As premises are progressively freed from the cordon, occupiers will need to be on hand to secure their premises as soon as they are released. The Police will endeavour to ensure that occupiers likely to be affected are given sufficient advance notice of the movement of the cordon boundaries.

## **COMMUNITY REASSURANCE**

Following a major incident, the local community may be both frightened and angry. People are likely to seek reassurance from all agencies involved as either primary or secondary responders. It is important that this need is recognised and that steps are taken to provide a focal point within the community where assistance can be obtained, combined with agencies providing a highly visible presence. This will be a matter for consideration by the Strategic Co-ordination Group.

## INTERNAL CONTINGENCY / EMERGENCY PLANS

All personnel using this Order are reminded that their own agency contingency/emergency plans must be referred to for specific actions

<b>West Mercia Police</b>	Contingency Plan A1 Site Specific Plans such as COMAH
<b>Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service</b>	Major Incident Plan
<b>Shropshire Ambulance Service</b>	Major Incident Plan
<b>West Midlands Ambulance Service</b>	Major Incident Procedures
<b>Shropshire Primary Care Team</b>	Major Incident Plan
<b>Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust</b>	Major Incident Plan
<b>Shropshire County Council</b>	Emergency Plan Flood Response Plan Major Accident Hazard Pipeline Plan Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) Plans
<b>Telford and Wrekin</b>	Emergency Plan Flood Response Plan Major Accident Hazard Pipeline Plan Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) Plans
<b>Joint plans which the councils either maintain or contribute</b>	Shropshire Unitary Authorities Oil Pollution Forum  Shropshire area Temporary Mortuary Plan MAFF Regional Area Rabies Plan