



Position Statement

Response to Terrorist Incidents

January 2020

Introduction

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) recognises the duties and powers held by fire and rescue services in relation to incidents of terrorism, particularly the necessity to act in order to save life.

The NFCC is clear in its view that the requirement to respond to all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks extends to all terrorism related incidents irrespective of the type, nature and/or basis of the attack and that such a response would include the rescue and extraction of injured persons.

It is the view of NFCC that response to terrorist incidents is encompassed within the agreed firefighter role maps as set out in the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service (“the Grey Book”).

The NFCC acknowledge that it may, on occasion, be necessary to utilise specially trained teams with enhanced levels of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as ballistic protection to operate safely and effectively at scene.

The NFCC also acknowledges that the initial response provided by operational fire and rescue service personnel, may be prior to any ‘Operation Plato’ declaration and that services should train for such an eventuality.

The NFCC is clear that under the right conditions and with the right safeguards in place, multi-agency commanders will be able to consider the deployment of non-specialist responders into the warm zone where lives can be saved.

The NFCC and the public expect fire and rescue services, who are trained and equipped to respond to such events, to do their utmost to save lives and protect the public.

Powers and responsibilities

The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) recognises the statutory powers held by fire and rescue services to respond to terrorist incidents, as set out in section 11 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. It also acknowledges their duty under section 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to plan, advise and assess for risks within the National Risk Assessment.

Further, the NFCC fully acknowledges the duties placed on fire and rescue services to respond to terrorist incidents as set out in the National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service in England 2018. English fire and rescue services must show due regard to the Framework, which requires arrangements be put in place to prevent and mitigate all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks, including terrorist attacks. Section 3.10 of the Framework states that:

“Fire and rescue services must be able to respond to the threat of terrorism and be ready to respond to incidents within their areas and across England. Fire and rescue services should also be interoperable to provide operational support across the UK to terrorist events as required.”

Conditions of service

Consistent with the National Framework 2018, it is the view of the NFCC that response to terrorist incidents is an agreed function of fire and rescue services as set out in the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service (“the Grey Book”).

The role of local authority fire and rescue services in the United Kingdom is the reduction in the loss of life, injury, economic and social cost arising from fires and other hazards. The service is responsible for...

...emergency preparedness coupled with the capacity and resilience to respond to major incidents of terrorism and other chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats.

Operational Considerations

In upholding the statutory powers held by fire and rescue services the NFCC acknowledges the requirements placed on the fire & rescue service to respond to terror related incidents and its duties to prepare, train its staff to respond to such risk.

Suitable and sufficient training and exercising and robust welfare arrangements are therefore essential in ensuring that firefighters and specially trained teams can operate safely and effectively within the confines of their role and within an established safe system of work.

In discharging these duties the NFCC commends the recently published Joint Operating Principles for Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) – edition 1. Principles which broadens the definition of a terror related incident and describes the actions which should follow any declaration.

Any response at operational, tactical and strategic levels should be underpinned by the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) as contained within the Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) Joint Operating Principles (JOP’s) to ensure that shared situational awareness and effective communications inform the joint understanding of risk.

Any response should be informed by the key JESIP principles of Co-location, Communication, Joint Understanding of Risk and Shared Situational Awareness.

The current threat levels as determined by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) in regards to the terrorist threat and varying attack methodologies which include bladed weapons, vehicle borne attacks, the use of fire as a weapon, IEDs (vehicle and

person borne) and firearms should be kept under regular review and should be considered in full.

The NPCC Operation Plato guidance provides a trusted source of information regarding the attack methodology; however the NFCC also acknowledges that it is reasonably foreseeable for fire and rescue service personnel to be deployed to a terror related incident without prior knowledge as a result of being mobilised to incidents not yet known or believed to be terrorist in nature.

The risk assessment processes should be informed by the terrorist attack methodology, as should the use of specialist and/or non-specialist responders.

Any use of operational discretion should only be considered with full cognisance of the services extant policies and procedures. Any response without the benefit of the necessary situational awareness to deploy safely and effectively should be actively discouraged.

**Committee
Operations**

**Date for Review
January 2023**