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The Role of Table Top Exercises



Table Top Exercises – Why do them?

Governments tend to ensure all organisations are fully prepared for all types of emergencies.

Integral to that is the practicing and testing of all the elements of emergency plans. Today outlines what we mean by exercising, describes different types of exercise, and outlines the exercising which takes place at different levels during the planning of major maritime events such as Tall Ship Races. It also provides some specific examples of recent exercises tested in the UK.

Training staff who are involved in emergency responses is fundamental to an organisation's ability to handle any type of emergency or incident at your event.

Table Top Exercises

An exercise is a simulation of an emergency situation or incident.

Exercises have 3 main purposes:

- to validate plans (validation)
- to develop staff competencies and give them practice in carrying out their roles in the plans (training)
- to test well-established procedures (testing)

Why it is important to hold exercises

Planning for emergencies and incidents cannot be considered reliable until it is exercised and has proved to be workable, especially since false confidence may be placed in the integrity of a written plan.

Generally, participants in exercises should have an awareness of their roles and be reasonably comfortable with them, before they are subject to the stresses of an exercise. Exercising is not to catch people out. It tests procedures, not people. If staff are under-prepared, they may blame the plan, when they should blame their lack of preparation and training. An important aim of an exercise should be to make people feel more comfortable in their roles and to build morale.

Types of exercises

There are 3 main types of exercise:

- ⦿ discussion-based
- ⦿ table top
- ⦿ live

A fourth category combines elements of the other three.

The choice of which one to adopt depends on what the purpose of the exercise is. It is also a question of lead-in time and available resources.

Discussion-based exercises

- ⦿ Discussion-based exercises are cheapest to run and easiest to prepare.
- ⦿ They can be used at the policy formulation stage as a 'talk-through' of how to finalise the plan. More often, they are based on a completed plan and are used to develop awareness about the plan through discussion. In this respect, they are often used for training purposes.

Table top exercises

Table top exercises are based on simulation, not necessarily literally around a table top. Usually, they involve a realistic scenario and a time line, which may be real time or may speed time up.

Usually table tops are run in a single room, or in a series of linked rooms which simulate the divisions between responders who need to communicate and be co-ordinated. The players are expected to know the plan and they are invited to test how the plan works as the scenario unfolds.

This type of exercise is particularly useful for validation purposes, particularly for exploring weaknesses in procedures. Table-top exercises are relatively cheap to run, except in the use of staff time. They demand careful preparation.

Live exercises

Live exercises are a live rehearsal for implementing a plan. Such exercises are particularly useful for testing logistics, communications and physical capabilities.

They also make excellent training events from the point of view of experiential learning, helping participants develop confidence in their skills and providing experience of what it would be like to use the plan's procedures in a real event. Where the latter purposes are, in fact, the main objective of the exercise, then it is essentially a training exercise or practice drill.

Live exercises are expensive to set up on the day and demand the most extensive preparation. These tend to be statutory authorities and emergency service led and are generally for major incidents and civil contingencies.

To my knowledge a live exercise has never been held for planning at a major maritime event or festival.

Exercising under the Civil Contingencies Act – the law in the UK

- The Civil Contingencies Act Regulations require Category 1 responders to include provision for the carrying out of exercises and for the training of staff in emergency plans. The same or similar requirements for exercising and training apply too to Business Continuity plan and arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public.
- This means that relevant planning documents must contain a statement about the nature of the training and exercising to be provided and its frequency.

Typical Structure of Tall Ships Events

- ◎ STI Race Director and Team
- ◎ Host Port Team
- ◎ Regional Emergency Services
- ◎ Regional Harbour Authorities
- ◎ Defence Organisations - Naval

Typical Structure of Host Port Team

STI Staff and Office
Traffic Management Office
Press Centre Liaison
Maritime Office
Event Control Office
Police Silver Control
Entertainment Co-ordination
Ops Managers
Site Management
Crew Party Co-ordination
Crew Parade Co-ordination
Captains Party Co-ordination
Passes and Accreditation
Safety Officers
Liaison Officers
Chief Liaison Officers

What type of events are risky?

- ⦿ Some of them?
- ⦿ None of them?
- ⦿ All of them?

All of them. Why?

- ⦿ The law tells us they are.
- ⦿ We are obliged to risk assess.
- ⦿ We have a duty of care to all workers, crew, staff and members of the public.
- ⦿ They must be safe, secure and considerately managed.
- ⦿ We must keep our reputations intact.
- ⦿ We must satisfy our insurers.



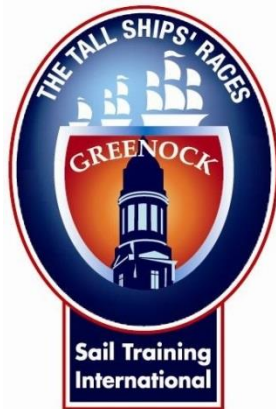
“But why do we need all this safety nonsense? After all we know what we’re doing...”

Event Management Plan

**The Tall Ships Races
Greenock**

9th-12th July 2011

EVENT MANAGEMENT PLAN



**Version 1.13
30/6/11**

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The Joint Agency Control

- Event Safety Officers
- Security Controllers
- Blue light Services
- Police
- Ambulance
- Voluntary Welfare
- Administration
- Silver Command
- Fire Service
- Maritime Control
- Traffic Control
- Event Control staff
- Communications Coordination
- CCTV controller

The plan is written, the examiners satisfied, the contract is signed

What do we do now?

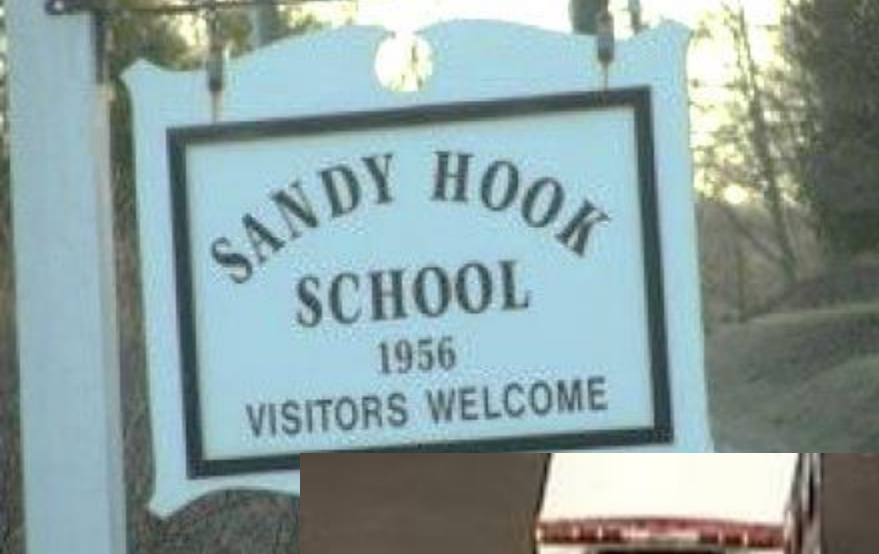
Table Top!

Table Top Objectives

- ⦿ To use an informal environment to test event plans
- ⦿ To identify key contingency measures
- ⦿ Establish relationships to foster co-operation between agencies
- ⦿ To gain an understanding of priorities and restrictions of each others' operations
- ⦿ To foster open discussion

Nightmare v Reality

- ⦿ Many table top exercises conjure nightmare scenarios in order to test emergency response
- ⦿ The list of potential threats is almost infinite
- ⦿ Our aim is to establish a common framework for incident response which allows us to co-ordinate resources *whatever* arises
- ⦿ For the Organiser, the hardest questions may be when there isn't a Major Incident



itv NEWS EXCLUSIVE





Every event should consider itself a potential target

What is the current national security threat level in the UK?

Substantial.

What does this mean?

“An attack is a strong possibility”

Sample Exercise 1

As a table, draw up a list of what you consider to be three principal vulnerabilities of your event.

Also consider:

What are appropriate controls?

- ⦿ How could we intercept a Boston Bomber, or Woolwich-style attacker?
- ⦿ What are the limits of acceptable surveillance and intervention?
- ⦿ What is practicable and financially viable?

Sample Exercise 2

What the Papers Say






- ⦿ Imagine it is the Monday following the departure of the fleet.
- ⦿ As a table, draft four newspaper headlines; two good and two bad
- ⦿ Consider what would be the best/worst story for your particular organisation.

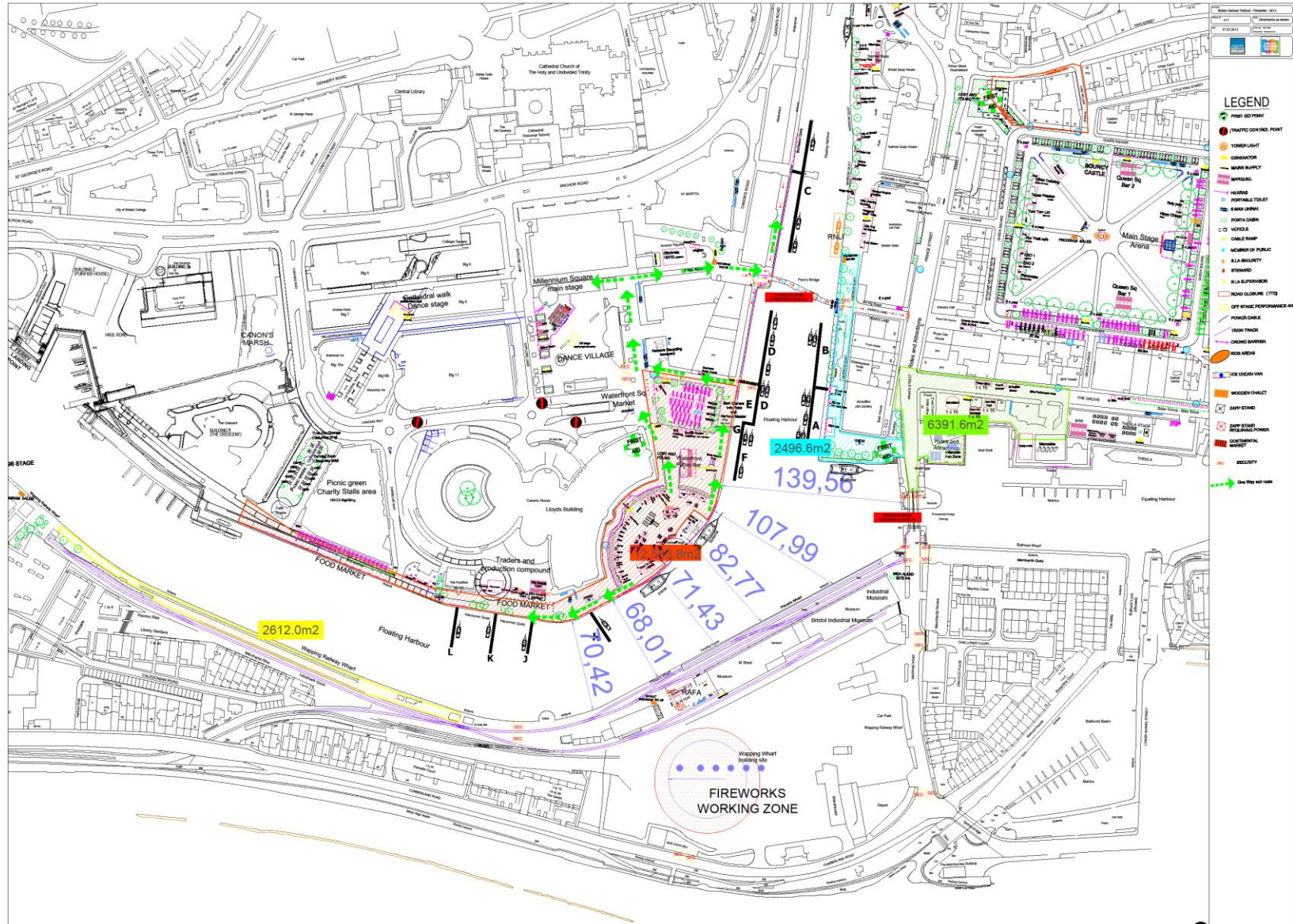
Press Contact

- ⦿ Role of press and media handling is critical in the event of a serious incident
- ⦿ Can agencies outline their policy and resources in the event of a serious incident on site
 - Host Port Team
 - Police
 - Harbour Authority
 - Captain/Ship

Sample Scenario 1

Weather Outlook

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				
Rainy with low cloud.	Overcast with showers	Thunderstorms	Sunny	Partly cloudy
Max 14° Wind SW 18mph	Max 16° Wind SW 22mph	Max 18° Wind SW 26mph	Max 24° Wind W 6-8mph	Max 22° Wind NW 11mph



LEGEND

- FIREWORKS POINT
- TRAFFIC CONTROL POINT
- UNDER LIGHT
- GENERATOR
- WATER SUPPLY
- PUBLIC LOBBY
- BARBERS
- HEAVES
- PORTABLE TOILET
- 4 HOUR UPRAL
- PUBLIC LOBBY
- VEHICLE
- CABLE BAMP
- MEMBER OF PUBLIC
- 4.5A SECURITY
- 4.5A SECURITY
- 4.5A SUPERVISOR
- ROAD CLOSURE (1710)
- OFF STAGE PERFORMANCE AREA
- POWER CABLE
- POWER TRACK
- CRIMINAL BARRIERS
- MOB AREA
- VICE CHAIRMAN VAN
- WOODEN CHALET
- EMPTY STAND
- EMPTY STAND
- EMPTY STAND
- CONTINGENTIAL MARKET
- SECURITY
- One Way street

FIREWORKS
WORKING ZONE

2612.0m²

2496.6m²

6391.6m²

139.56

107.99

82.77

71.43

68.01

40.42

Suburban walk
Office stage

Millennium Square
Main stage

Waterfront St
Market

Traders and
production compound

FOOD MARKET

RAF A

BOUNCE
CASTLE

Main Stage
Avenue

Classen St
Bar 2

Classen St
Bar 1

RAF A

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A typical event weekend:

- Poor weather has meant the fleet is arriving periodically and the cancellation of the Captains Dinner and Crew Parade on Friday
- By Saturday afternoon the weather is finally warm and sunny – and large crowds are assembling around the Harbour and commercial areas
- There is a consistent rumour on social media that the previous nights welcome fireworks (cancelled) will be taking place with a parade of sail on Saturday evening instead
- The rumour is heavily re-Tweeted
- At 18.00, event security report locations of severe congestion and people becoming uncomfortable
- Red Cross (medical) receive a report of person in crowd who has apparently suffered a heart attack

Questions

- ① Host Port – how do you set capacity and how do you monitor numbers?
- ① Security Contractor/Police – what resources do you have and how do they report issues?
- ① Red Cross (medical) – how do you attend incidents in dense crowds and how do you locate/transport casualties?
- ① STI – how do you convene heads of depts to discuss?

By 20.00 it is clear that the site is approaching capacity, with severe crowding in key access routes.

Car parks are all full, with many people leaving cars on local roadways

1. What can be done to manage crowds within the site?
2. What can be done off-site?

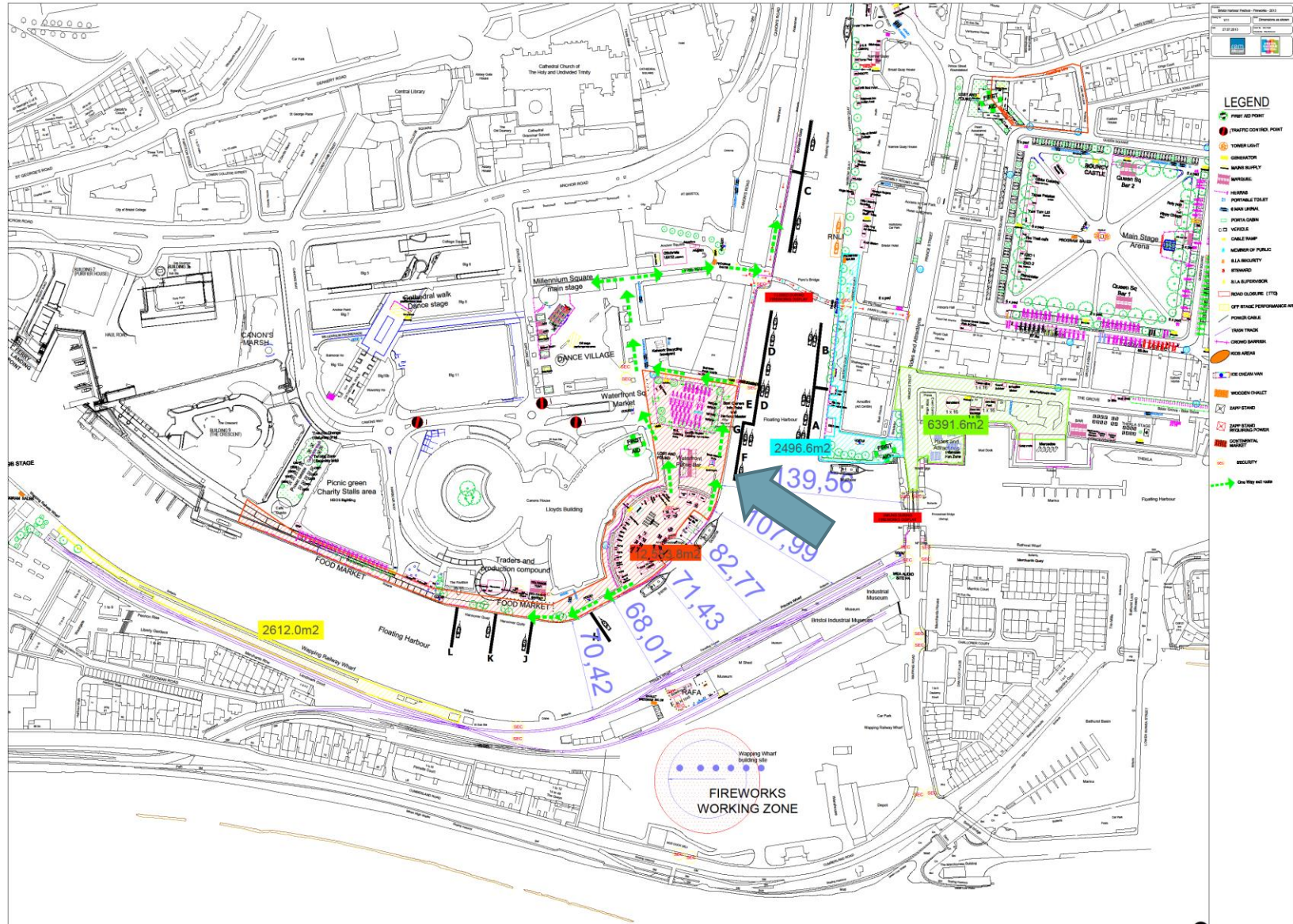
In addition to attending the immediate needs of the incident, what other measures may be required?

Sample Scenario 2

A typical event weekend:

It is 18.15 and the city harbour is busy with around 100 visiting craft moored up and enjoying the 28 degree sunshine. The bars around the moored vessels are busy and the walkway from the central promenade has the usual hustle and bustle of a Friday night, with small craft stalls and market operations selling their wares and the outside licensed areas of the bars full with smokers.

At 18.20 outside Harbourside Bar a member of the public notices that the vessel Irene moored four out from the quay wall is discharging significant smoke and could be on fire. He calls 999 and reports the incident to the Fire Brigade.



LEGEND

- FIRST AID POINT
- TRAFFIC CONTROL POINT
- UNDER LIGHT
- GENERATOR
- WATER SUPPLY
- BARRIERS
- HEAVES
- PORTABLE TOILET
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2612.0m²

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2496.6m²

139,56

107,99

82,77

71,43

68,01

70,42

FIREWORKS WORKING ZONE

At 18.21 the owner of Pretty Lady moored alongside Irene reports to Harbour Control on VHF channel 73 that Irene is on fire.

At 18.22 Pretty Lady radios to Harbour Control to say he is cutting his lines as Irene is unoccupied. He reports that several other vessels are also doing the same and that Irene will soon be ablaze.

At 18.22.30 seconds the Harbour Master informs Event Control.

At 18.30 the Stage Manager of Harbourside Stage reports to Event Control he already has an audience of around 3000 people waiting for the concert which commences at 19.30.



At 18.32 the Contracted security supervisor at Harbour Gate entrance reports that a high volume of people are heading towards Harbour Gate Bridge to view the concerts.

Questions

- ◉ Host Port?
- ◉ Harbour Master?
- ◉ Security Contractor/Police?
- ◉ Red Cross (medical)?
- ◉ STI?
- ◉ Fire and Rescue Service?

Summary

- On an event of this scale, collective and collaborative working is essential
- The Police assuming primacy for an incident will still require STI and others to provide support
- A framework & location for joint working and decision-making is required *in advance*
- Immediate responses to incidents can have significant repercussions elsewhere
- Media management is a core part of the plan

Any Event or Festival

- Access Control
- Security Provision
- Stewards
- Volunteers
- Traffic
- Public
- Welfare
- Safety
- Event Control



Festivals on Land can be equally as wet as maritime events



Don't be daunted !!!

- ⦿ If organisers at Host Ports undertake to consider safety and planning in equal measure as ship movements, captains dinner menu's, crew parades, or where the VIP is taking a comfort break, then everything will be fine.
- ⦿ If its not seen as that serious seek help! You may need it !!

Remember - no one is immune to danger!



Any questions ???

