

Civil contingencies

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 23 October 2013 Updated 29 September 2020

Written by College of Policing

3 mins read

Civil emergencies require a professional, structured and coordinated response from all the emergency services. Police, fire and ambulance services need interoperable arrangements to manage major or complex incidents successfully and to meet legislative requirements.

This guidance covers police contingency planning and response to civil emergencies, regardless of the cause. It focuses on interoperability between agencies when providing an emergency response. Police roles and specialisms are covered, as well as the knowledge and skills required to respond to civil emergencies.

This page looks at the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles](#) (JESIP) and [key definitions](#).

JESIP

Public inquiries have criticised the lack of interoperability between the emergency services when responding to incidents. JESIP was established to address this deficit.

JESIP provides agreed joint working practices to improve the way that the police, fire and ambulance services work together when responding to incidents. The programme delivers a number of products to help promote and embed interoperability across the emergency services.

Products

JESIP's primary product is [Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework](#). All other JESIP products are derived from information found in the Joint Doctrine. The key areas are:

- five principles of interoperability:
 1. co-location
 2. communication

3. coordination
 4. joint understanding of risk
 5. shared situational awareness
- the [joint decision model](#) (JDM)
 - [METHANE](#) – a model for supporting shared situational awareness

These key areas are addressed in JESIP training products, which are available to multi-agency partners.

Note: JESIP working practices apply to **all** incidents responded to jointly.

Arrangements

JESIP doctrine continues to be implemented at a local level. This includes training, exercising and a new system of joint organisational learning. The following arrangements are in place.

- **Support** – a small emergency services team supports ongoing local implementation. It is based in the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat.
- **Oversight** – an Interoperability Board provides national oversight. It is chaired by strategic lead officers from the emergency services, who comprise its membership alongside representatives from government departments and wider agencies and bodies.
- **Learning** – the joint organisational learning (JOL) project identifies, analyses and acts on learning from live incidents, testing and exercising. JOL delivers change on the front line as required.

For further information see [JESIP](#).

Definitions

The following originate from the [lexicon](#) of UK civil protection terminology, which sets common and agreed definitions used in the multi-agency business of civil protection. The lexicon is one of the underpinning elements of interoperable communications and coherent multi-agency working.

Emergency

An event or situation 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 the UK or of a place in the

UK.

Major incident

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

A major incident can take many different forms, such as natural disasters, transport incidents, industrial and terrorism.

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.

For further information see [Police role in major incidents checklist](#).

Critical incident

Any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.

Ambulance and fire services do not yet have the same critical incident methodology as the police service. This means that confusion with major incidents can arise if an incident involving other agencies is declared a critical incident.

Examples of events that may be deemed critical incidents include:

- homicides
- serious sexual offences
- firearms incidents
- hate crimes
- police pursuits

For further information see APP on [critical incident management](#).

Tags

Civil emergencies