

Introduction >>>

It is assumed that you are familiar with the six stages of an extrication, adopt a team approach, and, in particular, are aware of the roles and responsibilities relating to extrication planning and managing safety. The National Operational Guidance Programme offers direction to Fire and Rescue Services, by identifying the hazards and control measures that should be considered by the Incident Commander. The information contained within this guidance is reflected in this and other UKRO modules. The focus of this module is on how the Commander should approach the incident scene to obtain information. Following this systematic approach provides a structured method of assessment that supports decisions to effectively and safely organise resources.

Initial Approach >>>

Having responded to and arrived at the scene of a Road Traffic Collision safely, roadway and incident hazards are often immediately evident. For example, the degree of damage to the scene, vehicles involved and their position, and the kinematics of the collision. This naturally leads to some immediate control measures being implemented such as the positioning of the appliances to protect the scene of operation, thereby creating a safer working environment. To identify the unseen hazards, gather information and fully appraise the situation, the Incident Commander needs to complete a 360-degree assessment of the scene, where it is possible and safe to do so. This consists of the Commander circling the incident, initially to assess the 'outer scene' and then, when safe to do so, checking the 'inner scene'.

The 'outer scene' survey focuses on both inward and outward assessment, while the 'inner scene' survey is predominantly a closer inward look at the specific incident circumstances, hazards, risks and tactical options. This all forms part of an on-going dynamic risk assessment. The assessment should be completed even if other members of the emergency services are in attendance. Although other emergency services are likely to have completed their risk assessment, as the Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for safety it is vital that the Fire Service Commander takes control and ensures that all risks are identified and managed.

The overall purpose of the initial assessment is to confirm that any immediate hazards have been identified. Once identified the appropriate controls and safe system of work can be introduced, to mitigate or reduce the risk. Incident commanders should use the hierarchy of control model as a guide to managing risk. It is at this early stage that the assessment of a casualty's condition may warrant a 'rapid entry' of a medic to the internal parts of a given vehicle, if not already done so by a pre-attending member of the ambulance service. This would be to make a lifesaving intervention such as opening an airway.

Further to the immediate hazards, the Incident Commander, who may be supported by other team members, should visibly and physically check for:

- Supplementary Restraint Systems Are they present? Are they still passive?
- Fuel Types Conventional or alternative? Is fuel leaking?
- Are there any sharps, spillages or is the ground undulating?

The Incident Commander and their team should also consider:

- The kinematics of the collision which can indicate the possible injuries sustained by any casualties; this helps both in the treatment of the patient and to develop the overall extrication plan.
- How to mitigate any initial and ongoing risks such as vehicle movement?

- The isolation of energy systems Are the vehicle keys accessible, can the battery be disconnected, if so, what are the implications on the rescue. For example, will the operation of vehicle seats and windows be compromised?
- The vehicle construction; its age and shape, what, if any composite materials are present, what damage has been sustained during the collision, what type of glass is still intact? Moreover, what are the implications of the use of rescue tools?

This list is by no means exhaustive and is dictated by the unique nature of the incident you are attending. These actions, when completed effectively help to ensure that the appropriate control measures and safe systems of work are introduced, safeguarding all those involved in the incident. Furthermore, the process of gathering information contribute to an active casualty centred extrication.

Summary >>>

- On the final approach to the scene and arrival, some hazards are often immediately evident. This naturally leads to some immediate control measures being implemented.
- To identify the unseen hazards, gather information and fully appraise the situation, the Incident Commander needs to complete a 360-degree assessment of the scene.
- The 'outer scene' survey focuses on both inward and outward assessment, while the 'inner scene' survey is predominantly a closer inward look at the specific incident circumstances.
- The Fire and Rescue Service is responsible for safety. It is vital that the Fire Service Commander takes control and ensures that all risks are identified and managed.
- Incident commanders should use the hierarchy of control model as a guide to managing risk.
- These actions, when completed effectively help to ensure that the appropriate control measures and safe systems of work are introduced, safeguarding all those involved in the incident.