



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

**A Framework for  
Major Emergency Management  
A Guide to Motorway and Dual  
Carriageway Emergencies – Strategic  
Guidance Document 15 – April 2013**

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

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## GUIDE TO MOTORWAY & DUAL CARRIAGEWAY INCIDENTS - STRATEGIC

['A Framework for Major Emergency Management' \(2006\)](#) replaced '*A Framework for Co-ordinated Response to Major Emergency*', which had underpinned major emergency preparedness and response capability since 1984.

*'A Framework for Major Emergency Management'* (2006) sets out the arrangements by which the Principal Response Agencies will work together in the management of large-scale incidents.

This *'Guide to Motorway & Dual Carriageway Emergencies – Strategic'* is intended to support '*A Framework for Major Emergency Management'* (2006) text and to provide additional guidance on the coordination of a response by the Principal Response Agencies to emergencies on motorways and dual carriageways.

This Guide provides a strategic overview for dealing with Road Traffic Collisions on motorways and dual carriageways. It is the first in series of three guides, which include also guidance at the tactical and operational levels.

This document, like others in the guidance series, is subject to regular review and for that reason, it is requested that any comments and/or insights that arise during its implementation are fed back to the national level. Comments should be addressed to:

MEM Project Team,  
National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management,  
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,  
Custom House,  
Dublin 1.

Or

[emergencymanagement@housing.gov.ie](mailto:emergencymanagement@housing.gov.ie)

November 2022: Since this document was first published, functions of some government departments were transferred with changes to their departmental titles. Some small changes in text have therefore been made.

## Introduction

1. The purpose of this Guide is to provide guidance for inter-agency co-ordination among the Principal Response Agencies (PRA<sup>1</sup>) when responding to major emergencies on motorways and dual carriageways. The co-ordination arrangements as outlined in the Framework (2006) apply.

This document has been developed as a parent strategic guide. It is intended that a suite of operational and tactical documents will be produced to detail how interoperability of each agency's procedures will be achieved. This document deals specifically with major emergency incidents on motorways and dual carriageways requiring a multi-agency response, however, the arrangements in this document may be used for incidents other than Major Emergencies, if appropriate. This document forms part of a suite of protocol documents that underpin the Framework for Major Emergency Management 2006 and associated guidance documents.

Attending motorway and dual-carriageway incidents carries the potential for harm to responding PRA personnel and other road users from moving traffic and other hazards at the scene. PRA personnel may have limited protection from approaching traffic and so it is essential that the work of the PRAs should be coordinated to ensure the safe and speedy management of motorway/ dual carriageway incidents.

This document has been developed in consultation with the three PRA's, the National Roads Authority and the DTTAS and is approved by the MEM National Steering Group.

## Planning and Preparedness

2. Each PRA is responsible for putting in place its own arrangements for responding to motorway incidents including the provision of appropriate procedures and training.

3. Joint exercises are valuable to raise awareness and to educate individuals on their roles and the roles of others. Exercises promote coordination and cooperation while providing an opportunity to validate plans, systems and procedures. Large scale exercises are generally only feasible on unopened sections of motorway or dual carriageway. Table-top or similar exercises can however achieve many of the training objectives associated with live exercises.

## Health & Safety

4. Each Agency is responsible for the Health Safety and Welfare of its own personnel at the scene of joint operations. Each attending emergency service should undertake a Risk Assessment as soon as possible and risk assessments should be revised to take account of new information, changing conditions and new hazards identified. Co-ordination meetings on site should include exchange of information on any unexpected or unusual hazards identified.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Principal Response Agencies (PRAs) are the agencies designated by the Government to respond to major emergencies i.e. An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Local Authorities. The Principal Emergency Services (PES) are the services which respond to normal emergencies in Ireland, namely An Garda Síochána, the National Ambulance Service and the Fire Service.]

## **Inter-Agency Coordination at Motorway & Dual Carriageway Emergencies**

5. When called to the scene of an emergency, incident responders will be attending as part of a multi-disciplinary group from a variety of separate agencies. For most incidents Fire Service, An Garda Síochána and the National Ambulance Service form the main part of this multi-disciplinary approach and liaison between these organisations is necessary to assist in achieving coordination among agencies at incidents. The NRA road operators / contractors and Recovery Truck Operators may also form part of the coordinated response.

6. A co-ordinated multi-agency approach will ensure:

- Liaison between PRAs and other agencies
- Clearly identifiable Incident Commanders within PRAs and other agencies
- Simultaneous activities/tasks.

7. The Framework for Major Emergency Management designates An Garda Síochána as the lead agency (see Appendix 7, Table 7.1) for coordinating the response to a Major Emergency involving a Road Traffic Collision (RTC). This pre-nomination of the lead agency role can apply also to RTC incidents not classified as Major Emergencies.

8. As lead agency for co-ordination purposes, the senior representative of An Garda Síochána will convene the agencies present and all will attend on-site co-ordination. This should include liaison with other emergency services and contractors to co-ordinate activities effectively, and liaison with technical specialists whose specific knowledge may be critical in helping to respond to the risk. Depending on the scale of an incident, the group of senior officers from each agency in attendance may establish a single coordination point.

### **Response Objectives**

9. The key objectives for each agency are:

- Ensuring scene safety.
- Protecting and rescuing those in immediate danger, and providing appropriate aid and assistance.
- Preventing the escalation of the incident and further consequent collisions/ threats to those in the vicinity.
- Ensuring the safety of responding personnel of the emergency services and other agencies.
- Protecting infrastructure, the environment and property
- Ensuring Business Continuity
- Controlling & regulation of traffic.
- Ensuring the motorway/dual carriageway is opened in the quickest possible time consistent with the above objectives.

### **Specific Agency Roles**

10. Specific agency roles will be detailed in subsequent operational and tactical documents. Roles will be defined for PRAs and other agencies including Civil Defence, the National Roads Authority, the Defence Forces, etc.

**11.** Effective communications are of critical importance at all incidents. It is essential that information is relayed accurately between the agencies operating at the scene. Each agency is responsible for its internal communications and ensuring that information and messages are formulated and relayed to relevant communication/ coordination centres and other agencies as appropriate.

**12.** An Garda Síochána will generally liaise with other agencies to determine if the motorway / dual carriageway should be closed or if it can remain partially operational during the response.

**13.** Diversions and road closures should be carried out by An Garda Síochána and / or appropriate Local Authority, road operators, or contractors. This may include the implementation of an information strategy including general public announcements such as deployment of VMS messaging, local / national radio stations and AA Road Watch. Refer to Guidance document No. 5 on media communication.

### **Re-opening Roads**

**14.** Business Continuity is one of the key objectives for the responding PRAs. In general when damaged vehicles and debris have been removed from a motorway or dual carriageway An Garda Síochána will determine when to re-open any lanes that have been closed.

**15.** Where concerns exist about the safety of the road surface e.g. due to a suspected spill of oil or similar, surface water, snow/ice or where damage has occurred to the road surface or infrastructure e.g., following a vehicle fire or impact to a structure, the decision to re-open the affected lane(s) will generally be taken by the technical staff of the organisation responsible for the motorway or dual carriageway.

### **The Media**

**16.** The lead agency for co-ordination, An Garda Síochána, should deal with the media interest in line with that organisation's policy. Other agencies or individuals should not speak with the media about emergency operations other than as authorised and in accordance with its own policy. When authorised, comment to the media generally should be confined to the information directly relevant to the incident and the agency's response and activity at this incident. Detailed guidance on media management is found in guidance document 5 and the media plan template.

### **Complex Incidents**

**17 Hazardous Materials Incidents** - The management of hazardous materials incidents poses specific issues for the PRAs. The Local Authority is the Lead agency for response to hazardous materials incidents, with the exception of those involving biological agents, when it is the HSE. The arrangements set out in the Framework for Emergency Management 2006 should guide the response to hazardous materials incidents, even where a Major Emergency is not declared. Should an RTC incident be classified as CBRN [Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear], the arrangements for co-ordination of such CBRN incidents, as detailed in the CBRN Protocol, should be followed.

**18. Severe Weather Rescue** - The principles for managing large numbers of stranded motorists/passengers set out herein are high-level by their nature. Detailed procedures should be developed and referred to a Regional Steering Group for testing by means of a desk-top exercise. This approach would facilitate the

development of more detailed procedures by each PRA.

Many circumstances, in particular severe weather (freezing temperatures, dense low-lying fog, heavy snow or blizzards, floods, heatwaves etc.) and major traffic incidents causing the closure of a lane or of the entire carriageway can result in extreme congestion and could result in vehicle passengers becoming stranded on the motorway network for prolonged periods of time. This period of time may be critically long for certain travellers, while not for others. The sick and the elderly and children may require assistance within a much shorter time frame than others. The scope of emergency welfare to be provided should be appropriate to the duration, scale and circumstances of the incident. Emergency welfare should not be provided if it will introduce similar or greater risks to the safety and welfare of the public and responders, on or off the Motorway / Dual Carriageway Network.

It is envisaged that the Local Authorities, supported by the Civil Defence, will be responsible for putting in place arrangements for the provision of emergency welfare in line with Civil Defence current mandate.

Emergency welfare should only be initiated under exceptional circumstances, usually where there are significant numbers of people affected and only after all other incident management measures have been considered, and, as the case may be, attempted and failed. These occasions are likely to be rare. The response objectives for such an incident should seek:

- (a) to minimise risk to health and well-being of stranded road users;
- (b) where feasible, to overcome any hazard caused by severe weather, or clear an incident, as quickly as possible in order to reduce the period of stranding of road users;
- (c) to provide 'on site' basic emergency welfare to road users where necessary; and
- (d) in extreme circumstances, to carry out evacuation from vehicles to enable welfare support to be provided elsewhere.

### **Incident Closure - Standing Down Individual Services**

**19.** An Garda Síochána, as the lead agency, should be informed before a decision is made by any agency to stand down any service. Where organisations other than the PRAs have responded, these organisations should be stood down formally by the agency that mobilised them.

**20.** The incident should be formally stood down by An Garda Síochána and decision should be communicated to relevant press officers.

**21.** As stated in the introduction, this document will form the basis for the development of more detailed inter-agency guidance documents that will focus on:

- Operational interoperability,
  - Defining Roles & Responsibilities, and
  - Guidance on Emergency Traffic Management,
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