



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

A Framework for Major Emergency Management

A Guide to Local Coordination Centres

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Introduction to a Guide on developing and operating Local Co-ordination Centres

‘A Framework for Major Emergency Management’ (2006) replaces the Framework for Co-ordinated Response to Major Emergency, which has underpinned major emergency preparedness and response capability since 1984.

The new Framework sets out the arrangements by which the principal response agencies will work together in the management of large-scale incidents.

This Guide on Developing and Operating Local Co-ordination Centres is intended to support the Framework text and to provide additional guidance on the co-ordination process.

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1. Introduction to the Local Co-ordination Centre Concept

Section 5.4.5.2 of “A Framework for Major Emergency Management” (2006) describes the place of the Local Co-ordination Group in the overall co-ordination architecture. The Local Co-ordination Centre (LCC) is a pre-nominated building that has appropriate support arrangements in place to facilitate the effective working of the Local Co-ordination Group. It is proposed that suitable facilities should be chosen, based on the functionality requirements outlined below, and that a minimum of one building should be nominated for each local authority area. Where it is considered appropriate, e.g. in large authorities or where specific situations exist, additional LCCs may be required. Buildings for use as LCCs should be pre-nominated in inter-agency discussions at the Regional Working Group (RWG) before being approved by the Regional Steering Group (RSG). When facilities are approved by the RSG they should be included in the plans of the relevant Principal Response Agencies (PRAs).

2. Functionality of Local Co-ordination Centres

Ideally, a local co-ordination centre should comprise the following elements:

1. A spacious main area, where furniture can be readily configured into the wedge shaped arrangement and where co-ordination activity can take place, i.e. where the relevant co-ordination group can meet and work. This space is referred to as the **Local Co-ordination Room** (LCR) in this document;
2. An adjacent communications space (not a room with communications equipment), through which communications in and out of the centre are routed and processed before being presented using the universal information management system;
3. A range of adjacent meeting /support rooms. There should be a minimum of three such rooms; two for the PRAs that are away from their own HQ buildings and one for the group involved in media management .
4. Access to a refreshments / toilets area.

Unless it is controlled, Local Co-ordination Centres will experience an influx of people when activated. The centre should be operated by the minimum number of people necessary to conduct the inter agency Co-ordination function effectively. Nonetheless, there are a number of additional elements that should be considered when choosing a facility to use as a Local Co-ordination Centre, including;

1. The ease with which the normal usage of the space can be relocated, and the wedge-shape work space put in place/ created;

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2. The availability/accessibility of the building after hours and at the weekends;
 3. Parking for the staff using the centre and their support teams;
 4. Security, to prevent unauthorised access to working areas;
 5. Adjacent (not necessarily within the building) large spaces where media briefing can take place;
 6. Back-up power supply (including generator) and Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) for ICT.

It is essential that LCCs and key role functions are incorporated into, and form part of, exercises, so any improvements that can be made are identified. In all cases, there will be a need for communications and information management facilities at immediate readiness, which are checked and tested periodically.

3. The Local Co-ordination Room

The Local Co-ordination Room is the room in which the Local Co-ordination Group, chaired by the lead agency, meets. The size of this room has to be sufficient to accommodate the representatives from the three PRAs and their support staff. The Local Co-ordination Group may also invite additional organisations or experts to participate/ assist or advise them on particular aspects relevant to the emergency and this should be factored in when considering a room for this function.

The Framework has set out a standard room layout that is considered optimal for the functioning of this group and this is outlined in the Figure 1, p.3.

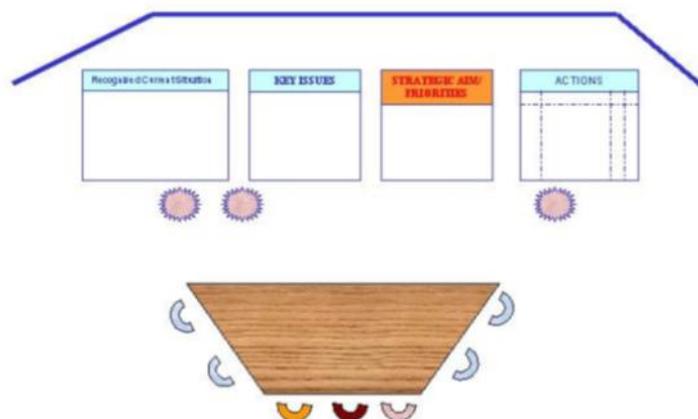


Figure 1 Layout of the Co-ordination Room

There are a number of important elements of Diagram 1 that should be noted when planning the Local Co-ordination Room;

3.1. The Co-ordination Desk

The diagram shows the classic wedge-shaped model. The chair of the LCG sits at the thin end of the wedge and, with other personnel around the desk, can readily view the information management display and engage in discussion with colleagues, with eye contact. Desk furniture in the room should, as far as possible, be readily configurable into this shape.

3.2. The Information Management Display

This is the four- Board Display that the chair of the LCC uses, in effect, to manage and lead the crisis response. This crucial element should, as far as possible, be readily visible to everyone in the room. The display shows the inter-agency information that will be used as the basis for effective decision-making. The information display is the prime and common source of information for both operational co-ordination and for communications to the public and media, and both functions will be managed by the LCG.

4. Adjacent Communication Space

This is the area through which most communications in and out of the centre are routed and is the space where messages/ information are processed/ validated prior to being brought to the Information Display Boards. By its nature, this can be expected to be a busy/ noisy space and this fact should be considered when considering its location.



5. Rooms for other PRAs and Managing Public Information/ Media Liaison

Two PRAs will be working away from their normal HQ buildings, and their staff will require rooms where they can work in support of their representative in the Local Co-ordination Room and maintain direct contact with their own HQ and their Controller of Operations (on site).

The (inter-agency) Public Information/ Media Liaison Team will also need space when they can undertake functions associated with their brief and tasks assigned to them by the LCG. While the “lead agency” will provide the bulk of the media team, staff from the other PRAs may assist them. This space should have Internet, TV and radio equipment, with recording facilities, where media coverage of the emergency can be monitored and actioned as appropriate. While it is the function of this group to arrange press briefings, these may, and preferably should take place at an adjacent location, and certainly not where they could interfere with the operation of the LCC itself.

Rooms for both these functions should be of sufficient size for four to six people to meet and work in. The rooms should have a main meeting desk and one or two smaller work desks. Additional equipment that could be made available in each room includes landline phones, Internet access, a printer, white boards and a flip chart.

6. Refreshment Area

As an emergency could be over an extended duration, it is advisable that a refreshment area is established close to where staff of the Local Co-ordination Centre could avail of tea/coffee when required. Consideration should also be given to the provision of meals or access to canteen facilities.

7. Local Co-ordination Centre Personnel

The Framework outlines a number of key roles involved in the operation of the LCC. These roles and their functions in the centre are outlined below. In addition to the personnel nominated in the Framework, there are a number of additional roles that are considered necessary for the smooth running of the Local Co-ordination Centre.





7.1. Essential Roles

7.1.1 The Co-ordination Group

Each PRA designates, in their Major Emergency Plan, a person (and alternates) to represent the agency at the Local Co-ordination Group. The lead agency representative chairs the proceedings of the Local Co-ordination Group. The functions of the Local Co-ordination Group and their decision-making mandates are detailed in Framework Section 5.4 and Appendix F8.

7.1.2 Support Team for Co-ordination Group

The PRA representatives at the Local Co-ordination Centre will require support from colleagues based in the centre including representatives of other Agencies and Specialists. Depending on the nature of the incident, the Local Co-ordination Group may invite other agencies or specialists to participate in the co-ordination task.

7.1.3 Representatives of other Agencies and Specialists

Depending on the nature of the incident, the Local Co-ordination Group may invite other agencies or specialists to participate in the co-ordination desk.

7.2. The Information Management Team

Incoming information/ data needs to be processed, marshalled and displayed quickly and accurately in the form of information required for decision-making. This process is a distinct and self-standing management task, undertaken by an Information Management Officer, or small Information Management Team (for larger and/or complex incidents). The role of the Information Management Officer requires training and practice to achieve competence in delivery of the Framework's universal Information Management System.

7.2.1 The Action Management Officer

In many circumstances the Information Management Officer will be able to operate all four information management boards. When an incident is very large or complex, or where the Information Management Officer so decides it is appropriate, an Action Manager may be appointed from available staff. This officer oversees the Actions Board of the Information Management system and ensures that tasks that have been assigned by the Chair of the LCG are dealt with within the agreed timeframe. A competent person, operating under the direction of the IMO, can undertake the task of Action Manager.





7.2.2 Log Keeper

A person should be assigned the task of maintaining a detailed log of the activities in the Local Co-ordination Centre. This log-keeping is a distinct function from the Information Management function, but should be operated under the direction of the Information Manager.

7.2.3. Personnel to Staff the Communication Area/Room

Most of the communications to and from the centre will be routed through this room. Personnel allocated to provide this essential support service should be adequately briefed and an appropriate system of logging and processing information/ messages should be in place.

7.3 Media Management Team

As noted above, the Public Information/ Media Liaison Team also undertake their functions and tasks assigned to them by the LCG within the Local Co-ordination Centre. The “lead agency” provides leadership to the media team, and staff from the other PRAs may assist them. The Media Liaison Team works under the direction of the LCG, and undertake actions assigned to them, in addition to monitoring media coverage of the emergency. While it is the function of this group to arrange press briefings, these may, and preferably should take place at an adjacent location, and certainly not where they could interfere with the operation of the Local Co-ordination Centre.

7.4. Facility Management Team

In addition to those using the LCC to manage the emergency, it is considered essential that a facility manager should be designated, to ensure that the centre operates smoothly. Although not directly involved in managing the emergency, the facility manager is crucial to ensuring that all necessary supports are available at the Local Co-ordination Centre, which will be a busy place, with many people unfamiliar with the space in which they are working.

The facility manager should be a person who is very familiar with the building. The primary task of the facility manager is to ensure that the Chair of the LCG and other groups/ teams described above have all they need to operate successfully under the pressure of the emergency. As Local Co-ordinations Centres may have a different function in normal circumstances, the first task of the facility manager is to bring the LCC into use and set it up, on activation of the Major Emergency Plan. The centre may of course have to be activated out of hours or at weekends. The Facility manager should use checklists and room layout plans to ensure that the co-ordination centre is ready for use once the LCG staff arrives.





7.5. Security Person

In the event of a major emergency, the Local Co-ordination Centre will be the focus of considerable attention. To ensure that only appropriate staff have access to the centre, it is recommended that a security person be appointed to control access, operating under the Facility Manager. Staff attending the centre should be aware that pre-listing and photographic identification would normally be required to gain access to the Local Co-ordination Centre.

8. Local Co-ordination Centre Equipment

The basic equipment available in all Local Co-ordination Centres should include:

- Information Management Boards and Markers
- Flip Charts/ Pads and Markers
- Stationary
- Telephones and internet ports
- Fax machine
- Photocopier
- Television, Radios & recording facilities
- Radio communication facilities as appropriate
- Copies of relevant documentation including Major and other Emergency Plans
- Access to Maps/ GIS and display facilities
- Aide memoires (where they have been developed)

9. Activation of the Local Co-ordination Centre

When a major emergency is declared, and the lead agency determined, the lead agency should implement its Local Co-ordination Group mobilisation procedure. A Local Co-ordination Group mobilisation procedure is part of every PRA's Major Emergency Plan. The procedure provides for contact being made with the nominated representatives on the Local Co-ordination Group, confirming which Local Co-ordination Centre will be used for the emergency, the time at which the Group will convene and any other arrangements necessary to facilitate the Local Co-ordination Group in performing its functions. The





mobilisation procedure should also include procedures for activating the facility manager and other staff of the Lead Agency, to ensure that the centre is prepared for use.

It is expected that the first contact with the members of the Local Co-ordination Group (and their alternates) would be via an alerting text message, indicating that a Major Emergency has occurred, or is imminent, and informing them that LCC is being activated.

Where agreed by the PRAs, a preliminary step in the activation could be a teleconference, with the alerting text message giving the time, telephone number and pin code for the teleconference. When the teleconference commences, each participant identifies himself or herself and any alternate, whose principal is already on the teleconference, withdraws. The members of the Local Co-ordination Group are then given available information on the emergency and decide to either:

- Hold another teleconference later or
- Come together at the Local Co-ordination Centre

10. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) of the Local Co-ordination Centre

A PRA whose building has been designated, as a Local Co-ordination centre should prepare a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for that centre with their inter-agency colleagues.

This guide recommends the use of action cards to support this SOP, comprising of pocket sized single or multi-page laminated cards for all roles/posts/tasks in the setup and operation of the centre. This includes principal Local Co-ordination Group members, Information Officers, Action Managers, Media Liaison Managers, Log Keepers, Facilities Managers, Security Staff, IT Support Staff and any others with functions assigned in local circumstances.

It is recommended that each Action card should have three core summaries;

- Priority of responsibility (Framework for ME and/ or the agencies MEP)
- Key Actions on receiving a major emergency alert
- Pager Alerting (Key group mobile phones) and conference call arrangements including a template for a conference call agenda, a call chairing arrangements and a call log-keeping arrangement.

A specific standalone Action card may be required , setting out each agency's call out cascade for key staff/ role mobilisation.



11. Communication Links

Communication links are vital to information flow, and therefore central to the success of any major emergency response. To this end, a resilient communication network is vital. Figure 2. below details the main communication lines into and out of the Local Co-ordination Centre.

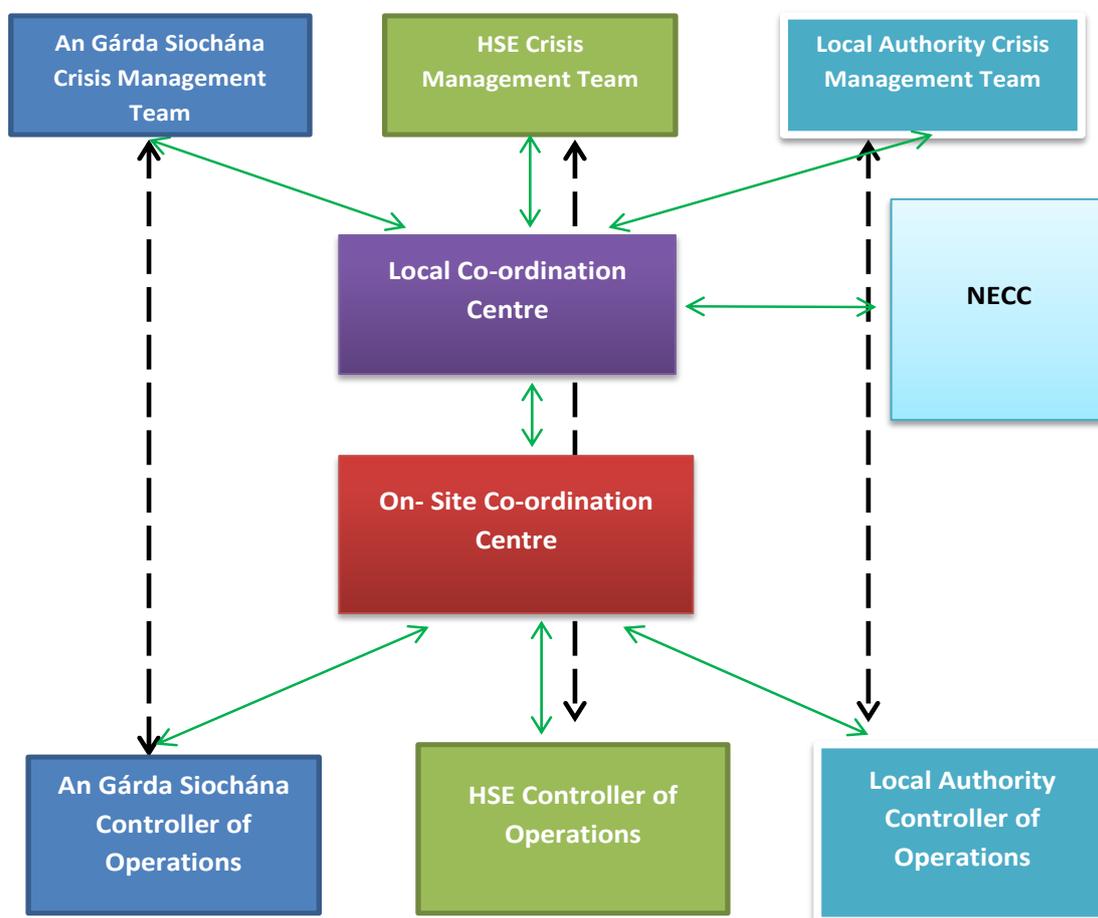


Figure 2 Main Communication Flows to and from the Local Co-ordination Centre

(Note: Broken Lines are intra-agency communications. Full lines denote inter-agency communications)





The following communication facilities should be available generally to support the information flow:

11.1 Crisis Management Team to Local Co-ordination Centre (and vice versa)

Where the Crisis Management team of the Lead Agency and the Local Co-ordination Centre are co-located in the same building, communication can be achieved readily by internal telephone systems. However, the Crisis Management Teams of the other two PRAs will be in other buildings, away from the Local Co-ordination Centre, and communication links can be achieved, generally, via the following modes:

- PSTN/ Landline
- Mobile Phone Networks
- Fax, e-mail, Internet
- Mobile Radio (where appropriate)

11.2 On-Site Co-ordination Centre to Local Co-ordination Centre (and vice versa)

The communication link from the On-Site Co-ordination Centre to the Local Co-ordination Centre is one of the most critical to the co-ordination of the overall response effort. This link should be resilient and have a number of fallback modes. All of the following links should be considered:

- Mobile Phone
- Mobile Radio (where available directly, or via one or more of the PRAs VHF PMR schemes)
- PSTN/ Landline, where the OSC can obtain such a line from the telecoms supplier or can negotiate the use of a building with landline at the site
- Satellite Phone

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