

FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

LEADING FIREFIGHTERS EXAMINATION

PAPER

OPERATIONS

SUBJECT

FIREFIGHTING AND RESCUE INCIDENTS

ITEM

RURAL FIREFIGHTING – USE OF APPLIANCES

STUDY NOTE No.

1107

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY NOTE

This study note has been prepared as the basis of study in connection with the qualifying examinations for promotion.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the information contained in the study note and understand how it should be applied:

The 'References' made at the end of the Study Note are included for information only and candidates will not be expected to study these as part of the bibliography.

RURAL FIREFIGHTING – USE OF APPLIANCES

1. Introduction

Fires in rural areas present different risks to fires in built up areas. There have been several incidents recently involving appliances and personnel in difficulties when attending fires off the road in rural areas.

2. General

Officers-in-charge of appliances attending fires off the road in rural areas should be aware of the problems and dangers that can arise. Driving cross-country under normal circumstances can be difficult. Entering such an area to tackle a fire requires alertness, pre-planning, local knowledge and a high standard of control and command.

It is not easy to know everything about the large rural areas, which some stations cover. The time of year, type of crops, type of forest, changes in farming methods, changes of land use etc can all occur and can nullify procedures, alter plans, and sometimes increase difficulties.

3. Terrain

Appliances vary in size and weight and the ability of emergency fire appliance drivers to manoeuvre is governed by the type of appliance they drive. Obviously a 4-wheel drive vehicle would have the best advantage under certain conditions but most Fire Service vehicles do not have this facility and drivers must exercise care on where they take their appliance. Officers-in-charge must also bear this in mind when they order a driver to leave a hard surface.

4. Gradients

Gradients, especially on soft ground, should be tackled with great care. Drivers should remember that, when driving across a gradient, the lower wheels may cut into the surface and tip the appliance too far for stability to be maintained. If traction is lost the vehicle could slide sideways and roll.

5. Access

Obviously, if an appliance can enter a gate opening it should be able to drive out. Too often, though, an appliance enters one way and leaves by another because of the circumstances of the incident. In forest fires this will often be mandatory and the entrances and exits are marked by the usual red and green markers.

Officers and drivers should keep their eyes open for alternative exits and have them investigated if they are in any doubt of their usefulness.

Where a shuttle of water tenders is being maintained and there is only one entrance to the incident, a firefighter should be stationed there to ensure that no other vehicle blocks or reduces the access.

6. Visibility

The ability to leave could be affected by reduced visibility. A sudden change of wind could not only cause a rapid spread of fire towards an appliance but the smoke could obscure the route out. Appliances should be parked facing an exit so that, even in poor visibility, a driver can head in the general direction out in an emergency. Drivers must remember that firefighters on foot may also be working in that area and the appliance should therefore proceed with caution.

7. Becoming Bugged Down

Drivers should be aware of driving onto, or parking on, soft ground. Even in dry spells there are always soft patches where water can lie and these are not necessarily always on low ground. Drivers should remember that, when pumping, there is often leakage of water around the pump. This, over a period of time, could soften the ground and make it difficult to move the appliance. It may be necessary to stop pumping briefly in order to move the appliance a few metres out of the softened patch before it gets bogged down.

8. Peat Areas

Usually it is impossible to take vehicles onto peat moss areas but sometimes it is difficult to see where solid ground ends and the peat starts. Drivers should investigate before proceeding or ask a firefighter to go ahead at some distance to try and probe the ground. If in any doubt the appliance should not proceed.

References

Dear Chief Fire Officer Letter 6/1992
Dear Firemaster Letter 5/1992