Reaching out to those at risk

The new *Fire Kills* minority ethnic fire safety campaign, launched in November, targets the Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Somali, and Polish communities. Research shows these groups to be at high risk of fire.

The minority ethnic safety campaigns in previous years have focused mainly on the religious festivals of Diwali and Eid Ul-Fitr.

**Polish community lifesaver pack**
A new initiative directed at the Polish community began in early November. In partnership with several key coach operator companies, Community and Local Government’s *Fire Kills* campaign has developed a ‘Living in the UK Lifesaver Pack’.

The pack includes essential items needed for starting a new life in the UK:

- ‘Fire Safety in the Home’ leaflet in Polish and English
- Key fire safety messages on setting up home
- Statistics on fires in the home
- *Fire Kills* pen
- *Fire Kills* fridge magnet, and other items

The packs will be provided to inbound coach operators, and 9,000 Lifesaver Packs will be distributed in two rounds of activity in January and in March. The *Fire Kills* campaign will also work in partnership with five main letting agencies in London to help distribute the Lifesaver Pack.

Press advertisements aimed at the Polish community will be placed in the established Polish media in England (Polish Daily, Polish Express, Polish Times, Polskie, Laif, Nowy Czas and Cooltura).

**Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities**
The *Fire Kills* campaign aimed at the Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities will run tailored television advertising on four digital channels (Channel S, ARY Digital, Prime TV and DM Digital). To target second generation communities, press advertisements will be placed in three key papers (Asian Express, Asian Today and Muslim Weekly).

**Somali communities**
For the Somali communities, tailored press advertisements will also run in two Somali papers (Kasmo, and Somali Eye).

Posters and leaflets will support the minority ethnic campaigns. The *Fire Kills* partnership, between central government and local fire and rescue services, has contributed to the fall in the number of fire deaths in the UK. These are now at the lowest level since 1959.

More information from
mike.larking@communities.gsi.gov.uk
High drama in London
Trapped man freed by London Fire Brigade’s USAR teams

London Fire Brigade’s Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams used their full range of specialist equipment to rescue a trapped construction worker from a collapsed building in Westminster in mid-June.

Three USAR modules were mobilised to the building in Dean Farrar Street – a few hundred yards from New Scotland Yard - at around 4pm on Tuesday 12 June. The top two storeys (fourth and fifth floors) of the five storey office block, which was being refurbished, had partially collapsed, leaving a builder trapped on the third floor.

Successful rescue
The successful rescue operation, which hit the national news headlines, involved seven fire engines, three Fire and Rescue Units and over 50 firefighters, as well as the USAR teams.

Search equipment
State of the art USAR equipment was used during the operation, including listening devices and special cameras. These were used in small voids to assist operators to locate the trapped casualty. A 150 foot crane was used to lift rubble away.

Steady progress was made by the Brigade’s USAR teams throughout Tuesday evening and into the early hours of Wednesday to rescue the trapped man.

Contacting the casualty
The trapped worker, a builder from Eastern Europe, was conscious during the rescue, and voice contact was made with him at an early stage. Rescue teams were able to lower communications equipment to him so he was kept updated on the progress of the rescue via an interpreter.

Other specialist equipment enabled the USAR teams to make safe areas to work in, and to shore up the building as they made their way towards the trapped man. The rescue process took 9 hours because of the risk that the whole building structure could collapse if the debris trapping the man was removed.

Welcome to FRS25

In this issue, FRS interviews Sir Ken Knight, the new Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, reports a successful USAR rescue in London and looks at the new ‘Fire Kills’ minority ethnic campaign.

This issue also includes a readership survey asking for your views on how to improve this newsletter. All returns will be entered in to a draw to receive a £30 Marks and Spencer Voucher.

If you have any initiatives, or good news to share with the whole of the fire and rescue service, please email us at frs@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Remember that the online version of FRS at www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk provides access to previous issues of FRS News, circulars and much more.

We wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and a safe new year.
At around 2.30am, the construction worker was rescued by the combined use of both USAR and line rescue techniques and taken by air ambulance to the Royal London Hospital.

Coordinated response
Area Manager Dave Scott, Head of London Fire Brigade’s Special Operations Group, said: “This was a difficult, hazardous, but ultimately highly successful rescue, which took several hours and demonstrated what a valuable addition to the Brigade’s capabilities the introduction of specialist USAR and line rescue equipment and training have proved to be. “

“Throughout, our urban search and rescue teams worked closely with the London Ambulance Service, the Helicopter Emergency Response Service, the Metropolitan Police and Westminster Council. The co-ordinated response was a testament to the close working relationship of all the emergency services and local authorities.”

The Health and Safety Executive is investigating the cause of the building collapse.

Other London incidents
Since they were formed in the wake of the September 11 World Trade Centre attacks, London Fire Brigade’s USAR teams – which specialise in the location and rescue of casualties trapped in confined spaces - have been deployed to a number of incidents. These include major crane collapses in Battersea and Croydon, a building collapse in Commercial Road, Whitechapel, and a tornado which caused damage in several streets and buildings in Kensal Green.

USAR rollout
On completion of the USAR capability rollout, which has been procured and funded by Communities and Local Government’s New Dimension programme, London Fire Brigade will have four complete USAR units located strategically in the capital.

Each unit consists of five modules which carry sophisticated technical rescue equipment, including search cameras, listening devices and communication probes, propping and shoring equipment and hot cutting, drilling and breaking equipment.
Top man:
Spotlight on Sir Ken Knight

Bess Teeger talks to the Government’s new Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser about his career and his new responsibilities.

Why did you choose to join the Fire and Rescue Service?
I grew up in a Fire Service family. My father was in the Fire Service, but he did not encourage me to join up. In fact, the fire service was not my first choice. I worked in a bank for 18 months after leaving college, and then decided to look for work in an area linked to the community.

Once I joined the Service, I realised that the world was my oyster. I was part of a well respected community service and I could explore training opportunities.

How has the role of a firefighter changed during your career?
Firefighters continue to have high trust and credibility in the community. They are trusted messengers for a range of community safety initiatives.

When I joined the Service, the fire station was an area of mystique to the public. Now fire stations are used by community groups and firefighters have a much wider role. They work with disaffected youth, and the elderly in their own homes.

As fire deaths and operational response have been driven down, firefighters have a bigger role to play in community fire safety and community cohesion and are extremely effective.

What were your main achievements in 4 years as Commissioner of London Fire Brigade?
Heading 6,000 firefighters, in one of the largest fire and rescue services in the world was the pinnacle of my fire service career.

My four years at London Fire Brigade (LFB) were a time of huge change in central and local government and in the modernisation of the fire and rescue service. We needed to prepare ourselves for the risk of terrorism. The highest test was the London bombings in 2005, when the professionalism and dedication of the service in planning, preparing and responding was clear.

When I left, fire deaths, arson and malicious calls were at their lowest levels for many years – thanks to the work of dedicated firefighters and staff in LFB.

A significant part of the culture change at that time was embedding equality and diversity in the Service. London Fire Brigade now leads in the recruitment of women and minority ethnic staff. We introduced a targeted development programme for staff with high potential, and LFB has one of the first graduate entry schemes to the Service.

LFB is a big energy user, so its procurement and disposal policies have an environmental impact. In February LFB won a prestigious award, the City of London Corporation’s Sustainable City Trophy. This ‘Green’ Oscar was for LFB’s work on reducing carbon emissions and its ‘green’ procurement strategy.
How different is this job from your last one?
The role of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser is to give to Ministers and policy officials professional advice that is current and credible. I act as the interface between policy makers and the fire and rescue service. It’s a very positive role.

I am enjoying my new role in Communities and Local Government – the parent Department responsible for fire policy. Policy colleagues have been welcoming and extremely receptive to my questions and to discussing the practical application of policy.

There are similarities between my last job and this one. As Commissioner of LFB, one of my principal roles was professional adviser to the fire authority (LFEPA), and the Mayor of London. I was also the lead adviser on fire and rescue matters to the Local Government Association.

What are you working on now?
I recently visited the scene of the fire in Warwickshire where four firefighters tragically lost their lives. My sympathy goes out to their families, friends and colleagues. We will be looking closely at the lessons to be learned from investigations while continuing to support Warwickshire FRS.

Another important area of work is the coordination of national assets and equipment, in the event of catastrophic events, such as floods or terror attacks.

What are your hobbies?
I don’t have much spare time – but I do enjoy the theatre and horse-riding, which I came to late in life.

What is your favourite ‘firefighter moment’ from the past?
I am fortunate in that there hasn’t been a single day when I felt I didn’t want to go to work. That doesn’t mean that every day has been a great day, but it is a credit to the FRS and to the people who work in it. I know it will continue to offer the most rewarding career to the whole of our diverse communities.

Very early in my career, in 1969, I was involved in a rescue after a plane crashed into a house near Gatwick airport. A baby was found alive in a cot in the house after her parents died. Over 30 years later, I spoke to a woman who told me: ‘I was that baby!’

Career snapshot:
Sir Ken Knight

- Trained with Surrey Fire Brigade
- Head of Dorset, and later West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service
- Returned to London Fire Brigade, appointed Commissioner in 2004
- Joined Communities and Local Government as Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser in October 2007

I have produced my initial report on the FRS response to the summer floods, which fed into the Flood Review led by Sir Michael Pitt. We are considering whether there is more we can do to improve the emergency response, and if other procedures and practices should be put in place. My final recommendations will be published early in the New Year.

[Photo: Sir Ken Knight as child participating in a fire safety campaign in Surrey in 1951.]

Sir Ken Knight as child participating in a fire safety campaign in Surrey in 1951.
London calling - a new control centre

The Government’s FiReControl project reached a significant milestone in October, with the announcement that the new London Regional Control Centre (RCC) will be located in Merton, in south west London. The London RCC is the last of the nine centres to be confirmed and puts the final piece of the network into place.

Merton site
The Merton site is located in a well-established business park. Transport links, accessibility (for both people and services), demographics, vulnerability to threats such as flooding, and suitability for development all played a role in the choice of the site.

The selection of the developer and site followed a comprehensive procurement process run under EU procurement guidelines.

Timescales
The new London RCC is scheduled for practical completion in 2010. Following a period of fit out and testing, staff should be able to move in towards the end of 2010. This means the new London Regional Fire Control Centre will be up and running well in advance of the 2012 Olympics.

The nine RCCs will start to go live in 2009 and the FiReControl network will be fully operational by 2011. The result will be a more robust and resilient Fire and Rescue service that has the systems and technology to respond to the demands of the 21st century.

New equipment
Data terminals fitted in every fire appliance will give fire fighters and control centre staff access to information such as locations of hydrants, building plans, and details of safe methods of dismantling cars. Satellite positioning equipment in every appliance will allow control staff to send the nearest appropriate vehicle.

Improving resilience
Announcing the RCC location, Local Government Minister, John Healey, said: “The Government’s top priority is protecting the public and increasing the nation’s resilience. That’s why we are investing in the new national network of Regional Control Centres. These will provide the Fire and Rescue Services with a modern, effective control and mobilisation system that will better protect the public.”

For more information, please visit www.communities.gov.uk/firecontrol

Local Government Minister John Healey (centre) with Valerie Shawcross (Chair of London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority) and Ron Dobson, the new London Fire Brigade Commissioner, at the event announcing the new London RCC location. photo: CLG

Firelink update

Firelink is the new digital wide area communications system for the Fire and Rescue Service in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Firelink rollout is going well, and almost all the legacy control rooms in England have been fitted out, pending activation. Design work for the more complex fit-outs in London, Scotland and Wales is under way. Telent is undertaking the installation work and Motorola has supplied the terminal equipment.

The first region to be fully Firelink operational is scheduled for the second quarter of 2008.

Firelink benefits include:
• the delivery of a resilient system
• improved voice quality and security
• national FRS roaming
• communications with other emergency services at Silver Command Level
• data terminals in vehicles – more functionality will come with FiReControl
Have your say on the future of the FRS

Communities and Local Government have launched three consultations which will shape the future of the fire and rescue service. Your comments and views are invited.

A Centre of Excellence for the FRS
The consultation on a proposed Centre of Excellence for the FRS sets out options for the role, functions, status, funding and governance of a national body to provide the FRS with a central resource to support its work, including:

- Managing the production of operational manuals and technical guidance to maintain high levels of health and safety
- Delivering training
- Leading on procurement and on resilience projects

National Framework 2008-11
The National Framework consultation sets out:

- The Government’s expectations of both the Fire and Rescue Service and Fire and Rescue Authorities
- Key strategic priorities
- The support which Government will provide

The proposed new Framework will be a three-year document, to align with the FRS’s financial cycle.

FRS Equality and Diversity Strategy: 2008-2018
The Equality and Diversity Strategy aims to promote fairness, inclusion, dignity and respect in all parts of the workplace, and to tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination. It highlights the importance of leadership and personal accountability at all levels — locally, regionally and nationally.

This consultation seeks views on:

- The actions proposed by the strategy — will they bring the necessary changes both within the Service and in service delivery?
- Proposals to improve recruitment, retention and progression levels of staff from under represented groups
- Guidance needed to support fire and rescue service in making progress on issues of fairness, equality and diversity.

The three consultations can be found on the Department’s website, at http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/publications/consultations/

Fire safer cigarettes — the next steps

While fire statistics show a downward overall trend in accidental fires and deaths, smoking materials remain the greatest source for fatal accident fires in the home. They accounted for an average of 32% of fatal fires between 1995 and 2005.

Fire safer cigarettes, which ‘self-extinguish’ if left unattended, have been introduced in several countries including the United States and Canada, following research into their benefits.

Work in Europe
The introduction of fire safer cigarettes, also known as Reduced Ignition Propensity (or RIP) cigarettes, has been championed in Europe by the UK Government and by Fire and Rescue Services. The Chief Fire Officers’ Association together with individual fire authorities, the Fire Brigades Union, Fire Officers’ Association and other organisations interested in fire safety have come together to lobby under the banner of the RIP coalition.

Towards a European Standard
On 29 November 2007, the EU member states endorsed the European Commission’s plans to draw up proposals for a European standard for fire-safer cigarettes.

The process of creating a European standard will take up to three years, and will use the existing American standard as a starting point. The UK Government, through the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser’s Unit, will be heavily involved in this work.

Work in the UK
While the Technical Committee develops the European Standard, Communities and Local Government officials will consult with Fire and Rescue Services, manufacturers and other stakeholders in 2008 to explore their views on the introduction of UK legislation in anticipation of the Standard.

More information from
mike.larking@communities.gsi.gov.uk
On your doorstep – in Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service launched a Central Task Force in July 2005, to increase the number of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) completed – specifically in households identified as being at high risk of fire.

The team, made up of three community safety officers - Pat Clarke, Abi Hirji and Mervyn Vickery - realised that the only way to increase the take-up of HFSCs was to go out to the community and seek out the residents most at risk. This meant actually knocking on doors and offering to complete the checks there and then.

Currently, between 80 to 90% of residents approached by the Task Force take up the offer of a free HFRC.

Residents at risk from fire
Residents targeted by the Central Task Force include:

- Single, middle-aged people who drink and smoke at home
- Single parents
- People over 75 years old
- Young people 16-24 years old
- Disabled or impaired people

These are among the people deemed most at risk of fire, from research completed by Communities and Local Government and others.

FSEC toolkit
Using the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) toolkit and MOSAIC software, Cambridgeshire FRS is able to pinpoint specific areas of the county, streets and even individual households that are more at risk from fire.

The Central Task Force is working its way through the 10 areas of the county most at risk, with the aim of completing the potentially life-saving checks in as many households as possible.

Each member of the team carries an ID card and could work alone. However, the team often works on the same street, in close proximity to each other, to ensure their own safety.


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