

Command support at incidents

Official

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 Responsible work team: **Incident Command Policy and Operations Review Team**

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Key point summary

- Set up an Initial Command Pump as soon as possible;
- Set up the Initial Command Wallet;
- Tell Control the call sign of the ICP and maintain radio contact;
- Do not return a Command unit (CU) unless a stop message is sent;
- Retain any documentation for the IC to decide if it needs archiving.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the provision of command support available to incident commanders (IC), the functions of the command unit (CU), and the duties of the command support officers.

2 Level 1 – Initial command pump (ICP)

- 2.1 Level 1 initial command support will be provided at incidents by personnel riding front line appliances.

Designating a command pump officer (CPO)

- 2.2 The firefighter designated to run the first phase of command support will not need a specialist command support officer qualification. It is essential for watch managers to regularly train their personnel in the duties of a command pump officer (CPO), the functions of an initial command pump (ICP) and the use of an initial command wallet (ICW). See [Policy number 238](#) - Incident command procedures.
- 2.3 The IC will designate a firefighter as CPO as soon as possible. It is recognised that this may not be possible immediately on arrival. However a CPO should be nominated as soon as resources are available.
- 2.4 The firefighter designated as a CPO should only carry out that role and not engage in any other duties such as pump operator or breathing apparatus entry control officer.

Duties of command pump officer (CPO)

- 2.5 Identify a suitable pump to be utilised as the Initial Command Pump (ICP). This should not be the base pump, or any pump which is involved in other pumping duties.
- 2.6 Notify Brigade Control, from all incidents that require an informative or assistance message that an ICP has been initiated, e.g. 'E351 is the Initial Command Pump at this incident, Tactical Mode.....'
- 2.7 Make sure that the headlights and blue beacons of the ICP remain on so that it can be easily identified. Turn off all beacons on other appliances where this does not jeopardise the safety of personnel or other road users.
- 2.8 Collect nominal roll boards from appliances already on the scene.
- 2.9 Deposit nominal roll boards in the Initial Command Wallet (ICW).
- 2.10 Enter preliminary incident details on the ICW incident information board.
- 2.11 Record the declared tactical mode at the incident.
- 2.12 Draw a basic line drawing of the scene of the incident.

- 2.13 Receive nominal roll boards from oncoming appliances and senior officers. Place them in the ICW and notify the IC of crews/officers available at the ICP.
- 2.14 Notify oncoming officers/crews of the requirements of the IC, recording brief details on the ICW incident information board.
- 2.15 Maintain radio contact with the IC and Brigade Control.
- 2.16 Continue to function as the ICP for the duration of the incident or until told to close down by the CU staff, at which point the CPO will then pass the ICW to the CU.

Note: The CPO may be instructed to continue their command support role by taking over the main scheme radio on the CU.

Functions of the Initial Command Pump (ICP)

- 2.17 The ICP will be the focal point at an incident, when the CU is not in attendance. This will allow police, ambulance or other agencies to identify a location to contact the IC, or for a roll call following an evacuation of Brigade personnel.
- 2.18 The ICP will provide the communications link between Brigade Control and the IC. The appliance main scheme radio must be monitored, as risk critical information may need to be passed to the IC from Brigade Control.
- 2.19 Appliance commanders and senior officers are to report to the ICP, hand in their nominal roll boards and gather information on the incident and crew deployment as appropriate.

Functions of the Initial Command Wallet (ICW)

- 2.20 The ICW provides a secure arrangement for holding nominal roll boards and will be used when the ICP is established. The ICW may be positioned in any suitable location close to the ICP.
- 2.21 The incident information board will be used to collate preliminary details of the incident and to brief oncoming personnel.
- 2.22 The ICW will facilitate a speedy and efficient transfer of nominal roll boards and information between the ICP and the CU.

3 Level 2 – Dedicated command support

- 3.1 Dedicated command support is provided by eight CUs strategically located across the Brigade. These vehicles are a Mercedes Atego chassis with a purpose built body providing the command area. The command area incorporates a range of computer and communications equipment with fax and print facilities. The internal design provides a large working area with a 40" screen separating the main command area from the two work stations in the technical area at the rear of the vehicle.



- 3.2 The command area is accessed by a door located on the near side of the vehicle body. The near side of the vehicle also incorporates an external 32" touch screen that can display all of the information available on the internal computer systems. This provides a briefing area for crews and officers at an incident.



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- 3.3 To the right of the external screen is the designated booking in window. When a CU is operating at an incident the dot matrix sign above this window will be lit to identify the vehicle as the command support vehicle for the incident. All appliances and officers attending an incident should report to this area on arrival and submit their nominal roll board.

Command unit technical equipment

Information storage and retrieval

- 3.4 The CU has a database incorporating all Brigade policies and procedures and a range of aide memoirs, including a printable agenda for a multi agency silver meeting.
- 3.5 Documents can be created and stored electronically to record information relating to events at the incident. The CU also has the capacity to download and view information from a range of multi media devices.
- 3.6 The Command Support System (CSS) is a dedicated computerised command support resource designed around the Decision Making Model (DMM). Its capabilities are described in [Policy](#)

[number 722](#) - Command support system. Should CSS fail then a headline board and whiteboards are available on the CU.

- 3.7 Part of the functionality of CSS allows remote monitoring officers to access CSS via the Authority's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems. Brigade Control, RMC and other specialist groups also have these permissions.

Incident communications

- 3.8 The CU has the following communication facilities:

- Main scheme and incident ground fixed radio systems.
- Dedicated command channel on channel two provided by an onboard radio repeater. A mobile repeater is available to provide communication facilities at incidents where radio weak spots are evident.
- A leaky feeder cable for enhancing radio communications at sub surface incidents or where communications are difficult.
- Matel field telephone and cable for point to point wired communications.
- A downlink capability to view images from the MPS helicopter.
- Message conferencing facility for all users actively logged into an incident accessed via the CSS Conferencing Screen.

Other equipment

- 3.9 The CU carries a full range of operational tabards designating command and functional roles at an incident, a BA 2nd set carry bag and a set of forward information board (FIB) laminated templates. [Policy number 820](#) - Forward information board.
- 3.10 CU team leaders are issued with digital cameras. Photographs can be downloaded onto the CU.

Command Support Functions

- 3.11 The CU will provide dedicated command support at incidents. Taking over all functions of the CPO, ICW and ICP and supporting the IC. There are four defined functional areas of command support provided by the CU team:

Operations Support

- 3.12 Providing dedicated support to the IC at incidents giving advice on the appropriate level of command support required at an incident. Provide the IC with detail of the functionality and capability of the CU and crew.

Communications Support

- 3.13 Monitoring main scheme and fireground radios, drafting and sending messages authorised by the IC. Utilising the functionality of the CU to enhance incident communications.

Logistics Support

- 3.14 Provide the focal/rendezvous point for booking-in appliances, senior officers and other agencies attending operational incidents. Assisting in preparation and implementation of relief plans, and providing information on projected resource requirements.

Planning Support and Information Management

- 3.15 Utilise fully the functionality of the CU to record and display information to support the IC. Provide an enhanced pictorial representation of the incident detailing resources and operational strategies i.e. location and designation of sectors.

Duties of Command Unit Staff

- 3.16 Command staff are identified by a red and white chequered tabard with the words 'COMMAND STAFF' and are only to be utilised for command support duties.
- 3.17 The CU Staff will carry out the following specific tasks when in-attendance at an incident.
- On arrival liaise with the IC and provide advice to the IC in relation to command support.
 - Relieve the CPO of their duties and transfer the ICW to the CU.
 - Notify Brigade Control that the CU is now Incident Command Vehicle.
 - Enter preliminary incident information as per the CSS start-up protocols as described in Policy Number 722 - Command support system.
 - Transmit and receive messages to and from Brigade Control.
 - Utilise the functions of the CU as appropriate e.g. provide a print out of 200m radius hazard zone at a cylinder incident.
 - The team leader will ensure the CU personnel provide accurate information relating to the incident and that this is displayed via CSS to assist the IC to manage the incident.
 - Maintain and update the plan of the incident, including the recording of the duties and location of senior officers and operational crews committed at the incident.
 - Maintain an operational overview of the reserve appliances and crews held at the marshalling area (if in operation).
 - Transmitting and receiving information/messages to and from the IC.
 - Co-ordinate and maintain radio contact with sector/operations commanders.
 - Transmit and record information/messages to and from Brigade Control or the Resource Management Centre (RMC) as appropriate to the incident.
- 3.18 Receive/issue nominal roll boards from/to appliances and senior officers, ensuring details match those on CSS. It is the responsibility of on-coming officers and appliance commanders to book themselves in attendance with Control.
- Note:** Command staff may request additional personnel from the IC to assist with the CU's administrative functions, these personnel will be briefed by command staff, they will not undertake the specialist duties of the command staff.

Interaction with the Command Unit Team

- 3.19 When a CU is in attendance at an incident it will have a minimum of two dedicated personnel to provide command support at the incident.
- 3.20 At less complex incidents it is likely this level of support will be sufficient to deal with all aspects of command support across the range of command support functions, Ops support, communications, logistics, planning and information management.
- 3.21 At the early stages of a dynamic incident the IC should be aware of the number of CU personnel in attendance and their capacity. The IC's objectives in relation to the provision of command support should reflect the number of personnel immediately available. The CU team leader will advise the IC on the command support priorities including the need to make up CUs to meet the needs of the incident.

4 Mobilisation of command units

- 4.1 The CU will provide dedicated command support at operational incidents.
- 4.2 The CU will be staffed by three watch managers with a minimum ridership of two watch managers.

- 4.3 The CU will attend incidents that are declared 3/4 pump fires and above (not 3 pump grass fires or special services) in addition to other predetermined attendances including:
- Multiple calls to fires in premises;
 - Persons reported fires;
 - Confirmed Hazardous Materials incidents;
 - Cylinder incidents;
 - Forward mobilising procedure;
 - Major incidents;
 - Mass decontamination;
 - Fire Survival Guidance calls in line with [Policy number 790](#) - Fire survival guidance .
- 4.4 At incidents of six pumps and above an additional CU will be mobilised to assist with the command support functions at the incident.
- 4.5 Incident commanders do not have the discretion to return the initial CU ordered to an incident prior to a stop message being sent. Upon arrival at an incident the CU team leader will liaise with the IC and if following an assessment by the IC it is decided that command support can be fully provided at the incident by the CPO, the CU can be released from the incident.
- 4.6 The IC can, following liaison with the CU team leader, return the additional CU ordered at incident of six pumps and above where the additional command support is not required, i.e. 'Make pumps six additional CU not required.'
- 4.7 Additional CUs may be requested at any incident to provide dedicated functions. These functions may include:
- Dedicated conference facility i.e. Silver Meetings at incident.
 - Acting as a media liaison point at a distance from the main operations.
 - Provide dedicated support to BA main control officer.
- 4.8 Mobilising criteria for CUs and other appliances is contained within [Policy number 412](#) - Mobilising policy.

5 Command support sector

- 5.1 At large incidents the IC may nominate a person to undertake the role of sector commander command support (SCCS). This person will be responsible for the CU Team and functional support officers at the incident.
- 5.2 Details of the responsibilities of a SCCS are detailed within the Fire Service Manual Volume 2 Fire Service Operations – Incident Command
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/incidentcommand.pdf>.

6 When an incident is at the 'Under Control' phase

- 6.1 Before leaving an incident the CU team leader will make sure that a CPO has been designated and that a command pump (CP) is identified. All relevant information is then transferred to the CPO and they are supplied with the latest situational information, messages and maps. The CP will assume its designated role re-utilising the ICW as detailed earlier within this instruction. Prior to leaving an incident the CU on site will ensure that Brigade Control is notified that the CP is now in operation and confirm its call sign.

7 Collection and storage of documents created at an incident which a CU has attended

- 7.1 Hard copies of any documentation relating to an incident should be collected by CU crews on the instruction of the IC.
- 7.2 ICs should consider what documentation should be retained for archiving. This would depend on the type or impact of the incident e.g. loss of life or significant economic loss.
- 7.3 Documentation relating to information that is **not** automatically recorded on Authority systems should be considered e.g. Silver meeting agendas, any documents relating to Fire survival guidance calls or messages confined to the incident ground.
- 7.4 Documents created electronically on CUs may be down-loaded onto a computer disc.
- 7.5 These hard copies and disc(s) should be placed in an envelope addressed to Operations and Mobilising Directorate Admin (HQ) for archiving. The last CU team leader should ensure the envelope is posted in the internal mail. If the procedure occurs as described in paragraph 6.1 above the team leader may pass this responsibility to the appliance commander.
- 7.6 This procedure may be altered if the incident dictates, e.g. incidents that are likely to attract an inquiry. In these cases the IC, Monitoring or Operations Review Team officer may invoke other measures to ensure security and storage of documentation.

8 Command support vehicle call signs

- 8.1 Command Units are geographically located at the following stations:

- Edmonton - CU 1 Charlie Uniform One
- Islington - CU 2
- Barking - CU 3
- Lewisham - CU 4
- Woodside - CU 5
- Twickenham - CU 6
- Wembley - CU 7
- Fulham - CU 8

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	31/03/2011	SDIA	31/03/2011	HSWIA		RA	
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Throughout	Policy reviewed as current. Changes made throughout including replacing images and updated department names and procedures. Please read the policy to familiarise yourself with the content.	31/03/2011
Throughout	This policy has been protectively marked.	24/01/2012
Page 1	Changed owner from Head of Operational Procedures to Head of Operational Assurance.	24/10/2012
Page 5, para 3.9	The addition of forward information board (FIB) laminated templates.	14/01/2013
Page 7, para 4.3	Added first bullet point - three PF incidents attendance.	
Page 7, para 4.3	Amendments- CUs will attend incidents that are declared 3 pump fires	12/02/2013
Page 1	The 'Protect' mark on this policy has been changed to 'Official' to bring us in line with the Government classification scheme.	13/03/2014
Page 7	Section 4.3 Formatting and inclusion of Fire Survival Guidance	15/04/2014
Page 9, FOIA exemptions.	Protective marking changed to Security marking classification scheme.	10/07/2014
Page 9	Subjects list and Freedom of Information Act exemptions tables updated.	29/01/2015

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Command pump officer (CPO)	Command unit (CU)
Initial Command Pump (ICP)	Initial Command Wallet (ICW)
Incident command	Incident management

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification
Darren Munro – Incident	Selected information to be redacted	Official

Management		
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