

Report title

Implementation of Revalidation of Incident Command Competence: Update

Meeting

Update

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Report by

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Summary

The paper provides an update on the current position in relation to the implementation of the revalidation of incident command process. This is operating under the governance of a corporate project, (Governance Level B). The revalidation of incident command 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 and agree the draft policy.

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.
3. A revalidation working group has been established with cross-departmental representation to drive the activity required for implementation. Although attendance is generally good, departmental workload can constrain the extent to which stakeholders can commit to undertaking actions.

Current Activity

4. *Policy update* - The draft policy note is being amended to reflect a greater focus on using the 'assessable' elements as an opportunity to form the basis of a Training Needs Analysis for the commander to focus personal training over the period that is being revalidated. This would apply to both the knowledge test and the incident command exercise.
 - a. Further work will be required to develop a maintenance of skills system for incident commanders. Although the CPD and command hours log will support this element, a formal system for maintenance of skills is currently a gap.
 - b. Work on a practical and consistent feedback system is being revised to take account of the TNA element in draft.
5. *Knowledge test question sets* - Knowledge test question sets are being further developed to reflect situational judgements. This will be piloted with all levels of incident commander during Q4. Further work is being led by Development and Training to use the Big Learning system to deliver the knowledge tests.
6. *Revalidation assessors* - Discussions are underway between relevant stakeholders to agree a process to identify, train and allocate suitable assessors to incident command exercises for revalidation purposes. This system will take into consideration suitability to assess in the promotional aspect of revalidation.
7. *Revalidation development course allocation* - A key element of revalidation is the ability for staff to access the incident command development course for the role above prior to applying for promotion, as a development opportunity. The 2017/18 Schedule of Training included additional courses to reflect the increased requirement. An organisational project is underway that will provide a method for self-enrolling on courses in currently in development, though is likely to take some time to implement. Interim options are being considered that will support this element of revalidation.

8. *CPD and command hours log* – A prototype web-based system has been developed that will facilitate logging command hours, with operational information being uploaded directly from the mobilising system. It will also provide a facility to log CPD activities that relate to incident command. An additional feature is an ability to pull evidence from a number of other systems, such as PRDS appraisals, PDRs, and PRDS. This can be used as an evidence folder to demonstrate CPD in areas wider than command, should the individual wish. A demonstration is scheduled for the Head of Development and Training and the Director of Safety and Assurance.
9. *Tactical Decision Exercises* – A library of tactical decision exercises has been established with an initial suite of 10 TDEs that have been developed by the North West Area. These have now been published, and a system established where all four areas have agreed to develop further TDEs using their area teams and Service Standard Support Officers (SSSO's). TDEs will be based on key risks within each area, meaning that scenarios are realistic, and risk information held by the Brigade relating to actual premises can be used. The NW also leads the allocation of exercises using Command Units using TDEs. Previously, Vector was used to deliver training to station based staff only. However due to the recent liquidation of Vector, TDEs are now used to support this training, which now sees all SM's, GM's and DACs being allocated a training session in the areas.

Implementation

10. The implementation of the revalidation process is dependent on the Babcock timescales for the development and delivery of the revised Incident Command Maintenance courses. These are currently being developed as part of the Incident Command Training review. The new maintenance courses will be used to deliver both the knowledge tests and incident command exercises for revalidation. Current estimates are that new maintenance courses that will facilitate revalidation will be available to pilot by April 2017. However, it should be noted that this time scale has slipped several times and current estimates may be ambitious.
11. The revalidation process was piloted for the AC and DAC cadre in January 2017. The revalidation element was applied retrospectively to the current Principle Officer Exercise (Po-Ex) as a pilot, in order to inform the incident command training review for the maintenance courses for Levels 3 and 4 which will replace the Po-Ex. This identified several challenges with the current format of the Po-Ex for the delivery of revalidation, which will be fed into the review.
12. Several communications have now been published in the form of Hotwire and Shout articles that are introducing the concept of revalidation. In addition, presentations have been given to Borough Commanders Communication Sessions, and at the Commissioner's Early Bird Briefing.

Industrial Relations

13. 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. Following agreement at JCF/JCMM it is anticipated that the policy will require discussion at BJCHSW.

Conclusion

14. Progress on the revalidation of incident command process has been good. 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.