



Service Policy: PREPOL01 Incident Command Policy

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1.0	Feb 10		Policy Review
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1.3	16/12/2013		Policy Review
1.4	27/03/2015		Policy Review
1.5	01/04/2016		Policy Review
1.6	17/02/2017		Policy Review
1.7	19/12/2017		Inclusion of Operational Discretion
1.8	31/04/2018		Annual Review
1.9	05/04/2019		Annual Review
1.10	02.03.2020		Annual Review – changed to 2 year review
1.11	22.02.2021		Full document review
1.12	6/3/23		Update and review
1.13	12/3/24		Update and review – changed to 2 year review
1.14	16/04/2026		Policy Review

Equalities Impact Assessment:

Initial	Full	Date	Reviewed by	Comments
	X	2023	ED&I Team	Located on the Portal

Civil Contingencies Impact Assessment:

Date	Reviewed by	Comments

Related Documents:

Doc. Type	Ref No.	Title	Location
Policy	PREPOL02	Major Incident	MFRS Portal
SI	0073	Mobilisation of Senior Officers	MFRS Portal
SI	0076	Operational Support Room	MFRS Portal
SOP	Section 0	0.1.0 Foundation Guidance (All Incident Hazards)	MFRS Portal
SOP	Section 6	6.1.0 Incident Command	MFRS Portal

Distribution List:

Name	Position	Department

Sign-Off List:

Name	Position

Target Audience:

All MFRS	Principal Officers	Senior Officers	Operational Crews	Fire Safety	Community Fire Safety	Support Staff
X						

Ownership:

FOI exemption required?	Yes		URL	
	No	X	Reason	

Legislation:

Title	Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Contact:

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Operational Planning & Policy Team		

PREPOL01- Incident Command Policy

1. Policy Introduction and Background:

It is the Policy of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) to adhere to the principles of the Incident Command System (ICS) as detailed in the National Operational Guidance for Incident Command and regularly reviewed against the strategic gap analysis.

2. Policy Explanation:

It is the Policy of MFRA that the incident command system is focused on an all-hazards approach, providing a progressive, scalable and flexible system of operational command, control and organisation. The incident command system within the service is designed to help an incident commander manage and fulfil their incident plan and encourages a controlled and systematic approach to resolving incidents.

The key components of the incident command system include:

- Clear, defined and visible lines of command
- Manageable spans of control
- A communications infrastructure
- Appropriate responsibility and authority
- Clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities
- Sectorisation of the incident

The Policy is to equip incident commanders to effectively request and safely organise resources to obtain the best resolution to an incident. The aim is to educate all operational personnel, who may attend or are involved with an incident, to be familiar with the requirements of the incident command system and the decision control process and knowhow to operate safely and effectively within it.

The service will use its performance management and appraisal process to identify individuals who display, or have the potential to develop, the required range of social, personal and cognitive command skills to deal with the wide-ranging nature of incidents. The focus is to develop assertive and effective

incident commanders who:

- Are confident and self-aware
- Are well-trained and competent
- Have sound situational awareness
- Are able to lead, direct and instruct others
- Can communicate effectively
- Are able to plan and implement
- Can apply sound judgement and effective decision-making
- Are able to adapt to changing and challenging situations
- Are calm and controlled

An incident commander should possess the leadership behaviours, technical knowledge and command skills to underpin their judgements, decisions and behaviours. The input to commanders will be specific to the level that they operate at to ensure that they are competent within their role and have an understanding of the other roles in the ICS structure.

The application of these skills on the incident ground is key to incident ground safety and the implementation of an effective operational plan.

The service debrief process will complement the Command Policy in providing a review of performance which will feedback into policy and procedural review to ensure the incident command system continues to evolve and learn.

3. Policy Implementation:

Incident Commanders will apply the principles of the ICS at all incidents irrespective of size, utilising all supporting mechanisms provided.

The roles and responsibilities of all personnel operating within the ICS are detailed within Service Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) and related Service Instructions, which can be located via the Operational Information System.

It is the policy of the Service to mobilise the Incident Command Unit (ICU) to all incidents of 6 appliances on request of the IC.

The Incident Command Case, carried on all pumping appliances should be used at appropriate incidents to assist with the Command Support Function in its initial stages with a recognition that these early building blocks will form part of the broader command support function as the incident develops.

A suite of documents is located on the Service Operational Information System via MFRS intranet which provides detailed information in respect of Command and Control systems and Specialist Officer Duties.

This information is available on the incident ground via appliance mobile data terminals (MDT) and senior officer portable devices.

Command support in the form of Incident Command Guides, Decision Logs, Inner Cordon Log Sheets and Dynamic/Analytical Risk Assessments are also available on the incident ground via attending appliances or the ICU.

The Training & Development Academy will support the process of performance management by means of operational assessments and the delivery of incident command training relevant to the role required.

The Operational Assurance Team will provide the facilitation of incident debriefs and will develop,

administer and monitor and subsequent actions for improvement.

Most situations that Incident Commanders (IC's) are faced with are dynamic but similar in the application of ICS. In resolving an incident, commanders use their own experience and knowledge of guidance, together with that of the command team and crew members. However, IC's may occasionally be presented with a situation that may be rare and exceptional.. In this circumstance, they may have to make decisions using their professional judgement.

Operational discretion relates to rare or exceptional circumstances where strictly following an operational procedure would be a barrier to resolving an incident, or where there is no procedure that adequately deals with the incident. IC's need to be fully aware of procedures, the skills and qualities of crew members, and the capability of resources available.

- Outcomes which would justify applying operational discretion include:
- Saving human life
- Taking decisive action to prevent an incident escalating
- Incidents where taking no action may lead others to put themselves in danger.

The overarching principle should be that in the opinion of the IC the benefit of taking unusual, unorthodox or innovative action justifies the risk.

Any decision to apply operational discretion should be the minimum necessary and only until the objective is achieved.

Any decision to apply operational discretion should be formally recorded along with the rationale that has informed the decision.

The extent of the record should match the severity and/or complexity of the incident. It is evident that on occasions, crew members and/or members of the public might apply pressure on an IC to act.

An IC should only apply operational discretion where the justifications as detailed above are evident.

Crew members should not intervene entirely of their own volition as doing so may put their colleagues or members of the public at additional serious risk.

The Service Instructions used to underpin this Policy are:

PREPOL09 Operational Training Policy
SOP 6.1.0 Incident Command
SI 0872 Incident Command Competency Framework and Training Strategy
SI 0042 Dynamic, Individual, Analytical Risk Assessment
SI 0760 Incident Handover Forms
SI 0055 Cordons
SI 0145 Incident Command Case
SI 0739 Decision Logging
SI 0683 Incident Command Unit

All Policies can be found on the [Website](#)

POLICY