



Tackling Violence at Work: Good Practice Guidance Document for Fire and Rescue Services

Report of the Task and Finish Group

Practitioners' Forum

18 July 2006



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On 5th May 2006 the responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) transferred to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The following guidance and recommendations, relating to staff who are exposed to violence at work, has been prepared by a working group under the direction of CFOA Operations Committee and the Practitioners Forum.

The working group carefully considered how violence in the workplace should be referred to in this document. Different definitions have been used by various agencies and FRSs who have been consulted and it was agreed to base the guidance on the Health & Safety Executive's terminology. Therefore for the purpose of this document Tackling Violence at Work is defined as:

'Any occurrence in which a member of staff is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of or in the course of their employment.'

- 1.2 Physical assaults include common assault, wounding, robbery and snatch theft. Threats include both verbal and non-verbal intimidation, made to or against the victim. These are mainly threats to assault the victim, though some threats relate to damaging property or harming others.
- 1.3 Physical attacks are obviously dangerous, but serious or persistent verbal abuse can be a significant problem too, as it can cause damage to the health of staff through anxiety and stress. For employers this can represent a real financial cost, through low staff morale and potentially staff turnover. This in turn can adversely affect the confidence of staff and consequently service delivery. All work related violence, both verbal and physical, has serious consequences for staff and for the organisation.
- 1.4 The Working Group has considered the implications arising from an increasing number of events where FRS staff are subjected to violence at work.
- 1.5 The guidance has been prepared in accordance with the principles contained in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and the associated Approved Code of Practice, particularly with regard to Schedule 1 of those Regulations, 'General Principles of Prevention'.
- 1.6 Violence against FRS staff is either anticipated ie; it can be an incident involving prior information from Police regarding public disorder, or unknown ie it develops immediately prior to and/or during the attendance of or engagement with FRS staff ie an unanticipated occurrence. This guidance defines these incidents as:
- Local Disturbances (LD)
 - Civil Disturbances (CD)
 - Other Occurrences.

This guidance seeks to extend previously published guidance from DCOL 7/1993 (Item 2) on Civil Disturbances.

- 1.7 The British Crime Survey (October 2005) indicates that people in protective service occupations, which includes FRS staff, were most at risk from Violence at Work (VAW). The Health and Safety Executive Committee, 'The Partnership on Work Related Violence, POW – V' is currently looking at issues relating to the Protective Services. It is likely that staff in higher risk occupations are less likely to report more minor occurrences. Preliminary findings of a study by the Labour Research Department on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union showed that occurrences are not being reported, and estimate there was 60% under-reporting of violence against firefighters, therefore, we are unable to see the true scale of the problem.
- 1.8 Work by the Scottish Executive on 'The Protection of Workers Serving the Public: When the Customer isn't Right' has relevance to the work of this group.
- 1.9 There is a culture of attacks on firefighters, some of them pre-planned ambushes, mainly by gangs of youths throwing bricks and bottles. Roads have been blocked and firefighters attacked when directed in to dead ends, such attacks have involved guns and fireworks. This issue is not just confined to deprived areas of major cities, and whilst these areas are where the majority of violence occurs it is the case that all Fire & Rescue Services may suffer these problems at some time.
- 1.10 It must be remembered that these occurrences are not confined wholly to appliance crews and can, potentially, affect other service staff, and in particular some lone workers eg flexible duty officers, hydrant maintenance staff, community fire safety staff.

2. Status

- 2.1 All persons responsible for the management of FRSs must consider any violence against staff to be unacceptable and will strive to influence legislators and politicians to take appropriate actions to resolve it.
- 2.2 This Guidance should be considered as good practice that should be applied in the light of individual and local circumstances.
- 2.3 The content of this document should be considered in addition to and in conjunction with existing legislation (Annex A).

3. Scope

- 3.1 This guidance relates to all Fire & Rescue Service staff. It can be adapted to suit most circumstances where those staff come into contact with members of the public in any service delivery arena, and where they are identified as being at risk of violence at work.
- 3.2 This document does not deal with issues which arise from internal violence at work, eg bullying and harassment in the workplace perpetrated by other FRS staff.
- 3.3 It is recognised that there may be cost and resource implications relating to the recommendations made. However, given the overriding health and safety implications in relation to the protection of Fire & Rescue Service staff, cost has not been an influencing factor in making the recommendations.
- 3.4 Adoption of the guidance will, of course, be the decision of individual Fire & Rescue Service's and their Authorities as to the measures that may or may not be adopted to suit their circumstances.
- 3.5 Whilst this guidance considers staff whilst they are at work, FRSs may wish to consider the potential for violence or threatening behaviour to staff being carried over into their private lives; eg where staff live and work in the same community.
- 3.6 This guidance also identifies the increased risk to staff that may occur at certain times of the year where seasonal activities frequently lead to violence against staff eg bonfire night or annual events where large crowds are brought together. The impact of these events on staff can be reduced by pre-planning.
- 3.7 There are potential benefits in working with other agencies that experience violence against their staff. Sharing information and having consistent policies and procedures should assist in, reducing the likelihood of specific high-risk incidents arising, and the process of managing violent incidents and dealing with the perpetrators of violence, particularly regular or prolific offenders. The possibility of raising the issue in partnerships already set up eg Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships, or in developing joint procedures with the Police for example is considered good practice. These partnerships will enable FRSs to maximise their ability to reduce the impact of violence against staff.
- 3.8 It is important to consider violence at work in the context of risk groups and, therefore, the staff who are most likely to be affected by violence at work.

Below is a summary of those who may be affected:

Operational Staff – may experience threats, assaults and abuse by members of the public whilst attending operational incidents, carrying out non-operational duties or whilst travelling to and from various work locations.

Other Staff Groups – this group of staff often consists of lone workers including cooks, workshops and station assistants and CFS staff some of who may be left alone in Service premises and approached by members of the public who perceive them to be soft targets. Violence in these circumstances may go unreported until colleagues miss the staff.

Control Staff – may experience threats or abuse from members of the public who misuse the telephone system.

It is evident from reports that the most at risk group of staff are operational firefighters. It must be borne in mind however, that the increasing frequency and span of service activities will create a need to continually monitor those staff with roles that may be at risk from violence at work.

4. Methodology

- 4.1 The issue of VAW on staff has until recently been left to specific actions by individual FRSs. Furthermore the matter is not addressed in any current single publication where service personnel can identify good practice guidance on this matter. This group was constituted to consider this and other issues.
- 4.2 The group collated an extensive list of documentation relating to existing initiatives and carried out a full review of that information formally recording that activity.
- 4.3 Good practice content of relevance to the terms of reference and which had a potential impact on activity was identified for consideration for inclusion in this final document.
- 4.4 Consideration was given to other areas of national activity so that this final document was not contradictory to other national work. This was further ensured by the continuous communication with a wide range of relevant agencies throughout the duration of the group's work, gathering relevant comment and information as the work progressed.
- 4.5 The hierarchy of control measures contained in existing health and safety legislation and the adoption of good practice from other reports, documents and guidance has informed the creation of the following recommendations.
- 4.6 Notwithstanding these recommendations of principle given below it is nevertheless essential that FRSs continue to conduct their own organisationally specific risk assessments for staff and activities in relation to this serious trend.

5. Definitions

These definitions apply particularly in the context of this document, although most are consistent with terms from nationally agreed FRS documents.

5.1 **Violence at Work (VAW)**

‘Any occurrence in which a member of staff is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of or in the course of their employment’.

5.2 **Local Disturbance (Lima Delta – LD)**

Incidents may occur where there are clear signs of public disorder, and the safety of crews is threatened. These may involve small groups of people subjecting personnel to verbal threats or abuse, missile attacks etc. Such occurrences, although obviously hazardous to personnel, cannot be classified as a civil disturbance, and would not normally necessitate implementation of Strategic Civil Disturbance Plans. Local disturbances are typically spontaneous, generally not pre-planned and often occur when there is an increase of tension within the community.

5.3 **Civil Disturbance (Charlie Delta – CD)**

Generally larger, more widespread and involving more members of the community than a local disturbance. Civil disturbance may be the result of escalation of a local disturbance, and will typically involve property damage, vehicle hi-jacking, looting and wilful fire raising. Civil disturbance can be described as ‘ the serious breakdown of law and order within the community’ and may be either spontaneous or pre-planned in nature. An outbreak of civil disturbance will normally necessitate implementation of the Strategic Civil Disturbance Plan.

5.4 **SOP**

Standard Operating Procedure.

5.5 **Incident Command system (ICS)**

The National command system laid out in the current Fire Service Manual Volume 2 Fire Service Operations – Incident Command which deals with this subject.

5.6 **Fires & Incidents of Special Interest (FOSI)**

A fire or other incident to which the Fire & Rescue Service attends, and which satisfies the criteria contained within FRSC 5/2005, ie – Attacks on Firefighters (Category C).

5.7 **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

Is defined within the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, as; “a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household”.

5.8 **Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO)**

An order made under Section 1 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998, aimed at;

- preventing Disorder & Crime, and
- protecting the rights of other members of the community.

5.9 **Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA)**

The continuous assessment and control of risk in the rapidly changing circumstances of an operational incident.

5.10 **Generic Risk Assessment (GRA)**

A generic assessment used to minimise the potential for an inconsistent outcome/approach in relation to identified incident types as contained in HMFSI Manual ‘A Guide to Operational Risk Assessment’

5.11 **Systematic Risk Assessment (SRA)**

Carried out by individual FRSs building on the template already created by the GRA.

5.12 **Community Tension Indicator**

This is the term used for the currently assessed measure of tension within any identified geographical area at a particular time. A high or increasing indicator would in most circumstances indicate an increased potential risk for FRS staff.

5.13 **Lone Worker**

Anyone who works alone and is at risk of violence at work.

NB: This document recognises the need for lone working for essential service delivery and raises the matter for additional consideration only when CD or LD occurrences arise.

6. Legal Position

- 6.1 The primary duty that requires our considerations on exposure of our staff to violence in the workplace is contained in the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSWA) – Employers General Duties Section 2.

“It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their staff.”

The legislation covering Work Related Violence (WRV) is contained in (Annex A) and there are also more general legal powers, not restricted to employment situations, which can be used to protect people from work related violence, antisocial behaviour and harassment.

- 6.2 It can be seen that the thrust of this document is primarily to avoid situations which could lead to violence at work to staff. Where it has not been possible to avoid a situation, then the attendance of the Police should be requested if a situation deteriorates to an extent that justifies this position. It is only when these options have been fully explored and there is no alternative that staff or their colleagues should consider alternative actions.
- 6.3 It is not the intent of this document to deal with specific legal powers that individual staff or their colleagues can use when subjected to VAW whether in relation to, self defence and defence of another, prevention of crime and lawful arrest or the apprehension of offenders. The understanding of these powers however, needs to be clear and is contained within, the Police & Criminal Evidence Act, Offences Against the Person Act 1861, Common Law, Criminal Law Act 1967, Crime & Disorder Act 1998, and guidance issued by the Crown Prosecution Service. All relevant staff should have an awareness of these issues enabling an understanding of the legal position applicable to them.
- 6.4 Where they exist, specific legislation and other measures created in relation to obstructing or impeding emergency service staff responding to emergencies must be promulgated and clearly understood in relation to VAW; eg in Scotland, ‘Protection of Workers Serving the Public: When the Customer isn’t Right’ and the subsequent ‘Emergency workers Act (Scotland) 2005.

7. Recommendations

7.1 CONTROL MEASURES

7.1.1 Police Assistance

There are specific Police assistance schemes operating within certain Fire & Rescue Services throughout the United Kingdom. Such schemes are by local agreements between the FRS and appropriate Police Authorities. Consequently, there is a marked difference in the schemes and level of response in operation for dealing with Local Disturbances (LD).

Whilst it was identified that many FRSs use the terms 'Charlie Delta' and 'Lima Delta' there is an absence of a nationally agreed scheme for dealing with incidents involving violence, especially when the attendance of the Police is required. This could be an issue where mutual assistance/over the border arrangements are in place.

Different coded warnings to request Police assistance are in evidence within certain FRSs and whilst such coded warnings may be understood within the Police and FRS for a particular area; resources from a neighbouring FRS that may be called to assist may be unaware of any locally agreed coded warning schemes.

Recommendation

Fire and Rescue Services to consider developing a coded system, and a memorandum of understanding with the Police where their assistance can be requested for LD incidents. FRSs must ensure that any scheme introduced is communicated and understood by any neighbouring FRS. (Ref 7.1.1).

7.1.2 Dynamic Risk Assessment

Dynamic Risk Assessments assist personnel in making professional judgements in a structured and considered manner, enabling tasks to be carried out as safely as possible in rapidly changing circumstances. It is not a single action or decision, but a series of decisions under constant review, which are amended according to the situation.

If a situation arises where it is obvious that some form of aggression/violence may be directed towards staff, a dynamic risk assessment should be carried out, this should take into account the following:

- The nature and level of the threat
- The type and severity of the incident
- The need to withdraw from the incident or discontinue the activity
- The need for additional staff resource
- The need for urgency
- Police availability

It is important to note that the principle of DRA can be adopted for FRS activities other than operational incidents where potential for VAW exists.

Recommendation

All managers and staff who have the potential to be directly affected by VAW need to understand the DRA process and have the ability to apply it when faced with these situations. (Ref 7.1.2).

7.1.3 Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

A study by West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service showed that appliances fitted with CCTV have seen a 47% reduction in attacks on the crews and appliances. In contrast, appliances not fitted with the cameras have seen a 35% increase in attacks on the crews and appliances. This study suggests that cameras can be a useful deterrent and assist with evidence relating to the identification of perpetrators

The use of CCTV Cameras comes under the scope of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Data Protection Act 1988 (DPA).

Continuity of evidence is vital to the use of the cameras and a robust recording and editing system is recommended to meet the needs of PACE. It has been seen that CCTV cameras support the principles of prevent and deter and can provide evidence to catch and convict perpetrators. This is in support of national Government policy which is committed to eradicating anti-social behaviour, and custodial sentences have been witnessed along with 'ASBOs being imposed on individuals as a result of CCTV evidence.

Recommendation

Authorities should consider the use of CCTV in support of staff that may be exposed to violence at work in identified areas of high risk. (Ref 7.1.3).

7.1.4 Communication Procedures

Where there is community tension or spontaneous events occur which relate to staff safety it is essential that FRSs keep all relevant staff informed. This can be achieved in any number of ways which could include:

- GRA reminders
- SOP reminders
- Training and awareness
- Turn out info
- Text messages
- Vehicle mobile data
- Direct briefings
- Debrief information

It is important that the information is timely and enables staff to be best prepared where their individual or collective role may take them into areas of heightened risk.

Information relating to staff safety can be received from and should be communicated to various external sources, e.g. the police could inform FRSs of intelligence received where there is a potential threat to the safety of staff.

Information can also be received from staff who are in attendance at or have attended an incident where tension may be evident e.g. intransigence from persons etc. In these circumstances the importance of inter agency communication cannot be over stated.

Any messages sent should be prefixed with a specific code for attacks/potential attacks on staff where this does not reach the level of a local disturbance eg **'Code red'** on member of personnel at Bloggs Lane, Manchester, or potential **'Code 13'** on personnel at Bloggs Lane, Manchester.

NB: *A national message prefix has not been advocated at this stage and may be subject to further work.*

Recommendation

A communication strategy should be developed to enable intelligence to be gathered relating to community tension or spontaneous events and the subsequent need for that information to be communicated to all relevant staff and agencies.

Any knowledge of potential attacks should be communicated to all relevant staff and agencies at the earliest possible opportunity using the most appropriate method. (Ref 7.1.4).

7.1.5 Incident Command System (ICS)

The incident command system provides the framework for the management of operational incidents.

Recommendation

In carrying out strategic and systematic risk assessments, FRSs may wish to give guidance on VAW to operational commanders in relation to tactical modes to be adopted when developing SOPs. (Ref 7.1.5).

7.1.6 Aide Memoire

Procedural guidance is provided in some FRSs by way of an Aide Memoire, based upon their SOPs. These are provided on appliances or to individuals. This has been found to be useful and assists Incident Commanders or other staff to constantly assess the situation and can also be used to remind staff of their legal powers.

Recommendation

All FRSs should have procedural guidance in place that may be quickly accessed whilst en-route, attending incidents or undertaking other fire service activities. (Ref 7.1.6).

7.1.7 Vehicle and Equipment Security

There are issues surrounding the security of FRS vehicles. Some of the issues relating to staff safety include:-

- Loss and misuse of equipment and vehicles
- Damage to equipment and vehicles

In the light of circumstances a number of FRSs have needed to provide specific staff protection measures in relation to appliance design including side screen glazing protection and the provision of central locking for doors and equipment lockers.

All appliances are provided with toughened windscreen glass which substantially protects staff in the event of missile attacks, but not all have similar properties on other crew cab glass.

This protection can be provided retrospectively by way of film applications or at the appliance specification stage following careful consideration of the risks to staff in certain areas. The use of 'bandit glass' on new appliances for all crew cab glazing is common in some FRSs.

The provision of lockable equipment stowage and crew cabs is also seen as a positive staff protection measure by some FRSs as equipment acquired by members of the public can be used against staff, whilst lockable crew cabs can provide staff with a barrier to potential violence when in situ or withdrawing from an incident.

Recommendation

FRSs in developing their appliance specifications should consider the need for the following:

- *Provision of suitably protected glazing for new and existing operational appliances.*
- *Provision of central locking for crew cabs and or lockers on operational appliances.*

7.1.8 Lone Working

Lone working may expose certain staff to additional risks whether on operational or other duties when CD or LD occurrences take place.

In CD/LD situations many FRSs suspend the use of lone mobile supervisory officers attending incidents in cars. This is as a consequence of the increased potential for risk of injury to the individual and that cars may be mistaken for Police vehicles. Other staff on non-operational duties will also need consideration in relation to working in higher risk areas.

Additionally, lone officers in cars have been attacked when attending hostile incidents in LD situations and other FRS staff could be similarly exposed.

In known LD/CD situations, lone officers should not be mobilised to incidents in cars, and officers are encouraged to ride appliances. In these situations the preference should be to utilise appliances for incidents and officers and other relevant staff should be regularly updated by Brigade Control of hostile areas either by pagers or mobile telephone.

Recommendation

Where there is the potential for a 'lone worker' to be subject to VAW, suitable measures should be put in place to avoid or minimise the impact. This will be necessary across all service activities and could include;

- *suspension of particular activities*
- *provision of additional persons ie 'doubling up'*
- *provision of additional support/monitoring measures. (Ref 7.1.8)*

7.1.9 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE provides a high level of protection to staff when used for its intended purpose and although it is not specifically designed for the protection of individuals suffering VAW, it may afford a level of protection when worn.

Recommendations

Where there is a potential known or suspected threat of violence to staff all FRSs must provide guidance as to the level of PPE to be worn.

7.2 MANAGEMENT RELATED ISSUES

7.2.1 Reporting of Violence at Work

Academic research has been carried out as to the reasons that incidents are not always reported and the findings concur that events involving violence at work are so frequent in some cases they are deemed as an "accepted" part of the job. (Ref 7.2.1). There still exists a culture whereby only the serious incidents are reported.

It is essential that a robust reporting system is utilised/developed as all incidences and potential incidences of violence must be recorded. This will ensure compliance with the requirements of the Communities and Local Government (Fires of Special Interest) guidance, H&S requirements and will assist local measures to be employed to reduce the impact of such violence.

In following up the reporting of occurrences of VAW, it is imperative that F&RS consider the need to actively pursue the more serious events in nature through the courts. The creation of a specific offence relating to emergency service workers across the UK used in conjunction with existing measures such as ASBO's will assist with demonstrating high levels of staff support.

Recommendations

Staff must be encouraged to report all incidences or potential incidences of violence. They must be reassured that the incidence does not reflect upon their professional conduct or whether they have handled the situation appropriately.

All FRS must ensure that they have an effective reporting procedure in place and that staff report all acts of violence at work. This should include the ability to locally analyse this information as part of its on-going systematic risk assessment review. Any procedure must facilitate the easy reporting of every occurrence. Any local procedures for reporting must feed into any national arrangements for collation and analysis.

It is imperative that all staff recognise that violence at work is unacceptable and all occurrences must be reported.

FRSs must have efficient arrangements in place to pursue legal actions against perpetrators directing VAW at staff with use of specific offences and other measures against emergency service workers contained in available legislation. (See Ref 7.2.1).

7.2.2 Seasonal Trends

It is recognised that there may be an increased risk to staff at certain times of the year where seasonal activities occur and can frequently lead to violence against staff eg bonfire night or annual events where large crowds are brought together.

Grampian FRS carry out a pre-emptive joint patrol with Police to remove dangerous bonfires prior to November 5th, potentially one of the most likely times for attacks against firefighters.

Recommendations

FRSs should consider the development of specific plans for reducing the impact of these events on staff.

FRSs should further consider the development of joint initiatives with the police and/or local authorities, eg the joint removal of any unauthorised bonfires or large amounts of combustible refuse. (Ref 7.2.2).

7.2.3 Training & Awareness

The inconsistent level and nature of VAW experienced by FRS has led to a consequential variation in the training and awareness delivered to deal with issues. Some FRSs will have done little training in relation to areas such as conflict management, staff legal position or evidential requirements for prosecution etc. It can be seen that awareness training for all staff who are potentially at risk from VAW is imperative to negating or minimising its impact. The health and Safety, and Scottish Executives provide general information for employers and employees on their website (Ref. 7.2.3)

Recommendation

All FRSs should ensure that staff who may be at risk from VAW are provided with an appropriate level of training or familiarisation for their role. The input should be related to local needs, circumstances and procedures. It should ideally be provided to staff prior to potential exposure. It should form part of organisational induction and in the ongoing development and maintenance of understanding.

7.2.4 Media Strategy

In times of heightened tension and periods of staff safety concerns it is essential that a positive relationship is maintained with the press and the public alike. It is inevitable that there will be public interest in relation to such issues and this should be responded to in a positive way.

Whilst the reporting of violence at work can lead to copycat style incidents the overall strategy of engaging with the media may prevent further occurrences and minimise any speculation. A low key approach is adopted by some FRSs whilst others have taken the opposing view and have found that by promoting the reporting it has resulted in a reduction of violence at work.

Recommendation

FRSs should develop and adopt a media strategy or specific reports which are relevant to the local circumstances. Where this is not a joint strategy all reports should be communicated to relevant agencies.

The FRSs position of neutrality should be maintained in the preparation of any statements it produces and should concentrate the message on the provision of the service despite the current situation.

7.2.5 In Depth Review of Social Behaviour

The research carried out for this report did not reveal any FRS that had carried a comprehensive review of anti-social behaviour. It is accepted that such a review is a far ranging project and falls within the academic field requiring expertise from within the appropriate educational establishments. However, since training has been identified as a significant factor as regards dealing with and recognising hostile situations a more in depth review is required in order that training is both appropriate and relevant according to impacts of social behaviour.

Recommendation

An in depth review should be considered into the effects of anti social behaviour in relation to activities connected to fire and rescue services. Such a review is likely to be far reaching and will require association with a University. FRS should be requested to establish if any individuals are carrying out such research and National support be provided as required.

7.2.6 SOPs

SOPs should be developed to allow pre-planning by all staff who may be at risk of VAW. Additional issues not already discussed that require consideration for inclusion in SOP's are:

Neutrality

Although the emergency services are often seen as acting as one body, neutrality is very important at incidents where there is a threat to staff.

Warning Devices

Audible and visual warning devices have the potential to incite and aggravate a situation where F&RS staff are engaged in activities

General Considerations:

- During the hours of darkness, where possible, park vehicles close to street lighting
- Avoid dead end situations wherever possible and plan escape routes. If necessary reverse into any dead-ends.
- Ensure that all lockers are closed once any equipment has been removed or replaced.
- Where possible, ensure that no members of staff are left alone with vehicles. In some circumstances the driver may remain within the vehicle with doors locked.

Recommendations

The FRS should advise staff to maintain a neutral stance and not get involved in activities normally undertaken by the police service e.g. such as crowd control, vehicle removal etc where there is a threat to violence to staff. (Ref 7.2.7).

FRSs in developing their SOP's should give careful consideration to avoiding the use of audible and visual warning devices.

General principle to be adopted on deployment of staff, appliances and equipment should be included within SOPs relating to these occurrences.

7.3 PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

7.3.1 Youth Inclusion Strategies

Fire and Rescue Services have been involved in initiatives with school children and local youths which have had a positive impact on the level of attacks on firefighters. A range of strategies and practices have been adopted by FRSs to suit local conditions and available resources. Research shows that there will need to be a systematic collection of information which will serve as a base upon which a targeted prevention strategy can be developed.

Hostilities are more likely to occur in areas of higher deprivation and associated crime levels, therefore FRS could work in partnership with other agencies and the local community. South Wales have identified the need to raise the issue of attacks on firefighters with the local Community Safety Partnerships for inclusion in the development of action plans.

In West Midlands a number of Station and Borough Commanders are involved in Anti Social Tasking Groups which are chaired by representatives from West Midlands Police. Information on ASB is gathered from Police logs, ASB hotlines, Fire Service call data and WMFS near misses involving violence towards firefighters. This information is used to populate a database on ASB and offenders which can be utilised to target groups or individuals to support local initiatives.

A report by the Labour Research Group for the FBU highlighted that it is easy to target young children through schools using formal Fire Safety Education programmes but it is not as easy to reach those who have left fulltime education.

The 'Strategy for Children and Young People: 2006 – 2010 gives additional direction on these matters. (Ref 7.7.1).

Specific initiatives have been identified through national research and include:

- Firefly, an initiative for young offenders was recently selected as an example of best practice by ECOTEC as part of their research into Youth Training and Diversionary Schemes, as mentioned with the ODPM 'Strategy for Children and Young People: 2006 – 2010' (Greater Manchester).
- Targeting hot spot areas of deliberate fire setting for school and community education programmes (Lothian & Borders)
- Fire Cadet scheme and inclusion of the subject of firefighter attacks within their schools education programme (South Wales and Greater Manchester)
- Scheme linked to prolific offenders on Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme delivered by a dedicated Youth Diversion Team (Kent FRS)
- Education scheme designed to engage young people and make them feel part of the community (Avon)

- LIFE (Local Intervention Fire Education) project introduced in 2002 after two firefighters were hospitalised following attacks by young people. A recent external evaluation has identified that LIFE has reduced (by approx 76% attacks on firefighters since it began)
- School assembly presentations around ASB in target areas, Youth Engagement schemes linked to Youth Engagement Service, Bonfire Night MOU between other agencies (Cleveland & Grampian)
- Youth intervention schemes and the appointment of a Service youth co-ordinator (Merseyside FRS)
- A Street Engagement Initiative involving CFS personnel and volunteers who liaise with young people in the vicinity of previous incidents (Northumberland FRS)
- Working in partnership with Leeds University, a play has been developed which highlights the consequences of arson and attacks on firefighters. Also, sporting sessions arranged with local youths who may have been previously responsible for attacks (West Yorkshire FRS)
- Fireball Scheme – using football as a link to young people in the community and a diversion tactic away from ASB and fire setting (Leicestershire FRS)
- Four stage approach to prevention; highlight the issue in the public arena, targeted education campaigns, not catching and prosecuting but focus on prevention, community engagement strategies (Northern Ireland FRS)
- Employment of Community Development workers (funded by the Home Office). Their role was specifically to develop and maintain links with minority ethnic communities, often including areas where firefighters had suffered attacks. This approach is considered essential to integrate with those communities where cultural differences may prevent traditional methods from working. (West Yorkshire FRS)
- Introduction of a dedicated Youth Diversion Team which has developed initiatives targeted at prolific offenders and those excluded from the education system, many of which may be responsible for ASB and attacks on emergency workers. Other one to one diffusion activities can be implemented following specific risk profiling. All youth activity should where possible form part of a co-ordinated, inter-agency approach to maximise efficiency and provide value for money. Adolescent Resource Centres in each Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership area have been recommended as a way forward for this co-ordinated approach. (Kent FRS)
- 12 week Prince's Trust Team programme by the Fire and rescue Service for 16-25 year olds that includes community cohesion input and also active member of the FRS Support Association for the Prince's Trust (Greater Manchester)
- An alternative approach may be the development of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts drafted between individuals and FRS. This contract could include clauses which specifically mention that the youth will not intimidate or attack emergency service workers.

Recommendation

New and existing FRS youth inclusion strategies should incorporate initiatives to prevent/reduce the impact of VAW against all staff. To ensure that these strategies are effective, FRS should consider partnerships and collaboration with other agencies. This can also assist with attracting additional resources. (Ref 7.3.1).

7.3.2 Education & Public Awareness

Raising public awareness of the consequence that attacks on FRS staff can have on the level of service provided to the community may assist in reducing its occurrence. Considerations when designing public awareness material include;

- Not depicting violent incidents
- Not berating the perpetrators directly to reduce the potential for copycat attacks
- Ensuring that the campaign forms part of an overall package in conjunction with other initiatives i.e. youth inclusion strategies.
- Ensuring that local staff are involved in the development and delivery of specific local campaigns.

Recommendation

All FRS should consider the need for targeted public awareness campaigns where it will assist in the reduction of VAW against staff.

7.3.3 Training

Recommendation

It is essential that staff who are responsible for the delivery of educational initiatives have received the appropriate training. These staff members, where appropriate should also have undergone relevant checks eg Criminal Records Bureau.

7.4 DATA CAPTURE MEASURES

- 7.4.1 The capture of relevant and timely data is essential in helping FRS prepare and respond to threats of violence to their staff. It can help in the identification of trends, relating to times, dates, nature and levels of incidents that occur.
- 7.4.2 The minimum data requirements placed on FRS in relation to “Attacks on Firefighters” are those laid down in Fire Service Circular 5/2005 relating to Fires of Special Interest (FOSI). All FRS should be collating this information.
- 7.4.3 FSC 5/2005 only covers collation of data relating to operational incidents. It would be appropriate to collect similar data for all other occurrences of VAW against staff and in all FRS roles.

7.4.4 In addition to the above data, consideration should be given to recording the following,

- Nature of work activity
- Geo-coding of incident location
- Offender profiles
- Areas of perceived risk
- Incident trends
- “Near Miss” reports

7.4.5 In all cases, Fire & Rescue Services must consider the provision of the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

7.4.6 In addition to the storage of data locally, the ability to present that data is considered essential. The usage of geographical information mapping systems present the opportunity to identify to others a graphic picture of the level of incidents within their area. This can help when working with partner organisations over issues relating to staff safety.

7.4.7 Where possible it is also relevant to enter into data sharing arrangements with stakeholder organisations experiencing similar issues. Such organisations might include,

- Other FRSs
- Police
- Ambulance Service
- Social Services

Although this list is not exhaustive, it is clear that a “joined-up” approach to data collection and sharing can help in the actions required to address VAW.

Recommendation

In addition to the minimum requirements covered by FSC 5/2005, FRS should make arrangements to collect data for all occurrences of VAW.

The data should be used to inform initiatives designed to reduce the impact of VAW and where possible shared with other relevant agencies.

7.5 WELFARE

7.5.1 Physical attacks are obviously dangerous, but serious or persistent verbal abuse or threats can also damage employee’s health through anxiety or stress.

7.5.2 Staff who have been physically injured as a result of VAW should, if required, obtain medical treatment as soon as possible. This should be recorded in accordance with local procedures and the police informed.

- 7.5.3 Where the injury is not physical staff welfare should be monitored and where necessary, advice sought from the FRSs Occupational Health provider. This should be recorded in accordance with local procedures and where appropriate the police informed.
- 7.5.4 Many FRS advocate Critical Incident Debriefs (CID) which enables staff, through a small group meeting, to talk over the facts of the incident and the effects on them.
- 7.5.5 Some FRS provide support and information to staff on the criminal justice system following incidents of VAW. This includes support through the duration of any legal proceedings.
- 7.5.6 Some FRS & Representative Bodies provide details and contacts of Victim Support Groups for personnel suffering acts of violence eg The Fire Brigades Union (Ref 7.5.6).

Recommendations

FRS should have in place a robust welfare strategy that includes;

- *staff awareness of the signs and symptoms following VAW*
- *a recognition of the problems facing victims of VAW*
- *a simple reporting and recording process*
- *a system of referral to occupational health*
- *an ability to provide and/or access appropriate and timely support*

Annex A

- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (1995)
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977 (a) and
- The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996 (b)
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Emergency Workers Act (Scotland) 2005

Annex B: List of Reference Documents

Below is a list of reference documents linked to the text contained within this guidance. The references below have identified specific FRSs who have developed strategies in certain areas that are considered 'good practice' and as such are commended to readers for further investigation. The reference documents listed under any one area are not designed to be exhaustive and, therefore, it is recognized that other FRSs will have similar or alternative strategies in place. This document does not discard any such activity but purely uses those quoted as a suitable point of reference in relation to any particular issue/recommendation.

7.1.1 Tyne & Wear standard operating procedure-incidents involving Local and Civil disturbances.

Youth hostilities towards fire-fighters-A Scoping Study for Greater Manchester FRS and Merseyside FRS.

Charlie Delta Group Report, South Wales FRS 2003

Antwerp-Code Red Procedure

Fire Brigades Union – Attacks on Fire-fighters report 2005

Standard Operating Procedures, Warwickshire FRS

7.1.2 Fire Brigades Union Attacks on Firefighters Labour Research Department 2005

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service Civil Unrest 2005

West Midlands Fire Service Civil Disturbances 2005

7.1.3 West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service Ops Procedure 54.

Fire Magazine "July 2005" – Protecting Fire Crews.

West Midland Fire Service – CCTV report

7.1.4 Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Incidents involving Local and Civil Disturbances (Ops Proc 5.6) 2003

7.1.5 Tyne & Wear Standard Operating procedure

National Guideline on ICS Structure to adopted

- 7.1.6 Tyne & Wear Incidents involving Local and Civil Disturbances-Aide Memoire
 - Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service – Operational Handbook
 - Kent Technical Bulletin – Aide Memoire
- 7.1.7 Suffolk F&RS Civil Disturbances
 - Kent F&RS Technical Bulletin
 - GMF&RS Operational Guidance and Policy Document – Civil Unrest
- 7.2.1 Fire Brigades Union, Attacks on Firefighters Report April 2005
 - Scottish Executive Research in PSW Report
 - Highlands and Islands Fire Brigade Conflict Avoidance
 - Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Violence at Work Strategy
- 7.2.2 Grampian FRS (Pre-emptive bonfire night initiative)
- 7.2.3 Health and Safety Executive website: www.hse.gov.uk/violence/index.htm
 - Scottish Executive website: www.infoscotland.com/violenceatwork
- 7.2.7 BBC Report 2001- reading the riot act.
 - BBC report 2002 – sticks and stones will break bones
- 7.3.1 Greater Manchester FRS – Hostilities towards Firefighters
 - South Wales F&RS – Charlie Delta Report
 - West Midlands – Overview of current preventative initiatives
 - FBU report by Labour Research Group
 - Fire Journal Article (Nov 02) – Yob culture countered
 - FBU – Acceptable behaviour contract
- 7.5.6 Highlands & Islands – Policy, procedure & guidance on conflict avoidance.
 - Fire Brigades Union – Free confidential stress and support line (0800 783 4778)

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- 7.7.1 'Strategy for Children and Young People: 2006-1010' (OPDM Nov 2005)
- 7.7.2 'Research into the effectiveness of youth training and diversion schemes' (ODPM March 2006)
- 7.7.3 'Risk Reduction Toolkit for Prince's Trust Team's (Fire & Rescue Services Prince's Trust Support Association September 2004: *under review*)

Annex C: Acknowledgement

CFOA and the Practitioners Forum wishes to thank all Agencies and Fire & Rescue Services who have assisted with the provision of information and its use in support of the work of the task and finish group in creating this document.

A list of those who have provided documentation, references and guidance can be found below.

Health & Safety Executive

Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service

Communities and Local Government Fire Services Inspectorate

Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service

Department for Communities & Local Government

South Wales Fire & Rescue Service

Scottish Executive

Surrey Fire & Rescue Service

Ambulance Services Association

Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Association Chief Police Officers

West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service

Copenhagen Fire Brigade

Grampian Fire & Rescue Service

Antwerp Fire Brigade

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service

Rotterdam Fire Brigade

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service

Brussels Fire Brigade

Kent Fire & Rescue Service

Finland Fire Brigade

West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Fire Services College

Leicestershire Fire & Rescue Service

Fire Brigades Union

South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service

Fire Magazine

Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service
Fire Engineers Journal
Fife Fire & Rescue Service
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service
Central Scotland Fire & Rescue Service
North Wales Fire & Rescue Service
Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service
Northampton Fire & Rescue Service
Highland & Islands Fire & Rescue Service
Tyne & Wear Fire & Rescue Service
Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service
Cleveland Fire & Rescue Service
Northern Ireland Fire Brigade
Durham & Darlington Fire & Rescue Service