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Subject

Incident Command Developments

Brief for

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Author

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This report updates members of the Lakeland House Working Group (LHWG) on the improvements that have been made to the functions and performance relating to incident command at high rise incidents. These improvements cover the items specifically referenced in the Coroner's Rule 43 recommendations as well as the other changes that have been introduced since the Lakeland House fire in 2009.

Rule 43 Recommendation

As members will be aware one of the specific recommendations detailed in the Coroner's Rule 43 letter, dated 28 March 2013, related to incident command. The Coroner made particular reference to the number of changes to the Incident Commander (IC) and asked the Brigade to consider giving training to ICs to enhance their performance in relation to the following:

- Use of the dynamic risk management model and other management tools to enable ICs to analyse a situation
- To recognise when to escalate attendance by more experienced ICs
- To anticipate that a fire might behave in a manner inconsistent with the compartmentation principle
- To be aware of the risks to those above and adjacent to the fire flat
- Handover from one IC to the next and effective deployment of outgoing ICs
- The collection of information from all possible sources
- Use of methodical search patterns

Some of the issues detailed above were already being progressed prior to the inquest as they had been identified by the internal reviews of performance that are routinely undertaken after a large incident. This was acknowledged by the Coroner in her letter to the Commissioner dated 28 March 2013.

All of the above issues have been fully reviewed and the following is a summary of the actions taken:

- Changes in Command - in November 2013 the Brigade changed the command thresholds for incidents to better reflect the scope of responsibility for each officer role, i.e., Station

Commented [c1]: We should note that whilst the training is being considered the incident was in our professional opinion so complex in the first half hour our officers did well to deal with the dynamic nature of the incident.

Commented [c2]: Covered over by change to span of control

Commented [c3]: Both covered by national GRA and new policies internally

Commented [c4]: I would make it clear the changes to span of control will mitigate changes of IC but this conflicts with bullet 2 requiring officers to change at complex incidents.

Commented [c5]: Covered in FSG policy and FIB policy

Commented [c6]: Covered in search policy

Manager (SM), Group Manager (GM), Deputy Assistance Commissioner (DAC), etc. These revisions involved middle and strategic command roles as detailed below:

- GMs now take command of 7 – 10 pump incidents (previously the range was 7 – 9)
- DACs now take command of 11 – 13 pump incidents (previously the range was 9 – 12)
- Assistant Commissioners are now responsible for 16 pump + incidents (previously 13 + pump incidents)

In relation to all of the training related issues the Brigade asked Babcock (the Brigade's training provider) to undertake a full review of all the Incident Management related courses and development programmes to assess whether they fully covered all seven issues detailed by the Coroner. This review confirmed that all seven issues were adequately covered in the existing portfolio of incident command training. However, it did highlight the potential to make more use of high rise incident related scenario to orientate the training towards this theme. As a result Babcock were instructed to take every opportunity to reference high rise incidents when delivery training inputs.

In addition to the above all the routine Incident Command Exercises (ICEs) for both middle and strategic managers have been based upon incident types that include various high rise premises.

Further opportunities to reference the challenges of managing high rise incidents have been taken through the Incident Command assessments that form an integral part of the promotion selection process. In 2013 this covered SM, GM and DAC selection rounds.

Complimentary Activities

To reinforce the routine training inputs and incident command exercises described above a number of the incident command themes highlighted by the Coroner have been included in the Operational News publications. These publications are produced and circulated approximately every three/four months and details a range of key issues and themes that the Brigade wishes to highlight. The content of the publication is informed by a wide range of data sources that are consolidated in to a regular report presented to the Operations Directorate Coordination Board (ODCB). Using these data sources, such as monitoring report, fire investigation report, feedback from Performance Review of Command (PRC) the Board is able to identify key themes that need to be addressed. Since the date of the Lakeland House fire a wide range of articles that impact on the command and operational performance of crews at high rise incidents have been featured. Examples of some of these articles are detailed below :

- Incident Command
- Command Support
- Hazards associated with loose cabling
- Briefing and debriefing on the incident ground inc. breathing apparatus crews
- Pre-planning and the use of mobile data terminals (MDTs)
- High rise incidents
- Compartment firefighting tactics
- Search and Rescue procedures
- Firefighter Emergency and tactical withdrawal
- Use of Aerial appliances

For each Operational News article the publication will include a bibliography of reference material including links to all the current policy and technical note guidance. For certain articles the Brigade will initiate a bespoke station and senior officer training package that will need to be completed by operational staff within a specified time period.

Post Incident Actions

As with all large scale incidents the Brigade undertook a review of the operations and command performance using the established debriefing protocols; Performance Review of Command (PRC) and Performance Review of Operations (PRO). These debriefs served to highlight the unusual challenges that the officers faced, due to the rapid and unprecedented fire spread within the Lakanal House building.

As a result of the unusual circumstances of the Lakanal fire the Brigade identified a number of issues that needed to be addressed to assist in the management of future high rise incidents. These issues fell into three main categories; high rise procedure and the requirement to provide guidance on moving a Bridgehead, the recording and sharing of information relating to fire survival calls (FSC) and pre-planning.

High Rise Procedure Review

Data Recording and Sharing

In response to this issue the Brigade undertook a review of the way information about fire survival calls is recorded and shared between Control and the incident. This review led to the publication, in February 2012, of a new policy (Policy Note 790 refers), which included revisions to the way Brigade Control handle FSC information and the resources mobilised to incidents where more than two FSC are being managed. A key development introduced through this policy is the requirement for both Brigade Control and the incident to share the key information about the fire survival situation. To support this requirement the mobilising policy for FSC related incidents was updated to include a dedicated Command Unit (CU) and Station Manager (SM) being mobilised specifically to manage the fire survival call element of the incident.

In addition to the above the Brigade has introduced a Forward Information Board (FIB) that is carried on all Pump Ladders. The FIB is designed to be a portable and easy to use item of equipment for the recording of key information at locations that are remote from the CU, such as:

- A Bridgehead
- Sector command point
- Forward command point

The FIBs were introduced in January 2013 and been successfully used to support the recording of operational information at a range of incidents, including those involving FSCs and complex search and rescue operations.

Pre-planning

Since 2009 the Brigade has introduced a range of new technology that enable operational crews to access a wide range important information whilst en-route and/or in attendance at incidents. Mobile data terminal (MDTs) were introduced to all frontline pumping appliance during 2009. This development was complimented by the introduction of the Operational Risk Database (ORD) that acts as the repository for all the information that brigade holds regarding premises and risks.

Since these facilities have been introduced they have been supported with a number of policy enhancements. In July 2012 the Brigade published a new policy entitled 'Information gathering and Contingency Plans, which provides specific guidance to station personnel regarding the risk assessment process for sites in their area. This involves identifying and gathering operationally important site risk information (SRI) and other supporting information and recording it on the operational risk database (ORD). This policy is currently being further reviewed in response to

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one of the recommendations detailed in the Coroner's Rule 43 recommendations. This further enhancement to the policy is due to be published early in 2014.

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