Resilience: the future...

The Government is making a considerable investment in the Fire and Rescue Service through the Fire Resilience Programme.

This programme brings together the Fire and Rescue Service contribution to ensuring that we are ready to respond to incidents at all levels, but particularly large-scale incidents, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

In effect, the programme unifies the Government’s approach to improving technology that will:

• make communications between the blue light services easier;
• improve operational resilience through the provision of a new radio system and interlinking control rooms; and
• embedding capabilities for tackling extreme weather conditions, collapsed structures and chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear incidents.

The scope of these projects is ambitious and their aim is common — to improve the level of service fire and rescue services can provide to their local communities.

The ‘Improving Resilience’ insert in this edition of FRS provides some detail on what the latest developments are. You may recognise the FiReControl, Firelink and New Dimension brands in their own right. They are now being delivered under the single banner of ‘Resilience’, making it easier to identify the links between these projects and smoothing the process for delivery.

Joined up working between the three projects will become increasingly visible as phased roll outs are implemented and the programme comes to fruition.

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee Report on the Fire and Rescue Service, to which the Government responded, highlighted the successes so far and has leant an even keener focus to the challenges ahead.

These challenges are of interest to all stakeholders in building the future of the Fire and Rescue Service. Specific areas of concern, such as some aspects of the FiReControl project have been addressed in the Government’s response to the report. Interested parties are encouraged to read the report and the Government’s response, which can be found on the internet via www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk/performance/listcat/60.

Following on from the successes that have already been achieved, opportunities exist in the challenges ahead and will require even closer engagement between the Fire and Rescue Service, local government, professional bodies, trades unions and Government if they are going to be met.

For more information, please use the following links:

Firelink: www.firelink.org.uk
FiReControl: www.firecontrol.communities.gov.uk
FRSOnline: www.frsonline.fire.gov.uk
The New Dimension Programme, which is funded and managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), is now in the final stages of delivering a Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) capability, strategically located across England. Sean Booth, New Dimension’s Mass Decontamination Project Manager, explains how this capability has been developed and implemented in partnership with the fire and rescue service (FRS).

Welcome to FRS 21

This edition of FRS looks at the way forward for Resilience including closer communication links between the blue light services. Pages 2 and 3 examine the final stages of delivering a Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) capability, strategically located across England. FRS 21 also highlights how the Fire and Rescue Service are looking at other communities such as the travelling community and boat users to ensure that safety is paramount.

We are always interested in hearing your views and finding out what issues you would like to see covered in future editions. If you have any initiatives or good news that you would like to share with the whole of the fire and rescue service, please email us at frs@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Operational aims
The aim of the DIM roll-out is to provide a 24/7 response capability to a major national incident involving actual or potential chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) or hazardous materials (Hazmat). The roll-out will increase FRS capability, improve firefighter safety and enhance the service provided to the public.

DIM – vehicles and training
DIM vehicles and equipment have been procured and initial equipment training is nearing completion. A total of 17 DIM vehicles will be operationally available at strategic locations across England by February 2007. Each DIM team is expected to consist of an average of 12 Hazmat officers, trained to use the full suite of equipment. They will provide a response capability to key areas across the country in the very early stages of potential or actual CBRN and Hazmat incidents.

The DIM vehicles have been specifically designed and built to meet New Dimension and FRS requirements. Each DIM vehicle will contain:

- a suite of detection, identification and monitoring equipment;
- a selection of robust communication systems;
- satellite telephones;
- data transfer equipment;
- battery charging facilities; and
- an anemometer to determine local wind conditions.

Vehicle design
The DIM vehicle is based on a long wheel base high-backed van.

The front of the vehicle is a three-person crew cab, with the communications and lighting systems of a modern FRS vehicle, and additional resilience in the form of a satellite telephone system.

The middle area of the vehicle has been built to form an office environment, to provide DIM advisers with additional communications systems and a computer for analysing sample information.

The communications systems will be resilient, to enable access to scientific support for the DIM advisers in most foreseeable scenarios. This is essential to inform key operational decisions, including the development of a safe system of work for the FRS and other agencies.

Equipment on board
The rear of the vehicle forms an equipment stowage area for gas-tight suits, breathing...
apparatus, decontamination equipment and scene lighting. The aim is for the vehicles to be largely self-sufficient in terms of equipment. This has led to the development of a modified firefighter decontamination structure (MD4), slightly smaller in size and weight than the structure used on Incident Response Units. The MD4 structure is capable of supporting the safe decontamination process for the operators, consistent with national procedures and protocols.

Detecting and analysing contaminants

The detection, identification and monitoring of substances is achieved by a sequential process. A suite of DIM equipment will provide the capability to detect and analyse a range of chemicals found in different forms or states, presenting a variety of different hazards. These variations present significantly different challenges that affect operational decisions and outcomes.

DIM equipment and processes are used to detect and identify gases and vapours, solids (including powders), liquids, radiological materials and biological hazards. The equipment also has the potential to assess the concentration of vapours or gases in the air. To support this process, additional equipment has been provided to monitor the operational and environmental hazards encountered during the DIM process, so that the operators can maintain a safe and effective system of work.

DIM equipment in action

DIM equipment is designed to be taken into the hazard area by the DIM adviser and a support team wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), respiratory protective equipment (RPE) and monitoring equipment.

The information obtained from the substance analysis and identification will be used to confirm:
- appropriate PPE and RPE for responders working in hot-zone areas;
- exposure levels and durations;
- first aid measures;
- inner cordon locations;
- requirements for post-incident casualty treatment; and
- procedures for responding agencies and the public.

Teamwork

Throughout the development of the DIM capability, DCLG’s New Dimension Programme has been supported by key stakeholders, including the Chief Fire Officers’ Association, Her Majesty’s Fire Service Inspectorate, individual fire and rescue services, other representative bodies and the Fire Service College. DCLG has also participated in Home Office-led work relating to user trials, testing and evaluation of DIM equipment.
The DVD *Fire Service Guide to Travellers* was produced with the full support and co-operation of one of the site’s community leaders. As a result, a very fruitful relationship has developed between Essex FRS and the travelling community in Essex.

The site neighbours another in Crays Hill where two people died in a tragic caravan fire in May 2005. As a result, Essex FRS has set about devoting resources to help protect the travelling community from fire risks through the use of preventative measures.

Martin has played a leading role in building a productive relationship between the travelling and local communities. In addition to providing fire safety advice, assistance is also offered to the travelling community in other broader areas of their day-to-day lives.

The fire safety DVD, aimed at increasing the safety of travelling families, is now being marketed by Essex FRS’s trading arm, EFA (Trading), as part of a national safety initiative. The DVD will be given away free to all families on both council-run and privately owned sites in Essex.

The initiative has contributed to a 57 per cent reduction in fire-related incidents in Essex in 2005–06.

For further information contact Mike Jones: 07775 857459 or email mike@thevillage10.freeserve.co.uk

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Single, male, had a few?

“If you’re a single male aged 25 or over, living alone and you drink alcohol on a regular basis, you’re more likely to die in a fire so make sure you take extra care and make sure you’re safe.”

That was a message from Greater Manchester FRS in launching a new fire safety campaign targeting single men aged 25 and over.

Of the 23 preventable fire deaths that occurred in Greater Manchester between April 2005 and March 2006, 18 were males, the majority of whom lived alone. It is estimated that at least one in three of these fire deaths also involved the consumption of alcohol.

The creative approach to target this group sees the use of pub advertising where washroom posters, beer mats and urinal stickers have been placed in over 70 pubs throughout Greater Manchester. Over the course of the year, the campaign will also spread to other forms of media such as radio.

Assistant County Fire Officer Steve Beckley said, “There is no doubt that as social demographics change we are seeing a new risk group emerge, that of single men who live alone and drink or smoke regularly. They are a particularly hard group for us to reach so we thought the best thing was to take our message to them in the places they visit most, their local pubs. By using creative methods, we hope to raise their awareness and they might take extra care when they’ve had a few. We also hope that some may contact us to ask us to visit them and fit smoke alarms and give them some life-saving fire safety advice.”

For more information, please contact Tony Hunter on 0161 608 4092
Kent FRS launches hard-hitting education film

Kent Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has introduced a pioneering education film which aims to hit home the real-life results of arson and anti-social behaviour.

Written and directed by Kent FRS staff, Elements – a short film – takes a graphic look at the choices five teenagers take one fateful night, and the consequences of those actions. Ultimately the production aims to reduce the numbers of young people killed or injured by fire and breaks away from the traditional approach to educational films, by involving young people at every stage. The content of the film was determined following extensive consultation with young people, partner agencies and teachers. Young people from Folkestone School for Girls worked with Kent FRS throughout the project and gave feedback at various stages. Actors for the film were sourced from professional auditions and the drama unit from the school.

Since September 2006, Elements has been delivered by Kent FRS’s education team in all Kent and Medway secondary schools as part of the new Key Stage 4 education programme. This aims to reduce numbers of arson and anti-social behaviour incidents in line with the Government’s strategy for children and young people.

Chief Fire Officer Charlie Hendry said: “In our opinion Elements really does pack a punch with its emotive and hard-hitting story. It is unique in many ways because of its involvement of young people in all stages of the film, including at research, script-writing and acting stages. We are extremely proud of this production and are confident it will have a far-reaching impact.”

For further information contact Alexa Kersting-Woods: 01622 698354 or email Alexa.Kerstingwoods@kent.fire-uk.org

Kent FRS launches hard-hitting education film

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service – Boat Fire Safety Check scheme

Fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning continue to contribute to the causes of death and injury on Britain’s waterways.

Warwickshire has approximately 120 miles of inland waterways (rivers and canals) and has 2,500 boats registered within the area. The risk increases significantly during holiday periods due to Warwickshire’s popularity as a tourist destination.

In response to the increasing levels of risk on Warwickshire’s inland waterways, Warwickshire FRS has introduced a Boat Fire Safety Check (BFSC) initiative to raise boaters’ awareness of the dangers of fire.

The BFSC scheme is designed to deliver key safety messages to boaters, particularly those who live aboard, and will ensure that some of the most vulnerable members of Warwickshire’s communities live on and travel the waterways safely.

Most incidents occur as a result of human error, poor installation and maintenance of equipment and, on occasion, dangerous practices by boaters. The use of liquefied petroleum gas, solid fuel and petroleum is widespread and poses significant risk to firefighters who are called to deal with a fire.

Partnership approach

In the initial stages of the BFSC project, Warwickshire FRS identified the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) as the lead authority in relation to boat safety. It recognised that the BSS had similar aims to fire and rescue services and that it was an organisation that already had considerable knowledge, experience and expertise in relation to fire safety.

Warwickshire FRS BFSC scheme has been produced in association with the BSS and is designed to deliver a consistent approach to the fire safety information that is offered to boaters. The scheme has been acknowledged by the BSS as being suitable for both inland and coastal vessels.

Other fire safety schemes such as the Home Fire Risk Assessment already exist. The BFSC will further expand the fire and rescue service’s commitment to fire prevention for all communities.

For more information contact Nigel Grant at Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service on 01926 410800, or email nigelgrant@warwickshire.gov.uk
Students are at high risk from fire. They don’t tend to have smoke alarms and their lifestyle habits – smoking, drinking and socialising – pose risks.

An innovative campaign sponsored by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) National Community Fire Safety Centre (NCFSC) has selected a network of students to raise awareness of fire safety among their peers, including gaining coverage in student magazines and websites and distributing leaflets and posters.

These student safety ambassadors will also work closely with their local fire and rescue services to organise chip pan demonstrations to illustrate how quickly a chip pan fire can develop, get out of control and put lives at risk. The students will also help their local fire and rescue service to identify high-risk properties for home fire risk checks.

The student ambassadors are from universities all over the country, including Birmingham, Bristol, Derby, Hull, Lancashire, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Northumbria, Sheffield, Southampton, York and Warwick, which together make up a student population of over 500,000.

The universities have been selected based on their population of second- and third-year students who live in rented accommodation and so are at higher risk from fire.

Co-hosted by the NCFSC and London Fire Brigade, a training day was held on 11 September at London Fire Brigade’s Southwark Training Centre to provide the students with basic fire safety advice and training and to give them an opportunity to meet a representative from their local fire and rescue service.

For further information contact Mike Larking: 020 7944 5695 or email Mike.Larking@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Fire safety and fostering are not words that often appear in the same sentence, but these two vital services have come together to raise awareness of what they do in a direct and practical way as part of an innovative new project launched by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (FRS).

Following the launch of the Fostering Network Initiative on 13 May 2006, Tyne and Wear FRS is working together with the fostering service teams from all five local authority areas across Tyne and Wear on a new and exciting initiative. This has the dual aim of promoting fire safety awareness within all foster care families – thereby reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by domestic fires. It also promotes fostering across Tyne and Wear.

The first aim will be achieved by:

• sending a fire safety information pack to all foster care families, which will include information on prevention, detection and escape and also contact details for their local community fire station;
• providing a fire service presence at community fostering events;
• delivering training to foster carers and social/support workers in basic fire safety; and
• offering a Home Fire Risk Assessment to existing foster care families and potential foster carers who have been identified as being high risk.

The second aim, to promote fostering across Tyne and Wear, will be achieved through:

• offering the use of community fire stations to social services for fostering meetings and training/recruitment sessions where Tyne and Wear FRS will be able to assist in the promotion of fostering; and
• disseminating fostering information and displaying banners to encourage potential foster carers.

Chris Lowther, Group Manager of Community Safety at Tyne and Wear FRS, said: “We are committed to providing the community with the highest standards of fire safety services available, and this joint scheme with fostering services has enabled us to do that while also appealing for more foster carers.”

In the UK today there are about 50,000 children and young people living with 37,000 foster families. Around 10,000 foster carers are needed across the UK and 1,300 are still needed in the North East.

For further information contact Louise Clarkson: 0191 444 1590 or email Louise.Clarkson@twfire.gov.uk
**Rural retained boost**

The retained support officers (RSOs) will provide a valuable back-up service, assisting with training, recruitment and community fire safety campaigns, liaising with employers and families and helping with administration.

Operationally, RSOs are all experienced firefighters and will be utilised to maintain RDS appliance availability across the county. They will help to keep appliances up to strength and organise drills and station exercises, whether this is setting up a chemical exercise at a local factory or a drill at a scrapyard.

RSOs will also work on boosting recruitment with employers, monitoring their stations with regard to establishment levels and acting proactively in the recruitment of Retained Duty System (RDS) personnel. They will be involved at all stages of the process – from talking to employers, arranging interviews, carrying out selection tests and assisting with development. RSOs will liaise and build up relationships with both current and potential employers of RDS staff, acting as the vital link between employers and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

This is all in addition to providing more general support, which may include liaison with headquarters departments on behalf of stations, or administrative support. The Ludlow RSOs are already involved in the organisation of an employers’ evening at Bishop’s Castle Fire Station, while others are arranging open days.

More broadly, the RSOs will also be available to answer any queries from families or partners of RDS staff, and will be involved in the production of newsletters aimed at keeping people abreast of events within Shropshire’s retained service. In particular they will represent Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service at Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership meetings, working in liaison with all of the major stakeholders in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour.

Clun Sub Officer Trevor Williams was instrumental in their recruitment. He sent the fire authority a detailed diary of his long day from dawn until dusk working as a firefighter while running his family poultry farm business, Clun Farm Eggs.

“This is going to be a big help to all of Shropshire’s retained firefighters. It will take the pressure off us, especially when we have our own businesses to run. There were simply not enough hours in the day before.”

The RSOs will be based around the county’s rural fire stations at Ludlow, Oswestry, Market Drayton and Bridgnorth.

The new jobs were created following a recommendation in a national review of the retained service and the findings of a review by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

For further information contact Phil Clarke: 01743 260232 or email Phil.Clarke@shropshirefire.gov.uk

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**Communications team wins PR awards**

Greater Manchester FRS’s Corporate Communications Team has won two prestigious North West PR awards.

At the Chartered Institute of PR (CIPR) Awards, they achieved Gold in the Public Affairs category for the Protect our Heroes campaign (in partnership with the Manchester Evening News), which has successfully influenced the introduction of new legislation to protect emergency workers; and Gold in the Public Sector category for the Smoke Alarm campaign to encourage every household in Greater Manchester to have a working smoke alarm.

The six-strong team based at headquarters is responsible for media relations, public relations campaigns, political affairs and employee communications for all 41 fire stations and 2,500 staff. The team also includes dedicated, uniformed Media Liaison Officers.
A stakeholder says...

Using police collision data helps us to be confident that we are focusing our work in a targeted, data-led way. Simon Ettinghausen, Chairperson LARSOA

Every local authority has a statutory duty to promote road safety. The Local Authority Road Safety Officers’ Association (LARSOA) represents those authorities throughout the UK. Road Safety Officers (RSOs) deliver road safety education, training and publicity services in the community. They have many years’ experience and, in recent months, have been working more and more in partnership with others, including fire and rescue services. This joint work is helping to make an impact on the national road safety targets to reduce death and serious injury on the roads by 40 per cent by 2010.

RSOs plan and deliver their education, training and publicity work using national and, more particularly, local collision and casualty trends. Using police collision data helps us to be confident that we are focusing our work in a targeted, data-led way. Each local authority has a different level of funding for its road safety work. So, there will be some areas where RSOs do not have specific monetary resources to share, but they can bring their expertise, knowledge and staff resources to make things happen.

So far, some examples of joint campaigns have included ‘extrications’ from mock crashes which back up publicity campaigns including ‘For My Girlfriend’, a government road safety campaign targeting younger male drivers.

Including firefighters in local news releases and at road safety events has a significant impact on the media and the public. It helps them realise the Fire and Rescue Service now has a key role in dealing with the results of road traffic collisions, as well as putting out fires.

The Chief Fire Officers’ Association and LARSOA are working together to help make the best use of our joint resources to tackle road traffic casualties and help make the roads safer for everyone. We are also keen to make sure we do not duplicate each other’s work.

More information, including a contact list of local road safety teams, can be found at www.larsoa.org.uk

Computer says no? Not any more

The IPDS team is committed to working with others to help develop our people. For example... learning things online is a great way to develop. You don’t have to travel to a training centre, you can learn at your own pace and you can learn in a way that suits your style.

In particular, our people who work the Retained Duty System can really benefit from the flexibilities of e-learning.

But the reality hasn’t always lived up to expectation. Often the computer said ‘no’ because e-learning just meant repackaging the same old training course. Also, there hasn’t been much national co-ordination so each fire and rescue authority (FRA) has had to find its own solutions.

Help is on its way!
The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has invested in a national project to produce a Managed Learning Service (MLS) for the Fire and Rescue Service. It’s a fancy title for a simple idea. The MLS will:

- provide flexible learning opportunities through an online portal (website);
- give the Fire and Rescue Service the means to deliver e-learning to its people;
- offer a wide range of centrally managed learning resources;
- provide a user-friendly way to keep records of their learning;
- allow FRAs to use their own material and branding;
- provide a clear road map for linking IPDS role maps with relevant development activities; and
- dovetail with current systems.

This is great news for the Fire and Rescue Service and great news for IPDS too, as MLS helps move staff development into the 21st century.

The MLS rolls out early next year and it’s FREE for the first two years. Want to know more? Contact e-learning@fireservicecollege.ac.uk

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