



Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service

Response Strategy 2017- 2020



1 INTRODUCTION

In line with its statutory responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Service's Act 2004, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) Order 2007 and the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) is committed to providing a range of response capabilities to ensure it is capable of dealing with the full range of emergencies that it could reasonably be expected to attend. These emergencies may take place within the county of Northamptonshire or outside it and may be national or sub-national in nature, i.e. wide area flooding.

In order to achieve this response capability, NFRS will maintain a fleet of vehicles; systems and equipment to meet these expectations and also ensure that their staff are trained to use them in the circumstances that they would reasonably be expected to operate.

2 PRINCIPLES

The main principle behind NFRS' response strategy will be to mobilise the most appropriate resource to an emergency taking into account the incident type and the time it would take for a resource to arrive. The determination of the resources mobilised will be based on having the appropriate capability to be able to deal with the immediate risk, stabilise the incident and bring it to a satisfactory and safe conclusion. The most appropriate initial resource, known as the Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) will be mobilised by our Control Operators based on the information available to them at the time of the emergency call. Further resources will be mobilised at the discretion of the Incident Commander (IC) in line with their risk assessment and operational plan.

In order to achieve correct mobilisation NFRS will continue to develop a response model that allows us to mobilise a range of vehicles, equipment and personnel in a more flexible way. This more flexible response model will not be based solely on the mobilisation of fire appliances in the traditional way, but on the capabilities and personnel required to firstly, make a lifesaving intervention and secondly, to bring the incident to a satisfactory conclusion.

To support the main principle of the response strategy NFRS will locate capabilities around the county based on the "Business As Usual (BAU)" risk and demand, whilst maintaining the overall organisational capacity to deal with large scale incidents.

3 RISK

Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) are organised on the basis of risk. Risk is defined as the likelihood of an event occurring multiplied by the severity of the impact, should that event occur. These risks can be generic or specific in nature. For example, a generic risk would include the type of incident that firefighters would attend on a regular basis all over the country i.e. fires in buildings or Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs), whereas a specific risk would usually relate to a particular property i.e. a factory that incorporates a hazardous manufacturing process etc.

NFRS is also required to co-operate with other services and agencies within the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), in line with its responsibilities as a category one responder under the Civil Contingencies Act. The LRF's main responsibilities are to ensure that local risks are assessed and that preparedness, in terms of response and recovery arrangements are in place to deal with the range of potential emergencies that could affect the county.

In order to comply with relevant legislation NFRS are required to be able to respond to this full range of risks. This includes the ability to be able to respond to incidents on a national scale and utilise the resources hosted by NFRS, which form part of the UK Governments National Resilience strategy.

One other important aspect of risk is having the ability to provide risk information to our ICs on the incident ground, to assist them in their risk critical decision making. NFRS have a risk intelligence process in place to ensure that the county's major risks are inspected and appropriate risk information is collected. This information is then formatted and made available to ICs via Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) on fire appliances.

4 HEALTH AND SAFETY

As an employer NFRS are required to be compliant with all relevant employment legislation, including Health and Safety law. The key piece of legislation in this regard, applicable to both employers and employees, is the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA). In addition to the HASAWA there is a raft of additional Health and Safety regulations, guidelines and codes of practice that are pertinent to the work of the FRS. These seek to ensure that FRS operations and activities are carried out in such a way as to maintain the safety of both employees and the wider public.

It should be recognised that fire service activities, particularly operational response, can be dangerous. In the main because of the unpredictable and dynamic nature of emergencies, and the fact that fire service staff are required to make decisions and act with incomplete information.

In order to overcome some of these issues it is important that FRSs have in place policies and procedures to deal with the range of incidents that they could reasonably be expected to attend. To achieve this NFRS will continue to develop a range of Strategic and Tactical Operational Guidance (TOGs) in line with the National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP).

In addition, NFRS will continue to strive to improve its operational activities and response. In order to do this NFRS have put in place an operational assurance framework. This framework ensures that there is a formal monitoring and review process of operational performance. This process is in line with the principles set out in HSG 65, which in turn will allow us to put in place improvements where they are identified and required. Whilst ensuring that NFRS learns from its own activities, the operational assurance framework also takes into account learning that may be gained from events that happen in other places, both nationally and internationally.

Training is also a key element in ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of staff. NFRS has a people strategy, which, among other things, outlines how NFRS intends to train and develop its staff to meet the challenges of the operational environment. This will include defining the core, and specialist competencies that firefighters and officers are expected to fulfil in order to ensure they have the requisite skills to deal with incidents in a safe manner.

5 INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS

NFRS is a strategic service designed to meet the needs of the whole of the county. It is therefore important that our infrastructure requirements are based on that strategic requirement. This means that whilst fire stations are locality based, they each support and form part of a countywide response capability.

Resources are not just mobilised to an incident from the nearest location, but also from neighbouring locations further afield to deal with it. It is therefore important to understand that for this Service, a 'site specific' impact extends beyond the locality. Traditionally fire stations have been built in the areas where most fires occur, predominantly in the county's major towns and large villages. However due to the increasing range of incidents attended, the need for a more integrated emergency response, and the growth and development of the county, there is a need to ensure that the strategic needs of the Service, in relation to the infrastructure required to meet our emergency response obligations, is recognised. Therefore, NFRS will utilise information about the county's development and growth, together with its risk modelling software, to determine the most appropriate location for our resources.

The location of resources is determined by risk. The aim being; that when called upon, resources are mobilised in a timely and efficient manner without negatively impacting likely outcomes. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Authority recognise that specified attendance times cannot be achieved on all occasions but will ensure resources are strategically located to minimise risk.

6 COMMAND AND CONTROL SYSTEMS

To ensure that NFRS is able to meet the principles set out in the response strategy, we have invested in a new command and control system in conjunction with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. This system will enhance our ability to answer calls more quickly and respond to emergencies in a more flexible way. The system operates by being able to calculate the time it would take for a resource to arrive at an incident by utilising road routing information together with Automatic Vehicle Location Systems (AVLS), a feature that allows the mobilising system to be able to know the exact location of any vehicle wherever it is.

7 MOBILISING POLICY

NFRS's mobilising policy provides the detail on how resources are mobilised, in line with the principles set out in this document. Currently, this is in accordance with the designated incident type as determined by our Control Operators, which in itself is determined by the information available to them at the time of the 999 call.

These incident types are a defined list and are based on work carried out nationally by FRSs working in collaboration. In all there are around 90 generic incident types. Each of these incident types has attached to it a PDA. The PDA is the pre-set number of capabilities that will be mobilised to an incident immediately on receipt of a call for assistance.

8 FIREFIGHTING AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Along with other FRSs, NFRS have historically applied traditional firefighting methods in order to resolve operational incidents. This generally included the ability to be able to fight fires from both the inside and outside of premises.

In order to fight fires from the inside of buildings firefighters are required to wear Breathing Apparatus (BA) and to be trained to understand the behaviour of fire in a compartment. Fighting fire from the inside of buildings is extremely hazardous.

Over the last ten years a number of firefighters have been killed on duty fighting fires in this way, therefore NFRS is actively working to exploit new technology in order to enhance both its firefighting capability and the safety of firefighters. Exploiting new technology will not completely replace traditional firefighting methods; however, it will provide alternative tactical options that can be employed by ICs.

This new technology includes the COBRA extinguishing system. COBRA allows the Service to fight a fire in a compartment without the need to commit firefighters into that compartment. To compliment the COBRA technology NFRS have developed new firefighting methodologies by bringing together a range of new technologies. This includes the use of Thermal Imaging Cameras (TICs) and Positive Pressure Ventilation (PPV) and COBRA.

NFRS aim to embed this methodology across the Service, which will enhance its knowledge and capability in tactical firefighting, and increase the tactical options available to ICs in their duty to deal with incidents in a safe and effective manner.

9 VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

In addition to the new technologies outlined in section 9, NFRS will also review its fleet and equipment requirements in order to ensure it has the right vehicles and equipment to deal with local risks and organisational resilience.

NFRS currently has a fleet of 28 fire appliances, 26 traditional appliances plus 2 Combined Aerial Rescue Pumps (CARPs), based at the 22 fire stations in the county. At present these appliances are built to carry largely identical equipment. In addition to these appliances NFRS also has a range of specialist vehicles and equipment to provide a range of core and specialist capabilities.

NFRS will also implement further trials of different appliances in order to evaluate their suitability and contribution to the response strategy. This includes trialling different fire appliances designed to better match the risk in the geographical area in which they predominantly operate in addition to supporting the strategic requirement.

In regard to equipment, NFRS will evaluate its requirements based on the lifecycle of equipment as defined in the fleet or asset management strategy. Where equipment is due for renewal, evaluations, including, where appropriate, trials, will take place in order to identify the most appropriate replacement. Areas currently identified to investigate for replacement are the provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and also the provision of specialist hydraulic cutting equipment for use at RTCs.

Our current PPE contract is due for renewal within the life of this plan, and we will use this opportunity to investigate the range of new PPE available on the market, taking into account the range of response and emergency activities that personnel will be required to undertake in the future.

10 INCIDENT COMMAND

Incident command is an integral part of the Service's response strategy and key to ensuring that the Service's response to emergencies is effective, whilst ensuring the safety of its personnel.

NFRS will adhere to the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) and also national guidance on incident command as developed through the NOGP. Both JESIP and NOGP set out a full set of principles and procedures for incident command, that are scalable depending on the size, type and complexity of incident attended, including incidents that require either a multi-agency response or where a national response is required.

The FRS, nationally, have in place a competency framework for incident command and have identified four levels. NFRS will adopt this framework and utilise it to train, assess and mobilise its ICs.

In order to assist ICs in their decision making NFRS will also ensure that it maintains its ability to mobilise officers with specialist capabilities in order that that ICs have all the specialist advice they require for command decisions to be taken. These include such capabilities as National Inter-Agency Liaison Officers (NILOs), Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection Advisers (HMEPAs), access to scientific support, Fire Investigation Officers (FIOs), Fire Protection Officers (FPOs), flood managers, water rescue advisers, large animal rescue advisers etc.

11 CONCLUSIONS

This document sets out a vision for operational response for NFRS over the next 3 years. This vision is to move from a response based on the mobilisation of fire appliances, to a more capability led flexible response, aimed at improving outcomes both in terms of firefighter safety and for the community by giving us the ability to deal with incidents in a safe, efficient and effective manner.

12 ACTION PLANS

In order to ensure that NFRS are able to meet the demands of the future, taking into account both national and local risk as well as a growing county, an action plan has been created to show the distinct improvements, work streams and projects required to contribute to achieving the goals set out in this strategy. Details of these actions can be found in the service business plans or within project documentation.