



Home Office



NFCC

National Fire
Chiefs Council

The National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) England

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Foreword

The environment in which fire and rescue services operate is often complex and challenging. The experiences of the 2015 -16 winter floods in Cumbria, Yorkshire & Lancashire, the Didcot power station collapse (2016), the Shoreham Airshow crash (2015) and the Bosley Mill wood flour mill explosion (2015) clearly illustrated the diverse nature of these challenges and demonstrated the professionalism of our fire and rescue services when responding to major incidents.

Major incidents of this nature invariably occur over prolonged periods of time and place significant demands on local fire and rescue services. Therefore, it is essential that we have robust levels of preparedness in place to assist our fire and rescue services in the safe resolution of a major incident. To enable this we have secured the provision of effective and efficient specialist national resilience capabilities, advice, and national guidance.

When considering major incidents it is important for us to recognise that the response and recovery arrangements to a major incident are provided by a wide range of local and national services and agencies.

It is for these reasons that the National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) has been designed to provide robust and flexible response arrangements to emergencies that can be adapted to the nature, scale and requirements of the incident. The framework will also support communities affected by emergencies in being returned to normality as quickly as possible whilst affording a valuable interface between local and central government.

This revised guidance has been developed jointly between the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office. I am confident the framework will provide the necessary advice and guidance to fire and rescue services which will deliver the effective coordination of resources before, during and after major incidents. Furthermore, it sets out the critical situational awareness reporting arrangements which will facilitate central government's decision making that is designed to protect and reassure local communities during emergencies.



Brandon Lewis
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service

Introduction

- The Fire & Rescue National Framework for England states that during emergencies the Department of Communities and Local Government will work with other government departments, partner organisations, and the devolved administrations to coordinate the deployment arrangements for fire and rescue assets. As of 1 April 2016 and the machinery of governments transition of Fire to the Home Office, the Home Office is now responsible for this duty.
- Most incidents to which fire and rescue services respond are dealt with using the assets a fire and rescue service has at its immediate disposal. However, there may be times when a fire and rescue service requires specialist equipment, or extra assistance to mount an effective response. An example would be a declared major incident which is defined as “an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agencies” (JESIP Doctrine 2016).
- The National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) is part of the mechanism to provide the coordination of Fire & Rescue assets. Home Office (HO) National Resilience & Fire Directorate (NRFD) and the Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) works with other government departments, partner organisations and the devolved administrations during “no notice” and “rising tide” major incidents to provide policy reach back and advice, ministerial briefings, co-ordination across government and management of communications. NCAF enables decision makers, both locally and nationally, to receive clear and unambiguous advice on how best to co-ordinate the fire and rescue service response to relevant emergencies.

The **National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF)** supports:

- Everyday assistance and collaboration between fire and rescue services on the occasions that specialist national resilience capabilities can support the resolution of an incident.
- Fire and rescue services to be provided with specialist assistance where an incident warrants it and it is available from elsewhere, or additional resources where the resolution of an incident is, or is likely to be, beyond a service’s own resources.
- Coordination of the combined fire and rescue services’ response to relevant incidents, and when required, the integration of that coordination with that of other first responders, for example police, ambulance and the military, at any geographical scale.
- The Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council/ and or the National Strategic Advisory Team (NSAT), who by exception will deputise for the Chair of the NFCC, to provide the Home Secretary, and other ministers within the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), with expert timely advice in accordance with central

government's requirements. Further explanation of this requirement is set out within the Fire & Rescue Service Supporting Guidance to NCAF.

- The provision of information between the affected services, the National Fire Chiefs Council, other agencies and government where that is necessary for the framework to operate effectively.

In addition

- The framework details the functions, roles and responsibilities necessary to coordinate national resilience resources before, during and after relevant incidents and sets out the direct lines of communication involved. This will ensure that the appropriate level of advice, guidance and assurance is provided when required.
- The structure of the framework is designed to be flexible to adapt and develop against the nature, scale and operational requirements of an incident and support those involved in resolving it. The framework should be considered as a supporting aide. It does not imply that all of the components will be required on each occasion or be automatically activated for every incident that requires a national response.
- The NCAF seeks to aid fire and rescue authorities with their planning and operating methods. It will strengthen resilience during the planning, preparation and response phases of incidents of national significance that may require national coordination. It is designed to complement and reinforce local response arrangements - it does not replace them. The responsibility for resolving incidents effectively and safely, and for implementing safe systems of work through effective command and control arrangements, remains with the local fire and rescue authority.
- The NCAF will be reviewed as necessary following Joint Organisational Learning taken from incidents, training and exercising. Importantly, this will include a review of incidents for which a formalised national capability may not be fully developed or made available, and of which the fire and rescue service could form a part, in relation to the National Risk Assessment and National Risk Register.
- The NCAF will support the deployment of fire and rescue service assets to incidents overseas on behalf of Her Majesty's Government and on the request of a disaster affected country.

Emergency Response

Fire & Rescue Services

- The majority of emergencies in England are dealt with at a local level by the emergency services, local authorities and local resilience partners without the need for direct involvement by central government or the implementation of these arrangements.
- In addition fire and rescue authorities can draw on mutual assistance under sections 13 & 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. These arrangements ensure continuity of service provision across authority boundaries.
- There will be occasions where fire and rescue authorities may expect to receive assistance from, or provide assistance to, other authorities. Fire Service Circular 42/2006 National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents outlines the provision of available resources.
- The effectiveness of NCAF arrangements is dependent upon individual fire and rescue authorities releasing resources for national deployment when requested to do so. It is recognised that during exceptional or wide spread events individual authorities may wish to retain assets for deployment in accordance with risk assessments within their own Integrated Risk Management Plan.
- However, each fire and rescue authority is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents and are therefore expected to adhere to its principles and purpose. Given the national implications of such situations, fire and rescue authorities should highlight the specific need to retain national resilience assets for deployment with the Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council and/or to the National Strategic Advisory Team (NSAT). Further explanation of this requirement is set out within the Fire & Rescue Service Supporting Guidance to NCAF.

Home Office

- In some circumstances, the scale or complexity of an emergency is such that some degree of central government support or coordination becomes necessary. Government will not duplicate the role of local responders. A designated lead Government Department (LGD) or where appropriate a devolved administration will be responsible for the overall management of the central government response.
- The Home Office provides the cross Government coordinating function for the response policy arrangements to emergencies involving Fire. Cabinet Office will provide the cross Government coordinating function for the recovery policy

arrangements to emergencies involving Fire. The co-ordination of response policy arrangements across government within the devolved administrations will differ accordingly and are set out as individual addendums to the NCAF.

- The Home Office Response to Emergencies policy arrangements will be delivered by the OSCT Operations Support Team for **no notice** major incidents during the initial 48hrs. The HO NRPD Operational Support Team will deliver the Response to Emergencies policy arrangements for **rising tide** incidents and for notice incidents after the first 48hrs. These arrangements are set out in **Annex A**.
- The defined UK Government response arrangements are set out in the Government's concept of operations documentation. These are large or complex incidents which may require a higher level of engagement and central government involvement, in response to an incident, and have been defined within three broad levels, which are:

Level 1 – Significant Emergency

Central Government support is provided through a LGD (or devolved administration) alongside the work of the emergency services and local authorities. This will usually be via the Local Resilience Forum for the affected area.

Level 2 – Serious Emergency

This level reflects an incident which has or threatens prolonged impact requiring sustained central government coordination. This coordination would likely be through the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) under the leadership of the lead government department.

Level 3 – Catastrophic Emergency

These events present exceptionally high and potentially widespread impact and require immediate central government direction and support, The Prime Minister, or nominated Secretary of State, will lead the coordinated emergency function of central government to deliver a national response, or where emergency powers are invoked. COBR and the Civil Contingencies Committee coordinate activity, rather than the LGD.

Functions

The NCAF is delivered by a number of key functions that have been developed to ensure the appropriate level of advice and coordination can be provided. These functions may not all be required simultaneously or be in operation during all emergencies.

Mobilisation, Co-ordination and Monitoring of National Resilience Assets

The Electronic Support System maintains a 24/7 overview of the availability and distribution of national capability assets. On receipt of a request for assistance the National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) supported by the Capability Lead/NSAT duty officer will facilitate the mobilisation of national assets for the duration of an incident. The NRAT Operations Room will be established within the Lead Authority Joint Control Centre for the duration of any protracted incident.

Strategic Holding Areas (SHAs)

These are pre-identified locations with suitable space and facilities to accommodate large numbers of crews, appliances and equipment. Should a SHA be required it should be established under the provisions and coordination of the host fire and rescue and supported by the NCAF. Locations for Multi Agency SHAs will also have been identified by each Local Resilience Forum.

Home Office Operations Centres

OSCT and NFRD Operations Centres enable strategic decision makers at a national and local level to carry out their role in an informed manner. The centres, which can be established in multiple locations, comprise of government department policy officials and government liaison teams, who in consultation with the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT, will provide situational awareness to COBR and across central government departments. In addition they co-ordinate advice for Ministers and engage with Government Liaison Officers via DCLGs Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) who provide Strategic Coordinating Groups with a single point of contact for central government assistance. Dependent upon the scale of the incident NSAT & NRAT assistance may be required to support the Home Office Operations Centres. If necessary this will be agreed at the time between the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT and the HO.

Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR)

In some instances the scale and complexity of an emergency is such that central government support and coordination becomes necessary. On these occasions the response will be coordinated through COBR.

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Roles

NCAF contains a range of designated roles that provide levels of advice and coordination when National Resilience capabilities are required. These roles may not all be engaged in every emergency and will vary dependent upon the scale and nature of the incident.

Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and National Strategic Advisory Team (NSAT)

The Chair of the NFCC and /or the duty NSAT have overall responsibility for the coordination of fire and rescue service national resilience assets, the provision of professional advice, assurance and guidance to fire and rescue services, partner agencies and Government including COBR.

Home Office Fire & Rescue Service Duty Officer

The Home Office Fire & Rescue Service Duty Officer is the first point of contact in Government for a range of responsibilities that are within the scope of NCAF, and provides support to the Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, the NSAT, OSCT Ops Centre and HO NFRD. Duty Officers maintain a close contact with the National Resilience Fire Control, the NRAT and other cross Government Departments. The Duty Officer monitors developing or emerging issues and incidents and provides the necessary advice and support.

National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT)

The NRAT are responsible for the mobilisation, co-ordination and monitoring of National Resilience assets in conjunction with the Chair of the NFCC and/or Duty NSAT. The NRAT may support any elements of NCAF with the provision of expert advice on national resilience capabilities. NRAT officers can be required to support any/all of the functions listed above, as well as being mobilised to the scene of operations to assist and support the management of nationally mobilised resources. The NRAT will also provide timely incident information and regular situation updates to the HO FRS Duty Officer and Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT.

National Tactical Advisory Team (NTAT)

The National Tactical Advisory Team provides resilience for the NRAT and support to the NFCC Chair and /or NSAT as required.

Tactical Adviser (TacAd)

Tactical Advisers are trained officers and recognised specialists with specific references within local capabilities and/or national resilience. They are available to provide advice and support to any incident irrespective of location. However, their usual role is within their host fire and rescue service.

OSCT & HO NRRFD Operations Centres

OSCT and HO NRRFD will provide the cross Government coordination functions during no notice and rising tide major incidents as set out within Annex A.

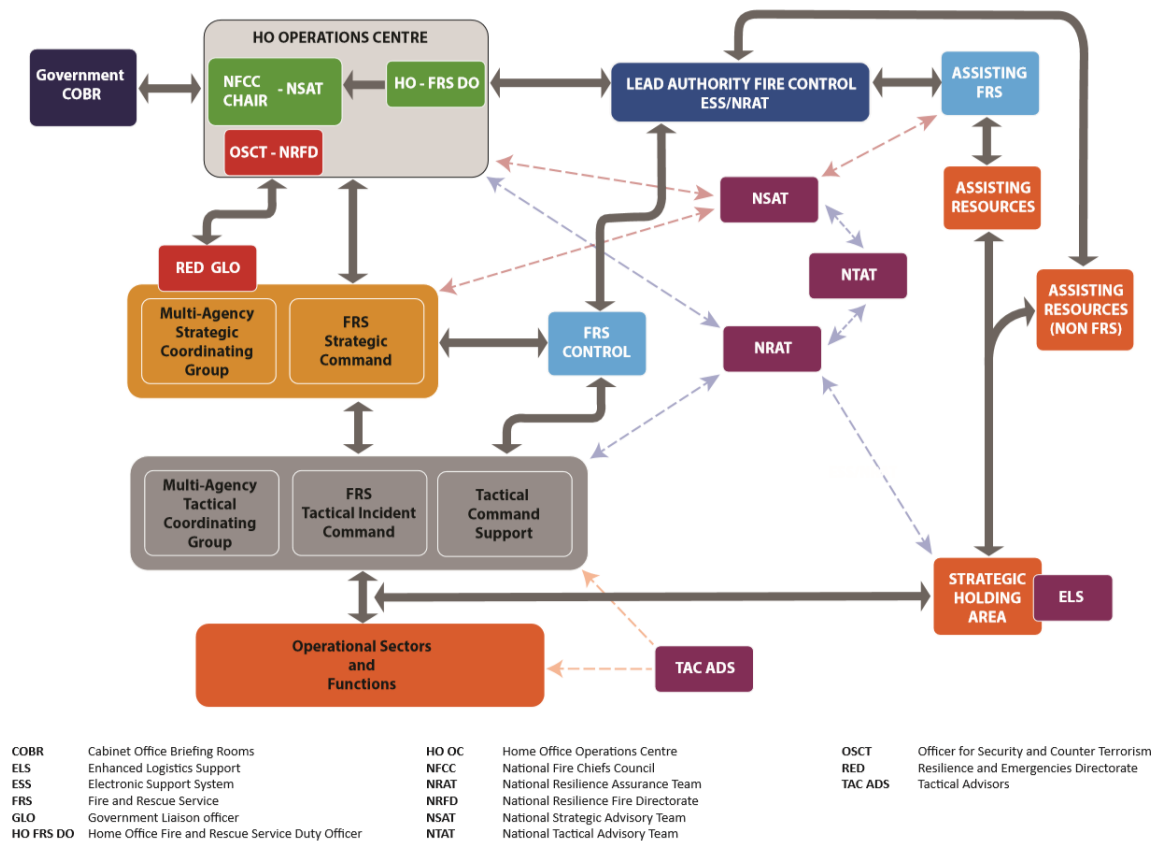
Capabilities

- National resilience, in the context of fire and rescue authorities, is defined as the capacity and capability of fire and rescue authorities' to work together with other persons defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as Category 1 and 2 responders to deliver a sustained and effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive events. These may include (but are not limited to) those identified in the National Risk Assessment¹.
- NCAF National Resilience capabilities can therefore be divided into two categories:
 - i) Specialist assets and skills that are an integral part of the National Resilience(New Dimension) Programme:
 - **Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (explosive)** (CBRNe including Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) and Mass Decontamination)
 - **Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)**
 - **High Volume Pumps (HVP)**
 - **Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS)**
 - ii) Assets and skills hosted at a local level by fire and rescue services, or other agencies, that can respond if specifically requested to do so as a national capability and where incident timescales allow. For example:
 - **Water Rescue** (team 'typed' assets with associated crews²)
 - **Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA)**
 - **Conventional and other specialist appliances**
 - **Bulk Foam**
- Capabilities are located across a large number of fire and rescue authorities. Mobilisation of these resources is facilitated by the Electronic Supporting System and NRAT. Other assets which may be available nationally fall within the scope of NCAF if involved with a national event.

¹ National Framework 2012

² A flood response national asset register is maintained through the ESS and includes specialist units on call and subject matter advisers

NCAF in Operation



- The above diagram represents NCAF as it operates at a strategic level, and how it is flexible in application depending on the nature of the incident and resources required.
- The following is not intended to be a complete explanation of the workings of NCAF as the framework in itself is adaptable to the situation or incident it is addressing. However, it is intended to illustrate how the local response relates to the national overview.
- Incidents of a significant size or nature will require a greater degree of strategic coordination, and are likely to require a wider multi-agency response and government involvement.
- This function directly involves the Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, NSAT, NTAT, the HO FRS Duty Officer, NRAT, HO Operations Centres and DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division liaising closely to coordinate the response and recovery arrangements in accordance with operational requirements and strategic intent.
- The Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council and /or NSATs will be required to provide advice and assurance to the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms to inform ministers' strategic decisions. Furthermore, they will be required to update ministers on present and future pressures facing responding fire and rescue services, and National

Resilience assets along with liaising with fire and rescue service brigade managers as required to determine the agreed strategic direction.

- The HO FRS Duty Officer remains in close liaison with the HO Operations Centres to ensure strategic decision makers at both local and national levels have an accurate, complete and timely appraisal of the current position.
- Where a fire and rescue authority requests a larger number of resources, it may decide to set up a Strategic Holding Area (SHA) in order to manage the assets and personnel. This may be a single agency FRS SHA or a Multi-Agency SHA (MASHA). A guidance document on MASHA has been issued through the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS). When a FRS sets up a SHA it should utilise an Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS) Team to manage the SHA.

Resource Deployment and Cost Recovery

- Emergency preparedness and response occurs both prior to and during an emergency incident.

Pre-deployments

- The term pre-deployment is used to describe the early movement of resources in order to assist with the mitigation of the impact of an identified event, or perceived threat based upon credible intelligence. Depending on the assessed scale of the response, an individual fire and rescue authority may, through the Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council and/or the National Strategic Assurance Team, seek the support of HO to assist in meeting associated costs of pre-deployment. All requests for financial support will be considered by HO on a case by case basis.

Post-occurrence

- Post occurrence is when a fire and rescue authority is in the response phase of an incident. Resourcing and mobilisation of the emergency response will remain with the fire and rescue authority, and supporting agencies, at the local level. Additional resource requirements will be determined by local commanders. Dependant on the scale of the response individual fire and rescue authorities can seek reimbursement if cost relating to response and recovery through existing finance schemes or those that are announced during and/or post incident by the Government department responsible.

Cost Recovery

- The NFCC mutual aid charging protocol is a mechanism which provides guidance to donor and receiving fire and rescue services when mutual aid arrangements are activated. This guidance defines types of mutual aid and offers a standardised scale of charges that provide consistency and assurance to all fire and rescue services.

International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

Incoming: International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

- National resilience planning within the UK is based on a general presumption of self-sufficiency. The National Risk Assessment sets out the government's assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different risks that may directly affect the UK, which equates to a relatively small number of occasions where the UK would seek international assistance. In exceptional circumstances where an emergency is of sufficient scale to overwhelm UK capacity, or where highly specialised niche assistance is required a request may be considered.
- International assistance is requested on a case by case basis following Her Majesty's Government cross departmental consultation and can only be initiated following a formal request. Co-ordination of such requests should be facilitated through formalised structures such as the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism or following a direct request.
- Incoming assistance must be well co-ordinated to ensure rapid and effective integration into the national response. Precise co-ordination arrangements will depend on the given situation. However, plans should be prepared and communicated across a range of Government departments, Local Resilience Forums and agencies well in advance of arrival to ensure that arrangements are understood and work effectively. This will involve the NCAF arrangements and should be made in conjunction with Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council and/or the NSAT, the HO Fire & Rescue Service Duty Officer and lead Government Department. **Annex B** provides an overview of the procedure for the approval of incoming international reciprocal mutual assistance.

Outgoing: International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

- On occasions UK FRS capabilities are required to respond to humanitarian disasters and emergencies overseas. Overseas deployments will be coordinated through the NCAF arrangements and assisted by the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT and LGDs. Any deployment must also be agreed by the NFCC Capability Lead and not mitigate the UK's ability to respond to a national incident.
- Following major international disasters the Department for International Development (DFID) are able to request fire & rescue resources through a

Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU sets out the principles for effective liaison, collaboration, communication and mutual co-operation.

- Fifteen fire & rescue services currently form the International Search and Rescue Team under the governance of the NFCC. The team is available to deploy to sudden onset disasters overseas, on behalf of DFID, Foreign and Commonwealth Office or the Cabinet Office.

Annex A

Home Office Response to Emergencies Policy Arrangements

Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) & National Resilience and Fire Directorate (NRFD)

Central Governments 24/7 policy support arrangements will be provided by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) for the first 24-48 hours of a no notice Fire related major emergency. Thereafter, when required the responsibilities will be discharged by the Home Office National Resilience & Fire Directorate (HO NRFD).

This arrangement provides for:

- no notice events only. It does not include rising tide events such as flooding, other than flash flooding. Policy support arrangements will be provided by HO NRFD for rising tide events.
- the first 24-48 hours, following which the response will be handed to NRFD policy, possibly in phases, depending on the situation. The exception to this being counter-terrorism events that will remain with OSCT, with NRFD involvement only where Ministers want to know that national resilience capability is being used and is sufficient, or where there is injury to, or death of, fire personnel.

The response functions provided by OSCT will include:

- Managing communications
 - Situational awareness - ensuring Ministers and senior officials have a single, timely and accurate account of what is happening.
 - Support to Ministers for COBR
 - Monitoring the situation
 - Coordinating actions across the Home Office, including any actions from COBR.
- The threshold by which OSCT will stand up their Operations Centre is the declaration of a major Incident as defined by JESIP Doctrine July 2016.
 - OSCT will require 24/7 policy 'reach back', including weekends and public holidays, but the threshold for making a call to a policy lead is high, although COBR actions may require policy support to start specific work streams. These points of contact will be the Home Office Fire and Rescue Duty Officer and designated senior NRFD officials.

In practice, this will mean that in the first 24-48 hours of a no notice fire related major emergency OSCT's Operational Support Team will provide consistent messaging to Ministers and senior officials, in consultation with the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT,

support them in COBR and co-ordinate briefing requirements. This will enable NFRD to identify and release appropriate resources to manage the longer-term implications of the incident and thereafter when required and for rising tide major incidents the NFRD Operations Team will be stood up.

Examples of no notice major incidents that OSCT will provide the response to in the first 24-48 hours include but not constrained to:

- Major Fires.
- Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attacks.
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Attacks.
- Collapsed structures.
- Special Service Calls.
- Mass Fatalities.
- Flash Floods.

Dependent upon the scale of the incident NSAT & NRAT assistance may be required to support the Home Office Operations Centres. If necessary this will be agreed at the time between the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT and the HO.

Standard Operating Procedures have been developed that set out the responsibilities of the OSCT and NFRD Operations Centres.

Annex B

International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

Incoming: International Mutual Assistance

The following procedure is to be adopted for the approval of incoming international reciprocal mutual assistance to the UK:

- Fire and Rescue Services should have exhausted all mutual assistance arrangements/options under sections 13 and 16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004.
- A request should be made by the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT to Government for the exploration of other national capability options.
 - i) Where COBR is in session requests should be made via this route
 - ii) Where COBR is not stood up requests should be made to HO NRFD who will co-ordinate the arrangements with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS)
- Once all national options have been exhausted Ministers will approve incoming international mutual assistance requests. Where COBR is stood up HO NRFD and CCS will prepare the brief for COBR. Where COBR is not stood up HO NRFD and CCS will agree and arrange the necessary Ministerial clearance procedure.

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- National Operational Guidance - Major Incidents 2017(In development)
- National Fire Chiefs Council Mutual aid charging protocol

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