



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE NO 2

Incident Command System – Mobilising Arrangements

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NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE BRIGADE

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE NO 2

ICS MOBILISING ARRANGEMENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Incident Command System (ICS) review process programmed for 2002 has now been completed and following consultation with Senior Management and the Representative Body, a number of amendments have been made to the existing procedures. These amendments are as a result of the collation of information from Active Operational Monitoring (AOM) Officers and feedback from Area Commands.
- 1.2 The attached mobilising grid (see appendix 'A') forms the framework for the mobilising arrangements necessary to give effect to the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade's ICS, details of which can be found in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Nos 1 A-G. The revised mobilising arrangements are designed to ensure a safer operating environment as a result of appropriate incident resourcing in terms of appliances, equipment and Officer cover. An explanation of the constituent parts of the mobilising arrangements has been provided to ensure uniformity of approach.
- 1.3 The District Command structure was designed to enhance Officer availability and contribute to timely and adequate resourcing of incidents. In order to ensure that the use of operational intelligence, local knowledge and personal development are maximised, the concept of nearest Officer mobilising has been amended as part of the ICS review process.
- 1.4 It is considered essential that District Command staff have the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of training delivery and assess crew performance to identify issues relating to safety and training needs analysis. In addition, since District Command Officers are responsible for operational intelligence and contingency planning within their District, it is appropriate that the information and experience gained as a result of the site specific planning process is fully utilised by their attendance, thereby contributing to effective incident management.

- 1.5 It is for the foregoing reasons that, in future, Officer mobilisation shall take account of these factors and the nearest Officer from the District Command in which the incident occurs shall normally be mobilised to an incident in the first instance.
- 1.6 Given the geographical size of Eastern Command and the number and scale of site specific risks, the nearest Eastern District Command Officer shall normally be mobilised in the first instance to all incidents, including those incident types listed in 1.7 below.
- 1.7 The principle of nearest Officer mobilising, irrespective of rank or posting, shall continue to apply to all incidents of the type listed below, where there is the potential for risk to life and/or a need for immediate supervisory cover, given the complexity of the incident.
- 1.7.1 Road Traffic Accident (RTC) - persons trapped.
- 1.7.2 All Emergency Special Service Call (except lifts), eg, confined space, rope rescue, water rescue, persons trapped.
- 1.7.3 Major incidents.
- 1.7.4 COMAH incidents.
- 1.7.5 Persons Reported fire.
- 1.7.6 Hazmat incidents.
- 1.8 The above criteria has been applied to nearest Officer mobilising, as research has indicated that the likelihood of firefighters being seriously injured is increased where life is known or suspected to be endangered and public expectation and moral obligations can induce personnel to take unnecessary risks or fail to conduct adequate risk assessment and implement appropriate control measures.
- 1.9 Brigade Control shall mobilise the nearest Officer, up to and including Senior Divisional Officer, as the first responding Officer to all incidents of the type listed above and that Officer shall normally attend. Where Officers of varying ranks are all available within the same geographical area, then Brigade Control shall normally mobilise the lowest appropriate rank first.

2 NEAREST OFFICER MOBILISING

- 2.1 The principle of nearest Officer mobilising shall apply to make-up incidents of 4 pumps and above, with the single exception of those incidents requiring the attendance of a Senior Divisional Officer as the minimum rank of Incident Commander (IC). In these circumstances the Area Commander (AC) of the relevant Area shall be mobilised when on duty. Where this Officer is unable to attend and the next nearest Senior Divisional Officer is a considerable distance from the incident, then the nearest Principal Officer shall be mobilised.
- 2.2 The overarching principle of nearest Officer mobilising is to ensure, particularly in respect of Retained crews, that Supervisory Officer cover is provided as soon as possible and that the travel distance of a responding Officer is not excessive, particularly when another Officer is available in proximity to the incident.
- 2.3 Where a Senior Divisional Officer/Divisional Officer (SDO/DO) attends an incident as 'nearest Officer' and due to pressing managerial responsibilities and/or Senior Officer cover requirements it is necessary for that Officer to be relieved as soon as practicable, then an Officer of Station Officer/Assistant Divisional Officer (Stn O/ADO) rank may be mobilised to relieve that Officer at his/her request. This is subject to there being a formal handing over on the fireground and that the incident does not require and is not likely to require the attendance of an Officer of SDO/DO rank. It must be emphasised that this facility is to be used only when necessary, ie, to relieve a duty Strategic Command Support Officer/Performance Review Officer or the duty Area Command Officer, duty Photographer, etc, who have responded as the nearest Officer but who also have other responsibilities.

3 OFFICER AVAILABILITY

- 3.1 It is essential that Wholetime crews, at change of shift, inform Brigade Control of the rank of the Officer-in-Charge (O-i-C), stipulating whether Stn O, Acting Stn O, Sub-Officer (Sub-O) or Acting Sub-O, as this shall have a bearing on the need for Officer attendance.
- 3.2 For the purpose of determining the total number of Officers at an incident, a Stn O or Temporary Stn O (Rider) shall count as an Officer attendance.
- 3.3 It is also essential, given the concept of nearest Officer mobilising, that Flexible Duty Officers (FDS) inform Brigade Control of their exact location and availability and, as agreed with the Representative Body, this should be a defined station area, the Officer's base or standby location (home).

4 OFFICER ATTENDANCE

- 4.1 Only those Officers mobilised by Brigade Control shall attend operational incidents in a command role and, in keeping with ICS operating principles, Officers should not attend incidents unless mobilised by Brigade Control. This policy has been adopted in the light of information obtained as a result of Fatal Accident Investigations in the UK and constitutes current 'best practice'.
- 4.2 This does not preclude a Supervisory Officer from attending an operational incident for the purposes of validation or to observe firefighting operations subject to that Officer reporting to the IC/Incident Control Point on arrival. However, it is important to reinforce that excessive Officer attendance at an incident can have the effect of undermining the command role of the IC and can often lead to 'multiple competitive command', which is referred to in SOP No 1A and which has been criticised following recent Fatal Accident Inquiries.
- 4.3 Officers **informed** of an incident by Brigade Control are not required to attend, as the incident details have been passed for information purposes only.
- 4.4 Officers mobilised to an incident (ie, turnout to ---) are required to attend the incident.
- 4.5 The practice of requesting the 'first message' and not attending has grown over the years in an ad hoc fashion, with limited criteria for when this is appropriate. Officers mobilised to an incident shall attend, unless it can be demonstrated that their attendance was not appropriate. While it is envisaged that there may be occasions when this may be justified, it is important to emphasise that the concept of 'nearest Officer mobilising' was agreed with the Representative Body to ensure effective service delivery and a safer operating environment for personnel and this should be foremost in the minds of Officers when mobilised to any incident.

5 SPECIALIST OFFICERS

- 5.1 The Strategic Command Support (SCS) Officer shall be mobilised and shall respond to the SCS Room at Brigade Headquarters in the following circumstances:
 - 5.1.1 The attendance of 6 pumps or the attendance of 5 pumps and the operational use of an aerial appliance.
 - 5.1.2 A major Hazmat incident.
 - 5.1.3 A major COMAH incident.

- 5.1.4 An incident involving an 'offshore' response.
- 5.1.5 Any incident involving the death of/serious injury to Brigade personnel.
- 5.1.6 Any prolonged civil disturbance.
- 5.1.7 Any major incident (as defined in the Major Incident Plan).
- 5.1.8 A request from a Principal Officer for an SCS Officer to be mobilised.
- 5.1.9 A request by the O-i-C, Brigade Control, for assistance of an SCS Officer.
- 5.2 In responding, the SCS Officer may also request that a duty ADO from Brigade Headquarters responds also to staff the SCS Room.
- 5.3 The duty AOM Officer shall be informed of and shall normally attend the following types of incident to perform an operational audit:
 - 5.3.1 The attendance of 4 pumps or the attendance of 3 pumps and the operational use of an aerial appliance.
 - 5.3.2 Confirmed Hazmat incidents.
 - 5.3.3 Incidents involving a request for/deployment of a specialist team (rope rescue, etc).
 - 5.3.4 Any terrorist-related incident/major civil disturbance.
 - 5.3.5 Any special service call (SSC) which is an incident of special interest.

6 SPECIAL APPLIANCES AND SUPPORT

- 6.1 As indicated in the mobilising grid, special appliances in the form of Command Vehicles and specialist support staff such as the Communications and Transport Departments shall be mobilised automatically at pre-set trigger points. With the exception of incidents, which involve fire fatalities the IC will be prompted as to the requirement for the duty Brigade photographer to attend. This does not preclude the IC from requesting such resources at any stage.

- 6.2 As part of the Brigade's development and improvement programme it is envisaged that additional Technical Support vehicles, Command Units and Rescue Tenders shall go on the run in the future. As a consequence, the mobilising grid shall be amended to reflect the availability of the new appliances and the enhanced cover they provide.

7 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 7.1 The IC shall be informed of the call signs and stations of reinforcing appliances as a result of a 'make-up', as well as the call signs of additional Officers mobilised for Command Support. This will enable the Command Support Officer to record these details in the 'Resources' section of the Incident Command Board.
- 7.2 Appliances and Officers mobile to an incident as an 'additional resource' shall be informed of the type of operational tactics being employed by crews at the incident, ie, 'Defensive Operations' (firefighting outside building), 'Offensive Operations' (firefighting inside building) or 'Transitional Operations' (mixture of Offensive and Defensive).
- 7.3 Where a Rendezvous Point or Marshalling Area has been set up, responding crews and Officers shall also be advised of this.

DIVISIONAL OFFICER
(OPERATIONS POLICY)