

# Dealing with persons in crisis

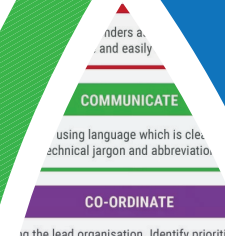
## Guidance for Emergency Service First Responders for dealing with persons in crisis incidents at locations of obvious physical danger



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**IMPACT ASSESSMENT**  
The outcome of the assessment ranges from tolerable to high.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**  
Follow the JOLWG's recommendations. Subjects from other agencies may contribute.





# Contents

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- 04 Introduction
- 05 Locations of Obvious Danger
- 06 Terminology
- 07 Incident Attendance
- 08 JESIP principles and the Joint Decision-Making model (JDM)
- 09 Communicating with a Person in Crisis
- 12 Incident Continuation
- 12 Third Party Intermediaries
- 13 Rescue and Intervention Plans

## **Dealing with Persons in Crisis - Guidance for Emergency Service First Responders for dealing with persons in crisis incidents at locations of obvious physical danger**

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# Introduction

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The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to any emergency service first responder in dealing with persons in crisis incidents at locations of obvious physical danger.

The aims are:

- To enable first responders and operational commanders to understand what action is required from them at a person in crisis incident if they are the initial emergency service at the scene.
- To provide communication guidance to a first responder if they are approaching and communicating with a person in crisis.
- To provide information of what police negotiator resources are available and how they would respond to a person in crisis incident.
- To provide guidance on what plans will be developed to assist bringing the incident to a safe conclusion.

This guidance will support the JESIP principles for joint working, the joint understanding of risk and enable all responders to have a shared situational awareness of the incident and the plans developed to safely resolve it.

# Locations of Obvious Physical Danger

For this document, the phrase “**Locations of Obvious Physical Danger**” seeks to use simple and non-technical language as an umbrella term for those incident locations where the physical or environmental conditions present obvious risks to life or pose the risk of serious injury.

Examples of these locations include (but is not limited to):



Locations at height, e.g., multi-storey car parks, bridges, buildings, lift shafts & cliffs.



Locations on, over or alongside the rail network.



Locations on, over or alongside roads.



Locations over or alongside water – and would include locations on ships, boats, and other watercraft.



Locations in proximity to industrial electrical power supply, or other industrial hazards.



Locations in proximity to fire or flooding.

# Terminology

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## **Persons in Crisis (PiC)**

Terminology used to identify a person threatening or considering suicide.

## **Police Negotiator**

A police officer trained in negotiation techniques and available 24/7 deployed to the scene of an incident for the following incident types:

- Persons in Crisis.
- Suicide Intervention.
- Missing Persons.
- Domestic Barricade.
- Criminal Sieges.
- Firearms incidents.
- Terrorist incidents and investigations.

## **Police Negotiator Coordinator**

A police officer trained in negotiation techniques and available on-call 24/7 to provide remote advice to individuals at the scene of an incident. They may provide this advice to the police commander, the police officer engaged in negotiations, the trained police negotiator or another member of the emergency services engaged in negotiations. It is the responsibility of the Negotiator Coordinator to lead and manage the Negotiator Team, to be responsible for the health and safety of Negotiators when deployed at scene, and to advise Commanders on Negotiation tactics and incident assessments, including the assessment of PiC behaviour.

## **Compliant PiC**

A PiC who wishes to return to a position of safety voluntarily either when requested or by their own request.

## **Non-compliant PiC**

A PiC who will not or does not wish to return to a position of safety when requested.

**\*\*\*Note:** There is no unsure position and is not reliant on any conditions demanded by the PiC at that time. In simple terms, if the PiC will not or does not wish to return to a position of safety when requested they **MUST** be assessed as being a non-compliant PiC.

# Incident Attendance

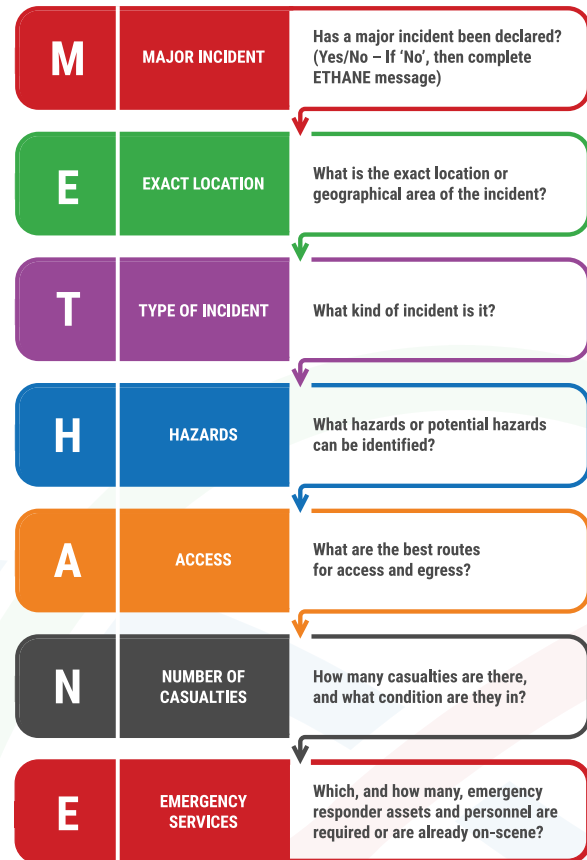
The police service should be the responsible agency when an immediate threat to life exists and where possible should be the lead agency for incidents involving a PiC.

Each police force provides negotiator cover on a 24/7 basis consisting of negotiator coordinators and negotiators. The deployment of negotiators is coordinated through the police control room and the force incident manager. There may be extended periods between negotiators being requested to an incident and attending, dependent on the location of the incident and other ongoing deployments.

Early engagement with a PiC is essential and so it could fall on any emergency service first responder to be the person to approach and engage if their agency is the first in attendance at the scene of a PiC incident.

It may be the case that other emergency services attend as the police are not suitably trained or equipped to deal with the incident such as a remote location or rescues at extreme height.

Use of a (M)ETHANE message should be used to notify other emergency services required to attend the incident as necessary.



# JESIP principles and the Joint Decision Model (JDM)

Emergency services should follow JESIP principles and use the Joint Decision Model (JDM) to help bring together the available information, reconcile objectives and make effective joint decisions keeping the aim of **Working Together, Saving Lives, Reducing Harm** in mind.



It is important that the police incident commander is co-located with the other emergency responder leads, including the negotiator coordinator. This will allow the shared situational awareness and the formulation of rescue and intervention plans (page 14).

- CO-LOCATE**

Co-locate with other responders as soon as practicably possible at a single, safe and easily identified location.
- COMMUNICATE**

Communicate using language which is clear, and free from technical jargon and abbreviations.
- CO-ORDINATE**

Co-ordinate by agreeing the lead organisation. Identify priorities, resources, capabilities and limitations for an effective response, including the timing of further meetings.
- JOINTLY UNDERSTAND RISK**

Jointly understand risk by sharing information about the likelihood and potential impact of threats and hazards, to agree appropriate control measures.
- SHARED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS**

Establish shared situational awareness by using M/ETHANE and the Joint Decision Model.



# Communicating with a Person in Crisis

The on-scene incident commander should nominate two first responders to approach the PiC carefully and slowly into a position where they can engage in conversation. It is key that the incident commander does not take this role on themselves as they must remain in command of the incident and in a position to make command decisions.

It is important that the police control room is informed that a first responder who is not a trained negotiator is attempting to engage the PiC. A request should be made that the police on call negotiator coordinator is made aware of this fact. An option for the negotiator coordinator is to contact the on-scene commander so that they can receive a briefing from them, inclusive of any disclosures made by the PiC, and from this briefing specific negotiator advice can be given to aid any first responder engaging with the PiC and the incident commander.

By only having two first responders engage with the PiC it will reduce the number of people in proximity to assist reduce tension and give the PiC more perceived space. By only having the primary responder communicating with the PiC it allows greater focus for the primary responder and PiC to gain rapport with each other. This is essential in gaining trust with a view to a behavioural change and influencing the PiC to put themselves in a position of safety. Too many people speaking to the PiC will become confusing or difficult for them to process.

## Responder Number 1

The person who will engage with the PiC as the PRIMARY COMMUNICATOR by listening to the PiC and responding appropriately.

Will be the only person that will communicate with the PiC to allow greater focus with this responder to assist in gaining rapport and trust.

## Responder Number 2

This person is there to SUPPORT the responder number 1 and does NOT engage in communication with the PiC.

Ensures that responder number 1 is safe and does not get too close to the PiC or in a position of danger.

Assists by making notes of information and providing advice to the responder number 1.

Relaying information back to the incident commander and receiving pertinent information from them that will assist the responder number 1. This includes if the PiC is speaking to a third party on the telephone as it may be that the third party needs to be contacted and controlled (see section on Third Party Intermediaries).

It is important to highlight if a name and age, or date of birth, is disclosed by the PiC as this will allow the negotiator coordinator to research police systems, including the National Negotiator Database, for information that will assist any first responder, negotiator or incident commander to effectively save life.

**DO NOT** attempt to rescue or take hold of the PiC. Any attempt to rescue the PiC is a command decision and should be planned and agreed with the incident commander. See the section on **Rescue and Intervention Plans**.



# Communicating with a Person in Crisis

## APPROACH

- **Approach as a pair** in the roles of responder number 1 and responder number 2.
- Approach the PiC **carefully and safely** so as not to startle them into a sudden action or movement.
- Consider your **appearance** so that you make yourself unthreatening and caring. You must ensure your own safety with protective equipment so do not remove this.
- **Reduce distractions** so that you can clearly listen to anything the PiC says. A good tip is for the responder number 1 to turn off your radio and responder number 2 to use an earpiece.

## COMMUNICATION

- Think about what you are going to say to the PiC as your **opening** line so that you make a confident and competent first impression. Introduce yourself and the responder number 2 but use your first name rather than rank or surname.
- Provide the early **reassurance** to the PiC that you are there to listen and to help. You are not there to grab or hold them but to support. Only when they are ready will you help them to safety.
- Use **clear and concise language** when speaking to the PiC. Remember they are in crisis so they may not hear or understand what you have said. Avoid lengthy sentences, jargon, or detailed explanations that will be difficult to process.
- Remain calm and keep a calm and caring **tone** when speaking. By being yourself and genuine it will help in building rapport with the PiC.
- Communicating with a PiC is about **listening** to them. It is not about providing advice or solving their problems - it is very rare that you can. Listen, gather information and respond to allow them to keep talking to you.

## REDUCE HARM

- Early in the initial conversation ask the PiC to put themselves in a **position of safety**. Point out the risks to the PiC by their position or ask them to come to safety. If they are not ready to do so then try and reduce the risk to them such as asking them to hold on, step back or similar.
- **Remove**, or encourage the PiC to remove, any items that could cause harm to them such as sharp objects or weapons. This includes items such as medication or alcohol which may impair the PiC to make a rational decision.
- If the PiC starts to significantly harm themselves, or consumes items, then ask them to **stop** with a clear and simple explanation of the implications.
- **Do not avoid the subject of suicide** - they have already thought of it. Ask the PiC what their intentions are. Talking about suicide and if they intend to end their life may reduce suicidal ideation.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

- Ask **open questions** that start with When, What, Who, Where, How, Tell, Explain or Describe will obtain a more detailed response and information from the PiC. Avoid the use of "Why?" as this is more judgmental language.
- Do not be afraid of **silence**. Effective silences and pauses in your conversation will allow the PiC to fill the silence and talk to you or allow them to process and think about what you have said to them. The key is that you listen to the PiC more than you talk to them.
- **Summarise** what the PiC has said to you if you have been talking for a long time or a lot of information has been disclosed. A summary of the conversation will allow you to check understanding of what has been said and shows the PiC that you have been listening to them. A summary is a useful technique if the primary responder is joined by a crisis negotiator or another colleague to support you as it will allow you to brief the negotiator on what the PiC has discussed with you without a break of contact with the PiC.

## BUILD RAPPORT

- Be **honest** and **genuine** with the PiC to build rapport with them. Never lie to the PiC as it will cause a lack of trust and they will not engage with you. If you do not know the answer to something the PiC asks you then inform the PiC that you do not know but consider establishing why it is important to them. Do not make promises to the PiC that you cannot personally keep or on behalf of another person or agency.
- Be **empathetic** to the PiC and avoid making assumptions or judgements. **Empathy** allows you to think of your own experiences and emotional intelligence to recognise what the PiC may be feeling and "put yourself into their shoes".
- Use **personal disclosure** to help gain rapport. If you disclose something, or answer a question asked by the PiC about yourself then the PiC is more likely to respond to you. You need to be comfortable with what you disclose – be honest with them if you do not feel comfortable sharing certain information. Remember that any conversation should be about them and NOT about you.
- Use **autonomy** to gain rapport by allowing them choice. It is the choice of the PiC of what they do and say, when they want to come to safety or when they want to speak to you. Do not be frustrated if they do not speak to you for periods of time- they will hear what you say. You are ready to listen to them when they are ready to talk to you.

# Incident continuation

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As the incident progresses other emergency services will attend the scene along with trained police crisis negotiators. The negotiators and negotiator coordinator may arrive at the scene of the incident at different times, and it is likely that the negotiator coordinator will be remote to the scene in the initial stages.

Upon arrival they will assess the incident in conjunction with the incident commander. Negotiation is a tactical option and irrelevant of the rank of the negotiator they have no command authority but work to the incident commander.

The negotiator (s) will approach the PiC and the first responders engaging with the PiC. It may be the case that if the dialogue is going well then, they will support the first responder in continuing to speak to the PiC or they may take over as the primary responder.

It is useful to the negotiator (s) to be briefed by either the incident commander or one or both responders who have been engaged with the PiC. As above, the use of a summary by the number 1 responder may assist this briefing process.

## Third Party Intermediaries (TPIs)

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An available negotiation tactic is the use of a third-party intermediary or TPI.

A TPI is someone that a negotiator could use to provide information to the negotiator team about a PiC and be used to effectively speak to the PiC with the negotiators.

A TPI can be an effective tool as they already have rapport and trust with the PiC and could include people like family members, friends, employers, medical practitioners, or religious / faith leaders.

The use of a TPI has an element of risk and therefore an assessment of the TPI should be conducted by a negotiator. The use of a TPI must be authorised by the incident commander prior to them engaging with the PiC.

If a person of this nature is identified at the scene of the incident, then they should not be introduced to the PiC but instead this should be communicated to the **negotiator coordinator** so that advice can be given to the incident commander.

It is important that the potential TPI is controlled and kept with an emergency responder.

# Rescue and Intervention Plans

On arrival at the scene, an assessment must be made of the behaviour of the PiC with the initial request to come to a safe position- this request can be made by the first responders.

The assessment must ask - Is the PiC either **compliant** or **non-compliant**.

There is no unsure position. It is a binary position which is not reliant on any conditions demanded by the PiC at that time. In simple terms, if the PiC will not or does not wish to come to a safe position when requested – they should be assessed as being **non-compliant**.

Once this determination is made then the incident commander should develop **plans** to be able to respond with the resources available to them to seek the safe recovery of the PiC. The incident commander should be supported and advised by the negotiator coordinator and other emergency services leads and advisors.

**It is the responsibility of the incident commander to ensure that the plans are authorised for use and communicated to all relevant parties.**

Where the PiC is **compliant**, they might need additional support or assistance to be recovered to a place of safety. As such these plans should be called **Rescue Plans**.

Where a PiC is **non-compliant**, either verbally refusing or not engaging at all, then any use of force on this individual would be without their consent and should be termed an **Intervention Plan**.

During the initial stages of an incident, it is appreciated that plans may be less evolved or matured and must be based upon the realistic availability of resources at that time – and would be **Emergency Plans** – either **Emergency Rescue Plan** or **Emergency Intervention Plan**.

During later stages, once the incident response has matured and other assets and resources are available, more comprehensive plans should be prepared in addition to the early or initial Emergency Plans, this should be termed **Deliberate Plans** – either **Deliberate Rescue Plan** or **Deliberate Intervention Plan**.

The table below indicates the type of plan based on the PiC behaviour.

PiC Behaviour:	Compliant	Non-Compliant
Plan	Rescue	Intervention
Initial / Initial stages	Emergency Rescue Plan	Emergency Intervention Plan
Later stages of incident	Deliberate Rescue Plan	Deliberate Intervention Plan

Plans should be developed using the Joint Decision making model and must consider the risks to all staff deployed as well as the PiC themselves. They should also consider the likelihood of success, as well as risks of a failed intervention damaging trust between the PiC and Negotiators.

It is recognised that any plan(s) might be **precluded from use** because it is too unsafe for the PiC or staff; or has a low likelihood of success without serious injury or death.

The primary role of Negotiators is to **save life** - best achieved through the function of influencing the PiC to a behaviour of **compliance** and either enable the PiC to **self-rescue** or to support the use of a **Rescue Plan**.

# Rescue and Intervention Plans

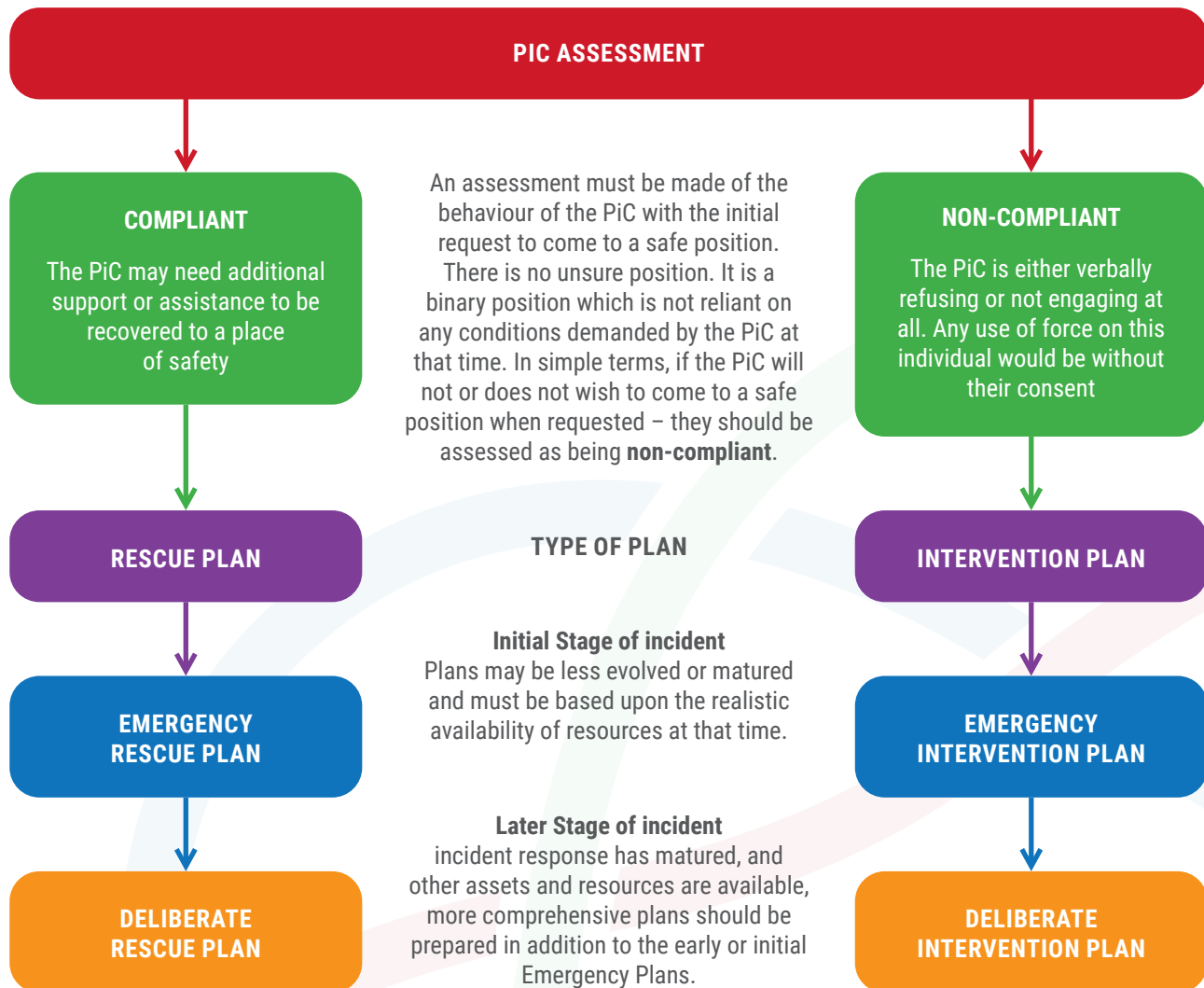
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The use of intervention plans is rare. Most incidents result in negotiators changing the behaviour of a PiC so that they become compliant and a rescue taking place.

Assessments, advice, decisions, and rationale should be recorded & retained in line with JESIP guidance.



# Rescue and Intervention plan flow chart





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