

FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

STATION OFFICERS' EXAMINATION

PAPER

FIRE SAFETY, EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

SUBJECT

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

ITEM

PLANNING FOR FIRE SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY

STUDY NOTE No.

3206

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.

PLANNING FOR FIRE SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Introduction

Fire carries with it great financial cost for both the Fire Service and the Health Service, with research showing that the cost of dwelling fires is over one billion pounds a year.

The research also shows that the public feels detached from the dangers of fire and so does not always behave in a fire safe manner. This contrasts sharply with the public's awareness of crime.

There is a wish to change the situation in regard to fire in an effort to reduce high levels of fatalities and injuries caused through dwelling fires each year. Accordingly, it is intended that the focus of the Fire Service will change from one of firefighting and rescue to one of preventing fires.

This will be achieved by making Community Fire Safety (CFS) the primary focus of the Fire Service.

Considerable cultural and organisational changes are required of the Fire Service if this is to be undertaken in a reasonable time scale and accordingly a strategy has been established by the Home Office to aid the implementation. The key elements of the strategy are described in Section A and one item from it 'planning' described in greater detail in Section B.

SECTION A – STRATEGY

1. The Aim

Proactive fire prevention has been the poor relation to firefighting and rescue. As a marginalised subject it has suffered from a lack of priority with damaging consequences for performance, resources, consistency and achievement.

The principle aim therefore is make

“Community Fire Safety the primary focus of the Fire Service putting fire and casualty reduction at the centre of both Fire Service policy and activity.”

2. Statutory Duty

Considerable elements of the work brigades undertake is stipulated by statute. Because CFS is not, it can be denied priority to become a significant brigade activity.

The funding arrangements also detract from CFS activity because brigades are partly funded on the number of calls. This can act as a disincentive for doing more CFS activity.

Arrangements to require CFS work to be undertaken as a statutory duty are being investigated as are the measures that act as disincentives. In addition, changes have been made to the funding arrangements of brigades to include fire safety education in the formula for grant assessment.

3. Targets

Targets have been established to reduce the statistical incidence of accidental dwelling fires, fatalities and casualties over a five-year period.

The Key Performance Indicators are as follows:

- (a) Accidental fires
 - (i) Reduce the number of fires in dwellings by one third.
- (b) Accidental fire fatalities
 - (ii) Reduce the number of accidental fire deaths by 40%.
- (c) Accidental serious fire casualties
 - (iii) Reduce serious non-fatal casualties by 5% year on year.
- (d) Fire safety awareness, attitudes and behaviour
 - (iv) Achieve a measurable annual improvement in each.

4. Leadership and Commitment

The refocusing of brigade activity needs to be driven towards the aim outlined in Section A1.

Each Brigade have been asked to ensure that they are doing all they can to refocus their activities and investigate whether the bulk of Fire Service activity and resources continue to be applied to other areas of work for reasons of tradition and expectation.

It is considered that CFS cannot be considered a luxury to be pursued only if resources allow. It must become central and resources reallocated to pursue the undertaking properly. This means that:

- (a) The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (and HM Fire Service Inspectorate), Fire Authorities and Chief Fire Officers should affirm a commitment to CFS as a priority and plan individually and collectively how this can be brought about.
- (b) There is a need to change to the way in which the activity is resourced and funds allocated.
- (c) There is a long-term need to ensure the culture of the Fire Service reflects the change in priorities and that the right skills are available to deliver them.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

In order to ensure that the full potential of CFS is realised and maintained, organisational and operational changes will need developing as part of the strategy.

Changes are progressively being implemented, and include:

(a) **The National Role**
A National Community Fire Safety Centre, which will provide a framework for all CFS, endeavours. Its main responsibilities will be to establish best practice for all CFS initiatives and instituting a national planning and evaluation process. The centre will also develop programmes and material for appropriate sectors of the community, which all brigades can implement.

(b) **HM Fire Service Inspectorate**
The Inspectorate will have a greater role to play in CFS by way of evaluation, the brigade inspection process and appraising performance against targets.

The role will also include giving greater prominence to CFS in reports etc.

(c) **Brigades**
Brigades will use their local knowledge to complement and augment national activity. It is recommended that all brigades should have a dedicated and trained CFS Team.

The team should identify and target special local campaigns using national materials and work with multi-agency partners.

(d) **Stakeholders**
The establishment of a Community Fire Safety Advisory Board which will bring together key stakeholders to work in partnership.

The Board would have the task of overseeing the continuing strategic approach and objectives of the National Fire Safety Centre and advise and guide the approach as it develops.

(e) **Multi-agency Partners**
It is recognised that CFS is part of a wider package of activity to create a safer environment. Many of the factors and circumstances placing someone at a greater risk of dwelling fire similarly create demands on social services, the police, the health service and local authorities. CFS should therefore be framed around a multi-agency approach.

6. Planning

There will need to be both national and local planning of CFS with Brigades producing an annual plan, which includes:

- (a) A clear set of objectives for fire safety education.
- (b) A target for all CFS work.
- (c) How the plan supports national objectives.

7. Improved Delivery

There should be an integrated communication strategy to improve delivery of CFS. Targeted programmes for all segments of the population will probably be the most effective means of changing public behaviour.

For some, messages communicated via television will suffice; for children, properly evaluated materials are appropriate; for others, specific brigade initiatives may be the best way to proceed.

8. Evaluation

All CFS work should be evaluated so that resources can be effectively deployed and continuous improvements achieved.

SECTION B – COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY PLANS

1. Community Fire Safety Plans

As mentioned in Section A 6, brigades will need to prepare annual CFS plans as part of the overall strategy of fire safety in the community. This section deals with the main issues regarding such plans.

2. Purpose

All CFS work should be based on sound evidence of the community's fire safety needs and be properly focused and measured, accordingly the purpose of a Community Fire Safety Plan should be to:

- (a) Enable brigades to develop a more strategic, data driven approach to prevention.
- (b) Instill a regular planning cycle for community fire safety work.
- (c) Outline clearly a programme of prevention activities and how they can contribute to achieving the brigade's objective of providing communities, which are safer from the risk of fire.

3. The Focus of the Plan

The main focus of the plan should be on accidental dwelling fires in the home, which is where most casualties tend to occur and should also be the main focus of most educational and publicity work.

The plan may also include the inclusion of wider prevention efforts such as hoax calls, arson, juvenile fire-setting etc, where brigades consider these an important facet of their community safety programmes.

4. Time scale

Community Fire Safety Plans should be produced annually and be framed within the financial year cycle, ie commence the 1 April. The plan should reflect longer-term goals and objectives.

5. Key Features of the Plan

A CFS plan would normally be expected to commence with an introduction that puts the plan into perspective and to set the scene within which the brigade's efforts on CFS are being made.

The plan should also show commitment from key players such as the Fire Authority and the brigade's principle officers together with the brigade's vision or key aims for the delivery of CFS to the community at large.

The detail of the plan should include:

- (a) How prevention work and efforts to reduce fire and casualties accord with the objectives of the brigade as a whole and an indication of the level of priority being accorded to it.
- (b) Indications of the brigade's statistical information on which assessments of its own CFS issues are based; such as:
 - (i) For accidental dwelling fires, the five year trends on the number of fires, the number of fatalities, and the number of non-fatal casualties.
 - (ii) The main causes of fire for each of the above categories together with some historical perspective.
 - (iii) A breakdown of those who are the victims of fire by age group.
 - (iv) An attempt to map the incidents of fires and casualties to highlight concentrations within particular areas.
- (c) An assessment of those socio-economic groups within the brigade area who are at most risk and the factors which underpin it.
- (d) Evidence of a phased and time tabled strategy to address the issues.
- (e) Evidence of a suite of CFS programmes being deployed, designed to address the brigade's CFS needs; such as:
 - (i) What ongoing, regular programmes (ie schools work) are being deployed.
 - (ii) What multi-agency working (with local authorities and other agencies who can make a difference) is being undertaken to tackle wider community problems (ie arson, hoax calls etc) and what other partnerships are also being formed.
 - (iii) What specific campaigns are being put in place (on what?) and how the message will be conveyed.

- (f) An indication of the resources being deployed – dedicated full time staff, wider brigade staff (including those on station), other agencies, sponsorship etc. The plan could show for example the core personnel who:
 - (i) Will lead the application of CFS throughout the brigade and liaise with the National Centre.
 - (ii) Provide the strategic lead for local efforts.
 - (iii) Work with those in education, publicity and media relations.
 - (iv) Run CFS programmes and utilise existing brigade personnel.
 - (v) Undertake multi-agency liaison, forming new partnerships as well as linking with the rest of the brigade and externally.
 - (vi) Collate and analyse data, provide management information and review performance against targets.
- (g) How the brigade's efforts are being assessed for their effectiveness; (performance measures and targets).
- (h) How the brigade's CFS approach is being reviewed against performance and reviewed against earlier plans.

6. Linkages between the Community Fire Safety Plan and other Brigade Documents

The CFS plan is likely to be one of a number of interrelated brigade planning documents. The annual plan should therefore complement and support wider long-term plans.

More detailed plans for divisions, station areas or other managed units setting out what is to be done at that level to meet the key and local objectives and to support the brigade-wide community fire safety activities may be provided.

Provision of local data on this same basis will clearly assist those in local areas in carrying out such responsibilities.

References

Home Office – Safe as Houses
Dear Chief Fire Officer Letter 21/1998
Dear Firemaster Letter 18/1998