



water safety
Scotland

Guidance for creating a Multi-Agency Incident Response Guide (MAIRG)

Water Safety Scotland

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It is based upon the MAIRG created by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park with partners from Police Scotland, SFRS, HMCG, Loch Lomond Rescue Boat, and Local Authorities.

1. Introduction

On average, 96 people lose their life each year due to a water-related fatality¹. Statistics show that Scotland has a disproportionately high rate of drownings compared to other parts of the United Kingdom (UK) and Water Safety Scotland, along with its national and local partners, work to implement Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS).

SDPS has two overall targets:

- reduce accidental drowning deaths in Scotland by 50 per cent by 2026 and reduce risk among the highest-risk populations, groups and communities
- contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide.

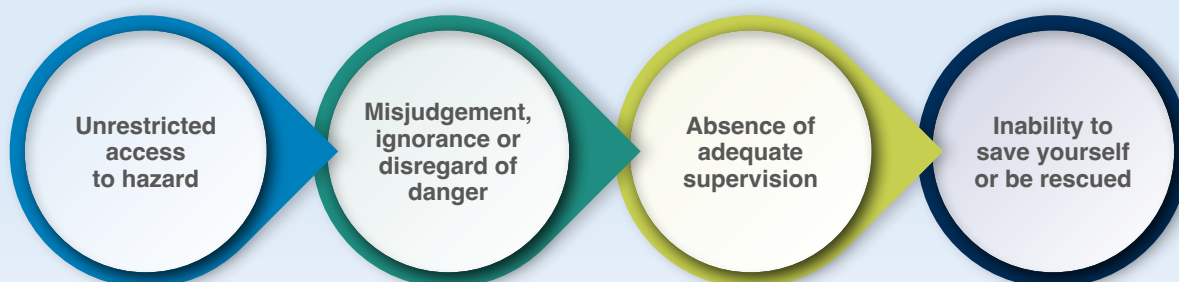
Water Safety Scotland (WSS) recognises that a multi-faceted approach is required if SDPS is to be successful in reducing water-related fatalities. Work in water safety and the reduction of drownings is implemented by WSS and its partners across different points of the drowning chain (see figure 1). For example, at the second link of the chain, WSS implements a full suite of preventative and consistent water safety messaging along with education materials which are age and stage appropriate to the Scottish Curriculum.

WSS also recognises that interventions need to be put at the fourth link of the drowning chain for when things do go wrong.

This document has been developed to assist landowners / stakeholders and local Partnership Approach to Water Safety (PAWS) (or equivalent) groups. A PAWS group is a local group that aims to build upon existing good practices currently undertaken by partner organisations across a geographical area. This co-ordinated and proactive approach aims to assist in the delivery of Prevention, Improved Response, and Review of water emergency incidents, and is consistent with the SDPS targets.

This document provides guidance on how to develop a MAIRG which will assist in the most effective response to a water emergency within an identified high-risk location.

Figure 1: the drowning chain



2. What is a MAIRG?

A Multi Agency Incident Response Guide (MAIRG) typically refers to a written document that outlines the coordinated pre-planned effort of multiple organisations or agencies to respond effectively to incidents or emergencies. These incidents could include natural disasters,

public health crises, terrorist attacks, industrial accidents, and other emergencies that require a unified and coordinated response. This guide specifically refers to water-related incidents.

3. Why might a MAIRG be required?

A MAIRG can be an effective pre-planning tool that can overcome identified challenges due to location or local characteristics. This may include:

- **Complexity of incidents:** Many incidents are multifaceted and require expertise from various sectors. Collaborative efforts enable a more comprehensive and efficient response.
- **Resource sharing:** Different agencies bring unique resources and capabilities to the table. By working together, they can pool their resources and enhance their collective response capacity.
- **Specialised expertise:** Certain incidents may require specialised knowledge and skills that are distributed across different agencies. A multi-agency approach allows for the mobilisation of expertise specific to the nature of the incident.
- **Communication and Coordination:** Effective communication and coordination are crucial during emergencies. Establishing a multi-agency response protocol helps improve communication channels and ensures a more cohesive and coordinated response.
- **Community safety:** The primary goal of a MAIRG is to ensure an effective response is implemented for a water emergency based on pre-planning and joint understanding of risk to improve community safety at the location.
- **Efficiency and effectiveness:** Working together allows agencies to avoid duplication of efforts, streamline decision-making processes, and respond more efficiently to the incident at hand.

In summary, a MAIRG is a crucial collaboration that brings together various agencies and organisations to effectively manage and respond to complex situations that require a coordinated and unified approach.

4. Establishing a MAIRG working group

To facilitate the creation of a MAIRG, a working group should be established to gather the relevant information and write the document, ensuring that appropriate local partners are aware of the protocol.

The working group should consist of any local partners that could reasonably be expected to attend an emergency incident or facilitate its safe resolution. Suggested contributors are:

- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
- Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS)
- His Majesty's Coastguard (HMCG)
- Landowner / Stakeholder
- Local Authority

The local PAWS (or equivalent) group should be made aware of the establishment of the working group and will potentially contain relevant contacts from the required agencies.

With a MAIRG Group established, attention should turn to collecting the required information to complete the MAIRG template.

5. The MAIRG Template

An editable template is available from the WSS website to support in the creation of MAIRG documents. It should be noted that this template provides suggestion of what information may be included, but the final MAIRG should be the product of what local partners have determined is relevant and is required to support effective response to incidents at the identified location.

Guidance on filling in the Template:

Insert the location name on the front page

Table 1 – Insert a map of the location

Table 2 – Insert Partner logos

Table 3 – Preface listing relevant geographical information including:

- The size of the body of water, (length, width, depth)
- Tributaries (rivers, burns, streams)
- Access roads
- Bridges or structures over water
- Visitor figures (if known)
- Number of previous incidents (no specific incident details should be included)

This list is not exhaustive.

Table 4 – Risks

Risks fall into two categories, actual known risks at the location and potential risks.

- Actual risk could be weirs, hydropower facilities, tidal waters, waterborne infections.
- Potential risks may be those that arise from known activities undertaken or weather influenced outcomes at the location.

First Emergency Services on scene

The first emergency services on scene should consider the scale of the incident and the resources required to resolve safely. JESIP procedures should be implemented at the earliest opportunity².

Table 5 – Actions of the Coordinating Agency (Police / HMCG)

In the event of an incident, the Coordinating Agency should focus on a number of considerations. Populate Table 5 as appropriate.

- Contact Police / HMCG to attend (dependent upon coordination responsibility)
- Contact Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Contact Scottish Ambulance Service (request Special Operations Response Team (SORT))
- Contact the appropriate Local Authority

Table 6 – Actions of Police Scotland upon arrival

In the event of an incident, the Police Incident Officer should focus on a number of considerations. Populate Table 6 as appropriate.

Immediate Actions:

- Establish a Forward Control Point, Incident Control Post
- Establish cordons and access and egress as required
- Establish communications
- Ensure supervisory attendance
- Inform all other relevant agencies

Depending on the scale / severity of the incident

- Consider a Duty Senior Investigating Officer
- Consider Corporate Communications (Media)
- Consider Road Policing
- Consider Media Briefing Centre
- Consider Incident Control Pos
- Consider Casualty Clearing Station requirements
- Consider Ambulance Loading Point requirements
- Consider Casualty Bureau
- Consider Documentation Teams
- Consider public order at Hospitals

Consideration may have to be given regarding the management of information relating to fatalities / casualties, traffic management and media. Detailed information relevant to these issues are all referred to in more detail within the Police Major Incident Plan. Police Scotland holds information on such Incident Plans.

Table 7 – Actions of SFRS upon arrival

In the event of an incident, the SFRS incident Commander should focus on a number of considerations. Populate Table 7 as appropriate:

Immediate Actions:

- Liaise with the responsible person for the site
- Manage the safety of the inner cordon
- Rescue and extrication of trapped persons
- Provide safety and risk information to other responding agencies
- Liaison with other agencies' Incident Officers
- Implement SFRS Incident Command Procedures

Table 8 – Actions of Scottish Ambulance Service upon arrival

In the event of an incident, the SAS Incident Commander should focus on a number of considerations. Populate Table 8 as appropriate:

Immediate Actions:

- Carry out a quick reconnaissance of the incident site and report back to control
- Request SORT if not already mobilised
- Liaison with other agencies' Incident Officers or Site Operators to gather information
- Declare a "Major Incident" as appropriate and act as the initial Ambulance Control Point
- Establish Command, Control and Communications for the Ambulance Service
- Designate appropriate priority roles to manage ambulance activity at the scene
- Maintain a decision / action log

Table 9 – Actions of HMCG upon arrival

In the event of an incident, the HMCG Incident Commander should focus on a number of considerations. Populate Table 9 as appropriate:

Immediate Actions:

- Incident Officer to attend FCP
- Liaise with other agencies' Incident Officers
- Consider Ground Assets – Personnel for shoreline searches
- Consider Air Assets – Search and Rescue Helicopter / Police Helicopter.

Table 10 – Actions of Local authority upon arrival

In the event of an incident, the local authority should focus on a number of considerations. Populate Table 10 as appropriate:

Immediate Actions:

- Provide a Liaison Officer to the scene (if required)
- Alert relevant Council Services
- Provision of assistance in response to incident – e.g. establish emergency support centres.

Coordination responsibilities

The responsibility for coordination of the incident is as per the UK Search & Rescue Guidance³ that states the following responsibilities:

- Inland incidents – Police Scotland⁴
- Coastal incidents – HMCG

It should be recognised that the coordinating agency may delegate warm zone working, for example by deploying SFRS or SORT to carry out rescues, but the responsibility for overall incident resolution remains with the coordinating agency.

Where multiple partners respond to an incident collaboration and communications remain crucial throughout the operation.

Table 11 – Rendezvous Point (RVP)

The preferred RVP should be identified and agreed between all partner agencies and take into consideration the possibility of the number of vehicles that would be required to attend a large-scale incident. Identification of holding/ access and egress areas should be borne in mind.

Assets deployed may not be from the local area, or be familiar with the location, so clear concise information is key and should consider the following:

- Main roads
- Local landmarks
- Unique Location Codes (ULC)

It is important to note that even with thorough pre-planning it may be necessary to relocate the RVP based upon incident circumstances.

Table 12 – Forward control point (FCP)

The Forward Control Point (FCP) is a place where partners will rendezvous and allocate tasks. Forward Control Point (FCP) Guidelines should include:

- **Pre-Event Agreement:** Determine the preferred FCP in advance of the incident/event. If utilising a car park, assess access points, including locked gates, barriers, and height restrictions, ensuring suitability for larger vehicles such as fire appliances.
- **Access Preparation:** Investigate access codes or contact details for the FCP location and verify them with the landowner to ensure smooth access during the event.
- **Coordinate with Stakeholders:** Communicate with relevant stakeholders, to coordinate access to the designated FCP and address any potential issues or concerns.

- **Plan for Contingencies:** Develop contingency plans in case of unforeseen obstacles or access challenges, ensuring that alternative arrangements are in place to maintain effective control and coordination.
- **Regular Checks:** Regularly review and update access arrangements for the FCP to ensure continued availability and readiness for use during the event.
- **Documentation:** Maintain accurate records of access arrangements, including contact details, access codes, and any agreements with landowners or property managers.

It is important to note that even with thorough pre-planning it may be necessary to relocate the FCP based upon incident circumstances.

Contact Numbers

Relevant contact numbers should be included within this section.

Document Control

It is recommended that this document is reviewed every 24 months and takes cognisance of any additional information that presents during this period.

Review

The current version and issue and review dates should be included in this section.

6. Conclusion

Please note this document is for guidance only. It provides step by step suggestions of how to develop a MAIRG which will assist in the most effective response to a water emergency within an identified high-risk location.

A template is available for use and can be downloaded from the WSS website.

An example of the Loch Lomond MAIRG document that this guidance is based upon can be requested via info@lochlomond-trossachs.org

References

- 1 Water Safety Scotland, 2018. Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy [online]. WATER SAFETY SCOTLAND. [viewed 30 November 2023]. Available from: watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/1213/scotlands-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf
- 2 JESIP, 2024. Working together, Saving lives [online]. JESIP. [viewed 05 March 2024]. Available from: Home - JESIP Website
- 3 Maritime and Coastguard Agency, 2017. Strategic Overview Of Search And Rescue In The United Kingdom Of Great Britain And Northern Ireland [online]. Maritime and Coastguard Agency. [viewed 06 March 2024]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/search-and-rescue-framework-uksar>
- 4 Responsibility of the following inland locations are with HMCG: Loch Ness, Loch Oich, Loch Lochy, Upper River Clyde.

