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Procurator Fiscal
Scottish Ambulance Service
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Executive
Scottish and Southern Energy
Shetland Islands Council
Western Isles NHS Board
Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS)

1 INTRODUCTION

Each of the statutory emergency services and other agencies have a responsibility to serve and protect the public. This document has been produced to outline the best possible response at the strategic level to any major incident within any part of the Highlands and Islands area. It is a structure that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the emergency services and other agencies and summarises their planned initial response.

The contents of this document is entirely consistent with the Principles of Command and Control, which have been agreed nationally by all services, and which would form the basis of the initial response to any major incident. It is a multi-agency document for use by all agencies and has been prepared by members of the Highlands and Islands Emergency Planning Group on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Emergencies Co-ordinating Group.

2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Aim

The **aim** of this document is to describe the initial processes and roles of all the responding agencies for an 'all hazards approach' to deal with a major incident at the strategic level of command, when the Strategic Co-ordinating Group is initiated. ***Many of the actions and procedures contained herein can also be applied to a tactical level of response.***

2.2 Objectives

The principle **objectives** contained in the guidance document are:

- (a) To identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities of each of the participating agencies at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (b) To describe and provide a framework for all the agencies to respond to a major incident at the strategic level of command.
- (c) To provide a structured approach, identifying the essential processes for co-ordinated major incident management but with the capability of adapting to the circumstances.
- (d) To ensure procedures are in place, remain relevant and appropriate, and, therefore, meet the responding agencies' requirements in order to achieve the aims of this plan.

3 PRINCIPLES OF COMMAND AND CONTROL

3.1 Introduction

In order to achieve a cohesive, organised and professional multi-agency response to a major incident the actions of all the agencies involved must be co-ordinated. A national structure has been agreed and adopted which ensures that all involved parties understand their role in the combined response and how the different levels of management inter-relate.

The co-ordination during the emergency phase of a major incident, including the strategic level of response, is normally a Police responsibility. During the recovery phase, following a major incident, co-ordination of the inter-agency response will normally be the responsibility of the Local Authority. Major incidents at sea are initially co-ordinated during the search and rescue phase by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Once the major incident comes ashore it will be co-ordinated by the primary agency, which is normally the police. It is recognised that, due to the nature of certain major incidents or natural disasters, the responsibility for the co-ordinating role may be more appropriately undertaken by or transferred to another service or agency.

A management framework has been established, which embodies the same principles irrespective of the cause or nature of the major incident. The response is divided into three levels, namely **operational**, **tactical** and **strategic**. The requirement to implement one or more of the management levels will be dependent on the nature and scale of the major incident. ***Normally major incidents will be handled at an operational level with tactical level co-ordination and support. Strategic level management of an incident should be considered and implemented, if necessary.***

All the emergency services and agencies will concentrate on their specific tasks within their areas of responsibility. Should it be necessary, consideration should be given to assigning control of a specific task or area to a designated officer / member of staff of the emergency services or particular agency at the initial response stage or at the scene.

3.2 Operational Level

The scene immediately after a disaster has struck or when a crisis is imminent will require a structured approach. ***To bring some order to a chaotic situation it is important that the emergency services and other responding agencies establish control of the incident scene.*** Arrangements for co-ordinating the responses at the initial stages of the major incident are of paramount importance. Experience has shown that an effective response depends on the timely receipt of accurate and complete information, on sound decisions being made and appropriate actions set in train at the onset.

A major incident is an emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, the National Health Service or the Local Authority for:

- ✎ The rescue and transport of a large number of casualties.***
- ✎ The involvement, either directly or indirectly, of a large number of people.***
- ✎ The handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated, both from the public and the media.***
- ✎ Any incident that requires the large scale combined resources of the emergency services.***
- ✎ The mobilisation and organisation of the emergency services and supporting organisations to cater for the threat of death, serious injury or homelessness to a large number of people.***

The declaration of a major incident by an organisation will trigger pre-planned arrangements by that organisation to deal with such an emergency. Any organisation declaring a major incident for their organisation will advise their partner organisations of this decision.

It is generally accepted that the first member of an emergency service to arrive on the scene of a major incident or the first member of any agency who identifies any situation as being a 'major incident', should not become directly involved with the immediate rescue. A rapid assessment of the disaster / major incident should be made and reported to his / her own control / manager.

Management of the resources any agency applies within a geographical area, or used for a specific purpose, will be retained by that agency. Each agency must liaise fully and continually with the others engaged in the same area to ensure an effective and combined effort. Specific types of major incidents may have several scenes, or in other situations there will be no scene.

3.3 Tactical Level

The tactical level of management exists to determine priority in allocating resources, to plan and co-ordinate when a task will be undertaken and to obtain other resources as required. Most but not all of the tactical functions will be discharged at or near the scene of the major incident (or the community affected). Some agencies, particularly the local authority, will prefer to operate from their administrative offices and will normally send a representative to the scene / community location to liaise with the lead agency Incident Officer.

When more than one agency is operating at the tactical level, there must be consultation between their appointed Incident Officers. Incident Officers should not become directly involved with the operational activities but concentrate on the overall general management. ***Where the tactical level of response to a major incident is established, one multi-agency co-ordinating group will be set up at an identified location. The multi-agency tactical co-ordinating group will be the point of liaison between the Incident Officers of the responding organisations, either in person or via liaison arrangements.*** The establishment of inter-service

communication links will support the running of the major incident at operational level. The lead agency will maintain a written record and will normally co-ordinate inter-agency meetings.

Should it become apparent that resources or expertise is required beyond the capability of the tactical level of management or should there be a need to co-ordinate more than one major incident scene, it may be necessary to implement a strategic level of management.

3.4 Strategic Level

The purpose of a strategic level of management is to formulate and agree the overall policy in which the response to a major incident will be made. A Strategic Co-ordinating Group may be established which will be involved with ensuring priorities for demands by the tactical level of command are met, as well as assisting in the setting out of plans for a return to normality once the emergency phase is controlled. This group is not responsible for making tactical decisions.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group will be aware of its wider role which may include responding to central government interest, handling requests for advice and assistance from individual services and agencies and formulating public information and media strategies. It will be the responsibility of the lead agency to establish and chair the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. The group will comprise a nominated member from each agency involved. Each person must be authorised to make executive decisions in respect of resources within their agency and have the authority to seek the aid of other agencies in support of their role.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group should be based at an appropriate location away from the noise and confusion of the scene. As it is normally a Police function to chair this group during the emergency phase of a major incident, the strategic level of management will normally be located at Police Headquarters, Old Perth Road, Inverness, and will be known as the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. When the chair of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group is held other than by Northern Constabulary, the type of major incident and the agencies involved will dictate the identification of an appropriate location for the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.

3.5 Liaison with Central Government

In the case of some major incidents the Scottish Executive or the UK Government will have a role to play. This may be either active, through the provision of specialist advice or assistance, or dealing with parliamentary, media and public enquiries. In either case a specific lead department will be identified. Tasks to be undertaken by the lead department include:

- (a) Co-ordinating the activities of the Scottish Executive and UK Government departments in the response to the disaster, providing the framework within which individual department can discharge their specific responsibilities.
- (b) Co-ordinating the collection of information on the disaster and its effects for the purposes of briefing ministers and informing parliament.

(c) Providing information to the public and the media at national level.

In a major incident the lead local agency will be responsible for establishing liaison with the Scottish Executive and UK Government via the Scottish Executive Emergency Room which will act as a focus for the co-ordination of information and a corporate Scottish Executive response.

4 THE STRATEGIC RESPONSE

4.1 Strategic Co-ordinating Group

The requirement for strategic management may be confined to one particular agency. However, some major incidents require a multi-agency response at a strategic level to effect a resolution. The main aim of this plan is to identify a set of principles for such a multi-agency strategic response. In such major incidents, a Strategic Co-ordinating Group should be formed. This group will be an extension of the role and responsibility of the Highlands and Islands Emergencies Co-ordinating Group, which has the function of ensuring that all aspects of integrated emergency management are in place.

It will normally be the responsibility of the Police to establish and chair the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. There may, however, be circumstances dictated by the nature of the incident where this responsibility will be undertaken by or handed over to a more appropriate agency. This group should include a strategic member from each agency involved.

It is a fundamental principle of this group that the members consult on a regular basis and maintain a strategic overview of the major incident. Each participant must be able to make executive decisions concerning resources within their agency and have the authority to seek the aid of other agencies in support of their role.

It is a requirement that meetings of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group are documented, that minutes are kept of decisions made, actions raised and to whom allocated. Minute taking / record keeping will be the responsibility of the agency in the chair.

Representatives of Scottish Executive and Government Ministers may attend these meetings. Others with relevant specialist knowledge may also attend the Strategic Co-ordinating Group meetings in an advisory capacity. The composition of the group will depend on the nature of the major incident.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group should hold meetings as frequently as necessary to discuss the overall management and progress of the major incident. They should aim to achieve or highlight the following:

- (a) Respective areas of expertise and responsibility.
- (b) Identify individual and common operational objectives.
- (c) Confirm the way forward and determine policy.
- (d) Liaise with the Scottish Executive Emergency Room.
- (e) Identify and resolve any areas of conflict between services and agencies.
- (f) Identify resource requirements.
- (g) Establish effective liaison between all services and agencies.
- (h) Establish a common approach to the media (refer to Section 6 of this plan)
- (i) Identify and decide upon financial considerations.
- (j) Establish a common approach to the provision of public information.

- (k) Regularly review each organisation's progress to ensure that all actions are being fulfilled and the necessary momentum maintained
- (l) Liaise with the Media Cell Co-ordinator (who is appointed as the main source of information and dissemination) to ensure that media briefings are arranged and that the media are provided with suitable accommodation, services and facilities with access to (and/or an overview of) the scene of the major incident if possible.
- (m) Arrange for relevant spokespersons from or on behalf of the group to be available to brief the media regarding agreed policies and actions of their individual agencies or services (refer to Section 6 of this plan for further information).

As the major incident develops, there should be regular evaluation of the need and purpose of the group. As circumstances change, it may be possible for some agencies to 'wind down' their operation and not attend future meetings. When a major incident moves from the 'emergency phase' to the 'recovery phase', there will be a minuted formal handover of responsibility for the co-ordination of the major incident. The Chair of the group will move to the Chief Executive of the relevant local authority or other statutory agency.

5 RESPONSE OF RESPECTIVE AGENCIES

5.1 Military Authorities

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident the military authorities will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that the military authorities are upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Provide Military Liaison Officer (MLO) at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre on request.
- (c) Provide military assistance, as requested, within capabilities and within Military Aid to the Civil Community (MACC) guidelines.
- (d) Provide command and control (C2) assistance.
- (e) Provide resources and equipment, as necessary, and as available.

5.2 British Red Cross

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, the BRCS will:

- (a) Inform Operations Director (OD) Northern Scotland.
- (b) If appropriate, the OD or Senior Service Manager (ER) will represent the BRCS at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (c) Continue communications and liaison at a tactical level.
- (d) Establish a link with the Communications Officer BRCS (Territory) and liaise with the Strategic Co-ordinating Media Cell.
- (e) Continue to support the Local Authority and statutory emergency services and the community affected.

5.3 Highland and Islands Fire Brigade

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, Highland and Islands Fire Brigade will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Highland and Islands Fire Brigade is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Implement the Highland and Islands Fire Brigade Major Incident Plan.
- (c) Mobilise the required pre-determined attendance in accordance with the Highland and Islands Fire Brigade Major Incident Plan.
- (d) Co-ordinate the Brigade's response from the Highland and Islands Fire Brigade Command and Control Centre in Inverness.
- (e) Attend the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre to support the strategic response

5.4 Highland NHS Board

Highland NHS Board is accountable to the Scottish Executive Health Department for the overall assessment of health care needs within the Highland area, including a planned response to deal with the consequences of a major incident or major emergency, and for arranging with operators of health care services for those needs to be met. 'Operators' includes Highland Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Highland Primary Care NHS Trust.

The Board's responsibilities in responding to a major incident include:

- (a) Assign the Director of Public Health, or his representative, to the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (b) Provide appropriate support for joint agency media cell and media management.
- (c) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Highland NHS Board is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (d) Provide health care advice to participating agencies, medical personnel and the public.
- (e) Establish a Board Control Team at Highland NHS Board Headquarters, Assynt House, Beechwood Park, Inverness.
OR
Raigmore Hospital, Inverness (dependent on the nature of the major incident).
- (f) Liaise with other Health Boards to enlist appropriate support.
- (g) Advise the Scottish Executive Health Department of health related issues and maintain communication.
- (h) Participate in inter-agency debriefing and make recommendation to improve procedures.
- (i) Co-ordinate and Chair a Joint Health Advisory Group.
- (j) Participate in environment and public health recovery plan.

5.5 Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Maritime and Coastguard Agency is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Co-ordinate HM Coastguard's response from the appropriate Maritime and Rescue Co-ordination Centre (or Sub Centre).
- (c) Mobilise required search and rescue assets to the major incident.
- (d) Implement Contingency Plans as required.
- (e) Dispatch appropriate Officer to the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.

5.5 Scottish Water

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, Scottish Water will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Scottish Water is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Implement the Authority's Contingency Plans.
- (c) Mobilise the appropriate Incident Team in accordance with the Authority's Contingency Plans.
- (d) Provide a senior member of staff to attend the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (e) Co-ordinate the Authority's response from the Incident Team who is dealing with the major incident.
- (e) Inform the Authority's Chief Executive that the strategic level of response has been established, and that the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre has been set up at Northern Constabulary Headquarters, Inverness.
- (f) Mobilise the Authority's Crisis Management Team, depending on the type and magnitude of the major incident.

5.6 Northern Constabulary

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, Northern Constabulary will:

- (a) Inform all Chief Executives of the appropriate agencies that Northern Constabulary is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Open and set up the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, at Police Headquarters, Inverness.
- (c) Invite strategic level representatives from each agency to attend at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (d) Call out the Northern Constabulary Strategic Administration Team.
- (e) Chair and provide minute taking at the Strategic Co-ordinating Group meetings.
- (f) Co-ordinate the response to the media through the Strategic Co-ordinating Group and consider setting up an appropriate Media Briefing Centre (refer to Section 6 of this plan for further information).
- (g) Co-ordinate the response to VIP visits through the Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

5.8 Orkney Islands Council

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, Orkney Islands Council will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Orkney Islands Council is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Inform all appropriate local agencies that the response has been upgraded to strategic level.
- (c) Open up communication links, including video conferencing, in Orkney Islands Council offices to Police Headquarters, Inverness.
- (d) The Chief Executive will nominate, if necessary, a strategic level representative to attend at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre by fastest means of travel.

- (e) Ensure that the Council's Communications Officer establishes links to the Media Briefing Centre.
- (f) Provide support for the emergency services, as per Orkney Islands Council's emergency procedures.
- (g) Provide Liaison Officer to attend tactical control, if required.
- (h) Open Orkney Islands Council's emergency centre and co-ordinate integrated management meetings, as required.
- (i) Where necessary, commence the preparation of a recovery plan in readiness for the handover of the major incident from the initial lead agency representative.

5.9 NHS Orkney

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, NHS Orkney will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that NHS Orkney is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Inform all appropriate local agencies that the response has been upgraded to strategic level.
- (c) Continue to manage its local response from NHS Orkney Headquarters, or from the Balfour Hospital, depending on circumstances.
- (d) Continue to maintain liaison at tactical level.
- (e) Provide Liaison Officer to attend tactical control, if required
- (f) The Chief Executive will nominate, if necessary, a strategic level representative to attend at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre by fastest means of travel.
- (g) Provide support for the emergency services as per NHS Orkney emergency procedures.

5.10 Scottish Ambulance Service

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, Scottish Ambulance Service will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Scottish Ambulance Service is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Operate as part of a joint services response from the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre at Police Headquarters, Inverness, or other designated location.
- (c) The General Manager will be immediately notified of a major incident requiring a strategic response, and the Scottish Ambulance Service Major Plan put into operation.
- (d) The General Manager, or his nominated Deputy, will attend at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.

5.11 Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incidents the Scottish Environment Protection Agency will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Scottish Environment Protection Agency is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Co-ordinate the agency's response from the Dingwall office.
- (c) Be represented, as required, at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, Police Headquarters, Inverness, by the Environmental Regulation and Improvement Manager or nominated deputy.
- (d) Provide pollution control and environmental protection advice and guidance, as required.

5.12 Scottish and Southern Energy

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, the Scottish and Southern Energy will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Scottish and Southern Energy is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Co-ordinate the company's response from the Emergency Centre, Docharty Road, Dingwall.
- (c) The Highland and Islands District Manager, or nominated Deputy, will attend the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, Police Headquarters, Inverness.
- (d) Mobilisation of resources to deal with the major incident will be in accordance with the Scottish and Southern Emergency Plan.

5.13 Shetland Islands Council

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, the Shetland Islands Council will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Shetland Islands Council is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Inform all agencies locally that the HIECG has been assembled at Police Headquarters, Inverness.
- (c) Make arrangements to establish regularly timed video links with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (d) Depending on the nature and severity of the major incident, identify a suitably qualified Council representative to attend the Highlands and Islands Emergencies Co-ordinating Group, if requested.
- (e) If necessary, despatch the said Council representative to Inverness by the fastest possible means.
- (f) Continue to support the responding agencies at the operational and tactical levels within the scope of the Shetland Islands Council Emergency Plan.
- (g) Where necessary, commence the preparation of a 'Recovery Plan' in readiness for the handover of the major incident from the initial lead agency representative.
- (h) Regularly update the Highlands and Islands Emergencies Co-ordinating Group on local conditions via the video conference link or through the Council representative.

- (i) Establish and maintain a link with the Strategic Co-ordinating Group Media Cell.

5.14 NHS Shetland

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, NHS Shetland will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that NHS Shetland is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Operate from the Gilbert Bain Hospital after establishing its Hospital Medical Control (HMC).
- (c) Establish contact with the Area Command Incident Room via the Police Liaison Officer.
- (d) Inform all relevant local agencies that a strategic level response has been activated.
- (e) Establish a communications link with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre by the most appropriate means.
- (f) Establish contact with the Casualty Bureau via the Police Liaison Officer or the Area Command Incident Room, as appropriate.
- (g) If appropriate, the Chief Executive will nominate an officer to represent NHS Shetland at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (h) Establish liaison links with supporting agencies/voluntary organisations.

5.15 The Highland Council

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, The Highland Council will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that The Highland Council is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Ensure a Senior Officer, Chief Executive or nominated Deputy level, will attend at the identified Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (c) Provide adequate personnel to ensure the efficient operation of the Council's role within a Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (d) Operating from The Highland Council Emergency Centre at Raigmore, Inverness, ensure that the staffing and operation of the Emergency Centre will provide all necessary communication and liaison with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.

5.16 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is upgrading its response to the strategic level.

- (b) Continue to manage its local response from the Comhairle's Emergency Centre.
- (c) Continue to maintain liaison at tactical level.
- (d) Inform all relevant local agencies that a strategic level response has been activated.
- (e) Establish a video conferencing link with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (f) If appropriate and air/sea transportation permitting, the Chief Executive will nominate an Officer to represent the Comhairle at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (g) Establish liaison with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre media cell.
- (h) Continue to provide support for the emergency services.
- (i) Where appropriate, prepare to accept transfer of 'lead agency' responsibility.

5.17 Western Isles NHS Board

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, the Western Isles Health Board will:

- (a) Inform all the Chief Executives of appropriate agencies that Western Isles NHS Board is upgrading its response to the strategic level.
- (b) Continue to manage its local response from Western Isles NHS Board Headquarters, or from the Western Isles Hospital, depending on circumstances.
- (c) Continue to maintain liaison at tactical level.
- (d) Inform all relevant local agencies that a strategic level response has been activated.
- (e) Establish a video conferencing link with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (f) If appropriate and air/sea transportation permitted, the Chief Executive will nominate an officer to represent the Western Isles NHS Board at the strategic co-ordinating Centre.
- (g) Establish liaison with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre Media Cell.

5.18 Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS)

Should the strategic level of response be required for any major incident, the WRVS will:

- (a) Inform the Emergency Service Manager, WRVS.
- (b) If appropriate, the Emergency Service Manager or nominated deputy will represent the WRVS at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.
- (c) Continue to maintain liaison at tactical level.
- (d) Establish liaison with the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre media cell.
- (f) Continue to provide support for the emergency services and the community affected.

6 MEDIA MANAGEMENT

6.1 Introduction

Recent years have seen a rapid advance in telecommunication and information technology capabilities. Television channels devoted entirely to news and extended news programmes are with us to stay. The impact made at the scene of a disaster by those engaged in gathering material for the media could be massive and it is vital to prepare for the influx of media representatives – local, national and international. The purpose of this Section is, therefore, to highlight some of the problems that can arise in handling the media's needs for information in the event of a disaster and to suggest arrangements for overcoming those problems. Key personnel should receive media training to ensure that they are 'media aware'.

Experience has shown the value of immediately dealing with the following points:

- (a) Control of media access to the disaster site.
- (b) Establishing a Forward Media Liaison Point (FMLP).
- (c) Nominating a Media Liaison Officer.
- (d) Lack of co-ordination and information sharing will result in different and even contradictory messages emerging.

In addition, in the initial stage of the disaster response it may be helpful for the following points to be borne in mind:

- (a) It is important to develop the best possible relationship with media personnel from the start.
- (b) Initial statements should focus on what is happening, what the limitations of knowledge are at the time and what is being done to arrive at a fuller appreciation of the situation.
- (c) The media will welcome any factual statements – particularly from emergency services' / agencies' eyewitnesses. However, such statements should not include speculation on the cause of the disaster, nor premature or uncorroborated estimates of the numbers of casualties.
- (d) Information must not be released about casualties until details have been confirmed, next of kin informed and with the approval of the Procurator Fiscal. It may be necessary to explain that, in certain circumstances, it can take a considerable time to identify victims.
- (e) Limitations on the release of information, often because of the need to avoid prejudicing what may become a criminal prosecution, should be clearly and frankly explained.
- (f) The first consideration should always be the well being of the individual. There will be great pressure on reporters to seek interviews with survivors and relatives but many will feel too shocked and distressed to give interviews. It will ultimately be the decision of the survivor / victim whether they wish to participate in any media interview.

- (g) The management of large numbers of media representatives can be assisted through pooling arrangements, particularly if safety or security considerations restrict access to a disaster site.

6.2 Initial Actions

In the first instance, the task of coping with media pressures usually falls to the lead agency in their role as co-ordinator of the response at and around the scene of a major incident. However, there are other aspects of a disaster which will call for a quick reaction by other agencies, and so they too must be involved in the media response from the outset. Depending on the nature of a disaster, attention may also focus on industrial operators, commercial or other organisations.

Media personnel will arrive very quickly. They will often have learnt of the disaster at the same time as the emergency services, and, when they arrive, will expect to have access to information and briefings. Demands from local and regional media will quickly be augmented by demands from national and - depending on the nature of the disaster - international media. If these demands are not anticipated, media representatives are likely to add to the initial distraction that may surround a major incident scene. It is possible to protect the cellular telephone system from saturation by invoking the Access Overload Control for Cellular RadioTelephone (ACCOLC), whereby the network would be available only to selected organisations. (The Police Incident Officer is normally the only authority able to invoke ACCOLC. Exceptionally, the Cabinet Office may take this responsibility.)

Any situation which is identified as a 'major incident' requires a structured media approach. To bring some order to any situation, it is considered to be good practice to issue an 'initial holding media statement'. This gives the Media a brief outline of what has taken place and also allows a brief respite from media enquiries. The holding statement should be brief and acknowledge the occurrence without giving intricate detail. The holding statement will be dictated by the nature of the major incident and the agencies involved.

The following is an example of the initial holding statement prepared for when the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre is based in Police Headquarters, Old Perth Road, Inverness.

'A major incident has occurred at (time, day, date and locus). Emergency services are currently at the scene. No further information is available at this time however a fuller update will be given when more information becomes available'.

The purpose of any initial holding statement is to provide time to set up a Forward Media Liaison Point (FMLP) near to the scene of the major incident and a Strategic Media Briefing Centre (MBC). The FMLP should be as near to the scene as possible and ideally have fax links where information can be passed to the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. No initial holding statement should be released without the prior approval of all agencies involved.

Further media statements will be developed as part of the media strategy within the media cell at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. It may be necessary to issue

further statements during the co-ordination phase prior to the FMLP and the MBC being set up. All agencies within HIECG, who could be required to Chair the Strategic Co-ordinating Group, should be in a position to produce a statement, which has already been approved by all other HIECG agencies. This supplementary holding statement should also dovetail with all agencies' internal media plans.

The following is an example of the supplementary holding statement prepared for when the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre is based in Police Headquarters, Old Perth Road, Inverness.

*'Further to our previous media release relating to the major incident which has occurred at **(time, day, date and locus)** please note that a Forward Media Liaison Point (FMLP) has been set up near to the scene at **(locus)**. Media attending at the scene should identify themselves to **(name)** who is in charge of the FMLP. A Media Briefing Centre (MBC) has been set up at **(locus)** and a press conference has been arranged for **(time)**. Media attending at the MBC should identify themselves to **(name)** who is in charge of the MBC.*

When the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre is at 'another appropriate location' any supplementary media statement will be supplied by the lead agency, following consultation with all other agencies involved.

Copies of the supplementary media statement will be faxed to the Forward Media Liaison Point, relevant Local Authority Operations Centre, all agencies' major incident / operations room at the scene and the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre and Media Briefing Centre.

6.3 Forward Media Liaison Point (FMLP)

The purpose of a Forward Media Liaison Point is to secure a focal point for the media near the scene, whilst preventing hindrance to all agencies concerned. The ultimate goal is to impart accurate information to the media in an effort to preserve the integrity of the scene and the efficiency of all agencies' response. It is also the ideal opportunity to obtain community assistance, where early information can be of vital importance, should it be required.

A Forward Media Liaison Point (FMLP) should be identified near to the scene of the major incident in order that media can view the scene (s) from an identified vantage point (s). Where available Press / Media Officers from all the appropriate agencies involved in the major incident should be dispatched to the FMLP as soon as possible and media representatives should be directed there. However, if the Media Briefing Centre (MBC) is set up, the media should be encouraged to go there where representatives at executive level from the responding organisations will be present to attend arranged press conferences. It must be recognised, however, that some media will always remain at or near the scene and the FMLP will require to remain operational for the duration of the emergency response of the major incident.

The agency chairing the Strategic Co-ordinating Group will appoint a Media Liaison Co-ordinator for the FMLP and a FMLP spokesperson. In all instances, regardless

of the location of the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, the FMLP is seen as a component part of the overall media strategy. All HIECG agency press office representatives attending at the FMLP will have a responsibility to ensure that the FMLP Co-ordinator properly briefs them. No HIECG agency press office representative should have contact with the media or release any information until they have been properly briefed. The FMLP Co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that media releases from all agencies are released in co-ordination with the MBC. No agency representative will give a media release without it being approved by the MBC, who will have had approval for the release of that information from the Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

The FMLP Co-ordinator and the MBC Co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that there is a flow of information in both directions.

Whilst local agencies' plans have been considered regarding the processes for the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, it may be beneficial for the Strategic 'multi-agency' processes to be acknowledged and identified within each local agencies' media plans.

The main functions of the Forward Media Liaison Point are to:

- ✍ Co-ordinate the media response at a local level.
- ✍ Provide 'pooling' arrangements for on-site visits.
- ✍ Provide one-to-one interviews.
- ✍ Provide early media briefing conference facilities until the Media Briefing Centre is set up.
- ✍ Provide copies of all media statements.

Dependent on the major incident, it may be necessary to set up a Media Liaison Point at another location. This should only be done in consultation with the Strategic Co-ordinating Media Cell. In this instance the organisation requesting this additional media point will ensure that a Co-ordinator is identified for this additional Media Liaison Point. The Co-ordinator appointed will ensure that all processes identified within the FMLP regarding briefing, press releases and communication are similarly adhered to. It is of paramount importance that all media related matters are co-ordinated through the MBC immediately this is set up. A flow of information must be established at the earliest opportunity.

6.4 Strategic Media Briefing Centre (MBC)

A major incident may also justify the establishment of a strategic Media Briefing Centre to provide working accommodation for media personnel, a news conference and briefing area and a press office with communications equipment. The decision to establish a strategic Media Briefing Centre will be the responsibility of the chairperson of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group who will appoint a Media Cell Co-ordinator and a Media Advisor. All HIECG agency press office representatives attending at the Media Briefing Centre will have a responsibility to ensure that the MBC Co-ordinator properly briefs them. No HIECG agency press office representative should have contact with the media, or release any information until

they have been properly briefed. The Media Cell Co-ordinator will be responsible for ensuring that media releases from all agencies are released in co-ordination with the MBC. No agency representative will give a media release without it being approved by the MBC, who will have had approval for the release of that information from the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.

It will be at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group whether to set up a strategic Media Briefing Centre. (MBC). The location of such a centre will be identified at a place that is considered most suitable for the strategic co-ordination of the media. Consideration will be given to size and propinquity of the premises to the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. Where possible, the Media Briefing Centre should have suitable car parking facilities for satellite vans, editing suites and communication facilities.

When the strategic level of management is located at Police Headquarters, Inverness, the Warner Village Cinema, Inverness Retail Park, Inverness, has been identified as the Media Briefing Centre (MBC) for any major incident occurring within the Highlands and Islands area. Cinema 1 has been identified as the main press conference suite due to suitable access and egress for spokespersons that would attend at press conferences. However, should a major incident occur on any of the islands within the Highlands and Islands area, smaller Media Briefing Centres have been identified on each island which may prevent the unnecessary establishing of the Media Briefing Centre in Inverness. These centres are as follows:

- ✍ Shetland Area Command : Garrison Theatre, Lerwick
- ✍ Western Isles Area Command : 'Council Chamber', Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway.
- ✍ Orkney Area Command : Pickaquooy Centre, Kirkwall

The setting up of a Media Briefing Centre offers a number of advantages, viz:

- (a) Agreed co-ordination within all agencies regarding the release of information.
- (b) Provides the media representatives with a known source for the most accurate and up-to-date information that the authorities can make available.
- (c) Once links with the rescuers and others central to the major incident response are in place and spokespersons have been nominated, smooth flows of information can soon be established, compared, co-ordinated and disseminated.
- (d) The identification and dealing with any potential differences in approach can be quickly relayed to the emergency services and other control centres.
- (e) Co-ordination from the Media Briefing Centre should help to control media presence at the site, whether this is for photo opportunities or briefing.
- (f) In the event of a widespread or multi-site disaster, a single Media Briefing Centre could serve as a focus for several media liaison points at differing locations.
- (g) The same Media Briefing Centre may suffice for both initial and recovery phases of the disaster response.

- (h) Ease of transfer of the media operation to Local Authority or Health Board Control.

Once set up, all press conferences should take place within the Media Briefing Centre. Spokespersons representing any agency who attend at the MBC should, without fail, be briefed by their respective agency Press Officer for a final briefing before contributing to any media update at a press conference and each agency representative has a responsibility for ensuring that they are properly briefed. This will guarantee that spokespersons from all the organisations involved are familiar with the corporate message being issued to the public via the media.

The Co-ordinator of the Media Cell via the Media Briefing Centre Manager, will be responsible for the smooth running of the Media Briefing Centre. This will be achieved with the appointment of a Media Briefing Co-ordinator and a Media Briefing Advisor. Close liaison will be necessary between the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre and the Media Briefing Centre and robust communications will be required.

The Media Briefing Centre should continue to be available for as long as necessary. In some cases this may be after the handover to the appropriate agency following the emergency phase of the major incident. There may, however, be a necessity for the location, Media Cell Co-ordinator and / or the Media Briefing Centre Manager to be changed to accommodate the handover. This will be done in consultation with the two agencies involved.

It is essential for the Media Briefing Centre Co-ordinator to be fully involved in the senior management arrangements for dealing with the disaster. They should be fully in the picture and can advise on and plan the media response. It is recommended that this person oversees all aspects of the media response including:

- (a) Activities at the Forward Media Liaison Point.
- (b) Arrangements for the media to visit the site taking into account transport may have to be arranged where the disaster is in a remote area.
- (c) Accreditation of media personnel.
- (d) Management of the Media Briefing Centre, when one is established.
- (e) Monitoring of likely media activities related to the disaster but at locations remote from the disaster scene.
- (f) Monitoring of media coverage.

6.5 General Media Management

The Media Cell Co-ordinator, acting under the SCC Chairman's authority, will be responsible for ensuring co-ordination of all media matters until there is a handover. The handover phase of the major incident will include the handover of responsibility for all media matters.

A multi-agency approach to media handling will be implemented with media representatives from all participating organisations based in the Media Cell at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre and the Media Briefing Centre. All organisations should work closely to ensure a single message is being sent out to the public via the media. In some instances it will not be possible for representatives of certain organisations to attend at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, FMLP and MBC. Where this situation arises, a communication structure will be established to allow a two or three way communication to be put in place.

Media statements will be distributed to all agencies at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre (SCC), the Media Briefing Centre (MBC), Forward Media Liaison Point (FMLP) and any supplementary Media Briefing Centre(s). It is imperative that copies of all statements released to the press are faxed immediately to the FMLP and the Major incident / Operations Control point of all agencies involved. Where Northern Constabulary are the lead agency, copies will also be faxed to Northern Constabulary Force Operations Room. Media statements will also be displayed at the SCC and the MBC to be viewed by all participating agencies

Media representatives from the organisations operating within the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre will be expected to work as part of a co-ordinated team issuing joint statements.

The timing and content of media briefings will be agreed between the Strategic Co-ordinating Chairman and the Media Cell Co-ordinator and will take into consideration the views of all other agencies involved and the media interest.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Chairman, and including in some instances the Procurator Fiscal, as well as the other main agencies, will be informed beforehand of the timing and content of any media statement. Spokespersons will be agreed through the Strategic Co-ordinating Group and will be kept to a minimum number. NB - *It should be recognised that, dependent on the nature and scale of the major incident, it may not be necessary to liaise with the Procurator Fiscal.*

It is the responsibility of the lead agency to ensure that the interests of all organisations involved in the major incident are best served by using a co-ordinated media approach. Where possible, a media spokesperson from a specific agency should be made available and the ultimate responsibility for the provision of a spokesperson lies with the particular agency involved. The Strategic Co-ordinating Group Chairman will nominate the appropriate media spokesperson according to the status of the emergency, and the spokesperson will normally take on that role personally.

6.6 Remote Handling

In some major incidents attention may focus on communities and individuals living many miles from the scene who nevertheless become the centre of media attention. This, too, may require co-ordinated media-handling arrangements to ensure an efficient and coherent response from the authorities.

6.7 Sustaining the response

At the conclusion of the major incident a full media debrief should take place to ensure that best practice is promoted throughout the media part of the major incident and that lessons learned from the media input can be re-assessed and used as necessary.

Major incidents place enormous demands on all involved in the response. Media interest, particularly if it is international, can create pressure on a round-the-clock basis. Chief Executives of all agencies must take this into account during the response and recovery phase. The pooling of resources in a joint media centre would be helpful in this respect.

Experience has shown that media interest in a major incident is revived approaching and on the anniversary, and Chief Executives should give consideration as to how these occasions would be handled.

6.8 Agencies' own Media Plan

The content of the 'Media Management' section to this document is not intended to replace any agencies' own Media Plan. The purpose is to support and to provide a framework and guidance for a co-ordinated multi-agency approach for all agencies, should there be requirement to go to strategic level.

7. VISITS BY VIPS

Visits to the scene by any persons must be carefully managed, and the lead agency has responsibility for controlling the site of the major incident. The preservation of evidence for any legal examination will be given priority over any visits. Rescue work must not be hindered and a risk assessment must be carried out before any access to the site is given.

A Minister may make early visits to various locations connected with the major incident and wish to speak to the injured / survivors, not only to mark public concern but also to be able to report to Parliament on the response. If a Minister is to visit, he / she may be accompanied by the local elected representative; this would be arranged by the Minister's private office. It is possible that the scale of a disaster may, in addition, prompt visits by a member of the Royal Family, Prime Minister or First Minister. Local VIP visitors may include the Lord Lieutenant, religious leaders, local MP, MSP and local elected representatives. If foreign nationals have been involved in the disaster, their country's Ambassador, High Commissioner or other dignitaries may also want to visit the scene.

Visits to the scene need to take account of the local situation and the immediate effects of the disaster on the local community. It may be inappropriate for VIP visitors to go to the disaster site itself whilst rescue operations are still ongoing, particularly if casualties are still trapped. VIP visits should not interrupt rescue and life-saving work, and the co-ordinators of the major incident response should be consulted about the timing of visits.

VIP visits will inevitably cause some disruption, and visitors will want this to be kept to a minimum. The additional need for security may also cause a problem. However, there are also dividends to be gained from such visits, as they may boost the morale of all those involved, including the injured and the emergency services, and will give the opportunity to place on record public gratitude for their efforts.

Visiting Ministers and other VIPs will probably require briefing before visiting the site (which they will doubtless want to see), and will certainly require briefing before any meetings with the media. In the case of Ministers, briefing arrangements should be agreed with the Press Officer of the lead Government Department.

In addition, VIPs are likely to want to meet those survivors who are well enough to see them. It will be for the hospital authorities to decide, on the basis of medical advice and respect for the wishes of individual patients, whether it is appropriate for VIPs and/or the media to visit the casualties. If the media cannot accompany the VIP on ward visits, then it would be appropriate for the VIP to make him / herself available for interview later.

8 SUMMARY

8.1 Use of Document

It is recognised that every major incident is different, and the circumstances surrounding each one will give the major incident unique characteristics. Situations will arise which do not fit within the framework contained in this document, and where such situations arise, the plan will have to be altered to fit the requirements of the major incident. The plan is designed to assist those responsible, at all levels, for the resolution of a major incident, to work together with maximum efficiency.

8.2 Review of the Document

This document is not intended to be definitive, and the contents should be reviewed on a regular basis. It should also be examined as part of any multi-agency debriefs, following any major incident, and amended as necessary.

8.3 Organisations' own Emergency Procedures Manuals

Whilst this document provides the basis for developing a multi-agency approach, it does not replace individual services' major emergency procedures. It cannot replace individual organisation plans but seeks to make the interface between services and agencies clearer and thus enhance understanding of one's own and each other's role.

This document covers the initial response plan but once a major incident has developed each agency would then refer to their own plans to ensure that their own area of responsibility has been fulfilled.