

Dated: 12/6/2024

POLICY TITLE: Major Incidents

OWNING DIRECTORATE: Force Coordination

AUTHOR: Chief Inspector, Force Resilience Unit

CONTACT DETAILS: 101

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT: Complete

AUTHORISED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (APP) NATIONAL GUIDANCE: AVAILABLE

AIM OF POLICY: This policy outlines the definition of a major incident and emergency, and the subsequent responsibilities of various agencies in response.

BENEFIT OF POLICY: To clarify the varying responsibilities of agencies and the role of Northumbria Police during an emergency or major incident situation.

REASON FOR POLICY: Compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 and Human Rights Act 1998, Article 2 (Protect Life).

The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) defines a **Major Incident** as:

'An event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency.'

Please Note;

- 'Emergency responder agency' describes all category one and two responders as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and associated guidance.
- A major incident is beyond the scope of business as usual operations, and is likely to involve serious harm, damage, disruption or risk to human life or welfare, essential services, the environment or national security.
- A major incident may involve a single-agency response, although it is more likely to require a multi-agency response, which may be in the form of multi-agency support to a lead responder.
- The severity of the consequences associated with a major incident are likely to constrain or complicate the ability of responders to resource and manage the incident, although a major incident is unlikely to affect all responders equally.
- The decision to declare a major incident will always be a judgement made in a specific local and operational context, and there are no precise and universal thresholds or triggers. Where Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and responders have explored these criteria in the local context and ahead of time, decision makers will be better informed and more confident in making that judgement.'

Major incident can take many different forms, such as natural, transport incidents, man-made and terrorism. However, each incident will distinctly fall into one of two categories: 'rapid onset' or 'rising tide'.

- **Rapid onset emergency**

An event or situation that develops quickly and usually with immediate effects, thereby limiting the time available to consider response options.

Forces should ensure they maintain the capability and plans to enable an initial response to potential emergencies. This may be supported by mutual aid where necessary. The initial response should be relative to generic risks and the risk profile within their area.

- **Rising tide emergency**

An event or situation that develops into an emergency or major incident over a period of days, weeks or even months, the final impact of which may not be apparent early on. Examples include health-related emergencies and severe weather events.

Forces (together with other Category 1 responders) need to recognise the potential for such events to escalate and should identify the points at which the response should intensify to avoid being overwhelmed.

The police role in major incidents is to:

- **save** life and prevent further loss of life in conjunction with the other emergency services
- **prevent** escalation of the incident
- **coordinate** the response phase of the incident (some exceptions apply)
- **coordinate and communicate** between the emergency services, local authorities and other supporting organisations both at the scene of the incident and elsewhere – this includes activation of the strategic coordination group (SCG)
- **secure, protect and preserve** the scene
- **provide** traffic management and identify evacuation routes (in consultation with the highways authorities and local authority)
- **investigate** any criminal offences, obtaining and securing evidence in conjunction with other investigative bodies where applicable
- **collate and disseminate** casualty information
- **coordinate** the provision of public information in conjunction with other agencies
- **recover, identify, reconcile and repatriate** the deceased in a timely and dignified manner on behalf of the coroner
- **prevent and detect** crime
- **conduct** a thorough investigation with appropriate authorities
- **lead** the establishment of a survivor reception centre and a family and friends reception centre
- **establish** documentation teams
- **develop** an accurate and coordinated media plan
- **restore 'new normality' to the community.**

This definition of a major incident is recognised by all the agencies likely to be involved in a major incident within the Northumbria Police Area. In the NHS, the term "major incident" is used for slightly different criteria where a set of circumstances or an incident severely affects the ability of the service to perform its statutory duties.

Definition of an Emergency

In accordance with the Lexicon of UK Civil Protection, the Northumbria LRF defines an emergency as:

'Any event which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or the security of a place in the UK.'

The common themes of an emergency are the scale of the impact of the event / situation, the demands it is likely to make of local responders and the exceptional deployment of resources.

The term 'major incident' is used by emergency services personnel to describe events or situations which would constitute an emergency as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act. The Northumbria Police Major Incident Plan is sufficiently flexible to be applied in either circumstance.

Major incidents can have a significant impact on society and the environment. The principal objective of the public bodies during a major incident is to protect life, in accordance with their positive duty to do so, imposed by Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

The Force has a statutory obligation to provide an effective response to, and resolution of, a major incident; a combined and co-ordinated use of the resources and expertise of the various emergency services and local authorities, supplemented as appropriate by other organisations. Therefore, integrated emergency management arrangements for the Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, the Ambulance Service, local authorities and other contributing organisations have been developed.

These arrangements include:

- Agreed assessments, by all agencies, of the risks facing a community or an organisation.
- Adopting measures to prevent emergencies or reduce their severity.
- Preparing plans to respond to known risks and unforeseen incidents and testing the plans by exercise.
- The initial response to an incident, including how a major incident is declared, and the sharing of information through the LRF Major Incident Declaration Protocol.
- A Joint Dynamic Risk Assessment.
- The instigation of a process of recovery and return to a new normality for the community and for those involved with the incident.

Northumbria Police will co-ordinate all activity of those responding to the incident, carry out any criminal investigation and facilitate enquiries carried out by other investigation agencies. (E.g. Health and Safety Executive, Railway Inspectorate, Air or Marine Accident Investigation Branch.)

Northumbria Police will also process casualty information and act on behalf of H.M. Coroner who is responsible for investigating the cause and circumstances of deaths arising from the disaster, in the identification and removal of fatalities.

FORCE MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN

The Northumbria Police Major Incident Plan is a plan of the actions to be taken, and procedures to be followed in the event of a major incident. It is based on APP, and Emergency Response and Recovery guidance published by the Cabinet Office. The terminology used in the Plan has been agreed with other organisations and agencies within Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

SOURCE DOCUMENT: Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and Human Rights Act 1998, Article 2 (Protect Life)

GROUPS AFFECTED: All police officers and police staff

ACCESS AND DISCLOSURE RESTRICTIONS: None
