Annual Efficiency Statements - a new online reporting system

Issued by:
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Addressed to:
The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
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This circular is to notify FRAs of a new online AES reporting system which we will be moving to ahead of the deadline for the submission of 2007/8 Annual Efficiency Statements (AES) on 12 April. FRAs are also invited to test the online reporting system before it goes 'live' and the circular contains details of how to book a place.
1.0 **ESD toolkit**

1.1 As you may be aware, Communities and Local Government (CLG) has commissioned ESD-toolkit to provide a secure online AES reporting system. All 388 Local Authorities in England have been using the ESD-toolkit to submit their Efficiency statements for some time. CLG now propose to extend this system to include Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). As a result of the move to online submissions, it is important to note that we will no longer be accepting AESs by email. Furthermore, we will no longer require signed hard copies of the AES as the person submitting the online statement will have delegated authority for ensuring that the AES is correct.

2.0 **Benefits**

2.1 This free service will enable easier reporting and reduce errors through the use of built-in validations. For example, ‘pop-up’ text relevant to each field will help the user to complete the statement and link to relevant sections of the AES guidance. The template will also be pre-populated with individual FRAs’ AES figures brought forward from previous backward and forward look returns. This should save time previously spent ensuring that figures are consistent year-on-year. A variety of reports, charts and spreadsheets will also be available and FRAs will be able to search and view their own archived AESs in PDF format.

3.0 **Timescale**

3.1 It is anticipated that the toolkit will go ‘live’ on 5 March, well in advance of the deadline for the submission of forward look 2007/8 AESs on 12 April. The process of completing the online AES will be straight-forward, and an accompanying short guidance note will be published on the ESD toolkit homepage on 5 March. This will allow FRAs six weeks to familiarise themselves with the AES template and input data prior to the submission deadline.

4.0 **Hands-on testing**

4.1 In order to ensure that the software works for everyone, we need your help to test the functionality. We are therefore inviting you to attend a hands-on testing session. There are a finite number of places available so please book as soon as possible. Dates and venues as follows:

- 12 February in the training room at IDeA, London – capacity 8
- 19 February at the e.learning centre North at Nottingham – capacity 30

Both are being run as two half-day sessions (10:00 – 12:30 and 13:30 – 16:00).

4.2 Testing is straightforward and takes place on a separate “Beta” version of ESD-toolkit. Your feedback is then reviewed and the toolkit is improved as a result.
5.0 Book your place

5.1 Anyone who would like to test the site will first need to register with esd-toolkit following the instructions at http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Documents/Redirect.ashx?d=9242 - this takes about two minutes. Once you have registered you can book your place at http://www.esd.org.uk/esdtoolkit/Events/EventDetails.aspx?E=204. If you have any problems registering then please contact support@esd.org.uk or esd-toolkit@idea.gov.uk who will arrange the booking for you.

6.0 Remote testing

6.1 Remote beta testing is also available and starts on Monday 12 February through to Friday 23 February. Remote testing is more flexible – you can do it at your own desk, at a time to suit you. It should take no more than 2 hours. Please contact Deanna.Sorrell@idea.gov.uk and she will organise this for you.

6.2 Details of how to register to enable access to the online AES will be issued under cover of circular in February. In the meantime please contact Talia Watson at Talia.Watson@communities.gsi.gov.uk if you have any questions. Please cascade this information to all relevant staff.

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