

# FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

## STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

STATION OFFICERS' EXAMINATION

PAPER

FIRE SAFETY, EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

SUBJECT

COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY

ITEM

SAFETY AT COMMUNITY EVENTS

STUDY NOTE No.

3207

### *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.*

## **SAFETY AT COMMUNITY EVENTS**

### **PART ONE - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **1. Introduction**

Study Note 3210 described a generic model outlining the 'Principles of Fire Safety Risk Assessment'.

The model is based on a methodology for the careful examination of what could cause harm to people by considering:

- (a) The Life Risks.
- (b) Possible Fire Hazards.
- (c) What Fire Precautions, if any have been provided.

The model could be used for a variety of situations where a fire risk assessment is required to be undertaken during a fire safety inspection or for an assessment of a more general nature at a community event for example.

#### **2. Events on a Fire Station**

This study note relates to community events that may be held on a fire station or in the station grounds, such as a social event, a community bonfire, charity car wash or other event.

The study note identifies a number of the issues that should be addressed and poses the type questions that should be asked by the Station Manager when compiling a risk assessment report for the event.

#### **3. Standards of Safety**

It is essential that on any fire station, the fire and other safety considerations be of the highest standard to avoid a potential embarrassing situation to the Fire Brigade should an accident or incident occur.

As an enforcing authority responsible for the inspection and examination of risks and hazards on other owners/occupiers premises, the public could justifiably expect only the highest standards of safety and probity at an event organised or held at or on a Fire Station.

It is therefore from this position that any event on the station should be viewed and risk assessed by the Station Manager.

#### 4. Background Information

Whenever a request is received to hold a function or event on a fire station the first action will be to obtain the relevant information file appertaining to the site to familiarise yourself with the content of any previous reports and risk assessments etc.

If there is a risk assessment already in existence, it must still be reviewed and signed off in case situations have changed or the event is slightly different from a previous one.

It should be stressed that a risk assessment must be done in advance for every event.

You should also establish if a licence or permit is required from a magistrate's court or local authority for the specific type of event being held.

In addition, guidance leaflets may be available on organising a particular type of event from The Health and Safety Executive, The Local Authority or other body.

#### 5. The Safe Access and Egress of Pedestrians to the Site

The following issues relating to access and egress for pedestrians should be considered:

- (a) Will people know where to go or are direction signs provided to stop people wandering into dangerous areas?
- (b) Are the pedestrians segregated from vehicular traffic?
- (c) If the event is on the station, does the pedestrian route/thoroughfare cross the path of appliances that are likely to 'turn out'.
- (d) Are walkways clear and free from any trip or slip hazards such as hoses, litter, uneven floors, oil spills etc?
- (e) In the event of snow, frost or ice, is there a procedure to grit or salt before pedestrians arrive?
- (f) Are exits to the venue large enough to allow people to leave quickly if there is an emergency?
- (g) Are facilities provided for people with disabilities and special needs?
- (h) if required, are there separate entrances to the site for emergency vehicles to attend quickly and safely?

## 6. Safe Parking

Safe parking is an important consideration to ensure operational efficiency of the station and allow access routes through parking areas in case of emergency. The following issues relating to safe parking should be considered:

- (a) Are direction signs required and provided to direct people to the car park?
- (b) Are stewards required to assist with parking?
- (c) If stewards are required will they be easily identified and wearing high visibility jackets?
- (d) Are areas cordoned off where parking may be dangerous?
- (e) Do owners of cars know that they are parked at their own risk?
- (f) How will illegal parking been deterred? Are police cones in use?
- (g) Is the parking arranged to ensure no one parks in a way that would block the means of escape?
- (h) Is the parking arranged to ensure that fuel pump areas are kept clear of parked vehicles?

## 7. Procedure to Prevent Access to Unauthorised Areas

There are areas on operational fire stations that could pose hazards to the general public. Dependant upon who is attending the station will generally determine which areas are hazardous.

Examples of such areas are kit rooms, BA compressor rooms, chemical stores and foam stores etc.

You should establish if steps have been taken to prevent access to these important and hazardous areas. In addition you should check that children would not be allowed in kitchen areas.

## 8. Pole Drops

Pole drops are potential areas for serious accident and arrangements must be in hand to ensure that the doors to the pole drops will be secured to prevent the public entering.

## **9. Adequate Supervision**

There should always be adequate supervision. The public should not be left alone on the station for safety and security reasons, especially if children or persons with special needs are present. Check to ensure that adequate supervision is to be provided.

If off duty personnel are used they may be required to book on duty for insurance purposes.

## **10. Insurance Cover**

You must check to ensure that the event has adequate insurance cover and that no additional insurance is required due to the nature of the event.

If the organisers are using a provider of some leisure equipment eg bungee jumps and bouncy castles etc you must ensure the provider has adequate public liability insurance. Ask for a copy of his/her documents for the file.

## **11. Fire Evacuation Procedures**

The event must have an adequate fire evacuation procedure and visitors must be advised of it on arrival or as soon as possible after arrival. Fire signs and fire notices containing the correct information must also be displayed.

## **12. First Aid Arrangements**

The event must have adequate first aid arrangements. These should be based on a risk assessment of the type of event being held and on the number of people attending, eg low risk events may require fire service first aiders and first aid kits. Higher risk events, eg bonfires, may require the attendance of St John's Ambulance or other suitable provider.

The First Aid Point should be clearly indicated.

Procedures should be in place to ensure that any incidents (accidents or near hits) must be reported via the usual brigade procedures.

## **13. Neighbours**

Consideration must be given to the impact of the event on neighbours in respect of parking, noise and smoke emissions. Remember the local authority could become involved if there is excessive noise or excessive smoke at the event and it is reported to them as a complaint.

#### **14. Emergency Procedures**

Regardless of the event there should be a written emergency procedure plan. The amount of detail in the plan to be based on the risks involved and numbers of people attending.

The issues that should be considered in the emergency procedure plan are:

- (a) What action will be taken in the event of a major fire or accident?
- (b) Are stewards required who can communicate with each other in an emergency?
- (c) Are procedures in place to brief stewards/supervisors on the emergency procedures?
- (d) Has steward/supervisor training been provided?
- (e) Who will contact the emergency services if required and how?
- (f) Is there is a designated access for emergency vehicles?
- (g) Ensure it is possible to make announcements to the public regarding emergency instructions, eg via a tannoy system;
- (h) Have announcements been prewritten to tell them what has happened and what they are required to do?
- (i) Who decides if the event should continue?
- (j) Have areas been set-aside for casualties?
- (k) Is the emergency egress wide enough for the number of people attending and is the ground free from trip/slip hazards? Have procedures been put in place for disabled or special needs persons?

#### **15. Troublemakers, Drunks, Gatecrashers' etc**

You should ensure that organisers have made arrangements on the procedures to be used for dealing with troublemakers, drunks, gatecrashers' etc. The procedures should include when to call the police.

#### **16. Slips, Trips and Falls**

Slip/trip incidents can be the largest cause of accidents at station events and you should ensure that controls are in place to remove them or that controls will be provided if they cannot be removed.

**17. Catering**

If food is to be offered, ensure it is under the supervision of a person who holds the Food Hygiene Certificate.

**18. Toilet Arrangements**

There should be adequate toilet facilities for the number of persons attending and their location should be clearly marked. Facilities should be provided for those with disabilities and special needs?

**19. Smoking Arrangements**

Ensure smoking is not to be allowed in dangerous areas and that the brigades' policy on smoking in designated areas is to be complied with.

**20. Lighting**

Ensure that there is adequate lighting, especially outside, otherwise, ensure the event finishes before dusk. Ensure that drills and demonstrations will not be carried in poor light.

**21. Housekeeping**

An adequate number of litter bins should be provided and arrangements should be in place to ensure that any spillages at the event are cleaned up as soon as possible.

Arrangements should be in place for cleaning up after an event.

**22. Chemical/COSH/Cleaning Products**

Harmful or flammable substances should be secured and out of the contact of visitors.

If the event uses chemicals or harmful substances, eg flammable liquids, oils etc, ensure there is a COSHH safety data sheet for the substances for personnel to refer to.

**23. Limits on Numbers Attending (ticket control)**

Check if there are any statutory limits on numbers attending the premises for particular events and ensure that there is some form of ticket control or entrance control to be used to prevent the numbers to be exceeded.

**24. Age Limits of People Attending**

Identify the hazards with the age group that is attending the event and make sure that arrangements are in hand to control them.

The supervision of the young and people with special need may need to be increased.

**25. Crowd Control**

Where large crowds are expected at an event has thought been given to controlling the crowds in an emergency? Do barriers need to be hired from Council to assist in crowd control?

**26. Animals**

The following issues need to be considered in respect of animals:

- (a) Are pets allowed to attend?
- (b) If the event has animals, do the public need to be segregated from them for safety?
- (c) Are there provisions to look after and control the animals properly?
- (d) Are there trained people to cope with an emergency or to calm the animals?

**27. Briefings/Practice**

Arrangements should be in place for all organisers, stewards and supervisors to be briefed on the procedures for the event and if the event involves a display or drills it should be ensured that everyone has had practice and training at what they are doing.

A separate risk assessment should have been carried out in respect of the display or drill element of the event in relation to it being carried out in close proximity to the public. Ensure that the risk assessment is up to date for the event in question.

## 28. Environmental Factors

There are a number of issues that the organisers should have considered in respect of the impact of adverse weather etc. A check should be made on these arrangements as follows:

- (a) Who is to decide whether it will be safe to continue the event in adverse weather conditions or whether it would need to be cancelled;
- (b) How are the organisers going to inform people if it has to be cancelled?
- (c) Do the tickets need to state 'depending on weather conditions'?
- (d) Has consideration been given to the best location for the public, eg upwind of any smoke or debris?
- (e) Is grit/salt provided in case the ground is slippery due to frost, ice or snow etc?

## 29. Grounds

Where an event is within the grounds of, rather than on, the station there are additional considerations that the organiser(s) should have accounted for, amongst these are:

- (a) Are the event grounds free from trip hazards such as potholes, cables etc, and are the grounds suitable underfoot?
- (b) Have barriers been provided to protect the public from hazards? An example may be a derelict car for a RTA demonstration;
- (c) If the event is on or imposes partly on other people's premises has written permission from the landowner been given to use the area?
- (d) Is there any danger areas for the public beyond the grounds? If so, has a perimeter fence of some sort it been provided to protect them? Examples of these could be a canal, a railway line or a main road.

## 30. Fire Appliances

Have arrangements been made to ensure that whilst the event is ongoing, fire appliances do not get blocked in or have to cross a main pedestrian area when 'turning out'.

### **31. Equipment**

Ensure that all equipment to be used at the event is in good working order and provided with guards or barriers to prevent the public coming into contact with any moving parts or hot components such as exhausts etc.

Stewards/Supervisors should be aware that the public should not be allowed to handle equipment in case of injury from moving parts, electricity and other machinery hazards.

### **32. Security**

Arrangements should be in place to inform people to look after their belongings especially where bags may be left unattended.

### **33. Smoke and Fumes**

Ensure that nothing is to be burnt that can give off toxic smoke or fumes where the public may be situated.

This especially relates to single room fire demonstration units and bonfires. The public should be upwind of any smoke or fumes that may be generated to avoid the risk of people developing breathing difficulties.

### **34. Chairs**

All chairs and seating should be safe to use and not damaged.

A specific check should be to check that the chair legs etc are not bent or damaged that the chairs are stable on the ground and do not rock.

There may be a requirement for chairs to be joined together in rows and set out with gangways in a particular way in order to comply with licensing conditions. These conditions should be checked and complied with.

## PART TWO - SPECIFIC EVENTS

### 1. Introduction

There are many different and varied events that could be held on a fire station or in the fire station grounds. They present their own hazards and require consideration in addition to the general issues as described in part one.

Appended below are action points relating to a number of specific station events.

### 2. Charity Car Washes

Although these events appear to be safe, there is the potential for accidents due to vehicle manoeuvres, the use of pressure hoses and cleaning agents.

Key points to look out for are:

- Keep water residues down to a minimum to avoid pollution;
- Ensure the driver remains in the car whilst the car is being cleaned in order to reduce the risk of them slipping or tripping;
- Use grit and salt if the ground is slippery due to ice, frost or snow. Consider cancelling the event;
- Design a one way traffic system to aid traffic flow;
- Park appliances in a separate area ready for 'turn out' so that there is no risk of the appliances having an accident with car wash vehicles;
- Do not cause traffic queues on the public highway;
- Enforce speed limits of 5 mph;
- Ensure that personnel wear fire kit with reflective strips or high visibility jackets so they are conspicuous to drivers;
- The event should only take place in daylight, cars should not be washed in the dark;
- Only trained personnel should use pressured hose. Water jets to be used on spray settings to avoid eye injuries;
- Ensure there is a COSHH information document available regarding the soap and other substances used in the car cleaning process. This will enable personnel to be aware of the hazards of the substances their correct use;
- Ensure personnel use correct manual handling techniques when using buckets full of liquid.

### 3. Children's Christmas or Other Parties

These events have the potential for accidents due to the age and size of the visitors and the equipment and vehicles that are on a fire station. The visitors will by nature be inquisitive and that may lead them into dangerous areas to try to see a fire appliance.

Key points to look out for are:

- Increased supervision by parents and service personnel will be required;
- Blanking plugs for electrical sockets that are not in use should be installed;
- Do not allow a Santa Claus to arrive on the top of a fire appliance;
- Try to organise the event on the ground floor and barrier the stairway to the upper levels. If this is not possible, ensure small children are supervised when using the stairs;

### 4. Discos/Karaoke and Dances

These events are often held in appliance or other rooms that were not specifically designed for this kind of event. As such special precautions need to be taken to remove or make safe fire service fixture and fittings such as battery charging points and appliance door opening mechanisms. Special arrangements for means of escape may need to be organised.

Key points to look out for are;

- Obtain a written statement from the supplier of the equipment stating that it is electrically safe;
- Fire Service personnel should not be involved in the installation of equipment such as speakers and amplifiers etc. The contractor should be competent to set up for the event without the use of fire service personnel;
- Ensure that cables and other equipment do not trail across or obstruct walkways;
- The safety of the contractor on site is a responsibility of the service. The contractor should be made aware of safety and emergency procedures whilst the contractor is on the station and of any special arrangements during the event.

## 5. Car Boot Sales

The attendance of the public attending may be considerable and more than expected, so that traffic and pedestrians need to be managed effectively.

Key points to look out for are:

- Increased supervision may be required;
- Restrict areas on the station to those whom are authorised only;
- If tables are to be used, ensure they are secure and can take the weight of the items likely to be on offer;
- There have been examples of high levels of pilfering at such events and a police presence would assist in reducing it if available.

## 6. Bungee Jump

This is a high-risk activity and it is important that you consult a senior officer for assistance in completing the risk assessment.

HSE provide safety guidance for organisers of such events and this should be followed.

Ensure the providers of the bungee event are going to comply with the relevant operating code and that their proposals for the arrangements of the event are accompanied by written evidence.

The operator must:

- (a) Use equipment which is to the required British Standard;
- (b) Have adequate insurance cover; (public liability)
- (c) Have copies of test certificates for the equipment and have tested all equipment including the crane and ropes before use;
- (d) Have good references from the local authority;
- (e) Are members of at least one of the appropriate associations;
- (f) Ensure first aid is available.

Key points to look out for are:

- Jumper safety;
- Weather conditions;
- Crowd safety and protection from falling objects;
- Emergency procedures;
- Safe working loads;
- Jump site and crane areas are danger zones and the public must not be allowed in those areas;
- The competency of the contractor needs to be demonstrated in the use and siting of mobile cranes.

## 7. Inflatable Bouncing Devices eg Bouncy Castles

This can be a high-risk activity in terms of injuries to children and it is important that you consult a senior officer for assistance in completing the risk assessment.

HSE provide safety guidance for organisers of such events and this should be followed.

Ensure the providers of the inflatable are going to comply with the relevant operating code and that their proposals for the arrangements of the event are accompanied by written evidence.

The operator must:

- (a) Have adequate insurance cover; (public liability)
- (b) Have copies of test certificates for the equipment and have tested all equipment before use;
- (c) Have good references from the local authority;
- (d) Are members of at least one of the appropriate associations;
- (e) Ensure that first aid is available.

Key points to look out for are:

- Do not use in bad weather;
- Blowing over or away of the whole structure by the wind;
- Splitting of the fabric when under pressure or failure of seams;
- Injury to users caused by other users, especially where older users are on the device with smaller younger users;
- Removal of footwear and other hard, sharp or dangerous objects;
- Overcrowding;
- Injury to users getting on and off the device;
- Misbehaviour or over boisterous children;
- Air loss due to blower disconnection or failure of power supply;
- Dangerous siting of equipment such as overhead lines.

## **8. Bonfires and Fireworks**

This can be a high-risk activity in terms of injuries, particularly to children, and it is important that you consult a senior officer for assistance in completing the risk assessment.

The organiser must:

- (a) Comply with HSE guidance and other information issued by responsible bodies;
- (b) Ensure first aid is available.

Key points to look out for are:

- Do not burn treated, painted or contaminated pallets or other material which may give off toxic gases or fumes.
- Comply with the safety distances and have the required fallout zones for the fireworks etc.
- Have an emergency procedure in place.
- Ensure training has been given to personnel on lighting and handling fireworks.

- Personal Protective Equipment must be worn by relevant personnel, this may include hearing defenders and eye protection.
- Ensure everyone involved has been briefed on the events' details.
- A competent contractor must erect the scaffolding.
- No ignition accelerants are to be used to light the fire.
- Be aware of any overhead hazards.

## 9. Summary

The above is a summary of issues that should be considered when preparing a risk assessment report for an event on a fire station or in the fire station grounds. It is not intended to be exhaustive, as there are potentially so many different types of event that could be staged.

## References

Fire Services Examinations Board  
West Midlands Fire Service