

Report title

Implementation of Revalidation of Incident Command Competence - Update – Part 1

Meeting

Corporate Management Board

Date

24 February 2016

Report by

Head of Development

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Summary

The paper provides an update on the implementation of the revalidation of incident command process, which is under the governance of a corporate project. This process will provide organisational assurance that officers are performing incident command at the required level. It also encourages continuous improvement through the uptake of professional development opportunities.

The revalidation process includes:

- A knowledge test – to ensure an officers technical and procedural knowledge is at an appropriate level and is current ;
- An incident command exercise – to demonstrate that the appropriate level of command skills are maintained and that technical knowledge can be applied; and
- A log of Continuous Professional Development activity to demonstrate the consistent application of command knowledge and skills in the workplace, including a minimum number of command hours.

Recommendations

It is recommended that that the Board agree:

- The use of Big Learn for knowledge tests
- The delivery of annual knowledge tests on incident command maintenance courses, subject to appropriate course review governance approvals
- The proposal to use maintenance courses to revalidate where appropriate
- The planned transformation of the Implementation Working Group to a Revalidation Governance Group following the conclusion of the cooperate project in 2017.

Background

1. A revalidation process for incident command was approved by the Corporate Management Board on 16 December 2015. This process was developed to mitigate a significant corporate risk, namely the occurrence of a death or serious injury as a result of our staff not operating a safe system of work (CRR1). A process to ensure the revalidation of incident command competence will serve as a key control measure for CRR1, support firefighter safety by ensuring that the Brigade has the necessary evidence of the ongoing competency of those making risk critical command decisions.
2. CMB approved the following recommendations:
 - A formalised incident command revalidation process is implemented to ensure that all Operational Officers are assessed on their command competency as detailed in this report.
 - Head of Development and Training establishes a cross-directorate working group in collaboration with the Operations Directorate and the Operations Review Team to progress the implementation of the revalidation process and the supporting developments outlined in this paper, namely:
 - Development of detailed implementation plans for each level of Incident Commander
 - The development of formal policy guidance to support these recommendations on the revalidation of incident command.
 - The implementation of an operational mentor scheme
 - Proposals for a schedule of CPD for incident command, including quarterly Incident Command seminars and self directed maintenance of command competence for all operational roles including computer based training solutions
 - Agree the implementation of the revalidation process in two phases. The knowledge tests and incident command exercises will be implemented in the first phase from April 2016 and the minimum number of command hours/CPD being implemented from April 2017.
 - Agree that the implementation of the revalidation runs as a project under corporate governance arrangements.

Implementation Working Group

3. The implementation working group has met three times, with fortnightly pre-programmed meetings. Membership has expanded to include a representative from Information Management to support the exploration of systems to support the process, Operational Policy to support in the development of question sets, and Training Assurance to support future scheduling of activity under the revalidation process.

The Knowledge Test

4. CMB agreed the implementation of an annual knowledge test for 1,511 officers, which includes all staff with an incident command responsibility (FF+, CM, WM, SM, GM, DAC, AC). The tests are based on the Policy Notes and other guidance directly associated with incident command.

Development of question sets

5. Through the Implementation Working Group, question sets are being developed in line with the policies and bibliography outlined in the knowledge profiles for each level of incident command (which were agreed at the Course Review Board in November 2014). This work is being carried out by a sub-group of the implementation group, by representatives from Operational Policy, ORT and the Operations Directorate, all of whom have been heavily involved in the development of previous question banks. The Implementation Working Group

has the responsibility for approving the question bank, on behalf of the Head of Development and Training.

6. The Group is coordinating the development of question sets. Existing question sets are being reviewed and further developed in line with the incident command knowledge profiles. Where gaps exist, each responsible department is being asked to develop a set of questions relating to their owned policies in line with the knowledge profiles. When a relevant policy is reviewed or a new policy is produced, the responsible department will be required to develop a set of questions relevant to the change/new policy. The OP Policy writing guidance has been amended to stipulate this. Policy Note 370 *Policies and Procedures guidance* has been amended to further reflect this requirement and will be live from March 2016.
7. The sub-group is in the process of developing some best practice guidance for policy writers which they will use to develop question sets. This will be available from March 2016. However there is unlikely to be significant work carried out until after the Exercise Unified Response, as the lead department also owns the majority of relevant policies. Current anticipated timeframes for the question sets are:
 - Best Practice question writing guidance – March 2016
 - Level 1 Incident Command (FF+, WM, CM) – May 2016
 - Level 2 Incident Command (SM, GM) – May 2016
 - Level 3 and 4 Incident Command (DAC, AC) – July 2016
8. The Implementation Working Group will approve the question sets for use, ensuring a consistent style and also identifying risk critical questions. Risk critical questions will be highlighted, and should an incorrect answer be given this will trigger a Personal Development Plan. Governance of future question sets will be dealt with by the proposed 'Revalidation Governance Group' outlined in paragraph 3-4.

Delivery of Knowledge Tests

9. In the Revalidation of Incident Command CMB report a commitment was given to hold further discussions with Babcock to explore the viability of introducing a knowledge test during Level 1 refresher courses. This proposal would reduce the number of tests required per annum to 217 from 1,511.
10. Discussions with Babcock have been positive. The 'Operational Fire Incident Command Skills – Maintenance' course (the revised Incident Command refresher training for level 1 incident commanders) replaces the SMIRC, and is currently being piloted.
11. The new Incident Command Maintenance courses will provide one day of refresher training per year, as opposed to two days every two years under the current SMIRC arrangement. This will involve a 'development' day and an 'assessable' day which will alternate between years. For example, in year 1 of the cycle, commanders will receive one day of refresher training that focuses on the development of key command skills through coaching and mentoring. The following year, commanders receive some refresher training which includes an individual confirmation of their skills and a knowledge test. Although pilot development sessions have been run without a knowledge test (the question sets are under development), Babcock have indicated that they would be able to incorporate the test within the session and are currently preparing options for LFB consideration.
12. Discussions are ongoing with Babcock regarding the development of the assessable element for approval at the next Incident Command Training Project Board on 25th February, 2016. If approved, these proposals would be passed to the Performance and Commissioning Board, which has delegated authority for the sign-off of all newly commissioned or altered training, on 8th

March, 2016). Adoption of this model would enable the delivery of annual knowledge tests to commanders up to WM level. This would account for 1,294 of the 1,511 knowledge tests required annually, and would significantly reduce the resource requirement for revalidation. Further detail on timescales for implementation will be provided in the April revalidation update. Should approvals be granted according to this governance timescale, the knowledge test could be introduced on level 1 refreshers from May 2016.

13. Furthermore, a similar delivery model for refresher training is being scoped for all other levels of command training. If agreed, this would account for the delivery of all annual knowledge tests and would negate the need for approximately 5 assessment centre days and additional HQ tests each year. This will be further discussed at the Incident Command Training Project Board on 25th February, 2016. Delegated authority to the Head of Development and Training is sought to implement this, should CMB be in agreement and approval at the Incident Command Training Project Board be granted. An update on the progress of this recommendation on this will be provided in the April revalidation update.

Knowledge Test Systems

14. The revalidation process initially planned to use Questionmark to deliver the knowledge tests. The implementation group has since conducted some further work around delivery systems. Big Learn provides the same functionality to facilitate the multiple choice delivery style adopted as Questionmark. Big Learn also has the functionality to run similar reports to those currently used with Questionmark, which include time taken to complete the test, and automatically notifying line managers of scores. Big Learn has the added benefit of being able to automatically upload individuals test results to their LMS records and Individual Training Records, whereas with Questionmark this would need to be done manually. Big Learn will therefore reduce the administration burden.
15. The delivery of operational knowledge tests is one of the largest current uses of Questionmark. If an alternative system is used for revalidation that can be linked with the promotion process (see Revalidation of Incident Command Part II: Assessment of Incident Command Skills for Promotion, CMB 24th February 2016), the need for Questionmark is limited to the delivery of question for Operational News and testing for access to operational 'tag' roles, such as tactical advisors. Should Big Learn be used for these purposes, it is possible to realise a saving of around £40k per annum.
16. It is recommended that CMB approve the progression of the use of Big Learn to deliver the knowledge tests.

Revalidation Process Part 2: Application of Command skills Incident Command Exercise

17. CMB agreed that the test of technical knowledge will be supported by an assessment of command skills. Every incident commander will undergo a formal incident command exercise biennially as part of the validation process.

Level 1 Incident Commanders

18. CMB agreed that the assessment of command skills for Level 1 Commanders would be facilitated through the revised Operational Fire Incident Command Skills – Maintenance courses (assessable). Babcock will provide LFB with 'confirmation of skills' for each delegate.
19. The timescales for the delivery for all revised Level 1(for CM and WM) Incident Command training courses were brought forward from their original date in April to commence in January 2016. Furthermore, Babcock and LFB are working together to bring forward the delivery of all Incident Command training courses under the course review by April 2016. However, Babcock anticipate this may slip, and are expected to confirm a schedule of implementation to the next

Incident Command Project Board on 25th February, 2016. The Operational Fire Command Skills – Maintenance course has been successfully piloted and received positive feedback from delegates. The second part of this maintenance training which includes the assessable element is currently being finalised and options will be presented at the next Incident Command Project Board.

20. It is anticipated that the assessable maintenance course will be in a position to pilot for WM and below from May 2016. Once these are confirmed via the appropriate Training Governance processes, a phased implementation plan will be scoped and delivered in the April 2016 update report.

Level 2, 3, and 4 Incident Commanders

21. A commitment was given to CMB to continue to work with our training partners to explore ways we could further integrate the revalidation of command with Babcock delivered courses. The Incident Command Project Board have agreed to consider a similar maintenance training model to that used for Level 1 Incident Commanders. This is tabled for discussion at the next Incident Command Project board (25th February). LFB and Babcock will discuss the content of the Incident Command development and maintenance courses for Incident Command levels 2,3 and 4.
22. A similar model for Maintenance courses at these levels would mean that commanders would receive a an assessable refresher every other year, and a 'coaching and mentoring' style development input in the alternating years. Like current Incident Command Observations (ICO) that are delivered to SM and GM every two years, the assessable element would be facilitated by Babcock but assessed by LFB officers. As these would replace the ICO, there would be no additional resource requirement for LFB officers for assessment purposes above current levels. The officers are currently provided by the ORT group. Via the working group, ORT have confirmed they will continue to commit the resource required.
23. Should this model be adopted by the Incident Command Project Board, by working with our training partners the need for additional standalone assessments for all officers of Level 2 and above, would be negated. This would release 218 TUs at an estimated cost of £13,9k per annum (at 2016/17 prices). It would also reduce the requirement for the additional 58.8 officer days for assessment purposes, as it would be contained within the pre-scheduled maintenance courses that will replace the ICO. If combined with the recommended option in the Revalidation of Incident Command part II paper (CMB 24th February 2016) which releases a further 80 training units and 104 officer days the saving would equate to 298 TUs (cash equivalent of £18,997) and 162.8 officer days (for assessors).
24. Because of agreement to bring forward the completion of the Incident Command Course review work, it is anticipated that all of these maintenance courses will be implemented in 16/17. Pilots are expected to commence in April 2016.
25. Further details on implementation will be provided in the April revalidation update.

Revalidation Process Part 3: Evidence of Application of Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace

Continuous Professional Development Logs

26. The Implementation Working Group has representation from the Information Management team. The group is considering the most appropriate ways in which to record the number of command hours, and methods of logging CPD. Currently, activities that relate to phase 1 aspects of the implementation plan (knowledge test and incident command exercise) are being

prioritised.

Revalidation Governance Post Project

27. Following the conclusion of the implementation corporate project, it is proposed that the implementation working group transforms into a Revalidation Governance group meeting quarterly.
28. The group should composition will continue to represent the senior stakeholders for Incident Command Development, namely Development and Training, Operations Directorate, ORT and Operational Policy. The responsibility for the discharge of the terms will continue to rest with the Head of Development and Training.
29. Draft terms of reference for this group are included in Appendix I. Key responsibilities will include:
 - Governance of incident command knowledge question sets
 - Compiling an annual schedule of CPD activities for senior officers, including a schedule of incident command seminars and tactical decision exercises
 - Monitoring the consistency of assessors engaged in the revalidation process
 - Govern the Tactical Decision Exercise database on behalf of the Head of Development and Training (see paragraph 32-34)
 - Six monthly reporting to CMB on the performance of officers through the revalidation process.

Other Supporting Developments

30. There are a number of developments that are either under way that will support the implementation and delivery of the revalidation of command system.
31. *Computer Based Training Packages*

As part of the Incident Command course review process, computer based training packages are being developed. These packages are in line with knowledge profiles which identify the areas of policy and practice relevant at each level of command. These packages will be available on “Big Learn” and be accessed between formal courses at no additional cost to LFB. This may include packages aimed at all levels of incident command, ensuring appropriate development material is accessible to those wishing to apply for an operational promotion. This activity can be used to contribute to the continuous professional development for Incident Command.
- Central database of Tactical Decision Exercises*
32. Although tactical decision exercises do not provide an opportunity to practice all of the command skills, they provide a useful opportunity to share learning of tactics, and to supplement some of the knowledge of incidents that has been lost due to the decline in operational incidents.
33. A central database of Tactical Decision Exercises (TDEs) is currently under development in collaboration with the Operations Review Team (ORT). Key themes and incidents of note identified by ORT are being developed into TDEs which will be made available to all officers on SharePoint. Each TDE will be supported with guidance notes to ensure consistency of application and that key areas of learning are covered. Early TDEs will be aimed at Level 2 Commanders, but further developments will be made to provide a suite for all levels of Command.
34. One of the suggested terms of reference for the proposed Revalidation Governance (see paragraphs 27-29) would be to generate, quality assure and govern the database of TDEs on

behalf of the Head of Development and Training. This will require support from stakeholders in terms of resource to develop and quality assure TDEs to grow the database.

Incident Command Seminars

35. A recent request was made by the AC and DAC cadre to Development and Training to develop a regular series of command based seminars. This was piloted with a series of 'warm-up' seminars in preparation for Exercise Unified Response. The proposed Revalidation Governance Group (see paragraphs 27-29) composed of the senior stakeholders for incident command development includes a term of reference to deliver an annual schedule of incident command seminars for all senior officers. A brief model for this would be a monthly seminar held in Head Quarters which would include external speakers, case studies of incidents of note and TDEs which would provide recordable CPD activity.

Further Developments

36. Current operational assessments during promotional process places demand upon the Recruitment Team, Operations Directorate and the Operational Review Team. This is due to the number of candidates involved and the time frame the assessments are required to be run within. A further paper is being developed that will identify ways in which the revalidation process may be extended to demonstrate competence at a higher level in order to access promotion. This would reduce the burden on the assessment process and would provide additional resilience for the rota groups and supporting succession planning for operational posts. Furthermore, it should support work in train on succession planning, following the recent MOPAC audit, ensuring that there are adequate levels of qualified officers available to fill predicted vacancies.

Incident Command Development Panel

37. This area is tabled for discussion and progression within the Implementation group from March.

Policy Development

38. The policy is currently being developed, and a draft will be submitted to CMB for consideration in April.

Industrial Relations

39. The proposals included in this paper supports the continuous development of commanders and will improve firefighter safety by improving command competence. The trades unions will be consulted on these proposals through the normal IR and Health and Safety machinery. Presentations to Trade Unions are currently being organised, and an update on progress will be provided in April 2016.

Conclusion

40. Progress on the revalidation of incident command process has been good, with keen engagement from senior stakeholders. Some proposals are outlined in this report that, if adopted, would further streamline the revalidation process. When considered in conjunction with proposals for the revalidation process to be used as part of the promotional process, the saving would equate to 298 TUs (cash equivalent of £18,997) which would be available to be reinvested in the SoTR, and 162.8 officer days (for assessors). A future opportunity to realise a further £40k of savings through the use of alternatives to the Questionmark system is also identified.

Recommendations

41. It is recommended that the Board agree:
- The use of Big Learn for knowledge tests
 - The delivery of annual knowledge tests on incident command maintenance courses, subject to appropriate approvals
 - The proposal to use maintenance courses to revalidate where appropriate

- The planned transformation of the Implementation Working Group to a Revalidation Governance Group following the conclusion of the cooperate project in 2017.

Implementation Timescales

42. It is recommended that a phased implementation of the revalidation system commences in April 2016. Timescales for full implementation will be developed through the implementation working group.

Area	Milestone	Deliverable	Completion Date	Comments
Governance	Establishment of cross-directorate implementation group		Established.	Completed. Meetings are well attended and milestones are being progressed.
	Update on progress of implementation, including options for the operational element for future assessment rounds	CMB report	February 2016	Completed.
	Draft policy for revalidation of command competence to be produced		April 2016	
	Update on progress of implementation, including: - Implementation plan for level 1 IC knowledge test and ICE - Recommendation on ICE delivered through Babcock refresher training for all levels of IC - Recommendation on knowledge test delivered through Babcock refresher training for all levels of IC		April 2016	
	Two-monthly update on progress of implementation		June 2016	
Knowledge test	Amend Policy Writing Guidance to reflect requirement to produce questions		March 2016	Completed
	Develop question writing best practice guidance		March 2016	
	Develop question sets for Level 1-2 Incident Command knowledge test		May 2016	Question set development to commence after EUR
	Develop question sets for Level 3-4 Incident Command knowledge test		July 2016	Question set development to commence after EUR
	Recommendation on the delivery of knowledge tests on IC maintenance courses in the April 2016 update		April 2016	Timescales dependent on IC Course Review Governance machinery

Area	Milestone	Deliverable	Completion Date	Comments
	Implementation plan for the delivery of knowledge tests in the April 2016 update		April 2016	Timescales dependent on IC Course Review Governance machinery
Incident Command Exercise	Revised Operational Fire Incident Command Skills – Maintenance (development) course to be piloted		January 2016	Completed. Piloted 'development' module. Feedback from delegates was positive. Some improvements to be made to XVR graphics, ongoing.
	Revised Operational Fire Incident Command Skills – Maintenance (assessment) course to be piloted		May 2016	Timescales dependent on IC Course Review Governance machinery
	Recommendation on the delivery of ICE on IC maintenance course for IC levels 2-4 to be provided in April update		April 2016	Timescales dependent on IC Course Review Governance machinery
Continuous Professional Development and Minimum Command Hours	Develop schedule of CPD for incident command, including quarterly Incident Command seminars		February 2017	
	Guidance on logging of CPD to be produced		March 2017	
	Explore the most appropriate use of systems to log CPD		March 2017	
	Continue the development of CPD supporting activities		March 2017	
	Implement Part 3 of the revalidation process – the minimum command hours and the use of CPD logs, commencing with the inclusion of an objective in PRDS/SOLACE, and the use of operational mentors		April 2017	

Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments .

43. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has reviewed this report and has no comment to add.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments

44. This report recommends the use of Big Learn to deliver the knowledge tests which would replace the current system (Questionmark). There is no additional cost expected because Big Learn is an existing shared system with Babcock. It is expected that there would be a surplus of 218 TUs (cash equivalent £13.9k). This surplus could be used to meet the balance of the TUs required for the Assessment of Incident Command Skills for Promotion set out in part II report also on today's agenda.
45. The report notes that it is possible to realise a future saving of £40k per annum if Big learn is used to deliver the knowledge tests. This is dependent on an alternative system being available for other Questionmark system users (although, the delivery of operational knowledge tests is one of the largest current uses of Questionmark).

Consultation

Name / Role	Method consulted
Director of Safety and Assurance	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Director of Operations	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Head of Development and Training	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Revalidation Implementation Working Group	Discussion

Appendix I

REVALIDATION OF INCIDENT COMMAND GOVERNANCE GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

The Revalidation of Incident Command Governance Group oversees and monitors the process that provides organisational assurance that officers are performing incident command at the required level. The group also provides continuous improvement through professional development opportunities.

AIM

1. The main aim of the group is to oversee developments required to keep the revalidation process current, and to ensure the core elements within it account for changes to LFB policy and procedures.
2. The group will oversee and coordinate a schedule of development activities associated with the revalidation process, designed to practice the command skills tested under the process.
3. The Group will also monitor the consistency of assessors, and report on the performance of staff engaged in revalidation in order to identify organisational trends and drive further improvement.

OBJECTIVES

4. The objectives of the group are to:
 - a. Agree, maintain and review the incident command knowledge question sets for the revalidation process, ensuring they align to LFB policy and knowledge profiles
 - b. Compile an annual schedule of CPD activities for senior officers, including a schedule of incident command seminars and tactical decision exercises
 - c. Maintain the Tactical Decision Exercise database on behalf of the Head of Development and Training
 - d. Monitor the consistency of assessors engaged in the revalidation process
 - e. Provide six monthly reports to CMB on the performance of officers through the revalidation process
 - f. Identify and assess future opportunities for improvement of the revalidation process and associated command training.

MEMBERSHIP

5. Membership of the group is drawn from senior stakeholders of incident command related policy, development and practice.

<i>LFB</i>
Head of Development and Training - Chair
Rep from Development and Training
Rep from Central Operations
Rep from Operational Review Team
Rep from Operational Policy

OUTPUTS

6. Outputs of the group include:
 - a. An audit trail of actions and decisions
 - b. Resolve issues escalated from the Contract Management Group and working groups.
 - c. Escalate issues to LFB's Corporate Management Board (CMB)/Babcock's Executive Board (where appropriate)

WORKING PRACTICES

7. Normal working practices are:
 - a. **Frequency** – The group will meet quarterly with more regular meetings when necessary.
 - b. **Location** – Meetings will be held at LFB Headquarters
 - c. **Secretariat** – Reports for consideration at the meeting shall be provided to the meeting administrator six business days before the meeting and distributed together with an agenda for the meeting by the meeting administrator at least four business days before the meeting. Final minutes will be circulated within 10 business days following the meeting.