



COMHAIRLE NA SEIRBHÍSÍ DÓITEÁIN
**FIRE SERVICES
COUNCIL**

**SENIOR OFFICERS
HANDBOOK**

Senior Fire Officers Operational Handbook

Amendments

From time to time amendments will be issued to this handbook.

To maintain a correct and up to date copy of the handbook it is important that instructions given in amendment notices are carried out.

The person carrying out the amending should complete the table below.

Amendment No.	Date Amended	By Whom amended
1		
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MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APRIC	Incident handling system – Assess, Plan, Resources, Implement and Close
BA	Breathing Apparatus
CISM	Critical Incident Stress Management
CISD	Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
Class B	Standard Fire Appliance
CCP	Command and Control Post
CCPO	Command and Control Post Officer
DoT Book	US Department of Transport Information Book on Hazardous Chemicals
ET	Emergency Tender
HP	Hydraulic Platform Aerial Appliance
IMB	Incident Management Board
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MAPAC	A formatted incident information sheet, containing Mobilisation, Attendance, Plan, Action and Closure
MEM	Major Emergency Management
O/C	Officer commanding (e.g. a crew)
OiC	Officer in Charge (of an incident)
OFFSCC	Off-site Co-ordination Centre



RTA	Road Traffic Accident
SFO	Senior Fire Officer
SITREP	Situation Report
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TTL	Turntable Ladder Aerial Appliance
VHF	Very High Frequency Radio

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Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Use of Handbook

This handbook is one of a series being produced to assist staff of fire authorities in discharging their duties. The purpose of this handbook is to bring together into one reference document relevant information for senior fire officers who are involved in Operational Responses. The format is intended to allow for updating and expansion as required in the future. The handbook draws on information provided in various command courses, and is generally based on the series of Fire Services Council Senior Command Courses held in November 1996.

The contribution of the participants on these courses to the development of this material is acknowledged, as is the work done by the following course facilitators:

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Frank Dennison, Asst Chief Fire Officer, Limerick County Council

The handbook is divided into four sections and provides information under the following headings:

- introduction;
- operational resources;
- command and control;
- major emergency management.

Much of the material in this handbook will already be familiar to officers, but it is recommended that officers should ensure that all the issues have been addressed in their areas of responsibility in their



brigade. The contents are arranged to facilitate local practices, procedures and arrangements, which should be added to the handbook as appropriate.

Officers may wish to study particular subjects and read other material in greater detail outside the contents of this handbook, as part of their professional development.

1.2 Roles of Senior Fire Officer (SFO)

Senior fire officers are generally engaged in the delivery and management of one of the primary emergency services. This handbook is concerned with the operational response roles of the senior officer.

The principal roles identified are:

- responding to, and taking control if necessary of incidents to which a fire brigade response has been made (Sections 2 and 3 of the handbook cover this area in detail);
- providing the initial local authority response to major emergencies, including taking control of fire brigade operations, and exercising the functions of Local Authority Controller of Operations until relieved (Section 4 covers this area);
- exercising certain support, supervisory and disciplinary functions (a Section is in preparation on this issue); and
- procurement of appliances and equipment (a section is in preparation on this issue).

The key words in TABLE 1.2 below provide a vision of the SFO as leader and manager of a professional emergency service. Fulfilling these roles requires many skills, and "bodies of knowledge" and "tools" are also required.

One of the key issues is the need for officers to know the strengths and weaknesses of the people they work with, and also to know their own

strengths and weaknesses. It is suggested therefore that officers undertake a self-appraisal exercise under the headings of roles, sub-roles, skills and knowledge. Where areas for improvement are identified, officers should set targets and programs for themselves, as part of their own professional development.

TABLE 1.2 ROLES OF SFO	
Role	Sub-Role
Leadership	Service Development Management of Change Staff Development Public Relations / Image Professionalism Research & Development
General Management	Efficient Use of Resources Program Management Budget / Financial Control Human Resource Management / Industrial Relations Local Authority Management Team Information Management
Operations	Command and Control Public Information / Media Supervision Training Major Emergency Management Liaison Health, Safety and Welfare Report / Investigate
Technical	Expert Advice Procurement Implementation Maintenance

1.3 Senior Fire Officer's Equipment

Officers should have transport available in accordance with their fire authority's arrangements. Blue flashing lights and sirens should be used in accordance with SI No. 137 and 138 of 1996.

The following areas need to be considered for successful operational response by SFOs.

TABLE 1.3 SFO's Equipment List	
1.	Alerting Equipment (Pager)
2.	Communications Equipment, VHF Mobile Radio, Mobile Phone, Hand Portable Radios
3.	Relevant Maps / Risk Cards / SOPs
4.	Haz Sub kit including Haz Card, Haz Chem book, DoT book,
5.	Fire kit and protective clothing, including rank markings
6.	Id Card, Tabards or Jerkins as appropriate
7.	Torches
8.	Field Glasses and Camera
9.	First aid kit and fire extinguisher
10.	Standard Information Forms, such as : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- MAPAC sheets and Card;- SITREP Form;- Officer Roles Sheets plus pens and markers.

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Section 2. Operational Resources

2.1 General

To effectively perform the roles outlined in Section 1, it is essential that operational officers are familiar with the resources they control and utilise. These aspects are considered below.

2.2 Personnel

The fire service is a service delivered by people, operating in small teams, and based in fire station units. The operational officer should be familiar with the personnel in each station, and likewise should be known to personnel. Officers should have a picture of strengths and weaknesses of crews and junior officers. It is important that the limits of competencies are understood.

It is suggested that senior fire officers hold quarterly review meetings, where all brigades in the senior officer's area of operations are discussed, performance for the past quarter is reviewed, and special needs and areas for attention and or monitoring in the coming quarter are identified.

Key issues are knowledge and realistic appraisal of the points in Table 2.2 below.

1.	Stations, appliances and personnel numbers
2.	Training undertaken by fire-fighters
3.	Training undertaken by junior officers
4.	Levels of experience of both fire-fighters and junior officers
5.	Working relationships with other senior officers
6.	Knowledge of, and working relationships with other services, such as the Gardaí, Ambulance, Local Authority personnel, Civil Defence, Port, Airport staff etc.
7.	Safety, health and welfare arrangements, including available support facilities

2.3 Area of Operations

Officers should be very familiar with the geography of the fire authority in which they work. Where officers are grouped with other fire authorities in rostering arrangements, it may be necessary to undertake a specific familiarisation program. Where such grouped arrangements exist, officers should also be briefed on items listed in Table 2.3 below, as well as personnel issues as considered at paragraph 2.2 above.

TABLE 2.3	
1.	Road networks, travel distances and expected times of arrival
2.	High fire / life risks
3.	Rail networks, airport / ports etc.
4.	Water Supply
5.	Communication black spots
6.	Topography including areas liable to frost, flooding

Officers should carry maps at an appropriate scale to enable incidents to be located. Maps of towns are very useful to the SFO, and pre-fire plans of major risks are also essential for the SFO.

2.4 Appliances and Equipment

Officers should be familiar with regular fire brigade appliances and equipment. Where specialist or rarely used equipment is available and in use, officers should ensure that they undertake familiarisation training, to know uses and limitations thereof. A list of common appliances and equipment is provided in Table 2.4 below. Officers should be familiar with the location and status of appliances and equipment as discussed above.

TABLE 2.4
APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT

1.	Class B appliances
2.	Special appliances, including HP, TTL, ET, Command Vehicles
3.	RTA Equipment
4.	Foam gear, stocks
5.	BA sets, cylinders, recharging, servicing
6.	Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment
7.	Communications and alerting equipment

Operational officers should generally be capable of wearing Breathing Apparatus, and should undertake refresher training as appropriate.

2.5 Brigade Orders and Procedures

Officers should be familiar with brigade orders and procedures that are in place in their authority. Copies of Brigade Orders should be included in this handbook. Likewise it is recommended that copies of the following which are relevant are also included in this handbook.

TABLE 2.5
STANDARD PROCEDURES

1.	Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
2.	Procedure for Declaring a Major Emergency
3.	Procedure for Mobilisation of (a) Fire Brigades (b) other local authority resources, if notified of Declaration of a Major Emergency
4.	Safety Procedures, including Accident Reporting
5.	Occupational Health Procedures
6.	Welfare Procedures
7.	Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
8.	Media Handling Procedures

2.6 Mobilisation and Communication Arrangements

Officers should ensure that they are familiar with the mobilisation and communication arrangements in their brigades for the areas set out in Table 2.6 below. Where appropriate, briefing on these subjects should be arranged, and if necessary, descriptions should be added to this handbook. Officers should also be familiar with standard radio procedures and call-signs for the fire service (see Fire-Fighter Handbook).

TABLE 2.6	
1.	Pre-Determined Attendance (PDAs) of fire service
2.	Procedures for Mobilising Fire Brigades
3.	Control Room Procedures
4.	Procedure for Mobilising Other Services e.g. Gardaí, Ambulance, Local Authority resources
5.	Mobs arrangements for Senior Officers, including response criteria, and procedure for taking command
6.	Procedures for maintaining fire cover during major mobilisation
7.	Communication / Radio Procedures, fire-ground and main VHF networks

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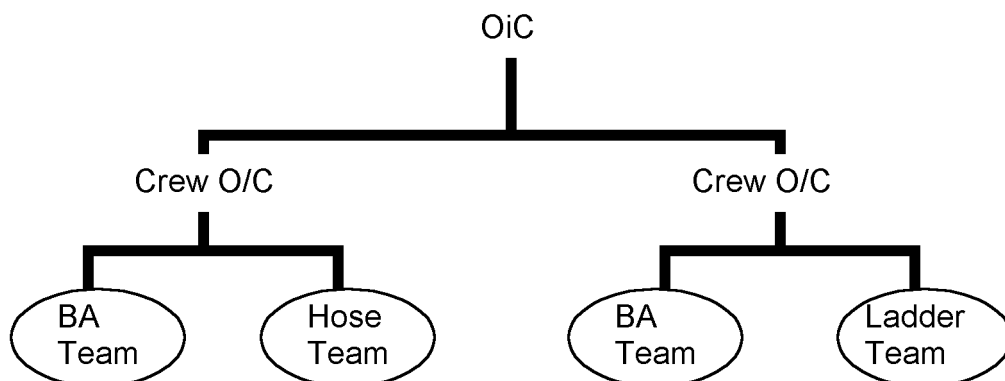
Section 3. Command and Control

3.1 Introduction

The command structure in fire services exists to ensure that best use is made of available resources for effective and safe emergency operations. The command system is hierarchical, with orders issuing from the officer-in-charge (OiC) to subordinates, and routine situation reports being provided by them to the OiC in return. The simple hierarchical nature of the fire service command structure is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

FIGURE 3.1

COMMAND STRUCTURE

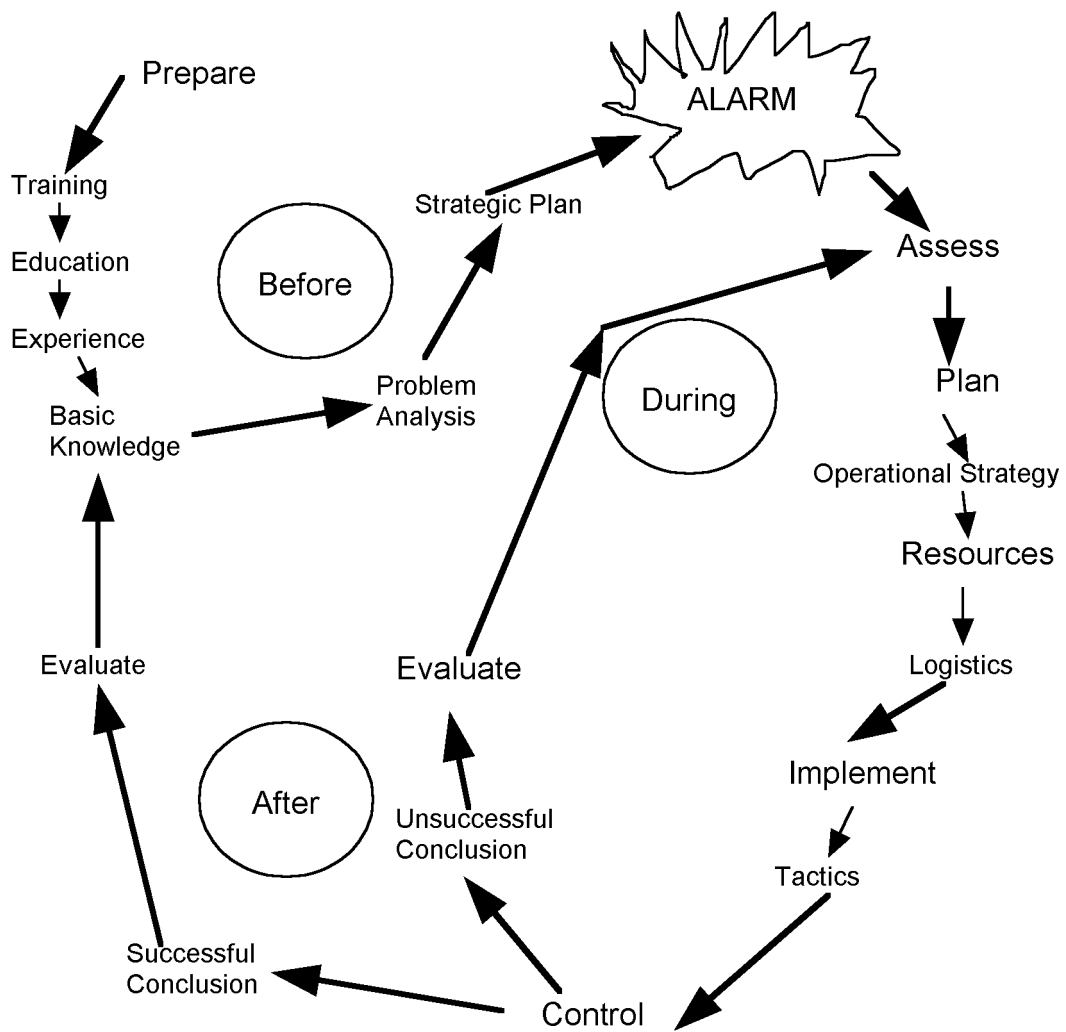


The command structure is intended to ensure that resources are deployed to a situation in accordance with a plan, and that the plan is directed and implemented. The structure is built on delegation of tasks and functions, and provides for avoidance of overlapping of functions.

The Fire Command System is illustrated on a strategic model in Figure 3.2, which illustrates the dynamic nature of incident command and control.

FIGURE 3.2

FIRE COMMAND SYSTEM



3.2 General Principles of Fire Service Command and Control

The model of command and control in use in the fire services is described in detail in the Junior Officer Handbook. The general principles are set out below:

- (i) fire brigades operate as units, based on appliances, under command of a crew o/c; fire brigade operations are based on a Crew / Sector / Task system; the crew remains as the basic unit, operating together unless directed otherwise, under their own crew o/c; where the crew o/c is assigned to a function and must leave his/her crew, a suitable senior fire-fighter should be designated as crew o/c by the departing o/c;
- (ii) the O/C of the first appliance to arrive at the scene of an incident is the officer-in-charge (OiC) of the incident, with the responsibilities and powers provided under the Fire Services Act, 1981; this officer continues in command until relieved by a more senior officer; the relieving officer can be a Station Officer or Senior Fire Officer (SFO); SFOs should be familiar with Sections 25, 27 and 28 of the Fire Services Act, 1981, and the Emergency Operations Regulations made thereunder;
- (iii) the Standard Incident Command System should be used at all fire and non-fire incidents; the command system is intended to control the incident in a structured way; the system is based on the OiC sizing up the situation, making a plan, assembling resources to implement the plan, assessing the progress and adjusting or completing the operation as necessary;

ASSESS - PLAN - RESOURCES - IMPLEMENT - COMPLETE

- (iv) the fire service command system builds with the rank structure (described in the Fire-Fighter Handbook); where two senior officers of the same rank attend an incident, the first to arrive should be officer-in-charge, if command has been assumed; and



- (v) to operate, the command system needs two-way communication, with directions / orders passing downwards, and situation reports (sitreps) passing upwards; the OiC needs to assemble information from the front-line staff, and staff should pass information routinely along command structure.

3.3 Senior Fire Officer and Command and Control

3.3.1 Arrival at an Incident

When a Senior Fire Officer arrives on the incident ground, s/he should go directly to the OiC, or contact the Control Point or Command Post, if established.

The existing OiC provides information on the incident, resources present, the plan, and action being taken and other information relevant to bringing the situation under control.

The Senior Fire Officer should verify that:

- (a) a thorough search has been made;
- (b) the fire (if appropriate) is adequately surrounded;
- (c) resources present (or ordered) are adequate; and
- (d) appropriate messages have been transmitted.

3.3.2 Taking over Command

If satisfied with the operation, the Senior Officer may decide to allow the existing OiC to continue in command. If this is the case, s/he should clearly state this to the existing OiC, with a phrase such as "Carry on in command, as you are".

The senior officer will often wish to attend an incident for reasons other than to take control. For instance, performance at operations is the best place for assessment of the effectiveness of training and preparation of

fire brigades. The senior officer, although s/he may not assume command, still bears ultimate responsibility for the satisfactory conduct of operations.

The senior officer should also consider carefully whether the circumstances warrant that s/he should take command. Development of junior officers require that they be given responsibility, and being unnecessarily relieved of command can damage confidence and prestige of junior officers. However change of command is a recognition of varying levels of operational responsibility attached to fire officer positions, and should not be seen as a negative comment on individual competence or ability.

If deciding to take control, this must be clearly communicated also by the Senior Officer. The SFO should state to the present OiC that s/he is taking control, using a phrase such as "As Senior Officer, I am now assuming command of this incident at (time)".

At all incidents where command is being changed, it is the responsibility of the officer assuming command to make the formal statement to this effect to the officer being relieved.

Where a Senior Officer arrives and takes on OiC role, s/he will generally appoint the existing OiC as Operations Officer, while dealing with strategic and external issues.

3.3.3 Where the Senior Fire Officer should take command

The arriving Senior Fire Officer should generally take command in the following circumstances:

- (i) where the scale of an incident merits this (i.e. where 5 or more appliances are deployed);
- (ii) where efficient and safe operations require this (i.e. where the existing plan is inadequate, or not being complied with or controlled, and the situation is such that a coaching approach with present OiC is not appropriate); or



- (iii) where the incident escalates after the arrival of Senior Fire Officer.

3.3.4 Command and Control Post

At large scale incidents, the Senior Fire Officer should establish a Command and Control Post (CCP) (if not already done), inform (via the command structure) division or the sector officers of the situation and confirm the plan, or issue such new orders as appropriate. S/he will also inform the mobilisation / control centre of the change, using the appropriate standard message. The Command and Control Post (CCP) should be located adjacent to the incident ground, but clear of operations.

The CCP is used as a focal point to control the incident, as well as to log incident progress, and to receive and transmit periodic informative messages. The CCP should hold information on resources present and ordered, and deployment, strategic and tactical plans, and water supply. The CCP would normally be staffed and run by an officer and an assistant. Additional staff may be needed at larger incidents. After the CCP is set up, all arriving resources should report to the CCP, or other designated holding area for instructions. Likewise prior to departure, all resources should report to and be debriefed at the CCP before leaving. The location or address e.g. "Main Street Command and Control Post ..." should prefix all radio messages to assist reporting without undue enquiries.

If the SFO is leaving the CCP, s/he should remain in hand portable radio contact, and ensure that the CCP is staffed. The SFO should ensure that orders go out, and that routine situation reports come in. Information should be logged, compiled and displayed. The use of Incident Management Boards and maps / sketches can avoid the need for repetition of information, and allow people to see the situation at a glance.

The SFO may instruct another officer to take his/ her place at the CCP, while s/he undertakes an inspection of the incident site. It is important that where new orders are issued during operations that conflicting

demands are not put on crew o/cs, and that crews are not disturbed needlessly. The SFO should report back any changes made via hand portable radio to CCP. Alternatively the SFO may delegate other officers to inspect the incident site, and report the situation back to the CCP.

Information should be recorded while the incident is in progress. Radio operators should log messages as the incident is in progress. The use of standard information sheets can be of considerable assistance. The MAPAC sheet has been developed to facilitate senior officers in keeping a contemporary log of incidents, a copy of this is reproduced at Appendix 3.1. Likewise the use of an Incident Management Board (IMB) can greatly assist in the assembly, validation and disseminating of information about an incident. IMBs are typically whiteboards, of transportable size, unless fitted to the wall of a command vehicle, with a prescribed format.

3.3.5 Replacing Senior Officers

At prolonged incidents, it will be necessary to relieve Senior Fire Officers after an appropriate interval of duty. Where prolonged duration is anticipated, the Senior Fire Officer should arrange to be relieved, in accordance with their authority's procedures. Formal hand-over should take place, with a full briefing for the replacement officer. The new Senior Officer should take command as at paragraph 3.3.2 above.

3.3.6 Leaving the Scene

The departure of the Senior Officer from the incident is also important. Premature departure can damage morale and the rank structure. At incidents involving casualties, the Senior Officer should not depart the incident scene until all casualties are accounted for, or s/he is relieved as at paragraph 3.3.5.

When deciding to leave, where command has been assumed, formal hand-over of scene to another appropriate officer should take place, with the officer assuming command making the formal declaration of



command. Where not formally in command, the Senior Officer should advise the OiC of his intended departure, checking that this is satisfactory.

It is the responsibility of the officer who assumes command to inform control at change over. On leaving a command it is not necessary therefore for the Senior Officer to advise control, as the new OiC will do this.

When leaving an incident at which control has not been assumed, it is the responsibility of the Senior Officer to inform control of their departure.

3.4 Safety, Health & Welfare Issues

3.4.1 Fireground Safety

Part of the objective of command and control systems is to ensure safety of personnel. Individuals have responsibility for their own and colleagues safety, and using equipment, techniques and procedures properly. The crew o/c also oversees safety of crews. Likewise sector and divisional officers see to safety in their areas. The OiC / SFO sees to overall safety at an incident.

The SFO / OiC may appoint a safety officer, where hazards faced are such that safety could be improved by such a step. This does not take from responsibility of individuals or crew supervisors / officers.

3.4.2 Accidents and Injuries

Where an accident occurs during operations which results in injury to fire-fighters, when the injured person(s) has been treated or taken for investigation / treatment, the brigades procedures for reporting and investigating accidents should be implemented, and necessary forms (see Table 2.6) should be completed.

3.4.3 Welfare Issues

Welfare issues in operations arise under two principal headings, physical welfare and psychological welfare.

Physical welfare includes the basic physical requirements of the fire-fighter, food, drink (especially with BA ops), shelter, cleaning and rest facilities. It is the responsibility of the OiC to make appropriate provision for crew welfare in accordance with the policy of the fire authority.

The work of the fire-fighter can frequently be difficult, dirty and at times stressful. The SFO should have an awareness of the stress that can be caused, and the steps that can be taken to assist both on the incident ground and after the incident. The senior officer should ensure that crews are debriefed by the junior officers on return to their home station, and before being stood down, where the impact of the incident is such that this is warranted. Where the incident is of a particularly difficult type, the senior officer should consider if Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) as part of a range of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) strategies is appropriate for personnel who have been involved, and if so, should arrange this in accordance the fire authority's arrangements.

Senior fire officers should be aware of the staff support schemes in existence within their local authority. Where it appears that an individual needs assistance, the senior officer should, in a confidential and supportive way, make arrangements in accordance with the fire authority's general policy for this assistance.

3.5 Public Relations and the Media

Incidents to which fire brigades are called are usually of interest to the public, and generally attract media attention. This can vary from local media, through national and international interest, depending on the type of incident. SFOs should operate in accordance with their fire authority's policy in dealing with the media.

Appendix 3.1

SENIOR FIRE OFFICER INCIDENT INFORMATION SHEET

MOBS

Message _____
 Persons Y/N _____
 Directions _____

 Support Info. _____
 PDA _____
 Contact(Amb, Gda, Other) _____
 Action Cards (Risk Card, HazChem, SOP) _____
 Communications (SitRep) _____

ATTENDANCE

Approach to scene _____
 OIC brief _____

 Recce _____
 Type _____
 Scene _____
 Forces _____
 Map/Plan _____
 Initial Attack? _____
 Command Y/N? _____
 Liaison _____

PLAN

Objectives _____ Resources _____

Tasks	Who	What	Why	How
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Command Structure / Sectors (See below)

Fireground Communications

ACTION

Orders _____

Feedback _____

Communications _____

Safety _____

Welfare _____

CLOSE

Media (Messages) _____

Reports _____

Debrief _____

Map / Plan / Sketch (See below)

Incident Sketch

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Section 4. Major Emergency Management

4.1 General

This section of the handbook considers the issue of Major Emergency Management (MEM) as it relates to the role of the Senior Fire Officer. It starts with a general review of arrangements for dealing with major emergencies in Ireland. It considers the specific roles which may fall to the SFO at an incident which is declared as a Major Emergency, including exercising the role of Local Authority Controller of Operations at the site. The authority to declare a major emergency is entrusted to the SFO, and circumstances and procedures for doing so are considered. Issues of inter-agency co-ordination are also considered.

The Senior Fire Officer may also be involved in leading preparation for Major Emergencies within the local authority, because of their familiarity with the subject and training. This area is outside the scope of this handbook.

4.2 Major Emergency Management in Ireland

4.2.1 Introduction

As societies have evolved, the capability to respond to adversity and disaster has also developed. Emergency Services are provided in Ireland by the Gardaí (police force), the Local Authorities (including the Fire Services), Health Boards (including Ambulance and Accident and Emergency Services) and the Irish Marine Emergency Services. Emergencies such as road traffic accidents, fires and rescues are part of the normal work of these services. Gardaí, fire-fighters and ambulance personnel are trained to cope with emergencies and respond to several hundred thousand emergency calls every year.

There are however certain rare events which, if they occur, will tend to overwhelm the emergency services. Such events can include sudden accidents such as aircraft, train or large-scale road crashes, major fires and severe chemical incidents. Severe weather may also cause major damage and disruption. These events are known as Major Emergencies, and co-ordinated plans have been prepared by the

Gardaí, the Local Authorities and the Health Boards to ensure an effective response. These plans are known as Major Emergency Plans, and they represent one stage of the Major Emergency Management process in Ireland.

4.2.2 Major Emergencies

A Major Emergency is any event which, usually with little or no warning, causes or threatens death or injury, serious disruption of infrastructure or essential services, or damage to property beyond the normal capabilities of the Gardaí, Local Authorities and Health Services. Major Emergencies therefore are different from normal accidents, in that normal Emergency Services resources would not be adequate, and require the activation of additional resources within these public authorities, as well as other organisations.

Like most other countries, Ireland has experienced events and disasters which are labelled as Major Emergencies. Some of the more notable of the last two decades are listed below.

Recent Major Emergencies In Ireland		
Incident	Year	Type
LPG Tanker	1995	Crash, fire and evacuation
Hickson's Fire	1993	Explosion and Fire
Raglan House	1987	Explosion and collapse
Air India	1985	Jumbo Jet crash off SW Coast
Cherryville	1983	Rail Crash
Buttevant	1980	Rail Crash
Stardust	1981	Fire
Whiddy	1979	Fire on oil tanker
Bombs	1974	Explosions

Many Major Emergencies have an international dimension. The Air India disaster in 1985, the Estonia ferry disaster in 1994, the Lockerbie disaster of 1988 are examples of international emergencies. The Chernobyl incident of 1986 shows how international borders are no protection against the consequences of major incidents abroad.

4.2.3 Four Phases of Major Emergency Management

Major Emergency Management is generally recognised as having four distinct phases within an overall system. These are :

- (i) hazard analysis and mitigation - where the potential for accidents is assessed, and where appropriate steps to prevent or reduce the probability of that event or its consequences are taken;
- (ii) emergency planning and preparedness - where procedures are put in place for mobilising the available resources, and preparing these resources for an effective and co-ordinated response;
- (iii) response phase - where the pre-determined procedures are brought to bear on the particular situation, until the situation is brought under control, and the response objectives have been achieved; and
- (iv) recovery phase - when individuals, organisations and communities try to restore the pre-emergency situation or develop therefrom, and learn lessons from what has occurred.

4.2.4 Hazard Analysis and Mitigation

A generic approach has been adopted as a guiding principle for MEM in Ireland. Many major emergency management functions are appropriate to a range of hazards, and effective response is more likely where there is a single plan which incorporates response to all the major hazards. A Hazard Analysis approach allows individual agencies to prepare appropriate response strategies, and ensures that mitigation

steps are taken where appropriate. Mitigation is the action taken before an incident to prevent its occurrence, or to reduce the effects when it does occur. Mitigation can involve a broad range of organisations, including several sections of the Local Authority, e.g. planning and development, building control and fire prevention. Other agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) may have functions to undertake on foot of their own statutory responsibilities.

A Hazard Analysis :

- indicates what to expect in the way of Major Emergencies;
- avoids planning and re-sourcing for unlikely events; and
- indicates preventive and mitigation measures.

Typical potential hazards are categorised under three main headings - Natural, Technological / Transportation, and Civil.

4.2.5 Emergency Planning and Preparedness

4.2.5.1 Framework for Co-ordinated Response

A 'Framework Document for Co-ordinated Response' was published in 1984. Dealing with major emergencies was seen as an integral part of the functions of the front-line emergency service organisations. Summary details of the Principal Emergency Services are provided in Appendix 4.1. It was recognised that response to a major emergency requires a wide and sustained effort by the organisations, beyond normal emergency service operations, which could only exist if preparation for and response to major emergency is undertaken with the full resources of the three main executive agencies Gardaí, Health Boards and Local Authorities (including Fire Services). Each agency is responsible for carrying out a range of functions allocated to it in the Framework document. The

Framework set out common activation procedures, and procedures for co-ordination of agencies activities.

4.2.5.2 Functions of the Services

The functions assigned to the three principal emergency services in the Framework document reflect these organisations areas of operations and competencies. These are detailed in their respective plans, and can be summarised as follows :-

Garda Síochána

- maintenance of law and order;
- securing the site and controlling access;
- traffic and crowd control;
- evacuation;
- provision of information on casualties;
- arrangements for the dead;
- preservation of the scene and collection of evidence;
- investigation of the incident;

Local Authority

- extinction of fires;
- containment and clearance of chemical spills;
- rescue of persons and property;
- control and direction of activities within "Danger Area";
- advice on evacuation;



- provision of access to the site;
- provision of food and rest facilities at the site;
- provision of accommodation and welfare of evacuees;
and

Health Board

- provision of medical advice and assistance;
- provision of first aid;
- assessment of casualties;
- casualty evacuation and ambulance transport;
- certification of the dead;
- provision of hospital treatment;
- provision of community and welfare services;
- provision of counselling to those affected.

These functions are generally exercised by the individual service in co-ordination and co-operation with the other services.

4.2.5.3 Major Emergency Plans

The approach adopted for emergency planning in Ireland has been to prepare generic plans, with specific sub plans in particular circumstances as required. A scheme for alert of Emergency Services to hazardous substances incidents involving rail, and a plan for nuclear accidents have been developed by the relevant Government Departments, and take account of the Major Emergency Plans of the principal agencies.

In addition to the generic plans, site specific plans are made for particular types of situations, such as Airports, Sea-ports, and certain types of industrial installations, which fall within the remit of the SEVESO Regulations.

The principal emergency service agencies have prepared plans, based on a Model Plan provided within the Framework document, and undertake the preparation and training of staff. Exercises, designed to assist preparation both within and between organisations, ranging from "table top" up to full scale are held for teaching and testing purposes.

When a Major Emergency occurs in any part of the country, a Major Emergency will be declared, and the local Major Emergency Plan will be put into operation. The Major Emergency Plan consists of the combined Major Emergency Plans of the relevant local Garda Division, Local Authority and Health Board. All of these plans are based on the common Model Plan, and have similar procedures for Activating the Plan, Control of the Site, etc. In recent years, relevant authorities have come together and produced combined Major Emergency Plans.

4.2.5.4 Activation of Plans

In the event of a Major Emergency the Major Emergency Plan will be activated by whichever of the three services first becomes aware that a Major Emergency has occurred or is imminent. Within each organisation a number of persons are authorised to activate the Major Emergency Plan, and a list of these persons is contained in the individual Major Emergency Plans.

Whenever the Major Emergency Plan is activated the service which initially declares the Major Emergency will immediately notify the two other local services that the plan has been activated. These will in turn implement their own activation procedures.

4.2.6 Response Phase

4.2.6.1 Response Objectives

Major Emergency sites are characterised in general as chaotic and confused. Each service responding to a Major Emergency has specific functions and responsibilities. There are common objectives, and the most important of these are :

- to preserve life;
- to prevent escalation of the emergency;
- to relieve suffering;
- to protect infrastructure and property;
- to keep the public informed;
- to facilitate criminal investigation and judicial or other enquiries; and
- to minimise damage to the environment;

4.2.6.2 Control and Co-ordination On-site

Each of the three principal emergency services nominates its own Controller of Site Operations whose principal functions are:

- to lead, control, direct and co-ordinate the activities of his/her agency services at the site;
- to ensure co-ordination between the three principal services on the site;
- to require the attendance of such services as are needed;

- to ensure secure communications with all other agencies responding to the emergency; and
- to arrange with the other Controllers for the establishment of holding areas, etc.

It is generally recognised that co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration between the responding services is vital to a successful response in a major emergency. The three Controllers of the primary emergency services meet as soon as practical at a pre-arranged point, frequently the Garda Site Control / Communications Centre, although this detail depends on local arrangements. The Controllers may nominate one of their number to act as Convenor. This Convenor does not exercise control or authority over the activities of the other agencies. The Convenor's role is to ensure the sharing of key information, the agreement on priority objectives and allocation of tasks, and adequate liaison and co-ordination between the Controllers.

4.2.6.3 Organisation at the Site

Major Emergencies can vary greatly both in type and size. As a result some Major Emergencies may be spread over a wide area, e.g. flooding, mid-air explosion while others may be concentrated in a small site e.g. fire in a premises. The Controllers will generally try to organise themselves at the site of a Major Emergency in accordance with an idealised layout attached to the Model Major Emergency Plan. Important issues are discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.2.6.4 Danger Area

In particular situations, such as a fire or a chemical incident, the rescue services may need special equipment such as breathing apparatus or chemical protective clothing. In such cases the Senior Fire Officer will declare that a Danger Area exists and define its boundaries.



4.2.6.5 Identification of Persons and Vehicles

All emergency service personnel responding to a Major Emergency wear or carry the form of identification issued to them. Gardaí, fire-fighters and ambulance personnel are uniformed and easily identified. Non-uniform members of the emergency services, such as Engineers, Doctors and plain clothes Gardaí, carry identification and wear tabards or other garments, identifying their services and position.

Similarly, all vehicles entering the Major Emergency site are, as far as possible, clearly identifiable.

4.2.6.6 Casualty Identification

At any Major Emergency, where casualties are involved, the priority task will be to rescue the injured, provide emergency first aid and transport to hospital as quickly as possible. However, at the same time, the Garda Síochána have a responsibility to identify victims.

When casualties have been certified as dead by the appropriate medical personnel, they become the responsibility of the Garda Síochána, who may, if appropriate, set up a temporary mortuary at the site.

Depending on circumstances, the Garda Síochána set up a Casualty Information Bureau either at the site, or off-site, where all information on casualties will be collected and collated. All information on casualties is provided to relatives and the media by the Garda Síochána.

4.2.6.7 Preservation of the Scene

Some Major Emergencies may involve criminal acts, and all Major Emergencies will require Garda investigation for subsequent court cases, inquests or tribunals. Therefore, while the rescue of casualties and the control of the emergency are

paramount, all responders at the scene of a Major Emergency ensure, as far as possible, that their actions do not interfere with the preservation of the scene and the collection and tracing of evidence.

4.2.6.8 Hazardous Substances

A Major Emergency may involve the release, or threatened release, of a hazardous substance or substances. Dealing with such a situation will normally require specialist training and equipment. The Senior Fire Officer provides advice on the steps to be followed.

4.2.6.9 Volunteers

At many Major Emergency sites the statutory emergency services may be assisted by casual volunteer helpers. This is particularly the case in a major catastrophe. These volunteers may include survivors, locals or persons passing by. Casual volunteers can be of great assistance in the early stages of a Major Emergency. It is generally recognised that if people can play a part in helping, it aids the process of recovery from the trauma of witnessing or being involved in the incident. However, care is required to avoid situations where volunteers could be exposed to on-going danger, and suffer injury to themselves or cause injury to others.

4.2.6.10 Voluntary Agencies and Second-Line Reserves

Ireland is characterised by a strong level of participation by the Voluntary Sector in the provision of services. Agencies, such as the Civil Defence, the Red Cross, the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and the Order of Malta, are widely available and normally called out as required as part of the second wave response in support of the relevant statutory services. The voluntary agencies, which have their own command structures, are mobilised at the request of and report to the appropriate location / service, to be assigned functions and tasks.

The permanent defence forces (PDF) and its local reserve force (FCA) are also available as part of the second-line reserve in the event of a major emergency requiring extended assistance.

4.2.6.11 Off-site Co-ordination

During emergencies that are particularly large or of long duration, off-site co-ordination will generally be required. To facilitate this co-ordination, an off-site co-ordinating group may be called together at any time following the activation of the Major Emergency Plan. The members of the off-site co-ordinating group are the Chief Superintendent of the relevant Division of the Garda Síochána, the City/County Manager and the Chief Executive Officer of the Health Board, or alternates nominated by them. This group may be called together at the discretion of any member to meet at an agreed location.

The co-ordinating group does not become involved in a detailed on-site response, but takes a strategic overview of the situation. The off-site co-ordinating group :

- ensure that all necessary personnel and equipment are mobilised;
- monitor the activities of all agencies responding to the emergency;
- maintain liaison between these agencies;
- arrange for the mobilisation of additional resources as required;
- give directions on policy decisions where considered necessary;
- inform Government Departments as appropriate; and
- facilitate the distribution of information to the news media and the general public.

4.2.6.12 Public Information

Public concern and anxiety may well be raised during a major emergency. Apart from persons immediately affected or their relatives, people may be concerned for instance if a gas cloud could affect them. The emergency services relay up-to-date information on the public broadcast media. This may be supplemented in particular circumstances with local announcements, by mobile public address systems.

In some specific circumstances, where people live near large chemical plants which fall within the remit of the SEVESO Directive, set procedures are in place to ensure that residents are provided with information relevant to their situations, and this includes arrangements for public information in the event of an incident at the site.

4.2.6.13 Shelter or Evacuation

During some Major Emergencies it may be necessary to consider the protection of people in their homes or places of work, for example where a smoke cloud threatens. Depending on the circumstances, persons may be asked to take shelter and remain indoors, or alternatively to be evacuated.

Evacuation is carried out by the Gardaí, and the decision to evacuate is taken by the Senior Garda Officer, after consultation with the Senior Fire Officer and the other controllers.

4.2.6.14 Media

Apart from the local media which are frequently involved in providing public information, as a general rule Major Emergencies attract a great deal of attention from the media. Large numbers of reporters, photographers and television crews are likely to appear at the site of any Major Emergency, as well as at any associated location, such as the hospitals where casualties are brought, and mortuaries.

The Gardaí establish an Information Centre at the site of the Major Emergency for use by the three principal emergency service agencies. Media representatives are made aware of the location of this centre. Information for the media is provided by the designated Information Officers from each service. In addition to the on-site information centre, the off-site co-ordinating group may establish a media briefing centre to which media are invited for regular briefings.

All information on casualties, for relatives and for the media, is provided by the Garda Síochána.

4.2.7 Recovery Phase

The recovery phase usually begins after the Major Emergency Plan is stood down, when individuals, organisations and society has to get on with re-building after the event. Depending on the circumstances, the recovery phase may be much longer than the actual response phase. This phase will also frequently involve an appraisal of what has happened, and seeing what lessons are to be learned.

4.3 Roles of Senior Fire Officer in Major Emergency Management

The roles of the SFO at a Major Emergency will be similar to that at a large scale incident, where Command and Control skills such as sectoring, information management etc. will all be applicable. However the Major Emergency involves additional specific roles for the SFO. These may include :

- activation of the plan;
- mobilisation of local authority resources, in accordance with predetermined arrangements;
- acting as local authority Controller of Operations;
- acting as convenor for Controllers of Operations, where acting as local authority Controller of Operations;

-
- delineating a danger area (if appropriate) and advising on hazardous substances incidents; and
 - advising on sheltering or evacuation requirements.

In addition the scale of the incident, the information which must be assembled, assimilated and passed on, the communication networks which have to be managed, the inter-agency nature of the response, and the logistics involved are factors impacting on the SFO at major emergencies.

4.4 Declaration of Major Emergencies

It may fall to the Senior Fire Officer to declare that a major emergency has occurred or is imminent. The SFO's judgement is important for this task. The SFO should use the prescribed format for making the actual declaration in accordance with local arrangements.

4.5 Co-ordination Issues in Major Emergencies

4.5.1 General

The Framework for response to Major Emergencies requires that a number of separate organisations and agencies will respond and participate according to their competencies in the relief effort at Major Emergencies. For this effort to be effective it is essential that the activities of all contributing agencies are co-ordinated towards agreed objectives and strategies. This has been identified in previous experience, and is considered crucial.

The greatest challenge is to develop co-ordinated effective responses from the different response agencies. The burden of giving effect to this co-ordination ideal falls to the leadership of the responding organisations. It requires skills and practice. These issues are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

One of the principal ways in which the climate for effective co-ordination can be created is through the working of inter-agency

arrangements at regional level. The principal benefit to be obtained is the understanding of inter-agency issues which emerges. As people become familiar with each others agencies and personnel, they also find practical ways of working together.

While the ideal agreed by most participants is "enhanced co-ordination", it is difficult to translate this into practice. It is suggested that the ideal can be divided into three distinct components :

- communication;
- collaboration; and
- co-operation.

The issue of communication is discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

4.5.2 Communications

4.5.2.1 General

Communication is about information flows. By definition, the scene at a major emergency will be confused and chaotic and may be widespread, which makes information flow difficult even within normal chains of command. Where multiple agencies are involved, the process of communication, which is the building block on which the ideal of co-ordinated response will be created, becomes even more difficult. This is an aspect which causes difficulty in real incidents and at exercises.

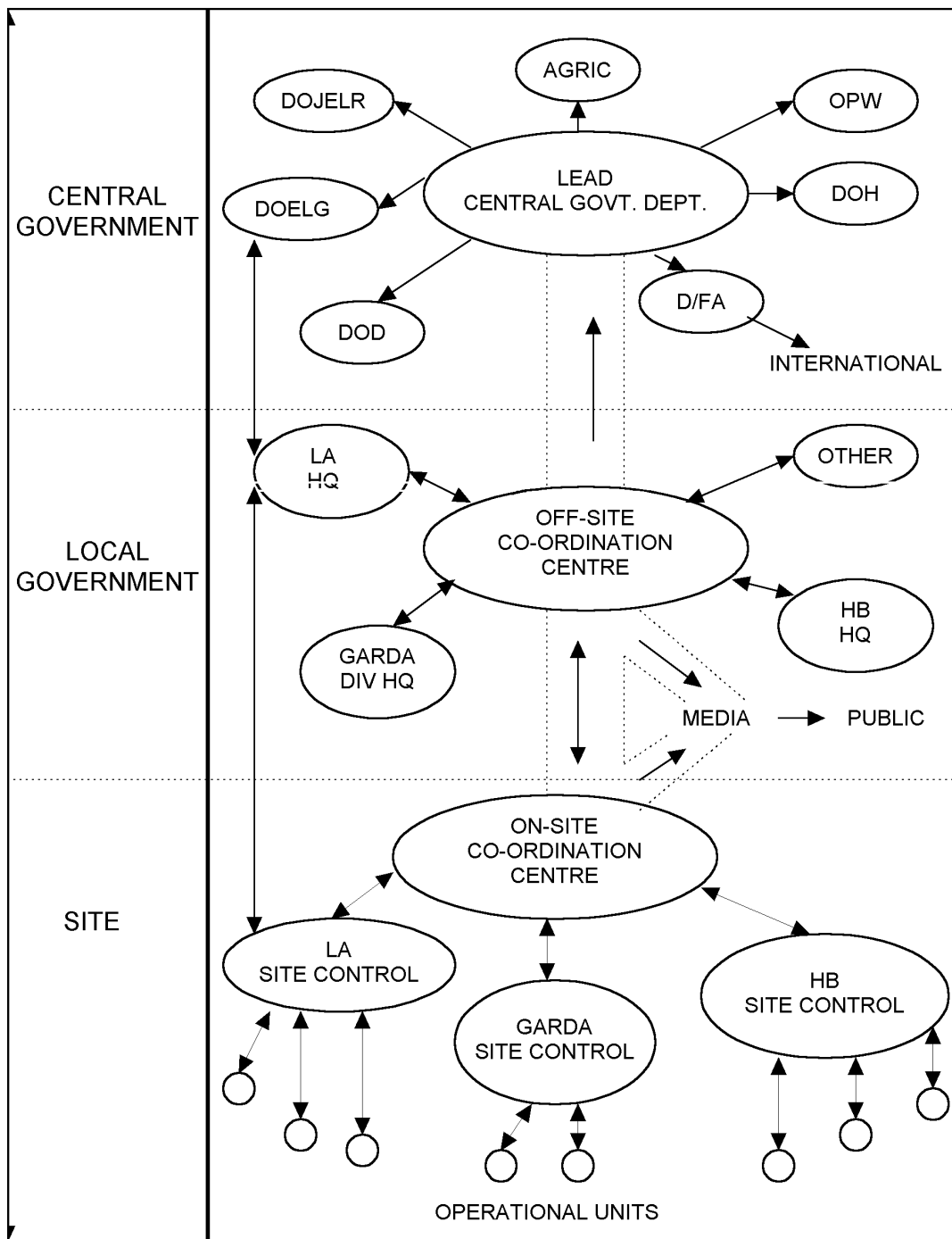
The picture is further complicated by the fact that information will also need to flow to and from the site itself, for instance to the Off-site Co-ordination Centre, and to the public via the media. Information may also need to be moved to central government level, and in circumstances involving international casualties, from central government to other countries. The typical information flows for a Major Emergency are illustrated

in Figure 4.5.2.1 below. While a central communications channel is shown in the figure, parallel channels exist and are used between individual agencies on-site and their control centres, and this situation is in turn mirrored between the local and central government level.

It is essential that the procedures, methods and tools to enable information flows to happen are created in advance and known and practised by relevant personnel, at every level. Participants involved in response should understand that the accuracy and coherence of the picture and information they create will influence the eventual outcome.

FIGURE 4.5.2.1

MAJOR EMERGENCY INCIDENTS INFORMATION FLOWS



4.5.2.2 Situation Size-up and Reporting

It is from those operating at the front-line that the base information on which decision-making and emergency management will be obtained. In the heat of the situation, it may be difficult to focus on the standard approach of sizing up the situation, but this task is all the more essential in the Major Emergency. First response teams, such as fire brigade units, should focus on four areas, and pass information upward through their chain of command. The four areas are :

- damage;
- casualties;
- response; and
- threats.

A form to assist the junior officer in recording and collating information under these headings could appear like that shown at Figure 4.5.2.2 below.

Junior officers should report their findings, no matter how limited, to the forward control point at a fixed point, suggested 30 minutes after arriving on-site, and every thirty minutes thereafter or as requested by the OiC, who may require more frequent briefings on progress with assigned tasks.

This information from the front-line field workers is the basic building blocks on which the picture of the whole emergency will be founded. It will then be recorded at the Command and Control Post, assessed, verified if possible, used for decision-making and passed on to the next level of the chain of command.

FIGURE 4.5.2.2

MAJOR EMERGENCY INFORMATION GATHERING FORM

Fire Service Forward
 Command & Control Point : _____

Brigade : _____

Start Time _____

Location : _____

Damage	Casualties	Response	Threats

Signed : _____

Information Passed to : _____

Time of Dispatch : _____

Both hand-held (UHF) and VHF radio systems will be used for the assembly and relaying of information. This is another reason why prescribed forms are an invaluable tool, as transmission times can be minimised, thereby freeing air-space for others to use.

At the forward Command and Control Post a system is needed to receive the information which is in-coming from the field units. The radio operator should record in-coming transmissions on a form similar to that in use by the field officer. The incoming reports then need to be collated and analysed, and it is suggested that a large white-board is used to assemble and process the incoming information. In this way a picture of the event may be created at the forward control point. Conflicting reports can be identified and validation sought. Officers will be able to overview what is happening, and identify priority tasks, estimate the scale of tasks and order additional resources.

One of the objectives of the OiC will also be to create a report for onward transmission to the on-site co-ordination centre, and for their own command structure. Again the use of prescribed forms is recommended, as facilitating both the OiC in his/her task, and also the transmission and receipt of the report. The further processing of this information at on-site and off-site co-ordination centres is discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.5.3 On-site Co-ordination

4.5.3.1 General

Each of the services which responds to the site of the emergency will form its own view as to the nature of the incident, and the priority tasks which they intend to undertake. To avoid gaps and overlaps in the response, and to enable sharing of information and agreeing of priorities, as well as agreeing joint issues, it is essential that the Controllers of Operations of responding services on-site meet to co-ordinate the response. The following is suggested as one method.

4.5.3.2 Initial Actions

The OiC / Controller of Ops (C/Ops) identifies himself/herself to the other Controllers, and arranges to meet initially at a fixed time at an appropriate location. One of the methods by which



such initial communication takes place is by use of a single channel hand-portable radio, issued by one of the services to the other two C/Ops on arrival. This radio is dedicated exclusively to communications between the three C/Ops.

Having assembled the initial information from their own forces, the C/Ops will meet as agreed.

4.5.3.3 Appointment of a Convenor

It has been recommended to the main response agencies that the three Controllers of Operations should agree among themselves on the nomination of one of their number to act as a convenor for co-ordination purposes. Nomination could be by pre-arrangement, or by agreement at the site of an emergency, and could be on a rotational basis, if desired.

The Controller nominated to act as convenor would not be seen as exercising control or authority over the activities of the other agencies. It has to be recognised that the three main emergency services have different powers and competencies as recognised by the assignment of different functions to each service and accordingly that the appointment of a person with executive responsibility for control of the activities of all agencies responding to an emergency could not be recommended. The on-site convenor's role would be to ensure :

- adequate liaison and co-ordination between the Controllers on-site; and
- sharing of key information.

Examples of areas where early co-ordination by the Controllers would contribute to effective response would include the following :

- (i) exchange of information on the nature of the situation faced;

- (ii) identification of priorities;
- (iii) review of important safety issues;
- (iv) co-operation on traffic arrangements;
- (v) designation of Ambulance loading points;
- (vi) establishment of communications;
- (vii) location and establishment of holding areas;
- (viii) operation of holding areas;
- (ix) maintenance of logs;
- (x) requests for assistance;
- (xi) communications with off-site co-ordination centre; and
- (xii) standing down operations.

The use of methods such as prescribed forms and white-boards, in a manner similar to that recommended at the individual services forward Command and Control Posts in paragraph 4.5.2 above, is recommended.

Co-ordination of the type envisaged can be facilitated by meetings and discussions between Controllers from the three main response agencies as well as by seminars, workshops. etc. Such meetings etc., can be used to discuss and explore the interfaces between the roles of the services and to address perceived problems or issues which arise, thus significantly contributing to inter-agency co-ordination.



4.5.3.4 Managing the Operations On-site

When task allocations have been agreed / confirmed at the on-site co-ordination meeting it falls to the C/Ops or OiC of the service to manage the operations under his/her control. This includes normal command and control activity, briefing and informing officers and crews on tasks and routinely checking on progress. It will also involve monitoring the situation for developments, particularly threats that need to be counter-acted.

The C/Ops should complete routine briefing reports of the type discussed above for transmission to the on-site centre, and their own service control centre.

4.5.3.5 On-going On-site Meetings

It is suggested that the three C/Ops of the services continue to be available to communicate via the dedicated hand-portable radio. They should agree the time of further site meetings.

4.5.3.6 Response beyond the Primary Emergency Services

In addition to the three principal emergency services, several other agencies may be involved in operations on the site of a major emergency. It is necessary to make arrangements to co-ordinate their activities with those of the emergency services. All agencies and organisations responding to the site of a Major Emergency report to the on-site co-ordination centre, and are subject to the direction of the Controllers of Operations of the three principal emergency services.

4.5.4 Off-site Co-ordination Centre

4.5.4.1 General

The need for an Off-site Co-ordination Centre (OFFSCC) was recognised in the original Framework document. A strong and active OFFSCC taking a lead role in areas beyond the co-

ordination function will greatly impact on the outcome of a major emergency.

In smaller scale Major Emergencies, or those of short duration, the OFFSCC may not be crucial or may not even come into operation, but for complex and longer-duration incidents it will be pivotal. The OFFSCC will generally also play the major role in Media Management.

As with other aspects of Major Emergency, specific training and exercising is necessary for the successful operation of an OFFSCC.

4.5.4.2 Functions

The functions of the Off-Site Co-ordination Centre go beyond the co-ordination function, and are set out in the Table 4.5.4.2 below.

**TABLE 4.5.4.2
FUNCTIONS OF OFFSCC**

TABLE 4.5.4.2 FUNCTIONS OF OFFSCC		
CO-ORDINATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal to ES and responding agencies • Roles defined in Plan • Division and Delegation of Co-ordination Tasks • Receipt of calls and mobs • External Liaison 	
INFORMATION GATHERING & PROCESSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage Casualties • Response Threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources • Frequency of Reports • Validation • Compiling & Using
Ops MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services Deployment • Assignment of Tasks • Monitor progress at routine intervals • Review and Reassign • Intervene in friction • Plan for reliefs 	
POLICY MAKING / LEADERSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining problems • Determining objectives • Strategic decision making • Defining perceptions 	
PUBLIC INFORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are we at risk ? • Media • Community involvement / distress 	
RECORD KEEPING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information • Actions • Instructions • Decisions 	
VISITORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political / Dignitary • International 	

Co-ordination of particular aspects of activity, such as receipt of distress calls in the case of flooding, would best be done via the OFFSCC. Likewise external liaison should flow from the OFFSCC to avoid gaps, duplication and conflicts in dealing with external agencies. This should include sending information to the lead central government department.

Collection and processing of information will be one of the key functions of the OFFSCC. This should be modelled and built from that described above.

The OFFSCC should exercise an overseeing role on Operations Management, and if necessary be involved with the on-site co-ordination centre in reviewing and re-assigning tasks. The OFFSCC should intervene where friction is reported between agencies on site. The OFFSCC should also be involved in planning for relief of crews.

The key role which the OFFSCC can fill is in defining problems from the information being provided from the site. It can determine key objectives, and make strategic decisions. It will also be instrumental in defining perceptions of the incident.

Provision of information to the public is also one of the key functions. There may be intense unease if the public feel they are at risk, or continue to be threatened by the crisis. The OFFSCC provides the best forum for assessing this, and planning and delivering information. The OFFSCC should also provide the focus for much of the media, and should both monitor the coverage, and plan and deliver the information to the media.

The OFFSCC should keep a record of its own activities, and the information it assembles during the crisis.

The OFFSCC should be the focus for VIPs.

Appendix 4.1

PRINCIPAL EMERGENCY SERVICES IN IRELAND

The following are brief descriptions of the main, front-line emergency services in Ireland. However, a wide range of organisations are involved in the response and recovery phase of emergency management. In addition to mutual-aid arrangements with adjoining authorities, the public utilities, as well as private companies and a range of volunteer groups may also be involved.

Garda Síochána

The Garda Síochána (police) is one of the first agencies notified of emergencies, and is always among the first to respond. The Garda Síochána is a national force organised operationally into 23 Divisions. Each Garda Division is in the charge of a Chief Superintendent. The Garda Commissioner, who reports to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, has overall responsibility for its operations. The Divisions operate with a measure of autonomy on a day-to-day basis, but overall control and co-ordination and policy is determined nationally. There are approximately 11,000 full time members of the Gardaí.

Health Services

Health services are provided in Ireland by eight regional Health Boards. This includes provision of accident and emergency services, as well as provision of an ambulance service. In general the ambulance service operates from the main hospitals in the regions. In the Dublin area the emergency ambulance service is provided on an agency basis by the local authority fire service. There are approximately 700 ambulance personnel employed by the Health Boards.

Local Authority Services

There are 37 principal local authorities, including the Corporations, County Councils and County Boroughs involved in the provision of a wide range of public services. Part of this responsibility extends to preparation and response to major emergencies in their own functional areas. The fire service is part of the local authority service, and generally constitutes the initial local authority response to emergencies. Local authority numbers 30,000 personnel among its

resources, 1,200 of these are full-time fire service personnel, with an additional 1,800 part-time (retained) fire-fighters. The fire service operates from 220 fire stations located throughout the country, 206 of which are staffed by retained brigades.

Irish Coast Guard

The Irish Coast Guard (ICG) provides emergency services in case of marine related incidents. The Irish Coast Guard Rescue Co-ordination Centre is located at ICG HQ in Dublin. The centre is responsible for the conduct of maritime search and rescue operations within the Irish Search and Rescue (SAR) Region. The Rescue Co-ordination Centre has at its disposal a number of rescue units for SAR operations from a variety of organisations. These include dedicated helicopters, Irish Air Corps Aircraft and Naval Service Vessels, RNLI lifeboats, Coast and Cliff Rescue Service (CCRS) and Local Inshore Rescue Boats, as well as its own IMES units around the coast.

