

Background and Context

The blast ripped through the heart of Manchester causing widespread damage to buildings up to half a mile radius and leaving hundreds of shops, offices, dwellings open to access many of which were unusable due to the extent of the damage which varied considerably in degree. Also, streets throughout the city were strewn with broken glass and other debris.

How the Topic was Handled

The recovery began on the afternoon of Monday 17 June when control of the site was handed over by the Police to the Local Authority. The immediate priorities were to maintain security and make the streets and buildings safe as quickly as possible to allow people access to their premises. Planning this task fell to Manchester City Council Building Control and was managed from their offices in the Town Hall which were undamaged by the blast.

The communication strategy had to satisfy the public's need for information, questions like:

- I need urgent access to my premises.
- When can I have access to my building?
- How long is it going to take?

The answers to these questions are often "we don't know, it depends on progress on site, and progress on site depends upon the scale of the damage". This means that the Senior Incident Management Team needs to understand the clean up strategy and requires constant updates of the progress being made on site so as to inform the people affected on a regular basis.

A daily cycle of briefings and debriefings developed and continued for many weeks:

- At the top level, meetings were held between the public and the emergency management team. These daily public meetings would take place addressed by senior officers of the Local Authority and the emergency services. They would explain aspects of the recovery strategy and answer specific questions put to them by individuals and organisations. These meetings would help to inform the development of strategic priorities that would guide the recovery process.
- Below that, daily briefing meetings were held between senior managers from the Local Authority and emergency services co-ordinating the management of the incident on the ground. This would inform the operational team of senior surveyors managing the incident on site guiding the operations of the clients and contractors.
- Site meetings between senior Local Authority surveyors managing the different zones.

- Finally, meetings between the Senior Surveyors and clients and contractors working on the sites. The next morning, Local Authority surveyors would meet with clients and contractors and set out the day's objectives and priorities.
- The day would end with a debrief with senior officers from the Local Authority, Police and Fire Service with a review of what had been achieved that day and what the expectations would be for the next day.

This process would then work in reverse at the end of the day with debriefs that would filter information back up to public meeting to keep people informed of progress.

Lessons Identified

The importance of a daily rotating cycle of meetings working both up and down the command and control structure where representatives of each organisation and agency filter progress updates to the relevant people they represent.

Contacts for Further Information

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