Open to you – Equality and Diversity Awards for 2008

Nominations are now open for the 2008 FRS Equality and Diversity Award Scheme, sponsored jointly by Communities and Local Government, the Chief Fire Officers’ Association and the Local Government Association.

Who is eligible?
The Scheme is open to all staff in fire and rescue services and authorities and to elected members. A nomination can be made on behalf of others or you can self-nominate.

Purpose of the Awards
The Award Scheme has been set up to:

- Celebrate achievement
- Promote equality and diversity across the FRS
- Encourage the development and sharing of good practice
- Raise awareness of the issues

What are the Award categories?
There are three Award categories:

1. Leadership - for outstanding leadership and commitment by an individual or a group, at any level, which has helped to achieve the equality and diversity aims of the FRS.

2. Service Delivery - for excellence in service delivery by an individual or a team, who have worked with local partners to improve the delivery of prevention, protection and emergency response to diverse communities.

3. Partnership Working - for innovative and creative work within the organisation, or with external partners, which delivers improvement in equality and diversity. This could be a policy, a concept, or outreach work which has produced significant results.

What are the judges looking for?
The judges, a panel of experts from the public and private sectors, will be looking for evidence of:

- Innovation
- Ambitious objectives
- Sound planning
- Successful delivery
- Effective monitoring
- How the work has helped to further equality and diversity
- Good practice that could benefit others

Eligible initiatives or projects should have reached a point where evidence of positive outcomes can be provided.

When do nominations close?
There is still time to apply - the closing date for nominations is midday on Friday 22 February. The winners will be notified by 21 May. The Awards will be presented to the winners at a conference in London on 28 May.

More information about the Award Scheme is available in Fire Service Circular 64/2007: www.communities.gov.uk/fire/publications/circulars-and-letters

Application forms are available from FRS Online, at www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk/publications/or from: mona.shah@communities.gsi.gov.uk
Fire and rescue crews, from five counties in southern England, joined with refinery fire response teams for an emergency exercise at Esso Fawley, the largest refinery in the UK. Crews from Hampshire, Dorset, Berkshire, Surrey and the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services took part in rehearsing the response to a large scale incident.

Exercise scenario
The purpose of the exercise, held in Hampshire, on 4 November, was to practice and test new procedures for the supply and re-use of fire fighting water during a major fire incident, using High Volume Pumps (HVPs).

Testing the practical procedures allowed the region’s emergency services to work together with the Esso Fawley fire response teams, to manage the consequences of a major incident as a fully cohesive force.

In total the exercise used 470,000 litres of water, covering an area of two-and-a-half square miles. The water used was a mixture of salt and fresh water from the refinery's coolant supply.

HVP airlift
In liaison with the RAF, a HVP was airlifted as part of the exercise, to test procedures for placing equipment in a location difficult to access by normal means.

Exercise planning
Chas McGill, watch manager at Hardley Fire Station, and event coordinator, said, “Planning for this exercise begin in January 2007, and went really well on the day. It was a massive logistical project and could not have been possible without the co-operation of all five fire and rescue services, along with the staff of Esso Fawley. This successful exercise has taught us a lot about our capability to cope with a large scale incident, and has also demonstrated the importance of partnership working.”

HVPs in Hampshire
Hampshire is the only fire and rescue service in the UK to staff the HVPs using crews from retained stations exclusively. Hampshire’s HVP was used most recently at flooding incidents in South Yorkshire and Gloucestershire.

New Dimension display
Hampshire FRS hosted a display of specialist New Dimension equipment, drawn from the nine
Fire and rescue services in the south east, later in November. Nearly 100 representatives from different agencies attended the one day event at Hawley Lake, which was made available to the South East Regional Resilience Group by the Ministry of Defence.

The display was designed to spread knowledge of New Dimension assets among key stakeholders in the south east, including the police, fire and rescue services, ambulance service, strategic health authorities, emergency planning officers, the Health Protection Agency and the military.

New equipment
Items on show came from Hampshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, West Sussex, East Sussex, Kent and the Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services, and included:
• High Volume Pumping (HVP) equipment
• Mass decontamination units
• Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) kit
• Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) facilities

50 High Volume Pumps (HVPs) have been procured for fire and rescue services in England and Wales, as part of Community and Local Government’s £200 million New Dimension Programme
• 7 HVP sets are located in the south east region
• HVPs are designed to pump large volumes of water – around 7,000 litres per minute - either to a fire, or from an area of flooding
• 3 kilometres of hose is carried with each HVP
• HVPs have already been used successfully in many fire and rescue operations, including the summer 2007 floods and the Buncefield fire.

Malcolm Pinchin, South East Regional Fire and Resilience Co-ordinator, who helped to organise the day, said: “With the New Dimension programme, the Fire and Rescue Service is now better equipped to respond to large-scale incidents than it has ever been. We hope those who attended the event found it enlightening and that it will assist them in further project planning.”
A new generation of fire stations, which are closer to the community and environmentally friendly, could play a part in driving down the number of fire deaths - according to new building design guidance.

The vision of accessible fire stations which local people can use for their own social activities, and hear important fire safety advice, is set out in Achieving Design Quality in Fire and Rescue Service Buildings. The guidance was produced by Communities and Local Government, in partnership with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), with the help of individuals in the fire and rescue service.

Design guide aims
The design guide aims to move away from fire stations as closed-looking buildings of the past and to help the FRS to commission buildings that are:

- functional, environmentally friendly, with high tech facilities
- eye pleasing, and of high quality design
- welcoming and accessible to the community, with good working conditions, which are motivating for staff

Launching the guide
Launching the guide at Millwall Fire Station in London, the Fire Minister Parmjit Dhanda, said, “Firefighters’ first job will always be fighting fire, but stations can also play a greater role in promoting good community relations, and focus on fire prevention, by increasing education about fire safety.”

He accepted that many traditional fire stations were magnificent buildings and were architecturally important but said the aim was to add to the range of buildings and facilities available to fire and rescue services. FRS buildings needed to reflect the changing role of the FRS - many of them now provide a community focus as well as an operational base for the Service.

New uses for fire stations
The Guide provides advice on how to incorporate design considerations into the project management process for new buildings. It advises fire and rescue authorities to explore new ways of encouraging people to visit their local fire stations, increasing the opportunities to spread fire safety messages.

Possible new uses for fire stations include:
- hosting community events and art displays
- providing cash points and remote access to local authority services

The guide is available to all on the Department’s website at: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/designquality
The North East Fire Control Company took on the lease of the North East Regional Control Centre (RCC) on 20 December. This is the second local authority company to take over the lease of its RCC from Communities and Local Government, following the East Midlands.

The North East RCC, located at Belmont Business Park in Durham, was completed in June 2007 after a build that took around 18 months.

The building has been equipped with furniture and interim technology for the regional FiReControl project team, who have already moved in. EADS, the FiReControl technology contractor, will fully fit out the RCC later this year so that work associated with the detailed transition planning process can go forward.

The first of the north east control services will transfer to the new site in October 2009.

Firelink is put to the test

The new Firelink wide-area communications network and infrastructure is now going through extensive testing by Airwave, to ensure it meets the exacting requirements of the FRS. Test environments have been designed to match the technical setup of existing FRS control rooms as closely as possible.

A range of control room scenarios are being played out to cover the different operational functions performed by FRS radio systems. Current radio systems will run alongside Firelink, as it rolls out on a phased basis to fire vehicles across England, Scotland and Wales. During this period fire vehicles can be contacted on either the old or new systems. On successful completion of the rollout, legacy systems can be decommissioned.

The Firelink radio system will be tested in each fire and rescue service during the rollout, which is scheduled for completion by the end of 2009.

For more information about the Firelink project, please visit www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk/resilience
A dog’s life – adds value in Herts

Hertfordshire FRS has a new fire investigation dog, CC, named after Computacenter, his sponsor. CC takes over from his predecessor Browza, now retired, in helping with fire investigations in Hertfordshire and other services in the eastern region.

CC has been trained to sniff out traces of ignitable liquids such as petrol, paraffin and lighter fluid which can remain present even after severe fires. Fire investigation officers use the team to help them determine whether the cause of fires is deliberate or accidental.

Training CC

Nikki Harvey, CC’s handler, said: “We’ve been training together for 5 months now, which has given us the opportunity to build up trust which is essential. Ongoing training is now part of CC’s daily routine and it’s important that he always enjoys the ‘game’. I’m looking forward to putting CC’s new skills to use.”

CC, who wears special protective boots, can only enter a fire scene after a full risk assessment has been carried out, to make sure it is safe for him to work.

CC is one of 17 fire investigation dogs in the country who are proving very successful in their work.

Funding for USAR dog teams

USAR dog teams are an integral element of the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability, given their ability to undertake wide-area searches to locate people trapped by collapsed structures.

Following discussion with host USAR fire and rescue authorities, and CFOA, Communities and Local Government has agreed to fund a search and rescue dog for each USAR team, amounting to 20 dogs in total. This is the final part of the USAR capability to be put in place, under the New Dimension programme.

Leicestershire Fire Authority has been established as the lead authority for the USAR canine capability, and it will receive additional funding for this role, ensuring that canine availability and training for handlers and dogs are coordinated.
NEWS IN BRIEF

Fire Gateway is a winner!
The Fire Gateway (www.fire.gov.uk), the web portal which gives online access to every fire and rescue service in England, has won a prestigious e-Government National Award.
The e-Government Awards are the UK’s highest level commendation for innovative IT or online services which have transformed the lives of citizens, business and local communities.
The Fire Gateway, hosted by the Fire Service College, was funded by Communities and Local Government and developed with the help of Greater Manchester FRS.
The Fire Gateway won in the category: ‘Building a fairer society – using ICT and e-Government services to improve social inclusion or improve lives.’
Using the Gateway, members of the public can contact their local FRS, to:
- request a home fire safety visit
- check compliance with fire safety legislation in the workplace
- complete an online assessment to see if they have the attributes needed to be a fire-fighter

At the Awards dinner on 22 January, Prime Minister Gordon Brown praised the winners and finalists, as the "best of the best" in UK e-Government.

More information on the Fire Gateway is available from nthompson@fireservicecollege.ac.uk

Recovering from emergencies
Recovery from emergencies is an area of growing interest – particularly after the floods last summer.
National Recovery Guidance, building on the lessons learned, has now been published on the UK Resilience website, at www.ukresilience.info/response/recovery_guidance.aspx
The guidance includes:
- A Recovery Plan Guidance Template, which can be tailored to local circumstances and used as a basis for recovery planning
- 38 detailed topic sheets for local responders, covering issues such as mutual aid, economic and business recovery, the historic environment, damage to residential properties and school buildings, environmental pollution and decontamination.
- Over 70 case studies from incidents and exercises, going back to Aberfan and the 7/7 bomb attacks
The guidance contains details on how to submit comments and feedback, including additional case studies.

Incident Recording System goes live
Following a successful pilot in nine fire and rescue services, the new electronic Incident Recording System for the FRS is ready for use.
The information collected will help to improve the timeliness and accuracy of data about FRS operations and will underpin research and development.
Fire and rescue services will need to decide when they intend to move across to the IRS System and plan appropriately. Every FRS should be using the new system by 31 March 2009.

More information on the IRS Project is in Fire Service Circular 2/2008 and at www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk/performance
You can also email: Firestatsprojectoffice@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Modern-day heroes
A survey by new TV channel DMAX has found that firefighters are considered to be the biggest modern-day heroes, followed by soldiers and air and sea rescuers. Footballers ranked as seventh in the survey.
Pull your finger out
— for the national fire safety campaign

The popular actress, Julie Walters, fronts the new national fire safety campaign, which covers the basic need for regular smoke alarm checking and maintenance. The campaign strap-line – Pull your finger out’ - and the ‘Fire Kills’ national logo will be used across all media.

TV and radio channels
The campaign runs between 15 January and 9 March during the advert breaks on the main commercial television stations (ITV, Channel 4, SKY) and satellite TV channels. Communities and Local Government is also producing a series of radio fillers for regional stations with the key deterrent themes (‘get it, install it, check it’).

The national campaign provides opportunities to build activities at a local level, developing community connections to reflect the risks and priorities identified in integrated risk management plans.

Pull your finger out
The new ‘Pull your finger out’ campaign, confronts the audience with most people’s inertia in checking their alarm. Currently only around a third of people with alarms check them weekly. The statistic that ‘1 in 3 smoke alarms don’t have a working battery’ and the juxtaposition of a normal and a burnt kitchen, acts as a very powerful reminder of why action is needed.

Target audience
The target for this campaign is all adults with a battery alarm. At a secondary level it is also aimed at everyone without one, as past evidence shows that non-owners are prompted to consider buying and installing a smoke alarm by exposure to alarm maintenance advertising.

Ordering campaign materials
Fire and Rescue Services have already been sent supplies of the campaign leaflet, poster and fire station banners.

More information from
mike.larking@communities.gsi.gov.uk