JOINT DOCTRINE:

THE INTEROPERABILITY FRAMEWORK

EDITION 2 JULY 2016

JESIP

Working Together – Saving Lives

1. FOREWORD

Welcome to the second edition of the *"Joint Doctrine: the interoperability framework"*.

Whilst joint working between agencies is a daily occurrence, whenever we work together and especially at major incidents, we need to ensure that we have the most coherent and effective joint response possible - the public will expect no less.

This guidance has been recognised as significantly improving the interoperability of emergency services since its publication in 2013. This revised edition continues to provide a framework to support and enhance interoperability between emergency response organisations when responding to multi-agency incidents.

The review of this guidance has been coordinated by the JESIP team along with the emergency services, other responder agencies and the central government departments including the Cabinet Office, Home Office, Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department of Health.

The content, whilst largely similar to the first edition, has been enhanced to provide more clarity in certain aspects and incorporates lessons from training, exercises and incidents which have been identified through the Joint Organisational Learning process.

This guidance remains essential to the effective interoperability of emergency services and other responder agencies and will be subject to future changes and improvements as it is tested and incorporated into business as usual. We need to make sure that the ethos of 'working together' becomes embedded, not only within our own organisations at every level, but within that of the other responder agencies.

The 'Joint Doctrine' is an essential element in the hierarchy of guidance. It provides commanders, at the scene and elsewhere, with generic guidance on the actions they should take when responding to multi-agency incidents of any scale. It is built on common principles for consistent terminology and ways of working. It does not constitute a set of rules to be applied without thought, but rather seeks to inform, explain and guide.

It should be embedded in individual organisation policies and procedures and in their training and exercise programmes, for all levels of response staff.
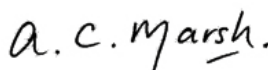
We are extremely grateful to those individuals and their supporting organisations who have contributed up to this point. If you have any comments about the document, or any questions as to how you might act upon this doctrine, please email them to contact@jesip.org.uk

Roy Wilsher

CFOA
Chief Fire Officers
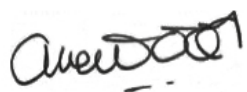Association

Anthony Marsh

**ASSOCIATION OF
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2. STATUS OF THE DOCTRINE

The structure for managing the local multi-agency response to emergencies is based on the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). The act is supported by two sets of guidance: Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Response and Recovery (ERR). Emergency Preparedness deals with the pre-emergency (planning) phase. Emergency Response and Recovery (ERR) describes the multi-agency framework for responding to, and recovering from, emergencies in the UK.

Details of the operation and co-ordination of emergency response can be found in the Cabinet Office Concept of Operations and the relevant chapters of Emergency Response and Recovery.

This publication complements Emergency Response and Recovery (ERR) by focusing on the interoperability of the emergency services and other responder agencies in the response to an incident.

Separate publications set out specialist ways of working that will apply in specific circumstances, such as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRNe) incidents or marauding terrorist firearms attacks (MTFA). These specialist response documents reflect the generic guidance found in this publication.

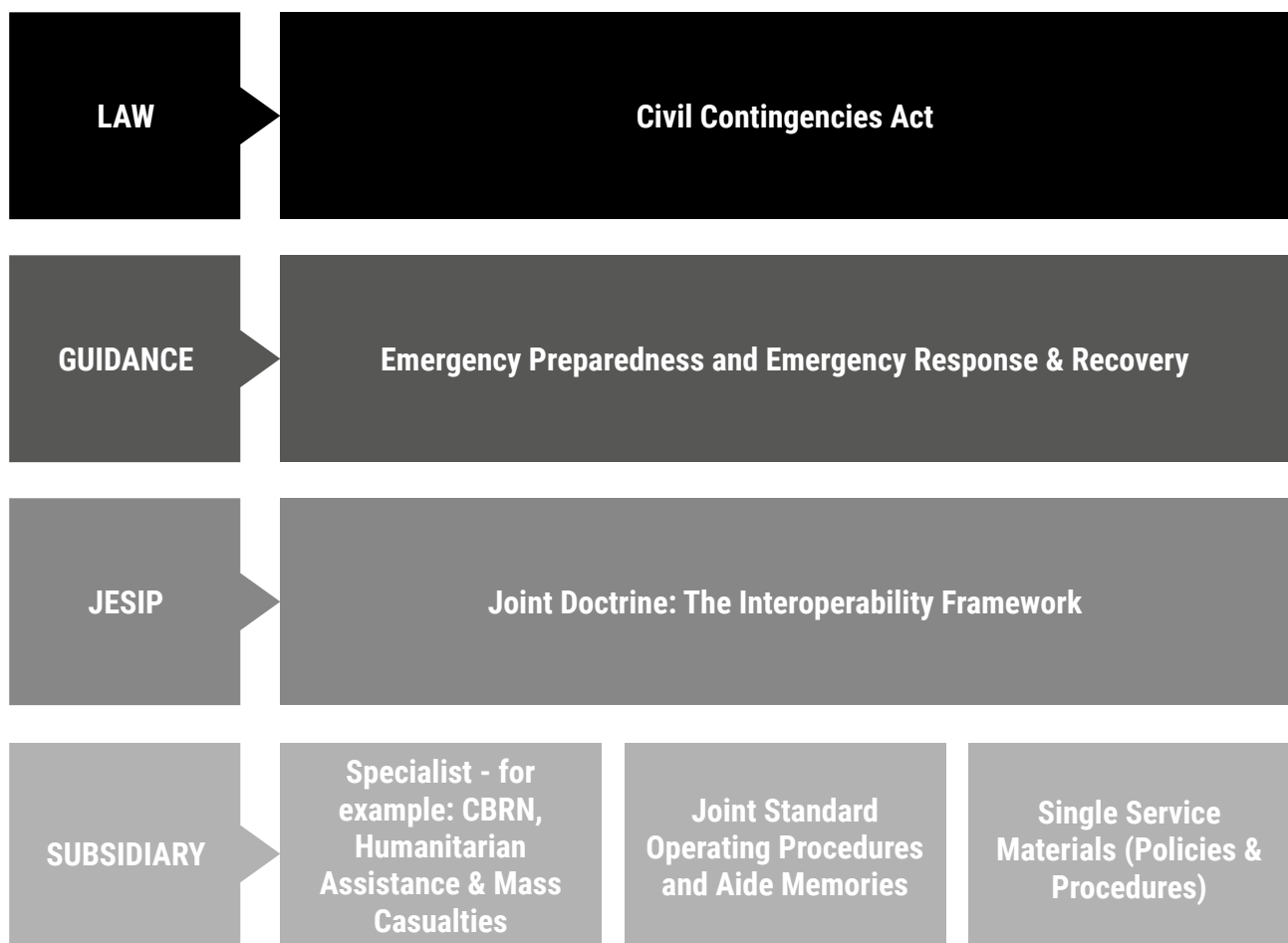| LAW	Civil Contingencies Act
GUIDANCE	Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Response & Recovery
JESIP	Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework
SUBSIDIARY	Specialist - for example: CBRN, Humanitarian Assistance & Mass Casualties / Joint Standard Operating Procedures and Aide Memories / Single Service Materials (Policies & Procedures)

Figure 1- Emergency response documentation hierarchy

3. PRINCIPLES FOR JOINT WORKING

The need for a joint response is not new. The findings and lessons identified by public inquiries and inquests have highlighted cases where the emergency services could have worked better together and shown much greater levels of communication, co-operation and co-ordination.

As well as improving joint working between the emergency services, this document emphasises the need for all responding organisations to work in a joint and co-ordinated approach.

Policies and procedures that promote joint working form the basis of the doctrine for responding services. Applying simple principles for joint working are particularly important in the early stages of an incident, when clear, robust decisions and actions need to be taken with minimum delay, in an often rapidly changing environment.

Those principles are illustrated in the diagram below. They will often, but not always, be followed in the order in which they are presented.

In the early stages of an incident, employees of one service may arrive before the employees of another, and as a result they may carry out tasks that are not normally their responsibility. If this happens, command and control arrangements for the relevant service should start as soon as the right personnel are in place in sufficient numbers.

Co-locate
Co-locate with commanders as soon as practicably possible at a single, safe and easily identified location near to the scene.

Communicate
Communicate clearly using plain English.

Co-ordinate
Co-ordinate by agreeing the lead service. Identify priorities, resources and capabilities for an effective response, including the timing of further meetings.

Jointly understand risk
Jointly understand risk by sharing information about the likelihood and potential impact of threats and hazards to agree potential control measures.

Shared situation awareness
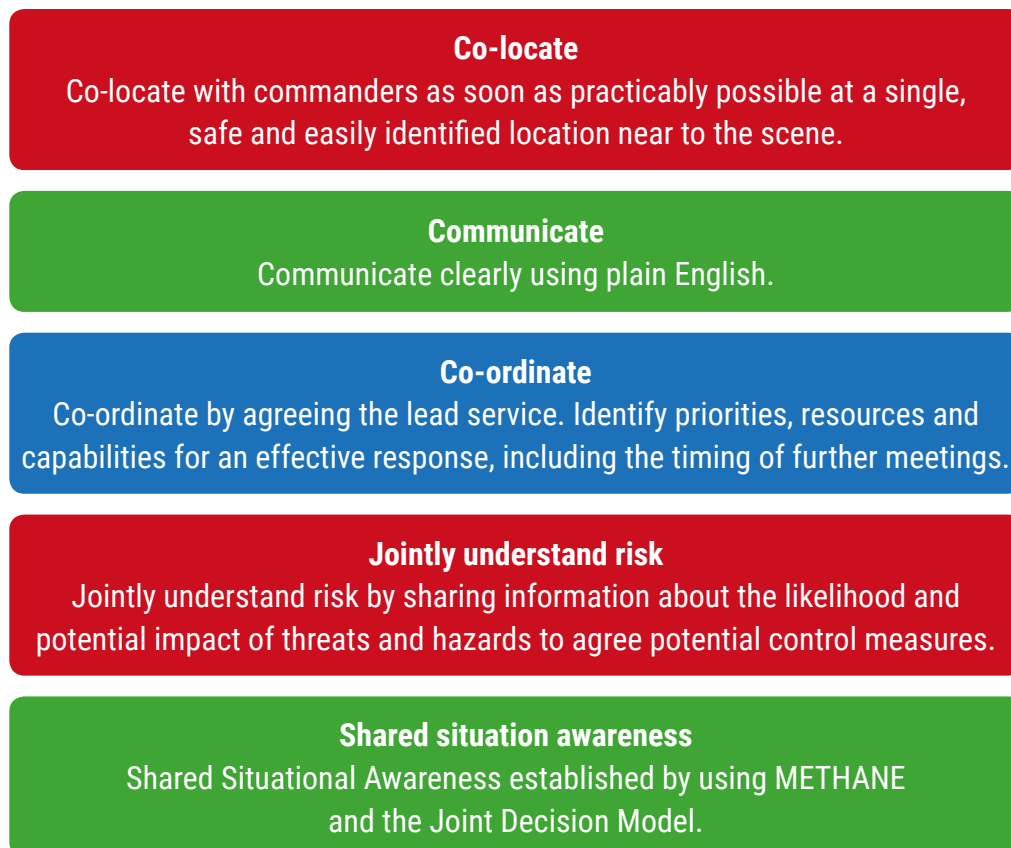Shared Situational Awareness established by using METHANE and the Joint Decision Model.

Figure 2 - Principles for joint working

3.1. CO-LOCATION

When commanders are co-located, they can perform the functions of command, control and co-ordination face-to-face. They should meet as early as possible, at a jointly agreed location at the scene that is known as the Forward Command Post (FCP). This allows them to establish jointly agreed objectives and a co-ordinated plan, resulting in more effective incident resolution.
The benefits of co-location apply equally at all levels of command.

If there is any delay in commanders co-locating, interoperable communications should be used to begin establishing shared situational awareness.

The operational and tactical commanders of each service should be easily identifiable at an incident. This is usually achieved by wearing role specific tabards. There are exceptions, such as at public order and other specialist incidents where coloured epaulettes and helmet markings are used.
See JESIP: incident commander tabards for more information.

Although not all responders will have role specific tabards they should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and have identification as a minimum.

3.2. COMMUNICATION

Meaningful and effective communication between responders and responder agencies underpins effective joint working.

Sharing and understanding information aids the development of shared situational awareness, which underpins the best possible outcomes of an incident.

The following supports successful communication between responders and responder agencies:

- Exchanging reliable and accurate information, such as critical information about hazards, risks and threats

- Ensuring the information shared is free from acronyms and other potential sources of confusion

- Understanding the responsibilities and capabilities of each of the responder agencies involved

- Clarifying that information shared, including terminology and symbols, is understood and agreed by all involved in the response

3.2.1. COMMON TERMINOLOGY

Using terminology that either means different things to different people, or is simply not understood across different services is a potential barrier to interoperability.

The Lexicon of UK civil protection terminology sets out definitions for common terminology in emergency management, including important terms in interoperability. There is also a set of common map symbols for civil protection.

Emergency services and responder agencies should cross-reference definitions in their own organisation's documents and adopt the common definitions contained from the Lexicon. Agreeing and using common terminology is a building block for interoperability. If there is any doubt about what is meant by a specific term, individuals should check and confirm whether a common understanding has been established.

Some of the terms used in this document are key to successful joint working and responders should understand them. Definitions and a short explanation can be found here.

3.3. CO-ORDINATION

Co-ordination involves commanders discussing resources and the activities of each responder agency, agreeing priorities and making joint decisions throughout the incident. Co-ordination underpins joint working by avoiding potential conflicts, preventing duplication of effort and minimising risk

For effective co-ordination, one agency generally needs to take a lead role. To decide who the lead agency should be, factors such as the phase of the incident, the need for specialist capabilities and investigation, during both the response and recovery phases should be considered. There is specific guidance for some types of incidents, highlighting which agency should take the lead role. The decision on who takes the lead role should be documented – the lead agency may change as the incident develops.

The lead agency should chair co-ordinating meetings and make sure they take place regularly.

3.4. JOINT UNDERSTANDING OF RISK

Different responder agencies may see, understand and treat risks differently.

Each agency should carry out their own 'dynamic risk assessments' but then share the results so that they can plan control measures and contingencies together more effectively.

By jointly understanding risks and the associated mitigating actions, organisations can promote the safety of responders and reduce the impact that risks may have on members of the public, infrastructure and the environment.

3.5. SHARED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

'Shared situational awareness' is a common understanding of the circumstances, immediate consequences and implications of the emergency, along with an appreciation of the available capabilities and the priorities of the emergency services and responder agencies.

Achieving shared situational awareness is essential for effective interoperability. Establishing shared situational awareness is important for a common understanding at all levels of command, between incident commanders and between control rooms.

4. THE EARLY STAGES OF A MULTI-AGENCY OR MAJOR INCIDENT

Recognising that an incident will involve working with other emergency services and/or other responder agencies is very important. The earlier other responder agencies are notified of the incident, the sooner joint working arrangements can be agreed and put into place.

For incidents with multiple sites, or an incident that initially appears to be a number of separate incidents, emergency service control rooms are best placed to recognise that a 'multi-agency' incident or 'major incident' may be in progress.

In other cases, first responders may recognise the nature of an incident and the need for a multi-agency response.

During the early stages of an incident it takes time for operational structures, resources and protocols to be put in place. This is likely to put initial responders and control rooms under considerable pressure. All the required information may not be available and commanders may have insufficient resources to deal with the incident.

In order to help all agencies gather initial information about an incident in a consistent manner, a common approach is recommended. The 'METHANE' model brings structure and clarity to the initial stages of managing any multi-agency or major incident.

A major incident is defined as[1]:

> ***An event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency.***

Declaring a 'major incident' triggers a predetermined strategic and tactical response from each emergency service and other responder agencies. It takes time for operational structures, resources and protocols to be put in place. Declaring that a major incident is in progress as soon as possible means these arrangements can be put in place as quickly as possible.

[1] See Cabinet Office Lexicon of civil protection terminology

5. M/ETHANE

The METHANE model is an established reporting framework which provides a common structure for responders and their control rooms to share major incident information. It is recommended that M/ETHANE be used for all incidents.

For incidents falling below the major incident threshold 'METHANE' becomes an 'ETHANE' message. During the decision making process using the joint decision model, there should be period consideration of the 'M' (representing 'major incident') by responders to establish whether a developing incident goes above the major incident threshold.

Each responder agency should send a M/ETHANE message to their control room as soon as possible. The first resources to arrive on scene should send the M/ETHANE message so that situational awareness can be established quickly. The information received through multiple M/ETHANE messages will gradually build to support shared situational awareness in those responding to the incident and between control rooms.

M	**M**AJOR INCIDENT	Has a major incident or standby been declared? (Yes / No - if no, then complete ETHANE message)	*Include the date and time of any declaration.*
E	**E**XACT LOCATION	What is the exact location or geographical area of the incident?	*Be as precise as possible, using a system that will be understood by all responders.*
T	**T**YPE OF INCIDENT	What kind of incident is it?	*For example, flooding, fire, utility failure or disease outbreak.*
H	**H**AZARDS	What hazards or potential hazards can be identified?	*Consider the likelihood of a hazard and the potential severity of any impact.*
A	**A**CCESS	What are the best routes for access and egress?	*Include information on inaccessible routes and rendezvous points (RVPs). Remember that services need to be able to leave the scene as well as access it.*
N	**N**UMBER OF CASUALTIES	How many casualties are there, and what condition are they in?	*Use an agreed classification system such as 'P1', 'P2', 'P3' and 'dead'.*
E	**E**MERGENCY SERVICES	Which, and how many, emergency responder assets and personnel are required or are already on-scene?	*Consider whether the assets of wider emergency responders, such as local authorities or the voluntary sector, may be required.*

6. CONTROL ROOMS

Control rooms play a vital role in managing the early stages of a multi-agency incident. There cannot be a co-ordinated multi-agency response or effective communication if control rooms do not deliver a swift and joint approach to handling them.

Specific control room guidance in the interoperability framework builds consistency into the procedures and working practices of emergency service control rooms.

This guidance sets out how control rooms, working together, start the principles for joint working. It also sets out what responders can expect from their respective control rooms when attending a multi-agency incident.

The control room guidance is divided into three sections, which align to the principles for joint working:

- Communication

- Shared situational awareness and joint understanding of risk

- Co-ordination and co-location

As with the five principles for joint working, they do not have to be followed in the order in which they are presented.

Control rooms generally operate from separate fixed locations and therefore cannot feasibly co-locate. They can, however, help in co-locating responders and commanders by jointly agreeing the initial multi-agency rendezvous points.

6.1. COMMUNICATION

6.1.1. SUPPORTING PRINCIPLE 1

A dialogue between control room supervisors should be established as soon as possible.

A multi-agency discussion between control room supervisors in the affected control rooms at the earliest opportunity starts the process of sharing information about the incident. The 'talk not tell' procedure involves control room personnel passing information and asking other responders what their response to the incident will be.

This is done by:

> a) Sharing information from all available sources along with immediate resource availability and decisions taken in accordance with each organisation's policies and procedures.

Because of the unverified nature and range of information sources at this early stage, situational awareness may be unclear until information can be verified by the first responders at the scene.

b) Nominating a single point of contact (SPoC) in each control room and establishing a method of communication between all of them. This could involve creating a telecommunications link or a multi-agency interoperable talkgroup.

Information and intelligence can then be shared in a timely way and inform deployment decisions. It also allows a co-ordinated response to be managed efficiently when key decision-making personnel (operational commanders, for example) are deployed to rendezvous with their emergency service counterparts.

To maximise shared situational awareness, responding commanders should be invited to join shared talkgroups between the control room single points of contact before they arrive at the scene or other location such as the tactical co-ordinating group.

c) Co-ordinating the setting up of multi-agency interoperable voice communications for commanders and operational working if necessary. See Supporting principle 4 for further guidance.

6.1.2. SUPPORTING PRINCIPLE 2

Plain English should be used in all discussions between control rooms.

Emergency services and responder agencies may not fully understand each other's call sign structures and single-service terminology, such as colloquial references to assets. Control rooms should therefore use plain English and avoid using acronyms and single-service jargon whenever they communicate with one another.

Control room staff should ensure that shared information, including terminology and symbols, is understood and agreed by everybody involved.

6.2. SHARED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND JOINT UNDERSTANDING OF RISK

6.2.1. SUPPORTING PRINCIPLE 3

Talking to commanders, both before the first commander arrives at the scene and to commanders throughout the incident will contribute to shared situational awareness. The process should include identifying risks and hazards to all responders.

Discussion between control rooms should be frequent and cover the following key points:

- Is it clear who the lead agency is at this point? If so, who is it?

- What information and intelligence does each agency hold at this point?

- What hazards and risks are known by each agency at this point?

- What assets have been – or are being – deployed at this point and why?

- How will the required agencies continue communicating with each other?

- At what point will multi-agency interoperable voice communications be required, and how will it be achieved?

Whenever possible, control rooms should use electronic data transfer to share information. This can reduce congestion on voice channels, prevent misunderstandings and eliminate 'double-keying' information.

Direct data transfer does not, however, remove the need to establish early dialogue between control room supervisors to achieve shared situational awareness.

6.3. CO-ORDINATION AND CO-LOCATION

6.3.1. SUPPORTING PRINCIPLE 4

Control room supervisors should engage in multi-agency communications and carry out the initial actions required to management the incident.

Control room supervisors should co-ordinate communication between the single points of contact in each control room by a method agreed during early multi-agency discussions (see Supporting principle 1). When identified, the lead agency should agree the timing of subsequent conversations between control room supervisors to ensure that shared situational awareness is maintained.

Control room supervisors should be ready to set up multi-agency interoperable voice communications for commanders if and when required. Requests to use multi-agency interoperable talkgroups should always be made to the police control room for authorisation. After identifying the talkgroups to be used, the police control room will communicate this to the appropriate responder control rooms so that the relevant commanders can be informed.

Multi-agency interoperable talkgroups are not necessary for every multi-agency incident. But when each service has allocated a commander to an incident, the value of making interoperable voice communications available should be considered.

Co-locating commanders and face-to-face exchanges will always be the preferred option. But when this is not possible or practical, interoperable voice communications can allow decision-makers to keep each other informed, contribute to shared situational awareness and enhance joint decision-making.

Control room supervisors and dispatch personnel should familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures and any other arrangements for using interoperable voice communications. A specialist operational communications adviser from each organisation should be identified to support the incident.

6.3.2. SUPPORTING PRINCIPLE 5

The lead responder will suggest a location for commanders to co-locate in the early stages of a multi-agency incident when operational commanders may be travelling to the scene.

When early location information is unverified and the suitability of potential rendezvous points is unclear, the lead responder and other control room supervisors should jointly agree an initial rendezvous point and communicate it to commanders as soon as possible.

Commanders may wish to revise the location of the rendezvous point and/or the forward command post in the light of further information at the scene.

Further information on the role and responsibilities of control room managers / supervisors can be found here.

7. ESTABLISHING A COMMON OPERATING PICTURE

A common operating picture (COP) has been defined as: *"A common overview of an incident that is created by assessing and fusing information from multiple sources, and is shared between appropriate command, control and co-ordinating groups to support joint decision-making"*.

A common operating picture is a single point of reference for those involved, and supports joint decision-making. Answering the questions below helps develop a common operating picture and helps establish shared situational awareness:

- What? - What has happened, what is happening now and what is being done about it?

- So what? - What might the implications and wider impacts be?

- What might happen in the future?

The form of the common operating picture depends on local requirements and practices. It would be updated as events and inputs change and also as the results of further work become available, such as analysis which answers the 'so what?' or 'what might?' questions.

The common operating picture should have a clear relationship with established command, control and co-ordination groups (including the Scientific and Technical Advice Cell) and should be accessed through a suitably resilient and secure common information sharing platform.

This completed [Strategic Co-ordinating Group situation report](#) is an example of a common operating picture. In other contexts, the common operating picture may be a dynamic dashboard that provides an overview of the incident, using maps and graphics as well as text.

8. ARRANGEMENTS FOR JOINT WORKING

Decision making in incident management follows a general pattern of:

a) Working out what's going on (situation),

b) Establishing what you need to achieve (direction)

c) Deciding what to do about it (action), all informed by a statement and understanding of overarching values and purpose.

8.1. JOINT DECISION MODEL (JDM)

One of the difficulties facing commanders from different responder agencies is how to bring together the available information, reconcile potentially differing priorities and then make effective decisions together.

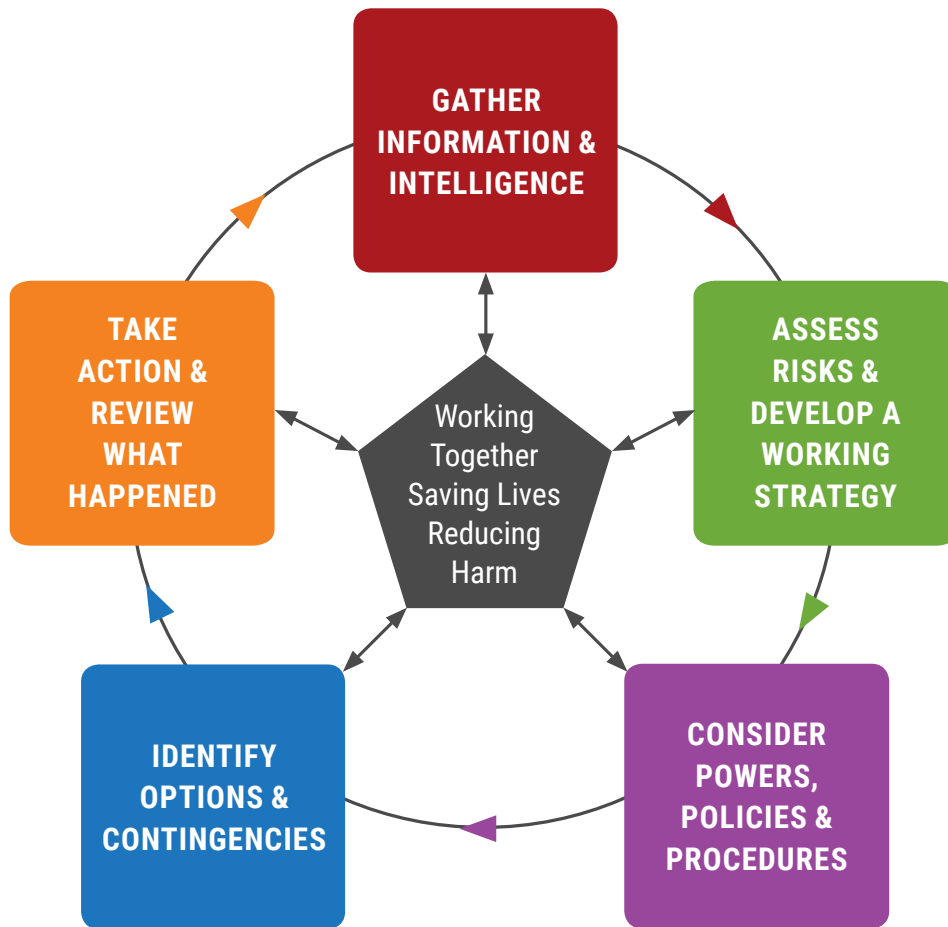The Joint Decision Model (JDM), shown below, was developed to resolve this issue.

Figure 3 - Joint Decision Model (JDM)

Responder agencies may use various supporting processes and sources to provide commanders with information, including information on any planned intentions, to commanders. This supports joint decision making.

All joint decisions, and the rationale behind them, should be recorded in a 'joint decision log'.

When using the joint decision model, the first priority is to gather and assess information and intelligence. Responders should work together to build shared situational awareness, recognising that this requires continuous effort as the situation, and responders' understanding, will change over time.

Understanding the risks is vital in establishing shared situational awareness, as it enables responders to answer the three fundamental questions of 'what, so what and what might?'

Once shared situation awareness is established, the preferred 'end state' should be agreed as the central part of a joint working strategy. A working strategy should set out what a team is trying to achieve, and how they are going to achieve it.

If a strategic co-ordinating group is convened, they will agree and share the joint strategy for the multi-agency response. The strategic command teams from each agency should then review and amend their single-agency strategy to be consistent with the joint strategy and support them in achieving the jointly defined end state, or overarching aim.

Deciding how all agencies will work towards the preferred end state reflects the available capabilities, powers, policies and procedures (means) and the arising options, constraints and contingencies (ways). Ways and means are intimately related – some options will not be viable because they can't be implemented, or they may be technically and logistically feasible, but illegal or ethically indefensible.

The joint decision model helps commanders explore these considerations and sets out the various stages of reaching joint decisions. One of the guiding principles of the joint decision model is that decision makers use their professional judgement and experience in deciding any additional questions to ask and considerations to take into account, so that they can reach a jointly agreed decision.

Commanders should be free to interpret the joint decision model for themselves, reasonably and according to the circumstances they face at any given time. Achieving desired outcomes should always come before strict adherence to the stepped process outlined in the joint decision model, particularly in time sensitive situations.

A detailed and well-practised understanding of the joint decision model will help commanders to think clearly and in an ordered way when under stress. The joint decision model can be used for both 'rapid onset' and 'rising tide' emergencies.

The following sections summarise the questions and considerations that commanders should think about when they use the joint decision model.

8.1.1. WORKING TOGETHER – SAVING LIVES, REDUCING HARM

The pentagon at the centre of the joint decision model reminds commanders that all joint decisions should be made with reference to the overarching or primary aim of any response to an emergency – to save lives and reduce harm.

This should be the most important consideration, throughout the decision making process.

8.1.2. GATHER INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE

This stage involves gathering and sharing information and intelligence to establish shared situational awareness.

At any incident, no single responder agency can appreciate all the relevant dimensions of an emergency straight away.

A deeper and wider understanding will only come from meaningful communication between the emergency services and other responder agencies. Commanders cannot assume others will see things, or say things, in the same way.

There may need to be a sustained effort to reach a common view and understanding of events, risks and their implications,

Decision making in the context of an emergency, including decisions on sharing information, does not remove the statutory obligations of agencies or individuals, but it is recognised that such decisions are made with an overriding priority of saving lives and reducing harm.

Personal data, including sensitive personal data (such as police intelligence), must be carefully considered before it is shared across agencies. The joint decision model can be used as a tool to guide decision making on what information to release, and who can receive it.

M/ETHANE is a structured and consistent method for responder agencies to collate and pass on information about an incident.

8.1.3. ASSESS RISKS, DEVELOP A WORKING STRATEGY

Commanders jointly assess risk to achieve a common understanding of threats and hazards, and the likelihood of them being realised. This informs decisions on deployments and the required risk control measures.

A key task for commanders is to build and maintain a common understanding of the full range of risks. They should consider how risks may increase, reduce or be controlled by any decisions made and subsequent actions taken. At any incident, each responder agency will have a unique insight into those risks.

By sharing what they know commanders can establish a common understanding. Commanders can then make informed decisions on deployments and the risk control measures required. Time critical tasks should not be delayed by this process.

The risk control measures to be employed by individual services must also be understood by other responder agencies, to ensure any potential unintended consequences are identified before activity commences. This increases the operational effectiveness and efficiency of the response as well as the probability of a successful incident resolution.

WORKING STRATEGY

The working strategy should not be confused with the strategy for the incident provided by the strategic commanders or strategic co-ordinating group. This strategy will generally be issued some time into the incident response and almost certainly after the operational or tactical levels of command have been established.

The working strategy is the action plan that commanders develop and agree together. They put the action plan in place to address the immediate situation and the risks that they are faced with to save lives and reduce harm.

It is rare for a complete or perfect picture to exist for a rapid onset incident. The working strategy should therefore be based on the information available at the time.

When developing a working strategy, consider:

- Sharing single service risk assessments

- Recording and agreeing the joint assessment of risk, in an agreed format

When developing a working strategy, commanders should consider these questions:

- **What**: Are the aims and objectives?

- **Who by**: Police, fire and rescue services, the ambulance service and other organisations?

- **When**: Timescales, deadlines and milestones?

- **Where**: What locations?

- **Why**: What is the rationale? Is it consistent with the overall strategic aims and objectives?

- **How**: Will these tasks be achieved?

For an effective integrated multi-agency operational response plan, objectives and priorities must be agreed jointly. Each agency will then prioritise their plans and activity.

The following key steps should be undertaken:

IDENTIFY HAZARDS	This begins with the initial call to a control room and continues as first responders arrive on scene. Information gathered by individual agencies should be disseminated to all first responders, control rooms and partner agencies effectively.
CARRY OUT A DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT (DRA)	Individual agencies carry out dynamic risk assessments, reflecting the tasks/objectives to be achieved, the hazards identified and the likelihood of harm from those hazards. The results should then be shared with any other agencies involved.
IDENTIFY TASKS	Each individual agency should identify and consider their specific tasks, according to their role and responsibilities. These tasks should then be assessed in the context of the incident.
APPLY RISK CONTROL MEASURES	Each agency should consider and apply appropriate control measures to ensure any risk is as low as reasonably practicable. The 'ERICPD' mnemonic may help in agreeing a co-ordinated approach with a hierarchy of risk control measures: **E**liminate, **R**educe, **I**solate, **C**ontrol, **P**ersonal Protective Equipment, **D**iscipline
HAVE AN INTEGRATED MULTI-AGENCY OPERATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN	The outcomes of the hazard assessments and risk assessments should be considered when developing this plan, within the context of the agreed priorities for the incident. If the activity of one agency creates hazards for a partner agency, a solution must be implemented to reduce the risk to as low as reasonably practicable.
RECORD DECISIONS	The outcomes of the joint assessment of risk should be recorded, together with the jointly agreed priorities and the agreed multi-agency response plan, when resources permit. This may not be possible in the early stages of the incident, but post-incident scrutiny focuses on the earliest decision making.

8.1.4. CONSIDER POWERS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This stage relates to any relevant laws, procedures or policies that may impact on the response plan and the capabilities available to be deployed.

Decision making in an emergency will focus on achieving the desired end state. Various constraints and considerations will shape how this is achieved.

Power, policies and procedures may affect how individual agencies operate and co-operate to achieve the agreed aims and objectives.

In a joint response, a common understanding of any relevant powers, policies, capabilities and procedures is essential so that the activities of one responder agency complement rather than compromise the approach of other responder agencies.

8.1.5. IDENTIFY OPTIONS AND CONTINGENCIES

There will almost always be more than one way to achieve the desired end state. Commanders should work together to evaluate the range of options and contingencies rigorously.

Potential options or courses of action should be evaluated, considering:

- Suitability   Does it fit with the strategic direction?

- Feasibility   Can it be done with the available resources?

- Acceptability Is it legal, morally defensible and justifiable?

Whichever options are chosen, it is essential that commanders are clear on what they need to carry out. Procedures for communicating any decision to defer, abort or initiate a specific tactic should also be clearly agreed.

Contingencies relate to events that may occur and the arrangements that will be put in place if they do occur. For example, strong evidence may suggest that an emergency is being successfully managed and the impacts safely controlled, but there remains a likelihood that the situation could deteriorate and have a significant impact. It is not good enough to 'hope for the best' and a contingency may include defining the measures to be taken if the situation deteriorates.

8.1.6. DECISION CONTROLS

As part of the decision making process, decision makers should use *decision controls* to ensure that the proposed action is the most appropriate.

Decision controls support and validate the decision making process. They encourage reflection and set out a series of points to consider before making a decision:

Note that points (a) to (d) are intended to structure a joint consideration of the issues, with (e) suggesting some considerations for individual reflection.

A) WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?	• What goals are linked to this decision? • What is the rationale, and is that jointly agreed? • Does it support working together, saving lives and reducing harm?
B) WHAT DO WE THINK WILL HAPPEN?	• What is the likely outcome of the action; in particular what is the impact on the objective and other activities? • How will the incident change as a result of these actions, what outcomes do we expect?
C) IN LIGHT OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS, IS THE BENEFIT PROPORTIONAL TO THE RISK?	• Do the benefits of proposed actions justify the risks that would be accepted?
D) DO WE HAVE A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND POSITION ON:	• The situation, its likely consequences and potential outcomes? • The available information, critical uncertainties and key assumptions? • Terminology and measures being used by all those involved in the response? • Individual agency working practices related to a joint response? • Conclusions drawn and communications made?
E) AS AN INDIVIDUAL:	• Is the collective decision in line with my professional judgement and experience? • Have we (as individuals and as a team) reviewed the decision with critical rigour? • Are we (as individuals and as a team) content that this decision is the best practicable solution?

Once the decision makers are satisfied, collectively and individually, that the decision controls validate the proposed actions, then these actions should be implemented.

As the joint decision model is a continuous loop, it is essential that the results of these actions are fed back into the first box – *'Gather and share information and intelligence'* – which sets out the need to establish and sustain shared situational awareness. This will, in turn, shape any change in direction or risk assessment as the cycle continues.

8.1.7. BRIEFING

Once commanders have made decisions and decided on actions, information must be relayed in a structured way that can be easily understood by those who will carry out actions or support activities. This is commonly known as briefing.

In the initial phases of an incident, the joint decision model may be used to structure a briefing. As incidents develop past the initial phases or if they are protracted and require a hand over between commanders and responders, then a more detailed briefing tool should be used. The mnemonic 'IIMARCH' is a commonly used briefing tool.

Using the IIMARCH headings shown below as a guide, information can be briefed in appropriate detail:

- Information
- Intent
- Method
- Administration
- Risk assessment
- Communications
- Humanitarian issues

Information on IIMARCH and its use as a briefing tool can be found here.

8.1.8. TAKE ACTION AND REVIEW WHAT HAPPENED

Building shared situational awareness, setting direction, evaluating options and making decisions all lead to taking the actions that are judged to be the most effective and efficient in resolving an emergency and returning to a new normality.

Actions must be reviewed. As information changes during the response, commanders should use the joint decision model to inform their decision making until the incident is resolved.

9. SUPPORTING JOINT DECISION MAKING

The joint decision model is designed to help commanders make effective decisions together. As they establish shared situational awareness, they can develop a common operating picture.

As part of this process, commanders and decision makers may need further support, skills and resources so they can assess and interpret the information they receive appropriately, before it influences the decisions they make.

The following section provides background information and some suggested methods to support decision making.

In many incidents there won't be a need, or any time, for formal arrangements to be set up to support decision makers. But some incidents will be highly complex and strategically significant, involve considerable levels of uncertainty, have hard-to-predict consequences and unclear choices.

In these circumstances, it will be necessary to implement pre-established arrangements to manage information and support multi-agency decision-making at tactical and strategic levels.

9.1. ASSESSING AND MANAGING INFORMATION

This section outlines the capabilities that responder agencies should establish to inform and support joint decision making. It covers the need to:

- Assess information

- Have common processes to report, assess and manage information consistently

- Have a common information sharing platform, so that information can be shared and applied

9.2. INFORMATION ASSESSMENT

Assessing the information received, using proven criteria, will establish its quality and suitability for the task in hand. This is critical to ensure that decision-making is based on the best possible information and to identify where critical uncertainties lie.

In an emergency or crisis, much of the information decision makers receive will be unreliable or of uncertain quality.

For that reason a framework is needed, to distinguish between:

- Information that can be relied on with confidence

- Information that is unreliable in some way

- Information of unknown quality

There are many ways in which responder agencies can assess information. If agencies use the same information assessment framework, interoperability will be enhanced.

As a minimum, information should be assessed for:

- **Relevance** – in the current situation, how well does the information meet the needs of the end user?

- **Accuracy** – how well does the information reflect the underlying reality?

- **Timeliness** – how current is the information?

- **Source reliability** – does previous experience of this source indicate the likely quality of the information?

- **Credibility** – is the information supported or contradicted by other information?

As they develop a common operating picture, decision makers need to work together, using their joint experience and judgement, when using an information assessment framework. This will ensure the information they are using is both suitable and adequate.

If decision makers are concerned or dissatisfied with the information assessment, they should issue clear direction and take steps to update, reconcile and check the information, or to seek further information, potentially drawing on other channels and sources.

The behaviour of individuals and teams, and the effectiveness of interaction, will either enable or impede them in developing shared situational awareness. Achieving shared situational awareness is more likely if people:

- Share what they know freely

- Make uncertainties and assumptions absolutely clear

- Challenge their own understanding of what they are being told, and challenge the understanding of others

- Are critical and rigorous

9.3. COMMON PROCESSES

An organisation responding to a crisis or incident must:

a) Gather relevant information about the incident

b) Evaluate that information in terms of quality and relevance

c) Filter, analyse and make sense of that information

d) Communicate the information inside their organisation, and outside if required

e) Present the information to decision makers in an appropriate form

Interoperability will be enhanced if emergency responders use consistent ways of working to carry out these tasks.

9.4. COMMON INFORMATION SHARING PLATFORM

A common information sharing platform is the means to share and manage information collaboratively to support joint decision-making. Any commonly understood, effective system can be described as a common information sharing platform.

There are considerable advantages to using an electronic system. For example, automating aspects of sourcing, combining, analysing and displaying data will be much more useful and efficient for those using the data collected.

The precise form of a common information sharing platform will reflect local requirements and existing capabilities, but responder organisations should consider ResilienceDirect, a widely-used and secure platform with a range of functions to support joint working. ResilienceDirect is provided to all responder agencies by the government.

10. TIERS OF COMMAND

Emergency responders adopt levels of command when responding to incidents. The level does not convey seniority or rank but the level of command an individual has at the incident. The figure below shows the generic tiers of command and basic responsibilities.

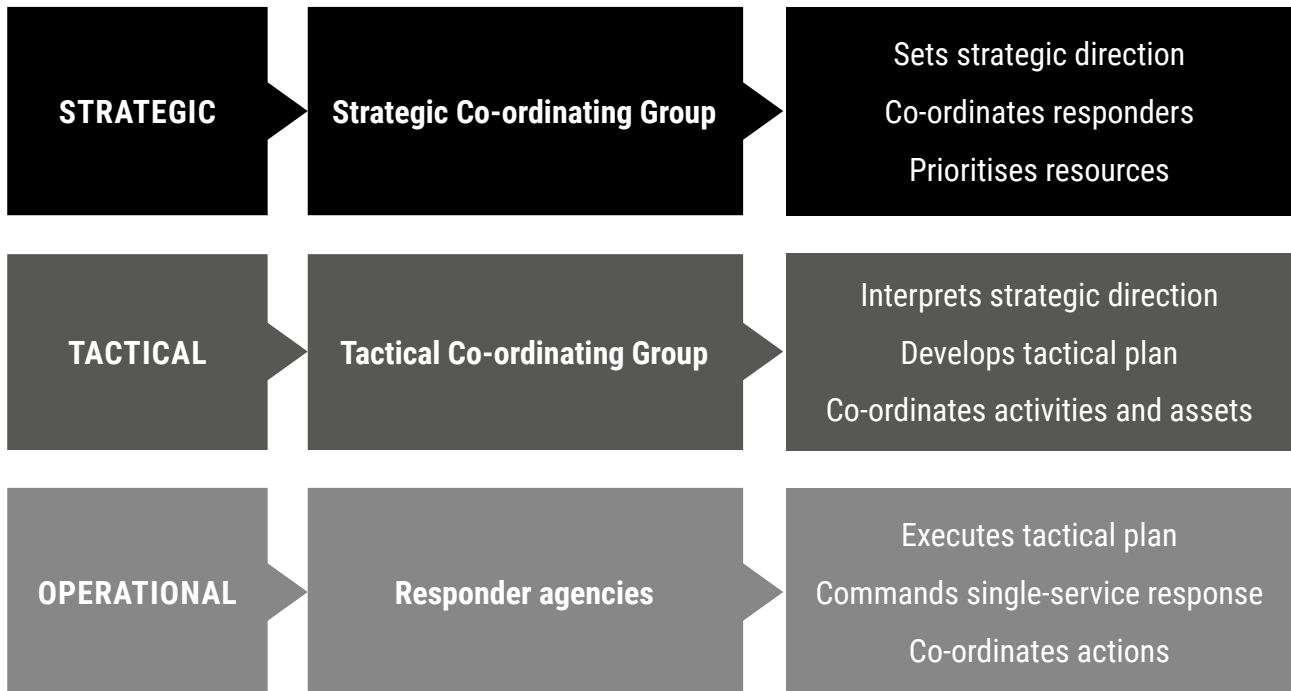| STRATEGIC	Strategic Co-ordinating Group	Sets strategic direction Co-ordinates responders Prioritises resources
TACTICAL	Tactical Co-ordinating Group	Interprets strategic direction Develops tactical plan Co-ordinates activities and assets
OPERATIONAL	Responder agencies	Executes tactical plan Commands single-service response Co-ordinates actions

Figure 4 - Response structure

This document refers only to the generic tiers of command and not the specific functional activities of individual organisations.

There should be a clear and identifiable commander or representative who is responsible for co-ordinating the activity of their agency at each level of command.

10.1. FIRST RESPONDER STAFF

It is important that all individuals who could be first on scene for their respective responder agency are able to declare a major incident, and that they understand the implications of declaring one. They must also be able convey incident information using the M/ETHANE model. Declaring a major incident begins the process of activating relevant plans.

10.2. OPERATIONAL

Operational commanders will be working with colleagues from other responder agencies. This will most likely be at, or close to, the scene of the incident.

They will control and deploy the resources of their respective service within a functional or geographical area, and will implement the tactical plan as directed by the tactical commander.

Clear communications should be established and maintained so that individuals can work together in a co-ordinated way.

The roles and responsibilities of operational commanders can be found here.

10.3. TACTICAL

In the initial stages of an incident, first responders are responsible for tactics. Once the scale and nature of the incident is known, emergency services will appoint officers to act as tactical commanders for their organisation. Other responder agencies may also appoint individuals to act as tactical commanders or co-ordinators on behalf of their organisations where relevant.

Communication and co-ordination between commanders is critical. Tactical commanders should be located at a mutually agreed location where they can maintain effective joint command of the operation. This includes effective joint working with other services, and other factors such as access to communications systems. The fire and rescue service tactical commander will be located where they can maintain effective tactical command of the operation, invariably they will be in attendance at the scene. Once the tactical co-ordinating group is formed, they will either attend in person or nominate a liaison officer to attend.

Where circumstances hinder co-location of commanders (of any level) then robust communications arrangements must be implemented, through the use of interoperability communications and where appropriate National Inter-agency Liaison Officers (NILO) to ensure a co-ordinated response and safe systems of work are maintained.

The tactical commander is likely to be in place before the strategic commander and is also likely to be the first senior officer taking command of the incident. In the early stages of an incident, the tactical commander is likely to set priorities before the strategic commander has set a strategy.

The roles and responsibilities of tactical commanders can be found here.

10.4. STRATEGIC

The strategic commander from each agency has overall authority on behalf of their agency. They are responsible for the resources of their own agency and for formulating their single agency strategy for the incident.

Each strategic commander may delegate implementation decisions to their respective tactical level commanders.

At the earliest opportunity, a strategic co-ordinating group (SCG) will determine or confirm a specific response strategy and record a strategy statement. The roles and responsibilities of strategic commanders can be found here. The role and responsibilities of the strategic co-ordinating group can be found here.

To minimise the consequences of the developing incident as far as is reasonably practicable, the structures and responsibilities detailed above must be activated and put into place as quickly as possible. It is acknowledged this is likely to take some time and therefore the first responders and commanders at a scene must identify and implement the initial tactics, whilst also communicating the need for support.

10.5. INTER-AGENCY RESOURCES

Any service may request temporary assistance from the personnel and equipment of another organisation. In these circumstances, while the supporting service will relinquish the immediate control of those resources to the requesting service for the duration of the task, the supporting service will 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 they are trained and equipped for, and they should not supplement the other service in a way that is potentially dangerous.

National inter-agency liaison officers (from the fire and rescue service or ambulance service) and tactical advisers are part of a network of specially trained officers who are qualified to provide commanders with advice on operational capabilities, limitations and capacity.

10.6. MULTI-AGENCY INFORMATION CELL

Emergency services and local resilience forums (LRFs) should be able to support tactical and strategic co-ordinating groups, when they are activated, by managing information and forming a common operating picture. This capability should be formalised as a multi-agency information cell (MAIC). The effectiveness of the multi-agency information cell (MAIC) depends on established and rehearsed capabilities.

A multi-agency information cell (MAIC) will not need to be established at the start of every incident involving a tactical and strategic co-ordinating group, but the multi-agency response to complex and/ or protracted incidents should be supported with a multi-agency information cell (MAIC).

The multi-agency information cell (MAIC) may come together in either a physical, co-located form, or in a virtual form. It should be able to source, access, analyse, display and disseminate situational information, drawing on information and expertise from many sources rather than a single organisation. Both co-located and virtual arrangements for a multi-agency information cell (MAIC) should make use of a wide range of information systems to support shared situational awareness, such as ResilienceDirect, other open data sources or social media.

A core function of the multi-agency information cell (MAIC) is to produce the common operating picture that will inform and support the tactical and strategic co-ordinating groups and other responders.

11. JOINT ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING (JOL)

The lessons identified from de-briefing activities are now at the forefront of many key changes in emergency services policy and practices.

Issues have frequently been identified but not successfully acted upon to improve effective joint working. It is essential that joint organisational learning is accepted as the standard for multi-agency learning and is adopted by all response agencies to ensure interoperability is continually improved.

Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) provides emergency services and other responder agencies with a consistent and accountable mechanism to ensure lessons identified are acted on and to ensure they become lessons learned.

11.1. JOINT ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS

A robust governance structure and process addresses joint organisational learning issues.

The Interoperability Board provides governance for the joint organisational learning arrangements. This ensures that any issues regarding interoperability are considered and acted upon by appropriate representatives from the emergency services, their respective Government departments and other key stakeholders.

The process includes a method to capture, analyse, implement and share learning from incidents, training, testing and exercises, and from other external sources. All responder agencies (some via their local resilience forum or LRF) have access to the joint organisational learning (JOL) application which is hosted on ResilienceDirect and can submit interoperability issues and share notable practice.

The majority of lessons to be learned are identified during de-brief procedures. It is essential that responder agencies have robust de-brief procedures at a local level, which include ways to identify any interoperability lessons and raise them to the national level via the joint organisational learning (JOL) application.

11.1.1. DE-BRIEFING AND LESSONS IDENTIFIED

It is important to capture lessons while events are fresh in the minds of those involved. For this reason, a joint 'hot de-brief' should be held by commanders as soon as practicable after an incident.

Formal de-briefs, which may be held later, will take into account lessons identified and captured from hot de-briefs or equivalent post-incident reviews. All de-briefs should involve the full range of responders and control room staff to ensure the lessons identified are captured from every aspect of the response.

To support emergency services in capturing interoperability lessons, a de-brief template can be found in the JESIP Interoperability de-brief template. This template is designed to be integrated into, or used alongside, existing de-brief procedures.

11.1.2. NOTABLE PRACTICE

Joint organisational learning (JOL) can also be used to share notable practice. This is where services have found a solution to an interoperability issue, which works well and that they wish to share so that others can benefit from their learning.

11.2. EXPECTATIONS OF RESPONDER AGENCIES

To continually improve emergency response interoperability, all responder agencies must capture lessons identified from incidents, exercises and training and have the opportunity to submit them for consideration by the Interoperability Board.

Where lessons identified meet the criteria for adding to the joint organisational learning application, then a local process should be adopted to ensure all responder agencies and where it is deemed appropriate, the respective local resilience forums, agree what will be submitted and who will submit them on behalf of their agency or area.

Following any incident, exercise or training, those involved should ensure appropriate de-briefs are scheduled and that all those involved in the response are represented.

- The lead agency for the response and/or local resilience forum (LRF) should co-ordinate de-briefing after a multi-agency incident or exercise

- There should be a common understanding among attendees of any issues raised during the de-brief process

- Issues should be captured using local multi-agency de-brief procedures alongside the JESIP interoperability de-brief template

11.2.1. CRITERIA FOR SUBMISSION TO
JOINT ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING (JOL)

Issues that meet any of the following criteria should be submitted onto JOL:

- Relate to interoperability – primarily using M/ETHANE, the JESIP principles for joint working and the joint decision model

- Had an impact on the effectiveness of at least two of the response organisations

- Impeded successful interoperability

- Are known to be recurring issues

- If resolved, could benefit other organisations and so may have a national impact

Any disclosure requests for information related to the de-brief or incident should be managed appropriately.

Supporting information, guidance and templates to help with using joint organisational learning (JOL) are available in the [JESIP - Joint Organisational Learning, Learning Interoperability Lessons, Guidance Document 2015](#)

12. DISCLOSURE AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Disclosing unused material in criminal cases is an essential part of any police investigation. Unused material is material that the police service has gathered during the course of an investigation that is not used evidentially for the case when it gets to court. Even though it has not been used, the material is expected to be kept as it could become relevant at a later date. Lord Justice Gross has described this as still 'one of the most important – as well as one of the most misunderstood and abused – of the procedures relating to criminal trials' (2011).

The police investigation team is likely to appoint a disclosure officer, who will be able to advise commanders on relevant material and disclosure procedures. Decision logs and de-brief information could be subject to disclosure rules, and form part of the unused material.

In an investigation, police investigators, via nominated disclosure officers, compile a list of all unused material that will be disclosed to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the defence. Examples of material falling under the definition are:

- 999 voice tapes

- Incident logs and pocket books

- Operational briefing/de-briefing sheets

- Policy files/decision books

- Material in police possession from third parties and records held by other agencies

In deciding whether the material satisfies the disclosure test the investigator must pay particular attention to material that could potentially undermine the prosecution case or assist the defence. Material should be made available to the officer in charge and the disclosure officer so they can make an informed decision. De-brief material includes not only the de-brief report but also individual feedback and notes made by any party at the de-brief.

13. INFORMATION FOR MILITARY RESPONDERS ATTENDING CIVIL EMERGENCIES

This guidance is provided for the use of military responders. It clarifies and explains the ways of working used by civil responder agencies when they respond to incidents.

13.1. INTRODUCTION

Emergency responders need to be able to work with other agencies, including the armed forces. Military responders contribute in a supporting role, with civil responders having primacy throughout.

Military responders should be aware of the JESIP principles for joint working and will be expected to adhere to them wherever possible. The principles for joint working are **co-location**, **communication**, **co-ordination**, **a joint understanding of risk** and **shared situational awareness**.

13.2. COMMAND AND CONTROL

Civil organisations use the terms 'strategic', 'tactical' and 'operational' to identify individual roles in the command and control structure. This differs from the strategic – operational – tactical structure found in UK and NATO military doctrine. The strategic commander has overall command of the incident and is part of the strategic co-ordinating group (SCG). Below this is the tactical command level, which functions through a tactical co-ordinating group (TCG). The operational commander will work at or very near the scene.

13.2.1. CO-LOCATION

Co-locating commanders is essential. When commanders are co-located, they can perform the functions of command, control and co-ordination face-to-face. They should work from a single jointly agreed location known as the Forward Command Post (FCP). They use the JESIP joint decision model along with joint decision logs to record their actions and decisions. Military log keepers must be aware of this, so that they can ensure any military logs and records are consistent.

13.2.2. COMMUNICATION

At multi-agency incidents, civil commanders use interoperability 'talk groups', which are held by the emergency services to ensure all responders have a shared understanding. Military responders should be included if possible.

Civil responders report and share information about the incident over their communications networks using the mnemonic M/ETHANE, which stands for:

- **M**ajor incident declared?

- **E**xact location

- **T**ype of incident

- **H**azards present or suspected

- **A**ccess – routes that are safe to use

- **N**umber of casualties

- **E**mergency services present and those required

Military units will also be expected to use M/ETHANE to convey information about the incident in the situation reports they give to civil agencies. Information shared should be free of acronyms and terms used by only one agency. This ensures that the information shared is clear and unambiguous.

13.2.3. CO-ORDINATION

Depending on the nature of the incident, one of the civil emergency services (or an appropriate responder) generally takes the lead role at an incident to ensure an effective response, with military contribution in a supporting role. Military unit commanders are responsible for identifying themselves at the forward command post, or any other location that they have been asked to attend. They should establish effective co-ordination with the lead civilian responder to ensure tasks are allocated appropriately.

13.2.4. JOINT UNDERSTANDING OF RISK

Commanders of civilian responder agencies will share their respective risk assessments and establish a joint understanding of risks to ensure the safety of responders. This will include any military assets where they are under the control of civilian agencies. However, this does not absolve military commanders from their own assessment of the risks and, where necessary, military commanders must decide for themselves whether the risks their personnel are exposed to are tolerable and as low as reasonably practicable. If there is disagreement between the military and the civilian commander, the military commander must inform the military chain of command as soon as possible.

13.2.5. SHARED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

A common understanding of the circumstances and immediate consequences of an emergency, together with an appreciation of available resources and the capabilities of responder agencies, is critical to success. Using the mnemonic M/ETHANE allows incident information to be shared in a way that is easily understood. As incidents develop, the briefing tool, IIMARCH should be used by civilian agencies, with information briefed against each heading in the IIMARCH mnemonic (Information, Intent, Method, Administration, Risk assessment, Communications, Humanitarian issues). However, in the early stages, a briefing can be delivered quickly around the content of the joint decision model.

13.2.6. JOINT ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING − MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Military units are encouraged to contribute to post-incident de-briefs and to ensure that interoperability lessons are captured in the joint organisational learning application on the ResilienceDirect website.

13.2.7. JOINT TRAINING AND EXERCISING

If military units and personnel are likely to assist civilian emergency services in their area, they are encouraged to take part in joint learning opportunities to enhance their awareness of the JESIP principles and ways of working.

The Army's Regional Point of Command (RPOC) brigades will co-ordinate this, usually through the network of joint regional liaison officers (JRLOs).

13.3. INFORMATION FOR CIVIL RESPONDERS WHERE MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IS LIKELY

This section gives responder agencies information on working with the military. It does not cover in depth the process for requesting assistance, or the capabilities and assets available.

13.3.1. COMMAND AUTHORITY

Military personnel deployed to assist with civilian responders remain under the military chain of command at all times. This means that they may be withdrawn at any time should the chain decide that they are required for higher priority tasks. Military commanders are also authorised to refuse tasks if they believe they are inappropriate, beyond the scope of the original request for assistance, or they put their personnel at undue risk. In these circumstances, the military commander will report the incident to a higher authority as soon as possible.

13.3.2. COMMAND AND CONTROL

Military command and control structure differs from that used by civilian agencies. The military strategic level of command is executed through the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The operational level of command will be taken by MoD Headquarters Standing Joint Commander (UK) based in Andover, whilst the tactical level of command is usually held by the Army's Regional Point of Command (RPOC) brigade commanders.

The Army's RPOC brigade commanders are usually appointed as joint military commanders for an operation to support UK civil authorities and in this capacity they may base themselves at the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. More military liaison officers will be deployed to the strategic co-ordinating group/s and tactical co-ordinating group/s (TCG/s) appropriate to the operation.

13.3.3. DEFENCE FIRE AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION

The Defence Fire and Rescue Management Organisation (DFRMO) has limited numbers of personnel and equipment at a number of MoD establishments.

Should the incident escalate to involve other fire and rescue services and responders, DFRMO incident command policy presents a building block approach for a robust incident management process.

DFRMO policy is that the fire officer from the primary authority takes charge of the incident. If the incident takes place at a military establishment, this will be the DFRMO incident commander.

At incidents where there are special risks, such as those involving military aircraft or submarines, the civil fire and rescue service fire officer will assume the role of overall incident commander at the incident, but will work closely with the senior DFRMO fire officer present, who may assume the role of tactical adviser, sharing risk-critical information.

13.3.4. JOINT REGIONAL LIAISON OFFICER (JRLO)

The joint regional liaison officer (JRLO)is the MoD's primary focus for integrating regional UK military operations with civil authorities. The regions are based on the geographic boundaries of the Army's Regional Point of Command (RPOC) brigades.

During routine periods they represent the MoD at local resilience forums and attend all relevant training and exercising events. When a crisis occurs, they may represent the Regional Point of Command (RPOC) brigade commander at the strategic co-ordinating group. But if the crisis covers a number of local resilience forum areas and a representative from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is needed in a number of areas, another military liaison officer may assume the role. They will be nominated by the MoD and will usually be drawn from military establishments or units in the region involved.

Single-service liaison officers from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force complement the capability and capacity of the joint regional liaison officer and provide specialist, single-service advice. The joint regional liaison officer can provide advice on the military capability available in an emergency situation and how to submit a request

13.3.5. REQUESTS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE

If the assistance or support of the armed forces is required at an incident, a 'military aid to the civil authority' (MACA) request is usually made through the strategic co-ordinating group to the relevant lead government department. If the lead responder on the ground is the police or the fire and rescue service, the lead government department will be the Home Office. For the ambulance service it will be the Department of Health.

Where the local authority is the lead responder, the lead government department is the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Slightly different arrangements exist in the devolved areas, although the lead government departments are still the London-based Wales Office, Northern Ireland Office and Scotland Office. In circumstances where the formal command structure for a civil emergency response has not been established, police headquarters will be able to supply the contact details for the joint regional liaison officer (JRLO) for each area.

13.3.6. EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

If an exceptional emergency situation develops and an urgent response from military units is needed to save life, local commanders are authorised under standing arrangements to deploy without seeking approval from a higher authority.

The Defence Council approves the use of Ministry of Defence (MoD) service personnel on tasks that are assessed as:

"Being urgent work of national importance, such work as is considered by a local commander, at the time when the work needs to be performed, to be urgently necessary for the purposes of the alleviation of distress and preservation and safeguarding of lives and property in the time of disaster…"

In very exceptional circumstances, therefore, where there is a grave and sudden emergency, military commanders have a duty to act on their own responsibility without a request by the civil authority. The commander must consider that the situation demands an immediate intervention to protect life or property.

13.4. FURTHER INFORMATION

More details of the role of the armed forces in supporting the civil authorities can be found in the following documents:

[Operations in the UK: The Defence Contribution to Resilience - Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 02](#)

[Operations in the UK: A Guide for Civil Responders](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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