

**HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS  
STRATEGIC CO-ORDINATING  
GROUP**



**IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGIC RESPONSE :  
A Guidance Document**

April 2007

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## **DISTRIBUTION LIST**

51 Scottish Brigade  
British Red Cross  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service  
Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
NHS Highland  
NHS Orkney  
NHS Shetland  
NHS Western Isles  
Scottish Water  
Northern Constabulary  
Orkney Islands Council  
Procurator Fiscal  
Scottish Ambulance Service  
Scottish Environment Protection Agency  
Scottish Executive  
Scottish and Southern Energy  
Shetland Islands Council  
The Highland Council  
WRVS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Contingency Planning) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 create responsibilities on a number of organisations in the event of an 'emergency'.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 an 'emergency' is defined as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK:

- An event or situation threatens damage to human welfare only if it involves, causes or may cause:
  - loss of human life
  - human illness or injury
  - homelessness
  - damage to property
  - disruption of a supply of money, food, water, energy or fuel
  - disruption of a system of communication
  - disruption of facilities for transport, or
  - disruption of services relating to health.
  
- An event or situation threatens damage to the environment only if it involves, causes or may cause:
  - contamination of land, water or air with biological, chemical or radioactive matter, or
  - disruption or destruction of plant life or animal life.

Each statutory emergency service 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 emergency 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.

### Category 1 Responders within the Highlands and Islands

**Local Authorities :** The Highland Council  
Shetland Islands Council  
Orkney Islands Council  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

**Police Force :** Northern Constabulary

**Fire Authority :** Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service

<b>Ambulance Service :</b>	Scottish Ambulance Service
<b>Coastguard :</b>	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
<b>Health Boards :</b>	NHS Highland NHS Shetland NHS Orkney NHS Western Isles
<b>Environment Protection :</b>	SEPA
<b>Weather :</b>	Meteorological Office

## **Category 2 Responders within the Highlands and Islands**

<b>Utilities</b>	Scottish and Southern Energy Scottish Water Telecommunications
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<b>Miscellaneous</b>	Rail and Airport Operators Harbour Authorities Health and Safety Executive Health Protection Scotland Scottish Ferry Operators
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### **Other Organisations**

Military Authorities  
Procurator Fiscal Service  
British Red Cross  
Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS)  
Other Voluntary Services  
Community Groups

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 emergency. 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 Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

## 2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Aim

The **aim** of this document is to describe the initial response of all the responding agencies for an 'all hazards approach' to deal with an emergency at the strategic level of command, when the Strategic Co-ordinating Group is initiated.

### 2.2 Objectives

The principle objectives contained in the guidance document are:

- (a) To describe and provide a framework for all the agencies to respond to an emergency at the strategic level of command.
- (b) To provide a structured approach, identifying the essential processes for co-ordinated emergency management but with the capability of adapting to the circumstances.

## 3 COMMAND, CONTROL AND CO-ORDINATION

### 3.1 Introduction

In order to achieve a cohesive, organised and professional multi-agency response to an emergency 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 an incident, including the strategic level of response, is normally a police responsibility. During the recovery phase, following an emergency, co-ordination of the inter-agency response will normally be the responsibility of the local authority. Emergencies at sea are initially co-ordinated during the search and rescue phase by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Once the emergency 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 emergencies 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 emergency. 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 emergency. Normally, emergencies 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 emergency 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.

An emergency is an incident 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 an emergency by an organisation will trigger pre-planned arrangements by that organisation to deal with such an emergency. Any organisation declaring an emergency 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 an emergency, or the first member of any agency who identifies any situation as being an 'emergency', should not become directly involved with the immediate rescue. A rapid assessment of the disaster / emergency should be made and reported to his / her own control / manager.

Management of the resources of any agency within a geographical area will be retained by that agency. Each agency must liaise fully and continually with the other agencies engaged in the same area to ensure an effective and combined effort. Specific types of emergencies 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 emergency 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 an emergency is established, a multi-agency group will be set up at an identified location. This group will be the point of liaison between the Incident Officers of the responding organisations, either in person or via liaison arrangements. The lead agency will maintain a written record and will normally co-ordinate meetings of the group.

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 emergency 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 an emergency 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 incident is brought under control. 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 person from the principle agencies involved. The nominated 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 an 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 emergency and the agencies involved will dictate the identification of an appropriate location for the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre.

## 4 THE STRATEGIC RESPONSE

### 4.1 Strategic Co-ordinating Group

#### Role and Functions

It will normally be a police responsibility to establish and chair a Strategic Co-ordinating Group. However, due to the nature of some emergencies, such as a rabies threat or coastal pollution, other agencies may wish to initiate its formation and chair the group. A Strategic Co-ordinating Group, once established, will have the responsibility for formulating the overall policy within which the various services and agencies will respond and for agreeing the arrangements for a return to normality once the incident has been brought under control. **It should be emphasised that this group should not involve itself in tactical decisions.**

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group will also address the wider issues arising from an emergency. These are likely to include media strategy and dealing with central government interests.

It is a fundamental principal of this system that each participant must have sufficient authority to commit their organisation and, in particular, to guarantee that the resources they offer on behalf of their organisation will be delivered.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group should be based at an appropriate location, away from the noise and confusion of the scene. It is usual to locate the Strategic Co-ordinating Group at Police Headquarters, Inverness, but this may move to the appropriate local authority during the recovery phase, when the emergency services may have little or no involvement.

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

- Respective areas of experience and responsibility.
- Identify individual and common operational objectives.
- Confirm the way forward and resolve policy.
- Identify and resolve any areas of conflict between services and agencies.
- Identify resource requirements.
- Establish effective liaison between all services and agencies.
- Establish a common approach to the media.
- Identify and decide upon financial considerations.
- Minute each meeting (audio recording may assist) and make these available prior to the next meeting.
- Regularly review each organisation's progress to ensure that all actions are being fulfilled and the necessary momentum pursued.
- Liaise with the Police and Press Officers from other agencies in accordance with HISCG media guidance, to ensure that media briefings are arranged, that the media be provided with suitable accommodation, services and facilities with access to and / or an overview of the scene of the incident, if possible.

- Arrange for relevant spokesperson(s) from or on behalf of the group to be available to brief the media in respect of agreed policies and actions in respect of their individual services.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group will need to take account of the features of the particular incident, together with the professional experience of each of the agencies and their statutory duties. On occasions, it may be necessary to assign the control of specific functions to one or more of the agencies. In extreme circumstances, such as at a terrorist incident, it may be necessary for the police to take executive action in respect of the total incident.

As the incident develops, there should be regular evaluation of the need and purpose of the group. The chair may at some stage be passed to another agency, eg from the police to the local authority, to manage the recovery stage. As circumstances change, it may be possible for some agencies to 'wind down' their operation, on which basis they may not be required to attend future meetings.

## **Minutes**

Minutes or a 'note of decisions taken' must be kept at all meetings of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. It is also essential that individual members of the group make their own notes of meetings. Minutes, 'notes of decisions taken' and personal notes, should provide an aide memoire of the continuing overall progress of the operation. They provide a perspective against which decisions on priorities can be made.

An emergency will necessarily result in an investigation as to its cause, and quite possibly a fatal accident inquiry or criminal trial. The actions of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group will be of considerable interest. Minutes of meetings will be invaluable in this regard and will, insofar as they are relevant, be subject to disclosure in any subsequent proceedings.

## **4.2 Mutual Aid Agreement**

The agency members of the Highlands and Islands Strategic Co-ordinating Group agree, where practicable, to render all possible help to each other in the event of a major accident/incident occurring. The incident may be the result of natural, man-made or technological causes or a mass casualty incident (hereinafter 'disaster') which impacts on the operational capabilities of any agency. The affected agency may request assistance from any or all of the other agencies.

In the event of a disaster, an affected agency should contact the other agencies to request, agree and arrange the level of assistance required. The extent of the assistance given will be at the discretion of responding agency members, having regard to their own local needs/situation at the time.

The arrangements to be conducted under the following conditions:

- The Chief Executive/Chief Officer of the requesting agency accepts full liability for all aid received, whether human or material, for the total period of deployment.
- The Chief Executive/Chief Officer of the requesting agency pays for, or reimburses the assisting agency, for travel, subsistence and overtime payments made to individuals during the period of deployment.
- The Chief Executive/Chief Officer of the requesting agency accepts liability for insurance cover for aid received, whether human or material.
- The Chief Executive/Chief Officer of the assisting agency accepts responsibility for paying the basic salary and allowances of individuals seconded to assist.
- The Chief Executive/Chief Officer of the assisting agency accepts responsibility for any overtime payments within their own organisation to cover any absence due to providing mutual aid.
- The duration of the requested mutual aid is kept to a minimum.
- The requesting agency will meet the cost of any further involvement of seconded individuals with the incident, for legal or any other reason.

An Agency may terminate its participation in this Agreement by giving notice to the next substantive meeting of the Highlands and Islands Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

### **4.3 Liaison with Central Government**

In the case of some emergencies, 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:

- Co-ordinating the activities of the Scottish Executive and UK Government departments in the response to the disaster, providing the framework within which individual departments can discharge their specific responsibilities.
- Co-ordinating the collection of information on the disaster and its effects for the purposes of briefing Ministers and informing Parliament.
- Providing information to the public and the media at national level.

In an emergency 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.

## **5 RESPONSE OF RESPECTIVE AGENCIES**

### **5.1 Northern Constabulary**

- Incident alert and co-ordination of other agencies

- Protection of public safety
- Investigation of the incident
- Identification of victims and provision of casualty bureau
- Protection and preservation of the scene
- Media Management/Co-ordination

## **5.2 Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service**

- Search and rescue
- Fire-fighting and fire prevention
- Safety management at the immediate scene
- Specialist advice about hazardous material
- Provision of fire and rescue service equipment

## **5.3 Scottish Ambulance Service**

- Immediate medical aid at the scene of the incident
- Transportation and evacuation of the injured
- Patient care
- Alerting of hospital services and immediate care GP's

## **5.4 NHS Highland, NHS Orkney, NHS Shetland and NHS Western Isles**

- Healthcare services and advice
- Designation of hospitals to receive casualties
- Provision of medical resources
- Support public health recovery plan

## **5.5 The Highland Council, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar**

- Support to emergency services
- Provide accommodation for rest and reception centres
- Road and traffic management
- Environmental Health services
- Activate voluntary services and co-ordinate their response

## **5.6 Maritime and Coastguard Agency**

- Initiation and co-ordination of civil maritime search and rescue
- Inform shore authorities of major offshore incidents
- Mobilise specialist search and rescue resources
- Co-ordinate HM Coastguard's response from Maritime and Rescue Co-ordination Centre

## **5.7 Scottish Environment Protection Agency**

- Pollution control and environmental protection advice
- Waste treatment, movement and disposal advice

- Flood risk information and flood warnings
- Formal investigation of pollution incidents

## **5.8 Meteorological Office**

- Short and long term weather forecasting service
- Advice on all weather related issues and hazards
- Warns of impending severe weather
- Weather impact modelling advice

## **5.9 Other Agencies Involvement**

A number of additional agencies, as follows, may be requested to respond to an emergency depending on the nature of the incident and their expertise in support of category 1 responders.

## **5.10 Category 2 Responders**

- Utilities (Gas, Water, Electricity, Telecommunications)
- Rail and Airport Operators
- Harbour Authorities
- Health Protection Scotland
- Health & Safety Executive
- Scottish Ferry Operators

## **5.11 Other Organisations**

- Military Authorities
- Procurator Fiscal Service
- British Red Cross
- WRVS
- Other Voluntary Services
- Community Groups

# **6 WARNING AND INFORMING THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE MEDIA**

## **6.1 Introduction**

The timely provision of relevant information, warnings and advice is a crucial part of the effort to promote and foster resilient communities. The Civil Contingencies Act has placed a duty on category 1 responders to communicate with the public.

There are three distinct aspects of communicating with the public:

- Raising public awareness before an emergency – informing and educating the public about risks and preparedness.
- Providing public warning at the time of an event – alerting the members of a community whose immediate safety may be at risk.
- Informing and advising the public about the nature of a continuing event and
  - the immediate actions being taken by responders to minimise the harmful effects on human or animal health and welfare, the environment or property
  - the actions being taken by responders to assist recovery
  - the actions people can take to minimise the impact of the emergency
  - how people can obtain further information, and
  - notify people of the end of an emergency and return to normal arrangements.

It is vitally important that the arrangements, made by individual responders, for providing public warnings and informing and advising the public during and after an emergency complement those of their partners, and are integrated with the overall management arrangements. Co-ordinated public warnings, advice and media co-ordination will enhance public safety and promote confidence and reassurance within the affected community.

## **6.2 Communicating with the Wider Community – Working with the Media**

The key to effective communication is putting across the right message for the right audience at the right time.

For most people the principal source of information is news broadcasts. Other general access media, including websites, is also available and widely used. The media can influence both the short-term handling and long-term impact of an emergency. At the same time as providing useful advice and information to the public, the media will be reporting on the emergency. There may be round-the-clock rolling news coverage if the emergency is serious enough. Responders will have little control over media output, however, it is important that they:

- plan to co-ordinate the main public messages that they will provide for the media
- provide as much relevant, accurate and consistent material as possible
- provide authoritative information and spokespersons for interview
- seek to ensure that the public has fair picture of how they are handling the situation.

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 would 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:

- control of media access to the disaster site
- establishing a Forward Media Information Point (FMIP)
- nominating a Media Liaison Officer.

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

- The importance of developing the best possible relationship with media personnel from the start.
- 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.
- The media will welcome any factual statements – particularly from members of the emergency services and eyewitnesses. However, such statements should not include speculation on the cause of the disaster, nor premature or uncorroborated estimates of the numbers of casualties, nor be outwith any agreed press strategy.
- 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.
- 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.
- The first consideration should always be the wellbeing 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. However, arranging such an interview, pooled if necessary, can for a short time ease the burden of pressure on emergency services personnel having to give interviews.
- The co-ordination of large numbers of media representatives can be assisted through pooling arrangements, particularly if safety or security considerations restrict access to a disaster site.

### **6.3 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 an emergency. However, there are other aspects of a disaster which will call for a quick reaction by other agencies, and, therefore, 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 will expect to have access to information and briefings on arrival. 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 an emergency scene. It is possible to protect the cellular telephone system from saturation by invoking the Access Overload Control for Cellular Radio Telephone (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 an 'emergency' requires a structured media approach. To bring some order to any situation, it is considered to be good practice to issue an 'initial media holding statement'. This gives the media a brief outline of what has taken place. 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 emergency and the agencies involved.

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

*'An emergency 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 Information Point (FMIP) near to the scene of the emergency and a Media Briefing Centre (MBC). The FMIP 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. Telephone contact should suffice.

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 FMIP and the MBC being set up. All agencies within HISCG, who could be required to Chair the Strategic Co-ordinating Group, should be in a position to produce a statement in consultation with the other 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 at Police Headquarters, Old Perth Road, Inverness.

*'Further to our previous media release relating to the emergency which has occurred at (**time, day, date and locus**) please note that a Forward Media Information Point (FMIP) 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 FMIP. 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 the other agencies involved.

Copies of the supplementary media statement will be faxed to the FMIP, relevant local authority Operations Centre, the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre and Media Briefing Centre.

#### **6.4 Forward Media Information Point (FMIP)**

The purpose of a FMIP 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 and provide public reassurance, should it be required.

A FMIP should be identified near to the scene of the emergency 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 emergency should be dispatched to the FMIP as soon as possible, and media representatives should be directed there. However, if the 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 FMIP will require to remain operational for the duration of the emergency response of the emergency.

The agency chairing the Strategic Co-ordinating Group will appoint a Media Liaison Officer for the FMIP. In all instances, regardless of the location of the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, the FMIP is seen as a component part of the overall media strategy. No Press Officers should have contact with the media until they have been properly briefed. The FMIP Liaison Officer will be responsible for ensuring that media releases from all agencies are released in co-ordination with the MBC. No Press Officers will give a media release without it being approved by the Media Cell Co-ordinator, who will have had approval for the release of that information from the Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

The FMIP Liaison Officer the MBC Manager 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 plan.

The main functions of the FMIP are to:

- co-ordinate the media response at a local level
- provide 'pooling' arrangements for on-site visits
- provide copies of all media statements
- provide copies of information packs, where available.

Dependent on the emergency, it may be necessary to set up a Media Information Point at another location. This should only be done in consultation with the Media Cell based at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. In this instance, the organisation requesting this additional Media Information Point will ensure that a Co-ordinator is identified for this additional Media Information Point. The Co-ordinator appointed will ensure that all processes identified within the FMIP 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 Strategic Co-ordinating Centre, immediately this is set up. A flow of information must be established at the earliest opportunity.

## **6.5 Media Briefing Centre (MBC)**

An emergency may also justify the establishment of a MBC 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 MBC will be the responsibility of the chairperson of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group who will appoint a Media Cell Manager and a Media Advisor. All Press Officers from the respective agencies attending at the MBC will have a responsibility to ensure that the MBC Manager properly briefs them. No Press Officers 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 and sent timeously to the MBC. No Press Officers will give a media release without it being approved by the Media Cell.

The location of the MBC 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 Vue Cinema, Inverness Retail Park, Inverness, has been identified as the MBC for any emergency 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 an emergency occur on any of the islands within the Highlands and Islands area, smaller Media Briefing Centres have been identified on each island which may provide additional facilities for the media. These centres are as follows:

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

The setting up of a MBC offers a number of advantages, viz

- Agreed co-ordination with all agencies regarding the release of information.
- Provides the media representatives with a known source for the most accurate and up-to-date information that the authorities can make available.
- Once links with the rescuers and others central to the emergency response are in place and spokespersons have been nominated, smooth flows of information can soon be established, compared, co-ordinated and disseminated.
- The identification and dealing with any potential differences in approach can be quickly relayed to the emergency services and other control centres.
- Co-ordination from the MBC should help to control media presence at the site, whether this is for photo opportunities or briefing.
- In the event of a widespread or multi-site disaster, a single MBC could serve as a focus for several media liaison points at differing locations.
- The same MBC may suffice for both initial and recovery phases of the disaster response.
- 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 MBC. Spokespersons representing any agency who attend at the MBC should, without fail, be briefed by their Press Officer for a final briefing before contributing to any media update at a press conference and each Press Officer 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.

Close liaison will be necessary between the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre and the MBC, and robust communications will be required.

The MBC 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 an 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.

## **6.6 Media Management**

The Media Cell Co-ordinator, acting under the Strategic Co-ordinating Group Chairman's authority, will be responsible for ensuring co-ordination of all media matters until there is a handover. The handover phase of the emergency 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 MBC. 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, FMIP 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, MBC, FMIP and any supplementary MBC(s). Where Northern Constabulary is the lead agency, copies will also be faxed to Northern Constabulary Force Operations Centre. Media statements will also be displayed at the Strategic Co-ordinating Centre 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 Adviser, and will take into consideration the views of all other agencies involved, media interest and any media deadline which may occur.

The Strategic Co-ordinating Group 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 emergency, 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 emergency are best served by using this 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 that particular agency.

## **6.7 Remote Handling**

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

## **7 VISITS BY VIPS**

Visits to the scene of an emergency must be carefully managed, and the lead agency will assume responsibility for such visits.

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 visits to the emergency site itself whilst rescue operations are still ongoing, particularly if there are casualties or people still trapped. Visits should not interrupt rescue and life-saving work, and a risk assessment must be carried out before any visit to the scene takes place.

VIP visits, particularly those involving royalty, will require planning and organisation, with a need for additional security. However, there are also dividends to be gained from such visits as they usually boost the morale of those involved, including the injured, and provide an opportunity to place on record public gratitude for the efforts of the emergency services and the other organisations actively involved.

## **8 SUMMARY**

### **8.1 Use of Document**

It is recognised that every emergency is different, and the circumstances surrounding each one will have unique characteristics. Situations will arise which do not fit within the framework contained in this guidance, and where such situations arise, adjustments will have to be made to fit the needs and requirements as they apply on the day.

This guidance is designed to assist those responsible, at the strategic level, for resolving emergencies to work in co-operation and with maximum efficiency and goodwill.

### **8.2 Review of the Document**

This document is by nature dynamic, and the contents should be reviewed on a regular basis. It should also be reviewed as part of the multi-agency debrief, following any emergency.

### **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' emergency response procedures. It is not intended nor should it replace individual organisation plans but seeks to make the interface between services and agencies clearer and thus enhance the understanding of each other's role.

This document covers the initial response to an emergency but once it has developed each agency would then refer to their specific plans to ensure that their own areas of responsibility have been fulfilled.