Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

INCIDENT COMMAND ASSESSMENT

LEVEL 1

PRE COURSE LEARNING

VERSION CONTROL

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PLEASE RECORD THIS PRE COURSE LEARNING ON TRACKING & TRAINING DATABASE USING THE FOLLOWING CODE:

LECTURES: EL03A – ELECTRONIC LEARNING ICA1 PRE COURSE LEARNING

INDEX

1. Aim

To give candidates an insight into Incident Command Assessment Level 1 (ICA1).

It is also a useful general guide for Incident Commanders.

2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Have an understanding of the assessment process and marking criteria, based on National Occupational Standards: *WM7 – Lead & support people to resolve operational incidents.*

2. Be familiar with the tools that can be used to gather information and identify hazards on arrival, and throughout an incident.

3. Be able to deliver a comprehensive brief to crews and delegate tasks.

4. Understand the Decision Control Process.

5. Be able to hand over an incident to a more senior officer.

3. INTRODUCTION

The ICA1 course is designed to train, develop and assess candidates on their ability to be safe, effective and assertive incident commanders.

You will be assessed as the incident commander at a virtual incident using a computer based programme, called *"XVR Simulation."* The incident will be appropriate for a Level 1 incident commander. You will be given a practical demonstration of the system to ensure you are familiar with how it works. You will also learn by watching an instructor deliver a Level 1 incident at the required standard, as well as completing a practice assessment yourself.

Peer learning is an important part of the course and you will watch other candidates' **practice** assessments. This allows you to note learning points for your own assessment and give constructive feedback. It should be noted that your final/marked assessment is only watched by your assessors.

All aspects of the course and assessment are derived from:

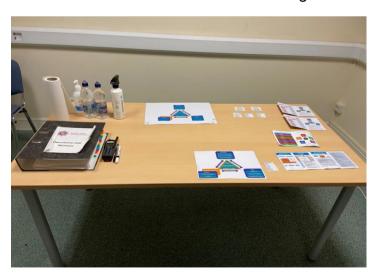• Service Training Note – Operational 01 – Incident Command

• National Occupational Standards - Crew/Watch Manager Rolemap: *WM7 – Lead & support people to resolve operational incidents*

• National Operational Guidance   https://www.ukfrs.com/nog

4. VIRTUAL INCIDENT GROUND

You will be alone in a room for your assessment. This room becomes the virtual **incident ground**. Assessment facilitators will be in an adjacent room operating the computer system. This room is known as the **facilitator suite**. Assessors will watch your assessment via CCTV.

*A candidate during assessment in the **Incident Ground***

*Incident ground table layout with **useful items** (items subject to change)*

VISUALS

All incidents will be displayed on a large screen and you will interact with virtual characters as you would do on a real incident ground. If you wish to speak to a character or go to a particular area of the incident ground, you will need to instruct facilitators to take you there. You will not have to operate any controls yourself.

For example: *"Take me on a 360° of the building please..."*
Facilitators will then walk you through the virtual scenario to your desired location, using computer controls from the facilitator suite.

It is impossible to fully recreate the sensory cues of a real incident. If something is unclear you may ask facilitators for clarity, e.g. "*Is that smoke or steam coming out of that engine?"* or *"Is the smoke coming out of the house on the left or the right?"* This will not have a negative impact on your score.

AUDIO

If you interact with a character e.g. a bystander, property owner, members of your crew, they will respond to you in real time. The characters/voices will be played by facilitators and you will hear their voices through speakers. Talk to characters as you would do on a real incident ground.

A sound check will be carried out before your assessment begins to ensure you are happy with volume levels.

During your assessment you should react to any new information you receive both verbally and visually, for example, an escalation of the fire.

A typical scene – house fire

A typical scene – road traffic collision

5. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

You will be brought to the **'Incident Ground'** (a classroom) and the environment will be explained to you. Feel free to ask for clarity on anything you are unsure of.

A facilitator will then read you the turnout sheet twice, and also give you a copy for you to refer to throughout the incident. At this point you will know the incident you are being mobilised to and will be given **5 minutes preparation time**. This simulates the thinking time you would normally be afforded as you drive to an incident.

You should use this time appropriately, such as making notes, looking up aide memoires, utilising Level 1 Incident Command Board etc.

When the 5 minutes has elapsed, facilitators will carry out a sound check with you and ask which appliance call sign you would prefer to use for realism of radio messages.

INITIAL ATTENDANCE

You will be the first attending appliance with a crew of 5 personnel including yourself. The initial mobilisation will be as per the turnout sheet and additional appliances will arrive later in the incident.

ON ARRIVAL

The assessment will begin with the appliance proceeding to the incident. You are being assessed from the moment the fire appliance starts to move.

You will arrive, be brought out of the fire appliance and be given a walking overview of the immediate scene. Please note: **this is not a 360°**

Following this, you will be in charge of the incident and you must direct facilitators as you require e.g. you may wish to instruct facilitators to walk you over to a bystander to gather information.

YOUR ASSESSMENT CAN BE SUMMARISED AS:

- Briefing your crew en route
- Information gathering and identifying hazards
- Incident evaluation – What is the priority? How will I eliminate risks? What further resources do I need?
- Your plan to resolve the incident, whilst managing the risks
- Command and control – delegation of tasks, using tools to assist you as OIC, use of the 2IC
- Communication – briefings, use of radio, handover to more senior officer
- Reviewing and updating your plan – getting updates and acting on new information
- Post-incident reflection and professional discussion with assessor

6. MARKING CRITERIA

PASS MARK

There is a minimum standard to be achieved.

- **0-49%**
  Red (Fail) Major development needs identified. Candidate requires significant development. A performance report will be provided detailing the areas of weakness. Candidates will not be allowed to take charge of a fire appliance until reassessment. **It is the responsibility of the candidate's District** to provide evidence of development before a candidate can return for reassessment.

- **50-59%**
  Amber (Pass) Satisfactory with development needs. Candidate remains available to take charge of a fire appliance. Candidates will be required to confirm understanding of their development needs by returning for reassessment within 12 months. **It is the responsibility of the individual** to provide evidence of development before a candidate can return for reassessment.

- **60-100%**
  Green (Pass) Candidates will be required to return for refresher and reassessment within 3 years.
  Candidates should continue to maintain and develop Incident Command skills.

- You will also be required to pass a written assessment as part of the course.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All aspects of candidates' performance during the course/assessment are kept <u>STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL</u> and are only communicated to the Group Commander (Personnel & Training) in candidates' respective areas.

Candidates are asked to respect this when attending the course.

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7. ANALYSIS OF PAST ASSESSMENTS

As part of a supportive learning environment, the Incident Command Faculty has reviewed all past assessments and the following is a list of errors and recurring themes identified. It is linked to the Decision Control Process (DCP). Instructors use this information to improve their teaching; however it is shared below to allow candidates to improve their own assessment.*

- Situation
    - Not gathering all crucial incident information
    - Failure to resource the incident early and appropriately
    - Failure to identify all hazards and risks

- Plan
    - Ineffective plan (can often be linked with poor information gathering)
    - Dynamic risk assessment – failure to eliminate or mitigate risks e.g. isolating utilities, deploying covering jets, use of thermal image cameras

- Action
    - Poor briefs – not making crews aware of hazards/risk identified
    - Failure to share information on incident ground
    - Poor radio message structure
    - Not declaring tactical mode
    - Poor use of incident ground communication – use of all available hand held radios. All personnel must be instructed to use 'station talk group' on trunk mode
    - Confusion/terminology regarding floors: ground/first/second etc.

- Active monitoring
    - Failure to get updates e.g. from BA teams, 2IC etc.
    - Failure to adapt plan according to updates
    - Poor delegation of tasks, particularly the use of 2IC
    - Failure to react to a deterioration in the incident

Treat the incident as real and do as you normally would – do not try to 'tick the boxes.'

*Please note: this is not an exhaustive list

8. INFORMATION GATHERING

The importance of gathering sufficient information at any incident cannot be underestimated. Information comes in many forms and may include information from:

- Occupiers, bystanders or responsible persons
- Fire alarm panels, history of previous calls
- Risk Critical Information (RCI), Aide Memoires, RCC, Crash Recovery
- What you see, hear and smell on arrival

It is important to be open-minded, not make assumptions and take a wide view of the whole scene, using *all* sources of information.

After reviewing past assessments, the Incident Command Faculty has developed the following acronym to help improve candidates' ability to 'actively question' bystanders. This will improve performance on **Information Gathering and Hazard/Risk Identification.**

Please note:
It is not mandatory that candidates follow this sequence.

PLEA   CLUBS

FIRE IN A BUILDING

PLEA
- **P**ersons Reported   Anyone inside?
- **L**ocation   Where are they in the building?
- **E**nquire   Are you ok? Taken in any smoke?
- **A**ccount   What happened?

CLUBS
- **C**ontents   Any hazardous contents/processes?
- **L**ayout   What is the layout of your property?
- **U**tilities   How do I isolate electric/gas/oil etc?
- **B**urn time   How long has the fire been burning?
- **S**tructure   What is the construction of floors/stairs?

PLEA

- **P**ersons Reported   How many in each vehicle?
- **L**ocation   Where are they? Who are the casualties?
- **E**nquire   Nature of injuries? Nature of entrapment?
- **A**ccount   What happened? Others involved?

CLUBS

- **C**ontents   Carrying anything hazardous?
- **L**ayout   Cutting points, airbags (apply restraint)
- **U**tilities   Fuel type? Isolate vehicles
- **B**urn time   How long ago? Golden hour etc
- **S**tructure   Crash recovery – reminder to use MDT

9. BRIEFING OF CREWS

It is imperative that incident commanders deliver a comprehensive brief before committing crews. It has been identified that crews are generally informed of their task, e.g. firefighting in a particular room, but key hazard information is not passed on.

Incident Command Faculty Staff have developed this useful summary of a brief to a breathing apparatus (BA) team to assist candidates to structure their briefs.

PRE ENTRY CHECK **COMMS** **PROTECTION** **TASK** **HAZARDS** **CONFIRM**

PRE ENTRY CHECK	*Get under air, carry out a pre entry check*
COMMS	*Make sure you're on Comms Channel 1*
PROTECTION	*You'll be taking in with you a HRJ & a TIC*
TASK	*Your task is to carry out a primary search of the first floor, 1 person unaccounted for*
HAZARDS	*Refer back to CLUBS* ***Contents:** No unusual contents, but we believe this to be a tumble dryer on fire in the kitchen* ***Layout:** 2 up/2 down – follow a left hand route to locate the large front bedroom, there is a rear bedroom and a rear bathroom upstairs also* ***Utilities:** Knock off the electric off above you as you go in the front door, let the ECO know.* ***Burntime:** Approx 30 mins, this is a well-developed fire, if the HRJ is insufficient let me know.* ***Structure:** Wooden floors and stairs – I am committing you above the fire, proceed with extreme caution*
CONFIRM	**Listen back to your brief for things missed.**

This is only an example brief and should not be considered as a 'textbook' example

RTC BRIEF

Just like briefing a BA team, it has been identified that incident commanders <u>do</u> convey information about the tasks needing completed, but <u>overlook</u> key hazard information and do not detail a definitive A & B plan.

In summary, a useful way to remember the key points of the brief is to detail each phase of the 'team approach' and add in the safety points associated with each phase.

It is important to note that your assessment is effectively a safety assessment and a scoring of a candidate's ability to keep all on the incident ground safe, alongside assessing their effectiveness to resolve the incident.

Failing to gather/share key safety information leads to low score.

An example brief:

1. **Details PPE for crew & casualty**
   Double eye protection/double gloves, dust masks, hard/soft protection.

2. **Detail A & B plan**
   Factor in potential foot entrapment as part of both plans.

3. **6 phases – useful prompts for safety information**
   - Scene assessment: isolate vehicles, apply handbrake, apply airbag restraints.
   - Stabilisation and initial access: remember to check stability
   - Glass management: remember appropriate PPE for crew/casualty/other agencies
   - Space Creation: create an equipment dump and keep the scene free of trip hazards.
   - Full access
   - Casualty extrication: this casualty has the following injuries…

4. **Hazards** refer to **CLUBS**

5. **Confirm** **Listen back to your brief for things missed.**

10.   THE WIDER SCENE

Fundamental to incident command is the importance of not getting 'drawn in' to a specific task. This can be a particular problem at an early, dynamic stage of any incident. This can be seen as 'tunnel vision', or a **decision trap.**

It is important at regular intervals to step back, **review**, absorb further new information and **adapt** your plan accordingly. There are specific sections of the marking criteria devoted to assessing this.

You may have to change the brief of initial crews, or assign additional tasks to oncoming crews on the wider incident ground:

Although not an exhaustive list, these additional tasks may include:

- Establish an inner cordon
- Source info from MDT – aide memoire, crash recovery, hazmat info, RCI
- Setting up a casualty handling area
- Check/evacuate neighbouring properties
- Manage utilities e.g. gas, electric etc.
- Additional water supplies
- Additional covering jets
- 360° survey/wider 360°
- Appoint safety officer
- Further information gathering
- Other WCs/CCs present taking responsibility for specific tasks/areas/safety roles

11.   DECISION CONTROL PROCESS

The decision control process (DCP) supports natural decision making at an incident and also supports decision makers in a practical way to avoid unintended consequences of decision traps.

Incident commanders are accountable for the decisions they make. You should be able to provide reasoned justifications for what you did and why. This is supported by the use of the DCP.

The DCP should be used **throughout** the incident to aid decision making. It is also the required format of any **handover** to a more senior officer.

DCP – USE DURING AN INCIDENT

Situation
Has it changed?

- Incident Information
  Has the incident changed in any way? Has it got larger? Has it spread? Has it changed in nature?

- Resource Information
  Have I got the resources to deal with the incident, not only now, but in the future? Is the incident going to become protracted - will I need relief crews?

- Risk Information
  What are the hazards? Have the risks changed? Have I identified new risks? Am I still searching for risk information and if not, why not?

Plan
Is it working?

- Objectives
  e.g. locating & extinguishing fire, rescuing persons trapped, carrying out a primary search, (list continues…)
  What are my objectives? Am I achieving them? Have I identified any new objectives?

- Tactical Priorities
  e.g. my current priority from my list of objectives is 'rescuing persons trapped'
  Have my priorities changed? - new risks may change my priorities. Casualty now rescued? = adapt plan.

- Operational Tactics
  e.g. My current tactics are 4 BA, 2 HRJs, 1 x 9m ladder.
  As the incident changes, are my tactics working? Is firefighting media sufficient? Have I my resources in the right place doing the right things? Do I need to sectorise?

Action

How well am I running this incident?

- Communication
  RCC: Have I sent sufficient messages? Have I declared the tactical mode?
  Incident ground: Do I have comms on the incident ground? Are BA teams on comms?
  Briefs: Have I passed on all relevant information to crews? Have I updated them? Have I detailed what I want the crews to do?
- Control
  Have I made the scene as safe as possible?
  (Cordons, safety officers, good briefs, mode declared, use of MDT, Level 1 Command support when appropriate, other safety measures)
  Span of control: role of 2ic

Decision Controls - Active Monitoring

Am I continuously monitoring the incident and reviewing?

- Why
  Why am I doing this? Is there a better way?
  Can I seek advice from anywhere? e.g. Aide memoires, RCC, other agencies.

- Expectations
  Is the incident where I thought it would be? If not why not? Do I need to change my plan, reassess my priorities, increase resources etc?
  Where do I expect the incident to be in the future? How can I make this happen more effectively?
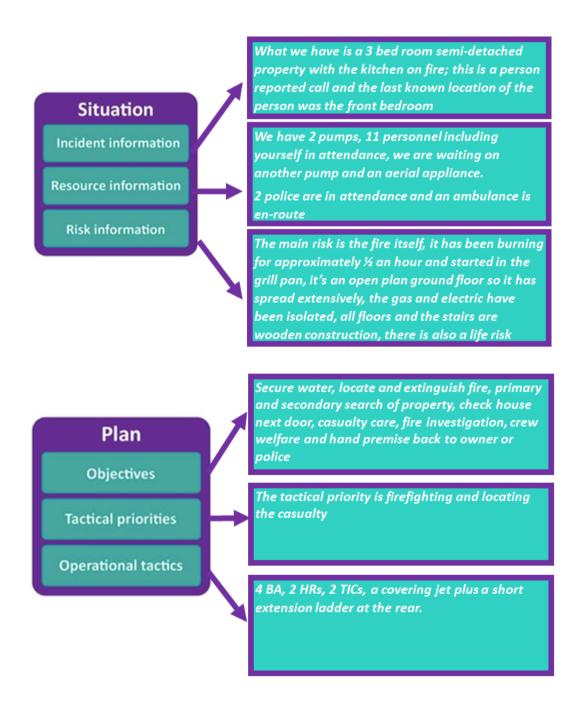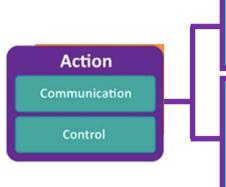
- Benefit vs Risk
  Have I updated my DRA? Does the benefit outweigh the risk? Is a change of tactical mode required?

DCP – HANDING OVER THE INCIDENT

The DCP is used to hand over the incident to a more senior officer in a format recognised by both parties. This ensures information is not missed or misunderstood. It is important that the handover is both comprehensive and accurate.

The following is an example of a handover:

Situation
- Incident information
- Resource information
- Risk information

What we have is a 3 bed room semi-detached property with the kitchen on fire; this is a person reported call and the last known location of the person was the front bedroom

We have 2 pumps, 11 personnel including yourself in attendance, we are waiting on another pump and an aerial appliance.
2 police are in attendance and an ambulance is en-route

The main risk is the fire itself, it has been burning for approximately ½ an hour and started in the grill pan, it's an open plan ground floor so it has spread extensively, the gas and electric have been isolated, all floors and the stairs are wooden construction, there is also a life risk

Plan
- Objectives
- Tactical priorities
- Operational tactics

Secure water, locate and extinguish fire, primary and secondary search of property, check house next door, casualty care, fire investigation, crew welfare and hand premise back to owner or police

The tactical priority is firefighting and locating the casualty

4 BA, 2 HRs, 2 TICs, a covering jet plus a short extension ladder at the rear.

Action

Communication

Control

I am the command point and all messages to RCC are through me on E1 district talk group, can you put you radio on to Knock station talk group. The driver of my pump, myself and the 2IC all have radios. Both BA teams on BA comms channel 1

I briefed my BA teams and made them aware of the hazards; team 1 is firefighting on the ground floor, team 2 is assisting team 1, isolating the electricity and when the fire is knocked down proceeding up to the first floor to search for the casualty in the front bedroom. My 2IC is at the rear looking for signs of collapse, change in conditions and looking for an egress point (with a ladder) in case she sees the casualty. I have also detailed a FF to check the adjoining property.

Action

Communication

Control

I have an inner cordon in place and the Police are managing the outer cordon

I haven't been able to establish level 1 ICS because we just don't have the resources at the minute but I will get it set up when the next pump arrives.

I have consulted the aide memoire for firefighting in buildings

My 2ic has been given a safety role and is currently carrying out a further 360°

We are currently in Oscar Mode.

12.   SELF REFLECTION

After you hand the incident over to the oncoming senior officer, you will have a chance to reflect upon your performance. This gives you the opportunity to note any positives aspects of your performance, as well as any development points or things you would do differently in the future.

This is an important part of the assessment process, and recognising any errors before being prompted can adjust your overall score.

An assessor will join you after you have had a chance to reflect, and will have a **professional discussion** with you regarding your assessment. You may be asked to explain or justify some of your actions.

Please note: your assessment is not over until the professional discussion takes place. Your score can be adjusted after this.

Area in incident ground for self reflection/professional discussion

13.   FURTHER READING

It is essential that candidates have the appropriate knowledge of procedures before coming on the course.

- Service Training Note – Operational 01 – Incident Command

  G:\Training\Training Notes & Powerpoints\05. Operations\Operational 01 - Incident Command.pdf

- Service Training Note – General 08 – Radio Communications

  G:\Training\Training Notes & Powerpoints\02. General\General 08 - Radio Communications.pdf

- Operational Aide-Memoire:

  G:\Document Management System\DMS\Operational Aide-Memoire

C 01	Dynamic Risk Assessment
C 02	Dynamic Risk Assessment Decision Control Method
C 02A	Tactical mode
C 03	Incident Command
F 08	Fighting Fires in Buildings
H 5	Road Traffic Incidents
H 6	Vehicle Hazards
L 1	Firefighter Emergencies

- Crew/Watch Manager Rolemap: *WM7 – Lead & support people to resolve operational incidents*

- National Operational Guidance – Incident Command
  https://www.ukfrs.com/nog