



# **Food Standards Agency Incident Response Protocol**

**(Revised May 2012)**

## 5.3 SCOPING GROUP MEETINGS

### **Purpose**

Scoping Groups are intended to gather information from FBOs and their representatives, as a valuable component of the risk assessment process, to inform subsequent risk management decisions. Scoping groups are not briefing sessions, for communication of information/decisions to wider stakeholders or for decision making. The Incident Manager will ensure that the purpose of the Scoping Group is clearly communicated to all potential members when they are invited to attend.

The Scoping Group will:

- establish the nature and scale of the issue; and
- map out the part of the supply chain involved.

### **When to use Scoping Groups**

A Scoping Group should be considered, particularly during high level incidents, when further information is required from food business operators (and/or their representatives) to:

- inform the FSA risk assessment,
- ensure relevant commercial stakeholders are aware (e.g. so they can carry out enquiries through the supply chain)
- identify cascade/communication mechanisms available to trade, including SMEs; and
- establish supply chain and distribution chain information.

The Incident Manager will determine when a Scoping Group is necessary, consulting the OIMT and SIMT, as appropriate.

### **Timing**

Scoping Group meetings are generally most useful during the early stages of an incident, but the need for such a meeting may not be identified until an incident has developed/escalated.

## **Membership**

It is important that Scoping Groups gather the most comprehensive data set available to inform incident response. Some FBO representatives have indicated that the presence of enforcement representatives and non Governmental Organisations dissuades them from openly sharing commercially sensitive information with the FSA. Therefore, in most cases a wider stakeholder meeting is the more appropriate forum for communication with non-industry stakeholders.

The Incident Manager shall ensure appropriate FBOs or representative groups are invited to the Scoping Group. Communications Division will compile a list of industry stakeholders taken from the FSA stakeholder database with an interest in the area concerned, any businesses directly involved, trade organisations and sector specific trade bodies. Representatives from related businesses/organisations may be invited if they may have additional information e.g. freight clearance agents, specialist hauliers, farming unions etc.

## **Meeting arrangements**

The Incident Manager will ensure that all logistical arrangements are in place, including room booking, invites<sup>25</sup>, note taking and recording etc.

## **Location**

Scoping Groups will normally take place at Aviation House in London. Attendees would normally be expected to attend in person. However, for stakeholders in devolved countries, where the meeting is held in London, it may be possible to arrange a video-link to the devolved offices. Teleconference is not considered suitable for Scoping Group meetings.

When arranging the meeting specific care needs to be taken to ensure that invited stakeholders are given sufficient notice to enable them to get to the venues (including those in devolved countries) on time. Due to the fast moving nature of incidents the amount of notice given is likely to be hours rather than days.

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<sup>25</sup> Invites should clearly set out the purpose of the meeting and the issues to be discussed

## 5.4 STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

### **Function**

The FSA may wish to hold a stakeholder meeting (or series of meetings) during an incident to communicate consistent information about the incident to external stakeholders. This would complement other external communications such as news stories, alerts etc. The Incident Manager will ensure that the purpose of the Stakeholder meeting is clearly communicated to attendees in the invitation.

Stakeholder meetings would be used to update external stakeholders on the information the FSA has, in line with our openness policy. For example, stakeholder meetings would update members on the current state of play, the FSA's assessment of the risk to consumers from the incident and the actions taken by the FSA to protect consumer health. The meetings could also include a Q&A session to answer specific questions from stakeholders.

These meetings should not be confused with Scoping Group meetings, where the objective is to gather information from industry stakeholders to inform the incident response/management.

### **When to use stakeholder meetings**

Due to the large number of incidents the FSA deals with and the impracticality of convening Stakeholder Groups for all of these, Stakeholder meetings will normally only be considered during high level incidents. The FSA may wish to hold more than one stakeholder meeting at relevant times during an incident, at the discretion of the Incident Manager in consultation with SIMT/OIMT. The first stakeholder meeting will normally be convened only after the FSA has had sufficient time to discuss and agree its internal strategy.

### **Membership**

The Incident Manager shall ensure appropriate stakeholders are invited to the meeting. Communications Division will compile a list of stakeholders taken from the FSA stakeholder database with an interest in the area concerned, any businesses directly involved, trade organisations, NGOs, LGR and other enforcement partners and consumer groups.

### **Meeting arrangements**

The Incident Manager will ensure that all logistical arrangements are in place, including room booking, invites, note taking and recording etc.

Attendees from trade associations should be made aware that it is not the FSA's intention to invite all their members to the stakeholder meetings. Instead the intention is that the trade association attending subsequently cascades messages back to their members, as appropriate.

### **Location**

Stakeholder groups will normally take place at Aviation House in London. Attendees would normally be expected to attend in person. However, for stakeholders in devolved countries, where the meeting is held in London, it may be possible to arrange a video-link to the devolved offices. Teleconference is not considered suitable for Stakeholder meetings.

When arranging the meeting specific care needs to be taken to ensure that invited stakeholders are given sufficient notice to enable them to get to the venues (including those in devolved countries) on time. Due to the fast moving nature of incidents the amount of notice given is likely to be hours rather than days.

## **5.5 OUTBREAK CONTROL TEAM MEETINGS**

During a foodborne illness outbreak an Outbreak Control Team (OCT) may be set up by the Health Protection Agency (or equivalent in devolved nations) to ensure that the outbreak is appropriately handled. FSA representation at OCT meetings will be required during a foodborne illness outbreak.

## **5.6 STRATEGIC CO-ORDINATION CENTRE MEETINGS**

These meetings would be held during high level environmental contamination incidents (e.g. 2005 Buncefield fire). Where, during emergencies, the Police have set up a Strategic Co-ordinating Centre or Gold Command, the Incident Manager shall determine whether the FSA needs to send staff to the Centre, or whether the FSA's needs can be met by another organisation present (e.g. Defra, HPA).

## **6.0 INCIDENT ESCALATION**

Under the protocol all incidents will essentially be treated in the same way, with the FSA scaling up or down as appropriate. To support this process, criteria or 'triggers' have been developed for the escalation of incidents. These 'triggers' are detailed in Appendix 1. To ensure that during complex, 'High' level incidents, the management structure is strengthened accordingly, a high level SIMT will direct and support the OIMT.

When an incident has been assessed as potentially 'High' level, the relevant Director, or nominated deputy, should be alerted immediately by the Incident Manager. The Director will then consider the case for escalation and, if they agree that there is a case, they will alert the Chief Executive accordingly.

The decision to activate the SIMT will be made by the Chief Executive or nominated deputy, who will also designate an appropriate Director (normally the Director of Food Safety) to act as Strategic Director, leading the team.

### **Battle Rhythm**

For all incidents, particularly high level incidents, it is important that the Incident Manager rapidly establishes an appropriate battle rhythm. The battle rhythm, which will differ for each incident, can then be shared

## Acronym List

FBO	Food Business Operator
OIMT	Operational Incident Management Team
SIMT	Strategic Incident Management Team
FSA	Food Standards Agency
SME	Small to Medium-sized Enterprise
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
LGR	Local Government Regulation