

## Background and Context

**Aim:** To validate the GMRF CBRN Response Plan and Recovery Plan during a strategic level command exercise.

### Objectives

- To identify the roles and responsibilities of participating agencies within a Strategic Co-ordinating Group
- Demonstrate the multi-agency gold level response to a CBRN incident
- Test and challenge the procedures within GMRF multi-agency CBRN Response and Recovery Plans
- Reflect on key decision making processes within the SCG and individual agencies
- Identify the community impact of a major CBRN incident
- Identify the impact of a major CBRN incident on individual organisation's service delivery
- During plenary reflection, identify and record areas of development for strategic command of a CBRN incident.

### How the Topic was Handled

The exercise scenario centred on the detonation of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) by a *'suicide bomber'* at a city centre Metrolink / Mainline railway station, resulting in approximately 25 – 30 fatalities and up to 100 additional casualties at the scene plus an area of contamination from Caesium 137. The impact of this incident was enhanced by the movement of two rush hour trains that were at the station at the time of the explosion.

The exercise was carried out at the Greater Manchester Police Hydra Minerva facility. The format for the exercise involved the establishment of three syndicates operating as **individual** Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCG) for the same incident and one syndicate operating as a Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG). All groups were supported by a Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) that operated as a separate syndicate. Additional agency specific tactical advisor support was available to participants throughout the exercise.

The intention was to split the exercise into four specific sessions to encompass the various stages of a CBRN incident in the initial 12 hour+ period. Following each session there was a comprehensive and facilitated plenary to enable a variety of issues to be raised and discussed.

The final session focused on the period of time 12 hours +. The aim of this session was to look at the longer term issues arising from the incident including the process for the recovery of contaminated fatalities at the scene. It was also a session for individual syndicates to reflect on their actions so far and to plan a longer term strategy including the potential hand over of the strategic management of the incident from the SCG to the RCG.

The original plan was that the final session would be run the same as the previous sessions with the SCGs and RCG meeting independently followed by a plenary. However, due to the time constraints the key elements were discussed during an extended plenary which focused almost exclusively on the RCG.

During the plenary the RCG reported on, and was challenged on, the work that it had delivered during the morning including:

- Preparation of a Community Impact Assessment
- Preparation of a Recovery Strategy
- Site Clearance and Decontamination
- Recovery Structures
- Long term community health monitoring
- Staffing
- Key issues
- Handover

The synergies between RCG and SCG activities were also explored.

Membership of the RCG comprised representatives from the following sectors: Local Authorities (Recovery Co-ordinating Group Chair), Police, NHS, Utilities, Environment Agency, Transport (Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE), Government (Government Liaison Officer (from GONW)), Government Decontamination Service (GDS), Voluntary Sector and Chamber of Commerce.

## Lessons Identified

- i. The overwhelming view was that the GM LRF Strategic Recovery Guidance provided clear and relevant guidance which strategic managers could and should utilise during an event. However, it was recommended that: **individuals should revisit the plan on a regular basis to ensure they remain familiar with the content and are prepared should an incident of this nature occur.**
- ii. Primarily for exercise planning purposes it was agreed to convene the Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) two hours (in real time) after the start of the exercise. At the time of planning this was considered to be too early but a necessary to facilitate the running of the exercise within the desired timeframe. However as the exercise progressed it was acknowledged that **the RCG should be established as soon as practicable.** The local authority representative at the SCG should then instigate this following the GM Strategic Recovery Guidance.
- iii. **It was acknowledged that the co-location of the RCG with the SCG is the best option.** If this was the case the RCG would also have direct access to the STAC which it would certainly require. However, it was recognised that this might not always be possible. For resilience purposes, it was suggested that **an alternate strategic location for the RCG should be identified, should it not be possible to co-locate with the SCG.** Although each local authority will have facilities that can be utilised for the longer term,

- it was recommended that **a specific alternative venue is identified which can be used in the early stages of an incident that is in relatively easy travel distance of the SCG**. This will enable the Chair to attend the regular SCG briefings. Agreements should be in place for the use of another Local Authority's facilities if necessary. The identified location should ideally be facilitated with video conferencing technology.
- iv. **The initial work of the RCG should focus on the development of a Community Impact Assessment.** The production of an early Community Impact Assessment will greatly assist the SCG in the management of the incident and development of strategy.
  - v. The role and remit of the RCG is contained in the GM Strategic Recovery Guidance. It is recommended that **all relevant current multi-agency emergency plans include a short section on recovery and 'signpost' to this document.**
  - vi. Participation in an RCG is not something that can be picked up on the day of an incident and there needs to be more awareness of the remit of this group and relevant training for those who would be expected to be involved. This is particularly pertinent to local authority Chief Officers and Directors who will be required to chair the group. **It was recommended that a greater awareness of the role and responsibilities of the RCG is disseminated to all relevant personnel.**
  - vii. It is acknowledged that individual agencies have a finite resource pool of senior managers with the requisite level of skills and authority to operate in the RCG arena. **It is important for resilience purposes that arrangements are in place to request additional support from other Local Authorities should it be required.**
  - viii. **Agencies should consider maximum work time periods that any individual should be involved with the incident.** Human nature will dictate that in the event of a real incident, individuals, with the best of intentions, will work to the point of exhaustion that could have a negative impact on their decision making ability.

## Contacts for Further Information

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## Additional Documents

- [GMRF Exercise Naval Debrief Report](#)
- [Summary of the Development of Greater Manchester Recovery Guidance](#)
- [Exercise Naval outline, Local Authority flyer and joining instructions](#)