

Major incident management

The next generation of control room solutions is providing a common operating picture for major incidents to support a better multi-agency response



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UK emergency services work together tirelessly and bravely to safeguard and protect the well-being of people in the UK – for this we are indebted. They are involved day in, day out in a variety of situations: planned events, such as Armed Forces Day; civil emergencies, such as flooding; and emergencies/major incidents, such as the Manchester Arena bombing or the Westminster Bridge attack. These highly complex operations, which require tight-knit multi-agency planning and response, are underpinned, supported and enabled by joint policies, processes, procedures, command structures – and a growing number of collaborative technologies.



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Initiatives such as the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) lay the foundations of operating models and frameworks for multi-agency working, allowing responders and control rooms to share major incident information. Strategic, tactical and operational national command structures (often referred to as Gold, Silver and Bronze command at local level), are stood up during such events to co-ordinate effective multi-agency responses. Technologies that support collaboration, such as shared control rooms, incident transfer, and communication standards allow emergency services to:

- communicate effectively
- share situational awareness and understanding of risk
- co-ordinate and co-locate as required.

There has been much positive work around multi-agency incident response over recent years. Programmes such as the Future Control Room Services Scheme provided funding for fire & rescue services in England to upgrade control rooms, and current projects, such as the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP), are paving the way for next-generation communications technologies, inspiring suppliers to develop media-rich control room solutions.

Inevitably, things do go wrong on occasion, which can result in a risk to the lives of responders and those they seek to assist. The Kerslake Report into the Manchester Arena attack largely praised the emergency services for their response. But it also contained an important lesson around the need for inter-agency communication regarding agreed operational responses.

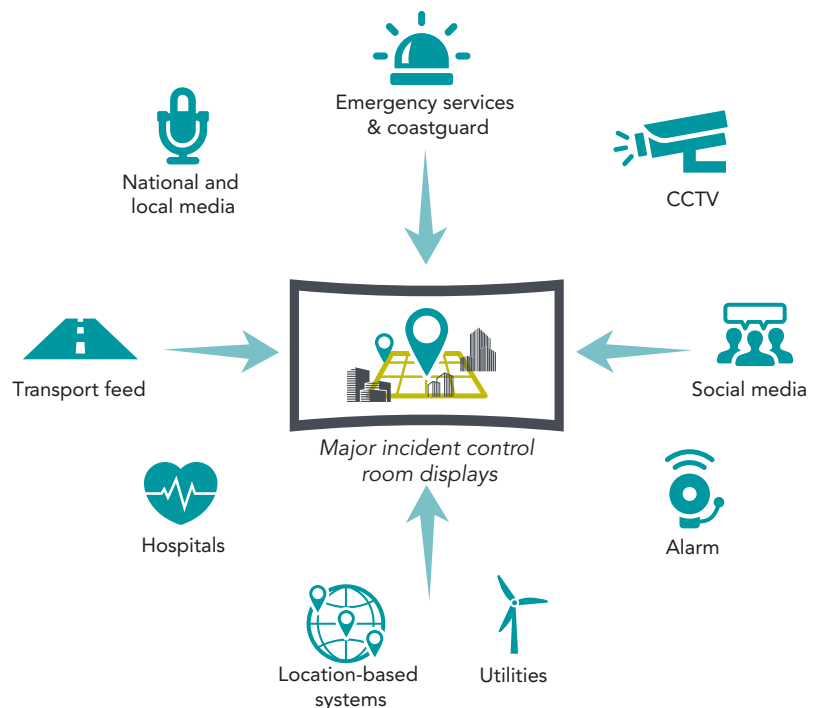
Frameworks and models such as M/ETHANE are crucial to this, but there is also new technology that can support a common operating picture. A number of suppliers are introducing new software that provides a 3D up-to-the minute view of what's happening at a given location based on multiple sources of information. That can include where emergency resources have been deployed, information on road blocks, public transport updates, and the locations of fatalities. This information is a powerful tool for commanders overseeing incidents.

Les Watson, Managing Consultant at Mason Advisory explains: “Imagine as a Gold, Silver or Bronze commander being able to use a secure, location-independent solution to gain an accurate overview of the incident, populated with live information from a diverse range of feeds. Information like this can be used to validate and further inform strategic, tactical and operational decisions which directly

affect the efficacy and safety of on-the-scene Category 1 and Category 2 responders.”

Some examples of how a major incident management solution can consume information feeds and inform the common operating picture, are:

- the use of CCTV or drone feeds to determine or monitor a marauding terror attack
- hospital resource availability, to establish the best routing of casualties
- the use of social media and primary media streams to obtain further incident insight and to manage public perception and organisational reputation
- flooding alerts, which may suddenly turn a rising-tide incident into a one which is rapid onset in nature, requiring immediate evacuation – these events may be predicted in advance with the use of historical data sets, public insight, and additional feeds, such as the Met Office’s DataPoint API
- real-time mobilisation and agency resource information – what multi-agency resources are at the scene, and their location and skills
- building management systems – intruder or fire alarm/suppression system zone information to understand which internal areas of a building are affected



Control room commanders can build up a much better picture of major incidents using innovative technology

- other Internet of Life Saving Things (IoLST) devices, such as biomonitors to monitor the health and well-being of responders.

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Mason Advisory will be continuing to work with emergency services and their suppliers, providing thought leadership in the use of incident management solutions. We'll keep you updated via the usual channels, but if you'd like to know more about developments in this area then please contact us for a friendly chat

About Mason Advisory

Mason Advisory has offices in Manchester and London and employs 40 staff, with plans to continue its expansion. It provides IT consultancy services that match technology know-how with commercial and business sense. Clients include organisations in the financial services, life sciences, retail and FMCG, energy, government, emergency services, and not-for-profit sectors.

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