Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience

Managing incident response

Speed read

- Monitoring early warning indicators allows the Incident Management Team to take protective actions and increase their readiness in managing the response.

- Managing the response to an incident has a structured system of declaring and escalating an incident.

- Exercising command, control and co-ordination is defined through legislation and articulated through emergency management plans and policies.

Key points

- **Early warnings or indicators provide information that an incident could happen imminently and what the level of risk it could be to communities,** e.g. through weather forecasts, flood watches, alerts. Monitoring these risks as they develop allows an Incident Management Team to take protective actions and increase their readiness in managing the response. Monitoring risks also helps the team forecast future incident conditions.

- **Incident management has a structured system of declaring and escalating an incident.** Declaration, activation, notification triggers and responsibilities must be clear. It needs to be clear:

  » who needs to be notified of an actual or potential incident?

  » who has the authority to activate an incident response?

  » who needs to be notified of the incident activation?

- **Common incident management terms used by emergency services when managing an incident response are command, control and coordination.** The responsibility for command, control and co-ordination may be defined through legislation and change depending on what type of incident it is. Be aware of the arrangements within jurisdictions for the control of specific hazards such as bushfires and floods.

- **Incident Management Teams need to maintain a high level of situational awareness as the incident rapidly evolves.** Critical to this is effectively exchanging, communicating and collating information. This ensures that the team is working with a common understanding of what has happened, what is happening and what may happen next.

- **Situation reports (SITREPS) provide a status and progress report of the incident response at a point in time.** SITREPS are published and updated continually during an incident. They inform organisational leaders and stakeholders of the details of the incident, the issues being managed, and the response being undertaken.

- **Briefings are a key communication tool** used to ensure that all members involved with the incident understand the incident objectives, the strategies to control the incident, risks and safety issues.

- **The response to an incident may involve impacts on a range of stakeholders across the community.** Incident Management Team members will require an understanding of the culture and values of those affected to develop effective engagement strategies.

- **Records need to be maintained of decisions made and actions taken.** This includes the rationale for such decisions based on the situation at the time, especially in a dynamic evolving incident.

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Take action

- Identify the triggers of declaring and escalating an incident within your entity.

- Use the *Practitioner's Guide: How to choose between community engagement approaches* to develop effective community engagement.

More information

- Incident Management, Chapter 3 (AIDR 2023)

- Incident Management Case Studies (AIDR 2023)

- ISO 31000: 2018 Risk management – Guidelines

- Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System highlights how emergency service agencies manage incident response and explains the concepts of command, control and coordination.

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