



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

VIOLENCE AT WORK

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service recognise that violence is a foreseeable risk to the safety of its personnel, particularly when dealing with members of the public involved in emergency incidents.

The Service recognises its general duty under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of personnel.

In addition, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 state that employers must assess the risks to employees and this includes violence against personnel.

The Service uses the Health and Safety Executive's working definition of violence that is:

'Any incident, in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of his or her employment.'

The Service recognises that violence can be either physical attacks or verbal abuse or threats and that each have the potential to damage employees' health.

The Service will ensure that systems are in place that reduces the risk of violence to personnel to the lowest practicable level.

2. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

HFRS has a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and a commitment, to ensure it does not discriminate either directly or indirectly in any of its functions and services nor in its treatment of staff, in relation to race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, gender reassignment or marriage and civil partnership. It also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants, employees and service users.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide and maintain formal planning and implementing arrangements to prevent harm to people at the point of risk, taking account of specific legal issues relevant to the Service.

Ensuring we have suitable and sufficient risk control systems in place to minimise the hazards and risks.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

Violence is considered in National Operational Guidance (NOG); 'All Incidents'.

Further specific risk assessments have been completed relating to violence at operational incidents NOG - Civil disturbances and violence against personnel who take telephone calls from or who meet members of the public

5. REDUCING THE RISK

NOG - Civil disturbances gives guidance on reducing the risk of violence at Civil Disturbances. ([See appendix A](#))

Service personnel who handle telephone calls from the general public and those who may have to deal directly with them will receive awareness training and information on the subject of violence. They will also be supervised appropriately. Where deemed necessary in individual circumstances, other measures may be taken such as the panic alarm and other security devices to protect personnel.

In the event of personnel being subject to acts of violence, these should be reported on the Health and Safety electronic recording software. The Service will respond quickly to avoid any long-term distress.

The following assistance will be available:

- Debriefing
- Counselling
- Occupational Health Advice

6. EMPLOYEE'S DUTIES

Regulation 14 of Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 **places** the following duties on all employees:

- Using equipment, safe systems of work and procedures provided by the Service in accordance with training and instruction given.
- Informing their line manager without delay of any situation which may present a serious and imminent danger.
- Notifying their line manager of any shortcoming in the health and safety arrangements.

HFRS will not tolerate acts of violence committed by employees. Any such actions will be dealt with using Conduct and Performance Policy and the Dignity at Work Policy.

If you require further guidance on this document, please contact the

Health, Safety & Environment Section

APPENDIX A

CIVIL DISTURBANCES

Introduction

Like most major incidents the type and scale of the responses required will vary with every incident. The information contained in these arrangements will not necessarily be used at every incident, but it will give Service Personnel an awareness of the problems that need addressing.

(a) Safety of Personnel

- (i) The safety of Service Personnel is of paramount importance at this type of incident.
- (ii) Officers in charge should be constantly re-assessing the safety of all personnel under their command.
- (iii) In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to negotiate with those responsible for the unrest in order that safe passage to the incident can be arranged. It must be borne in mind that this is rarely the case.
- (iv) At any time, contact with those responsible is thought necessary, approach should only be made following consultation with the Police and personnel must wear full firefighting kit, including helmet.
- (v) Officers in charge should ensure that they keep fully updated on the current situation and if necessary, maintain contact with those involved with the disturbance.
- (vi) Officers should not hesitate to withdraw personnel in the face of threatened violence.
- (vii) Personnel working in such areas should always maintain radio contact with the Forward Control Point and also bear in mind the following information regarding radios.
 - (1) Ensure that all Service Radio equipment is kept under strict security.
 - (2) Hand held radios should be used in a discreet manner. This will avoid the impression that constant re-direction of resources is being employed.
 - (3) Personnel are reminded that the frequencies used for Fire Service radio channels are not secure and messages can be overheard by unauthorised persons.
 - (4) Under no circumstances should HFRS personnel be allowed to work on their own.

(b) Police Liaison

- (i) Officers in charge must be aware of the tactics being used by the Police to control the incident.
- (ii) Police Commanders must be made aware of the location of all Service personnel who are committed to the incident.
- (iii) Liaison between Police Commanders and HFRS personnel is vitally important and "on scene" liaison should be kept as discreet as possible.
- (iv) Service Personnel must be guided by the Police as to the wisdom of trying to enter any particular area. Service vehicles should only proceed along routes agreed by the Police.
- (v) An FDS Officer will be mobilised to the Police Operations Room to act as advisor.
- (vi) Liaison with Police Commanders is an on-going process at Service Headquarters level and items concerning Civil Disturbances are discussed as and when thought necessary.

(c) Mobilising

- (i) Service Control will operate a 2 pump first attendance in areas where Civil Unrest is known to be taking place. The Command Unit will also be mobilised to act as Forward Control. Consideration should be given to siting the Command Unit in close proximity to the Police Forward Control.
- (ii) Officers in charge should ask for the assistance they require in the usual way.
- (iii) Following a survey and report from the Officer in charge, normal mobilising procedures may be suspended to the affected areas. If the disturbance involves many fires in a small area, the priority in which they are dealt with will be devolved from Service Control to the Forward Control where the Officer in Charge will be more aware of the priorities.

Service Control should be kept fully updated on appliance movements and availability.

- (iv) If the condition in para. (c)(iii) applies, then supporting appliances will be directed to an agreed holding point to await further instructions.
- (v) Service Control staff should be aware that they must screen all incoming emergency calls with extreme care and if necessary check with Call Handling Centres as to the origin of the call before taking mobilising action.

This will help prevent malicious calls being made to unnecessarily utilise over extended resources.

- (vi) A duty Group Manager will be called into the Major Incident Room at Service Headquarters to co-ordinate the support measures.

(d) Proceeding to Incidents

- (i) All routes to the Forward Control will be decided following consultation with the Police. This may help to alleviate passing through areas of known trouble.
- (ii) Appliance speed should be kept to a reasonable level to avoid provoking a possible hostile crowd.
- (iii) Blue lights and warning horns should not be sounded anywhere within the area of disturbance.
- (iv) All appliance crew cab doors and windows should be kept closed and where possible locked.
- (v) Senior officers attending incidents with crews should do so only in appliances, thus avoiding being mistaken for Police Officers. A rendezvous should be made at a convenient safe point.
- (vi) Full firefighting kit with helmets must be worn at all times.
- (vii) Appliance drivers should ensure that they park the appliance in such a way that a quick evacuation can be achieved if necessary, avoiding where possible dead-end situations. Drivers must remain with their appliance and maintain the engine running.

(e) Firefighting

- (i) It is not possible or desirable to pre-plan specific tactics. Every situation must be treated on the circumstances applicable at the time.
- (ii) Consideration should be given to using water direct from a hydrant, rather than operating through the pump.
- (iii) All Service procedures designed for the safety of crews at fires should be adopted at all times. This will also include the standard evacuation signal.
- (iv) The weight of attack to fires where civil unrest is present is likely to be nowhere as high as under normal circumstances. Therefore, Officers in charge will need to carefully utilise the resources with which they have been provided.
- (v) Under circumstances where the Service attendance at incidents has been delayed and fires are well established upon arrival, Officers in charge will need to bear in mind that the structure of any buildings may be unsafe.

(f) General

- (i) It is often the case that advance information exists about the possibility of unrest occurring. This information should be shared with other emergency services as soon as possible.
- (ii) Officers in charge of appliances will be fully briefed before being committed to any areas of disturbance.

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- (iii) With regard to radio messages, only requests for assistance or stop messages should be sent between appliances, Forward and Service Control. These messages should not contain any details of the incident.
- (iv) Officers in charge should record all the details of incidents they attend for forwarding to Service Control by telephone at a later time.
- (v) The Home Office Fire Services Division requires Services to submit a report in all cases where an appliance has been dispatched to an area where Civil Disturbances are taking place.
- (vi) This will be done by the Officer in the Major Incident Room.
- (vii) Further actions that may need to be taken are contained in procedures for officers taking control of the Major Incident Room.
- (viii) If an attack on crews at a fire station occurs the Officer in charge will inform Service Control who will take the following action:
 - (1) Request Police assistance.
 - (2) Inform the Duty Flexible Duty System (FDS) Manager.
 - (3) Inform the Duty Group Manager.
 - (4) Inform the Duty Area Manager.
 - (5) Take that station "Off the Run" until all problems have been resolved.

NOTE: UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ARE APPLIANCES OR EQUIPMENT TO BE USED TO QUELL RIOTERS