

Report title

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## **Implementation of Revalidation of Incident Command Competence: Update**

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Meeting

Corporate Management Board

Date

8 June 2016

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Report by

DAC Cohen-Hatton

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**049/16**

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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, (Governance Level B). 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 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 operational knowledge and skills in the workplace, including a minimum number of command hours.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that that the Board note the report.

## **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 agreed that the implementation of the revalidation runs as a project under corporate governance arrangements, with the board being updated on progress at regular intervals.

## **Areas of Significant Progress**

3. The Revalidation of Incident Command working group, consisting of representatives from Development and Training, ORT, Central Operations, Operational Policy and Information Management has been meeting regularly and has enjoyed good engagement from senior stakeholders. A communications plan for the phased implementation of the Revalidation of Incident Command is attached in Appendix I.
4. Representative Bodies have been consulted with via the JCF/JCMM and discussions were constructive. In addition, a draft policy has been completed and has been circulated for peer review.
5. Knowledge Test question sets have been developed for Level 1 incident commanders (FF+ to WM), with question sets from Level 2 (SM/GM) and Levels 3-4 (DAC-AC) on schedule for completion in July 2016. A TCAP is in draft that will outline the use of the Big Learning system, and the administration criteria. Following this, this administration will be piloted with LFB and Babcock.
6. The 'confirmation of skills' criteria for Level 1 incident commanders is currently in development, with Babcock preparing a draft for LFB consideration. As the delivery will be through the annual Operational Fire Incident Command Skills Maintenance Courses there will be no additional impact on PROP or SR. All scheduling has been agreed through the scheduling working group.
7. Stretch objectives for each level of command are currently being scoped by the implementation working group, and will be fed into the incident command course review prior to the development of level 2 and above scenarios.

## **Implementation**

8. CMB agreed the implementation of the knowledge tests and incident command exercises during 16/17, with the CPD and annual hours being introduced in 17/18. A draft policy has been circulated for peer review within the revalidation working group membership. Comments will be considered and a final draft will be circulated to Directors for approval, then consultation with Heads of Service.
9. A phased implementation is planned to commence once the policy has been agreed. The implementation will commence with the introduction of knowledge tests on incident command maintenance courses, both in their existing form and as the new courses come on line.

10. The knowledge tests will be introduced initially as a learning and development tool on maintenance courses. This will be prior to the implementation of the revalidation policy. This 'soft' introduction of the revalidation process is intended to ensure it is viewed as a development process and to reduce the risk of punitive associations. It will also bring about the benefits associated with a knowledge test as soon as possible.
11. Results of the knowledge test will be provided to both the candidate and their line manager, and will prompt a PDP where development needs are identified. However, the results will not trigger the specific revalidation processes (i.e. a 30-day improvement plan and a re-test).
12. In order to demonstrate leadership in the area of operational readiness, it is proposed that the revalidation process is introduced initially to the DAC and AC cadre, with other roles following as the revised incident command maintenance courses are launched.

#### *DAC and AC Cadre*

13. The current Incident Command Skills Maintenance course for DAC/AC is the Principle Officer Exercise (PO-Ex), which is run every 18 months. This course is currently under review, with a new Maintenance course being piloted in 16/17. Once the revised maintenance course is established, this will replace the PO-Ex and will include the revalidation elements as a matter of course. As an interim step, it is proposed that the 'revalidation' element is introduced within the current Po-Ex for the DAC and AC cadre, following the agreement of the policy.
14. All DACs and ACs will receive input on the assessment criteria, in order to facilitate peer assessment across the group for the incident command exercise element. The knowledge test questions are on target to be developed and approved by July, will be included in the delivery of the PO-Ex by August 2016, subject to the policy being agreed. Revalidation of Strategic Incident Command Skills (Gold) will follow, once the appropriate training courses have been developed by Babcock (timescales tbc).

#### *FF+/ CM/WM Cadre*

15. The CM/WM Incident Command Skills maintenance courses have already been piloted successfully and the 'coaching and development' style course is already in place.
16. A basic question bank for Level 1 incident command has been developed, and will be expanded over the next 4-6 weeks. A 'confirmation of skills' document is being piloted on current Level 1 Operational Fire Incident Command Skills Development courses (LIM replacement). This document outlines the assessment criteria to confirm the skills demonstrated by Level 1 incident commanders in their 'assessable' maintenance course, every other year. It is designed to be measureable against WM7. The 'assessable' maintenance course is under development and will be piloted in the coming months.
17. All level 1 incident commanders will receive a coaching and mentoring style maintenance course, between January 2016 and January 2017, prior to experiencing an assessable element. From January 2017, half of the Cadre will undertake an 'assessable' maintenance course and the other half will again receive a 'coaching and mentoring style course.
18. Splitting the scheduling will prevent all officers within this cadre undertaking an assessable element in the same year, minimising the potential impact on managers and the IC development panel. It will also ensure that all officers receive a coaching and mentoring style maintenance session prior to assessment, providing development and increasing the likelihood of the

appropriate standard of performance being reached.

#### *Step 3 – SM and GM Cadre*

19. The refreshed SM and GM incident command maintenance course is being developed by Babcock, and will be piloted and delivered this year. The maintenance courses will follow a similar format where officers will receive a one-day maintenance course per year, alternating between 'coaching and mentoring' and 'assessable' courses.

### **Continuous Professional Development Logs**

20. The Implementation Working Group is considering the most appropriate ways in which to record the number of operational hours (including 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.

### **Other Supporting Developments**

21. There are a number of developments that are either under way that will support the implementation and delivery of the revalidation of command system.

#### *Computer Based Training Packages*

22. These packages are in line with knowledge profiles which identify the areas of policy and practice relevant at each level of command. A full compliment of 9 packages for Level 1 incident command courses are currently available on Big Learn. Similar packages are planned for all levels of commanders.

#### *Central database of Tactical Decision Exercises*

23. A central database of Tactical Decision Exercises (TDEs) is currently under development. A standard format has been developed and a suite of TDE's is being compiled and existing TDEs are being standardised and developed to ensure TDEs are available for all levels of command and can be integrated with the Command Unit vector training schedule.

### **Industrial Relations**

24. The revalidation of incident command proposals have been introduced to representative bodies by the Director of Operations. Discussions were constructive and a commitment was given to ensure that the process focuses on the development of skills.

### **Conclusion**

25. Progress on the revalidation of incident command process has been good, with keen engagement from senior stakeholders. All milestones are currently on track, although it is recognised that some proposed timeframes are dependent on the incident command course review machinery and are therefore subject to change.

### **Recommendations**

26. It is recommended that the Board note this report.

### **Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments**

27. The statutory basis for the subject of this report is provided by section 7 (Fire fighting) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, in particular section 7.2(d) (securing the provision of training for personnel). The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has read the report and has no further comments.

### **Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments**

28. The Director of Finance and Contractual Services has reviewed this report and has no comments.

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/Circulation of this report

## Appendix I

### Revalidation of Incident Command Communications Plan

Communication Subject	Key points	Date	Method
<b>IC review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New courses</li> <li>- Positively received</li> <li>- Partnership work with Babcock</li> <li>- Improved outcomes</li> <li>- Introduce revalidation</li> </ul>	May 2016	Shout Article
<b>Initial introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rationale for revalidation</li> <li>- Introduce key parts of revalidation – knowledge test, ICE, command hours</li> <li>- Focus on development</li> <li>- Link to IC course review</li> </ul>	May 2016	Shout Article  BC Communications day  Local SM Communications day  Local WM Communications day  Commissioners Early Bird briefing (subject to agreement)
<b>Phased implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy launched</li> <li>- Implementation will be phased</li> <li>- AC/DAC will lead – first to be revalidated</li> <li>- Soft introduction of knowledge tests</li> <li>- CM/WM to all receive min of one coaching/mentoring refresher prior to revalidation</li> <li>- CPD/Command hours to follow in 17/18</li> <li>- Some CPD activities to be piloted in NW – ie command seminars, additional TDE's etc</li> <li>- Role of governance group</li> </ul>	At policy sign off stage	Shout Article  BC Communications day  Local SM Communications day  Local WM Communications day

<b>DAC/AC implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight revalidation now in place for DAC/AC cadre</li> </ul>	Approx. August	Shout Article
<b>Soft introduction of knowledge tests</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight point that knowledge tests are introduced to IC maintenance courses</li> <li>- Link to bibliography</li> <li>- Outline protocol</li> <li>- Focus on use as a development tool</li> </ul>	Approx. August	Shout Article  BC Communications day  Local SM Communications day  Local WM Communications day
<b>SM/GM implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight point that revalidation is live for SM/GM group</li> <li>- Focus on development</li> <li>- Update on piloted CPD activities</li> </ul>	Approx. September	Shout Article  BC Communications day  Local SM Communications day
<b>CM/WM implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight point that revalidation is live for CM/WM group</li> <li>- Focus on development</li> <li>- Update on go-live for minimum command hours and CPD</li> </ul>	Jan 2017	Shout Article  BC Communications day  Local SM Communications day  Local WM Communications day

<b>Minimum Command Hours and CPD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Highlight point for go-live</li><li>- Outline protocol</li><li>- Focus on development</li><li>- Highlight schedule of CPD activities</li></ul>	March 2017	Shout Article  BC Communications day  Local SM Communications day  Local WM Communications day  Commissioners Early Bird briefing (subject to agreement)
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