

# Water Cannon

Metropolitan Police 2014



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# Timeline

- August disorder 2011
- HMIC report "The rules of engagement" – A review of the August 2011 disorders
- March 2012 – MPS reports "4 days in August"
- December 2012 – The Home Office less lethal technology systems strategic board recommended a project board to look at issues.
- January 2013 - Chief Constables Council support project work going ahead
- January 2013 – The first water cannon project board meeting
- April 2013 – Policing Minister give permission to for work to project work to proceed
- January 2014 - Mayor of London writes to the Home Secretary outlining support in principle for water cannon and, subject to the public engagement process, making funds available.



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# Policing Style

- The MPS manage in excess of 1500 major public events every year.
- Always aim to prevent disorder by:
  - Engagement with all parties
  - Deployment of Police Liaison Team
  - Community tension monitoring
  - Using intelligence to influence resources and tactics
- Water cannon will not change the way in which we police demonstrations and events – It will be rarely seen and rarely used.

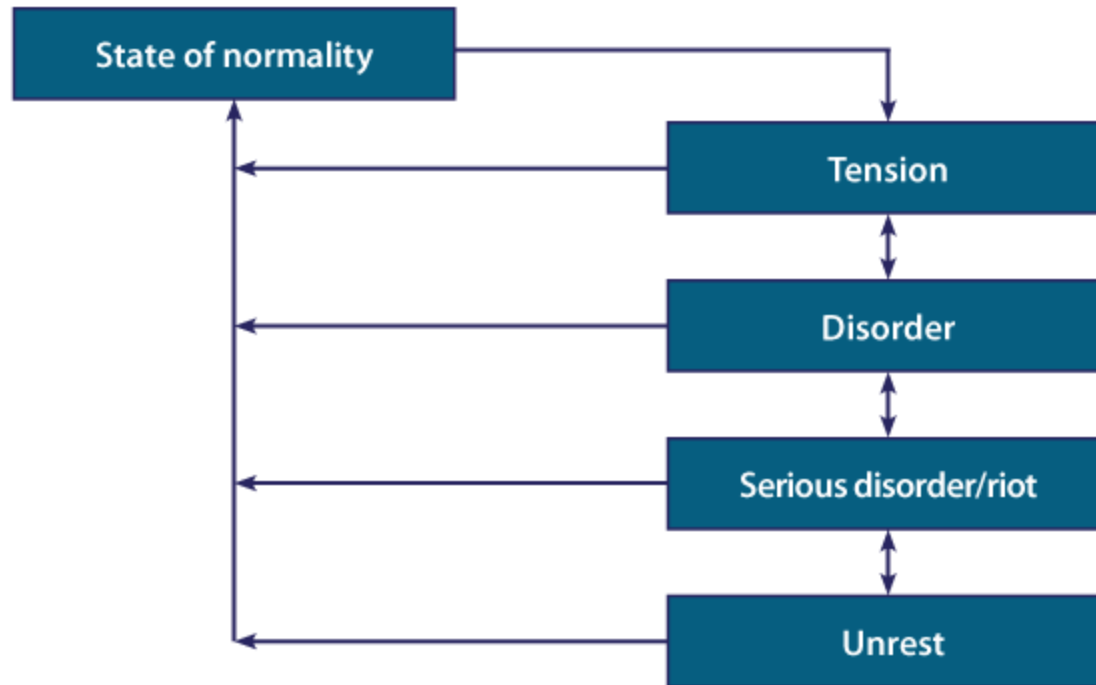


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# The disorder model



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# Operational Requirement

- Water Cannon provides the ability to exert control from a distance and, critically, to provide a graduated and flexible application of force (Section 2.2 Operational Requirement).
- Without it and faced with the need to protect the public, safeguard vulnerable premises or disperse a crowd in a situation of serious violent public disorder, it is likely that police commanders would have to authorise alternative tactics. They would involve significant force and could include AEP, batons, mounted officers and police dogs (Section 2.3 Operational Requirement).
- It is accepted that water cannon has its limitations (Section 2.5 Operational Requirement).

## HMIC rules of engagement

- Barricades & missiles
- Petrol bombs thrown
- Violence against public in presence of police
- Arson on building
- Threats to LFB/LAS



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# Operational Requirement

The report "Four Days in August" recognised that had water cannon been available it would have been considered as a tactical option during the August 2011 disorder. It may have also been considered for events such as the Country Side Alliance in 2004, the Gaza demonstrations against the Israeli Embassy in 2008/9 and the student protests of 2010.

HMIC's report "Rules of Engagement" stated that current guidance allowed for a graduated use of force in order to protect the public but in practice some of the more forceful tactics were not available to commanders during the August disorders, because of insufficient training, equipment and officer numbers deployed.

The report went on to recognise water cannon as a valid tactical contingency.



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# Public Opinion

- You Gov poll carried in 2010 respondents were asked " Thinking about violent protests, such as those against tuition fees last week, do you think the police should or should not be able to use water cannons against violent protests?", 69% said that the use of water cannon was acceptable.
- In the public opinion poll carried out by HMIC in support of the rules of engagement: A review of the August 2011 disorders. report, 77% of those surveyed felt that water cannon should have been used.
- In the *YouGov* poll in 2012, 89% supported the use of water cannon in riots, whilst only 8% said police should not use them.



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# Criteria for use

- When conventional methods of policing have been **tried and failed** or, because of the circumstances, are **unlikely to succeed if tried**.
- In situations of **serious public disorder** where there is the potential for loss of life, serious injury or widespread destruction and whether such action is likely to reduce that risk.
- Must only be used by trained officers.

<http://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/public-order/planning-and-deployment/tactical-options/#water-cannon>



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# Additional safeguards

- Adopt a 'no surprises' ethos pre and during the event
- Communication first – reasoned request to desist / disperse by officers on the ground and public address systems or other signage
- Use of sirens, public address system and blue lights to inform the crowd that the water cannon may be used
- Incremental warning messages on a number of occasions prior to use
- Ability to discharge jets of water at varying pressures proportionate to the threat
- Target specific persons within the crowd
- Only highly trained officers to operate the equipment
- Bespoke assessment on the ground by specially trained commander
- Accredited and experienced command structure
- Effectiveness monitored and evaluated – can we return to conventional policing?
- Cease use once objective achieved or can be achieved by lesser means
- On board CCTV monitors the crowd, onboard loggist records decision in cab



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# Water Cannon



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# Water cannon

- This model of water cannon was built by Rosenabuer in the early 1990's and is purpose built water cannon.
- It has a 9000 litre capacity and the capability to deploy water at varying pressures depending on the situation, up to 20 Bar pressure.
- The water in the tank is prevented from falling below 4°C. The temperature of the water when sprayed will be dependant on the atmospheric temperature.
- Capability to record crew, crowd and the incident and circumstances in which the cannon is deployed or employed.
- Other technical considerations can be found at:  
<http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ACPO%20Water%20Cannon%20Briefing%20Document%2C%20Jan%202014.pdf>
- No injuries recorded by PSNI to date



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# Governance

- In order for water cannons to be available for use in England and Wales it must first be authorised by the Home Secretary following consideration of:
  - The operational requirement
  - The technical specifications
  - The medical implications as determined by Science Advisory Committee on Medical Implications of Less Lethal Weapons (SACMILL). SACMILL is an advisory non-departmental public body of the Ministry of Defence.

Mayors authority to purchase. If all in agreement:

- The authority to make water cannon available for operational purposes in the MPS is by an Assistant Commissioner or above.
- Phased deployment: Employ v deploy
- Post event scrutiny by Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime and PCC



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# Deployment

- Currently, when the MPS has advance intelligence of the possible need to respond to disorder they will brief the Mayor and discuss their deployment plans with him. Other stakeholders may also be briefed.
- In the future, if water cannon was available it would only be deployed when the strict criteria had been met. The MPS would follow the same approach of briefing and discussing it with the Mayor.
- The operational decision to **deploy** Water Cannon is made by an Assistant Commissioner, and then its **use** is a tactical decision made by Operational Commanders. Each decision maker has to justify their decision and is accountable for it in law.



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# Water Cannon - Summary

- HMIC & MPS in post 2011 riot reviews concluded a role for water cannon
- To create a safe distance and/or disperse rioters
- To combat serious violence and damage and protect life
- Fulfils a capability gap only occupied currently by tactics that require significant force
- Indicative public support; 77- 89% in surveys
- Will be rarely seen and rarely used
- No intent to change style of policing disorder and protest
- It's operational use has been assessed by independent scientists and no injuries recorded in NI
- Safeguards – authority level, training, graduated use of force



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# Questions?



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## Freedom of Information Act

Protective Marking: Not protected | Publication Scheme Y/N: Y

Title: Water Cannon – Metropolitan Police Service

Summary: Water cannon – Engagement presentation.

Branch / OCU: SCO12

Date created: 22.01.2014

Review date: 22.01.2016

Version:0.5

Author: PS A McCartney 209340



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