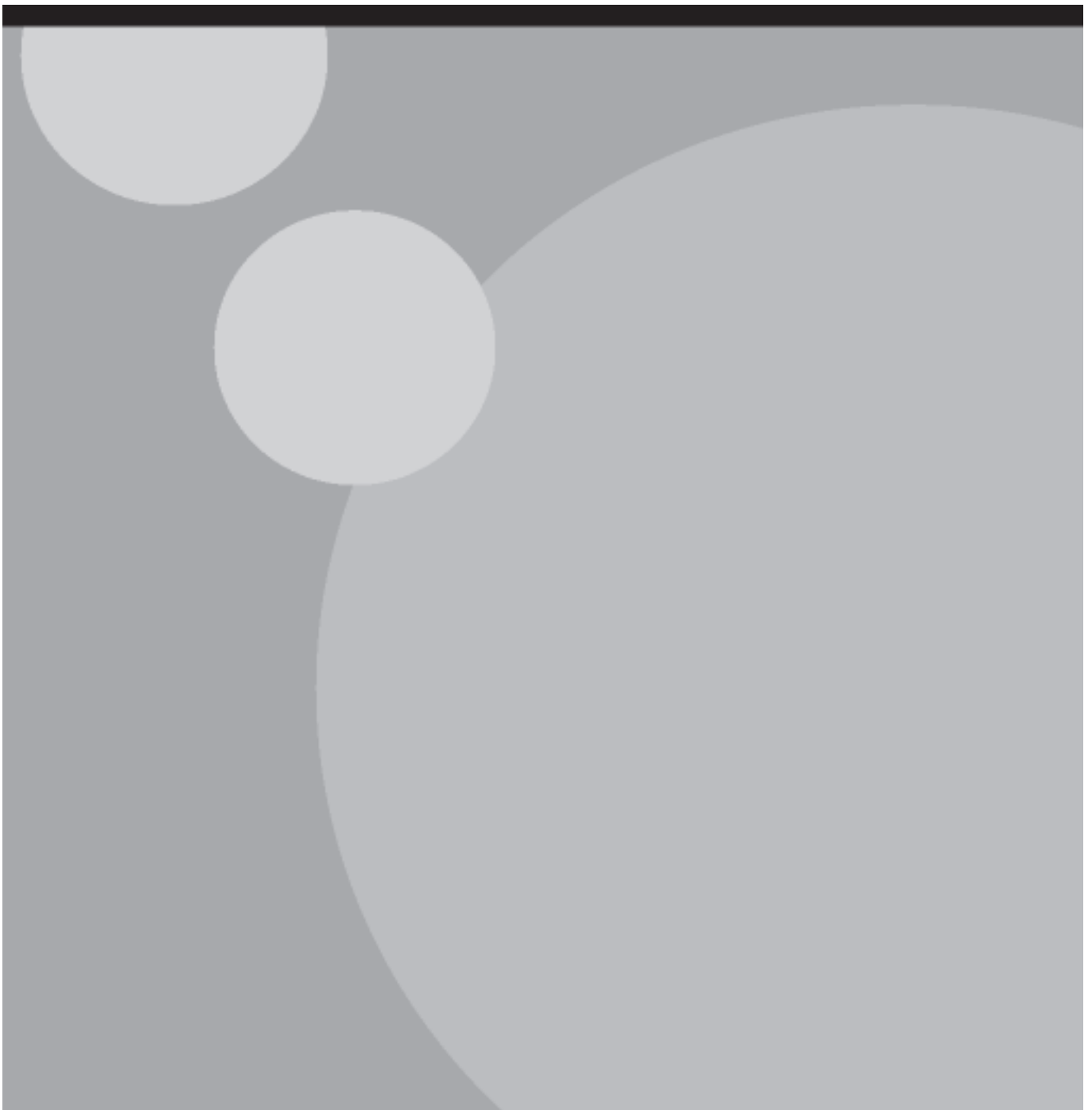




Reductions of annual returns data collected from Fire and Rescue Services and of Fires of Special Interest reporting

Consultation





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Interest reporting

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Department for Communities and Local Government
November 2010

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Summary of consultation

Scope of the consultation

Topic of this consultation:	Proposed changes to the data collected from Fire and Rescue Services by the Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department).
Scope of this consultation:	Data returns and reporting in the following areas: 1) Annual returns from Fire and Rescue Services to the Department on fire safety, health and safety, personnel and equality and diversity 2) Information reported in Fires of Special Interest reporting forms by Fire and Rescue Services to the Department.
Geographical scope:	England
Impact Assessment:	Not required as this is a technical consultation on data reported by Fire and Rescue Services to the Department.

Basic information

To:	Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and any other organisation or individual that uses information from the Fire and Rescue Annual Returns and Fires of Special Interest reporting forms.
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	Head of Profession for Statistics, Department for Communities and Local Government.
Duration:	From: Friday 26 November 2010 To: 5pm Friday 14 January 2011
Enquiries:	1) Annual returns: Daniele Bega daniele.bega@communities.gsi.gov.uk 0303 444 2824 2) Fires of Special Interest: Mark Dunn mark.dunn@communitites.gsi.gov.uk 0303 444 2814

	<p>3) Other comments relating to Fire and Rescue statistics:</p> <p>Gavin Sayer gavin.sayer@communitites.gsi.gov.uk 0303 444 2818</p>
<p>How to respond:</p>	<p>Please ensure that it is clear in responses whether comments refer to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Fire and Rescue Services Annual Returns <li style="text-align: center;"><i>or</i> 2) Fires of Special Interest (FOSI) reporting <p>A summary of proposals and consultation questions is detailed over pages 5 to 9.</p> <p>Please send responses, preferably via email, to: daniele.bega@communities.gsi.gov.uk</p> <p>or by post to:</p> <p>Daniele Bega Fire and Resilience Department for Communities and Local Government 3/E1 Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU</p>
<p>After the consultation:</p>	<p>The responses will inform the future scope of Fire and Rescue Service Annual Returns and Fires of Special Interest form reporting.</p> <p>A summary of the consultation responses will be published on the Department's website.</p>
<p>Compliance with the Code of Practice on Consultation:</p>	<p>As this consultation is targeted at Fire and Rescue Services and other users of these data, it is not subject to the 12 week period required for formal public consultation.</p>

1. Introduction

Aim

1.1 This consultation focuses on:

- 1) proposals to reduce non-financial annual data returns from Fire and Rescue Services to the Department for Communities and Local Government's (the Department).
- 2) proposals to terminate of the majority of data collected on 'Fires of Special Interest forms.

1.2 The consultation will run from **Friday 26 November 2010 to Friday 14 January 2011**.

Background

Non-financial annual returns from Fire and rescue Services

1.3 Fire and Rescue Services have long provided annual returns on a range of subjects including: fire safety audits, health and safety, community fire safety activity, other operational statistics such as on numbers of emergency calls, and staffing numbers. Twenty-one tables have been discontinued over the last two years largely following the 2009 Review¹. However, there have been far greater increases in volumes of equality and diversity data tables over recent years.

1.4 Headline statistics are published in Fire and Rescue Operational Statistics², along with more detailed data tables.

1.5 Users of these statistics in recent years include:

- Fire and Rescue Authorities
- representative bodies
- academics and other researchers
- commercial organisations
- government departments
- Office for National Statistics
- members of the public.

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/reviewfrsannualdatareturns> (June 2009)

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/researchandstatistics/firestatistics/firerescue/>

Fires of Special Interest (FOSI) forms

- 1.6 Appendix A lists the various circumstances when a Fire of Special Interest form is completed by Fire and Rescue Service and returned to the Department.

2. Proposals

2.1 Section 3 requests that responses to this consultation are made to the specific questions listed. The basis for this consultation is the following set of proposals.

Non-financial annual returns from Fire and Rescue Services

2.2 The proposed changes to the annual returns is as follows:

Subject matter	current number of tables (Spring 2010 return)	Proposed shape for Spring 2011 return and beyond	Description
Fire Safety Audits and related activity	10	10	Maintain the current data
Numbers of staff and FRS joiners	23	5	One table of staffing strength and head count by duty system (Wholetime, Retained, Control and Non-uniformed) by role. Four tables, one for each duty system, of headcount by role, by the six equality and diversity strands.
Leavers	20	4	Retain one table for each duty system of role by reason for leaving (disciplinary, medical, discrimination, performance, other employment, compulsory/voluntary age retirement, compulsory redundancy, voluntary redundancy, re-employment by another Fire and Rescue Service, re-employment as non-uniformed personnel, deceased, other).
Promotions	12	0	Cease collection

Subject matter	current number of tables (Spring 2010 return)	Proposed shape for Spring 2011 return and beyond	Description
Training	1	0	Cease collection
Health and safety	10	2	Continue to collect high level data on firefighter injuries for both wholetime and retained. Tables to retain types of activity (fires, road traffic collisions, other special service, operational training fitness training, other) and severity of injury (fatality, RIDDOR, other over three day, other)
FRS vehicle incidents and casualties	1	1	Continue to collect as per current data. Data cover numbers of vehicle incidents and casualties when travelling both with and without blue lights.
Community fire safety	5	1	Redesign into a single table containing numbers of home fire risk checks, and smoke alarms and automatic suppression systems fitted. Also hours and numbers of initiatives or visits to the following vulnerable groups (youth, elderly, disabled, single parent, other minority).
Emergency call types	1	0	Cease collection
Total tables	83	23	

Fires of Special Interest (FOSI) forms

- 2.3 In order to remove duplication and ease administrative burden, we propose that the requirement to complete and return Fires of Special Interest forms as set out in *Fire and Rescue Service Circular 22-2006* will end.
- 2.4 This would apply to all types of Fires of Special Interest forms including acetylene cylinder incident forms, but with the exception of “Category A6” returns. These are where a fire has occurred in a Crown premise and would still be required.
- 2.5 Additionally, the Department would like to continue to receive notification by phone or email to the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor duty officer of:
- serious injury or death of a firefighter
 - significant incidents and/or multiple fatalities.
- 2.6 It would not necessarily follow that individual Fire and Rescue Services should stop collecting other types of Fires of Special Interest form information for their own purposes, if it is felt locally that there is a use or need, or where there is a requirement to do so, such as Health and Safety recording.
- 2.7 Equally, this only applies to the completion and return to the Department of the actual Fires of Special Interest forms; it does not mean that information collected elsewhere on similar subjects such as in the Incident Recording System will stop.

3. Responses to this consultation

Consultation questions

3.1 If possible, we would particularly appreciate responses to be structured to address the following questions.

1. Annual returns (see 2.2)

- a) Are there any data items for which it is proposed to no longer collect, that you consider should be retained as national data sets?
- b) Of the data items for which it is proposed to continue to collect and compile into a national data set, which would you use?
- c) Do you have any suggestions for alternative or additional data collection not included in this consultation?

In answers to both a), b) and c), it is vital that you explain what data have or would be used and how, and in particular, the decisions informed by the relevant data.

- d) Do you have any further comments in relation to using the data from these Annual Returns? For example on the data themselves, or on the publication *Fire and Rescue Operational Statistics* and its accompanying data tables³.
- e) Overall, how do you consider the balance between value and burden of:
 - i) the proposed new arrangement of 23 tables.

Burden much greater than value	Burden somewhat greater than value	Balance about right	Value somewhat greater than burden	Value much greater than burden	Unable to say

- ii) the previous arrangement of 83 tables

Burden much greater than value	Burden somewhat greater than value	Balance about right	Value somewhat greater than burden	Value much greater than burden	Unable to say

³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/researchandstatistics/firestatistics/firerescue/>

- f) For Fire and Rescue Authorities/Services only:
 - i) How much burden would be reduced under the proposed reductions?
 - ii) Do you have any other comments from the perspective of supplying these data?

2. Fires of Special Interest

- a) Do you think there will be any significant gaps in available data caused by the removal of the requirement to submit completed forms to the Department. If so, please explain what they are.
- b) For Fire and Rescue Services only:
 - i) How much burden would be reduced under the proposed reductions?
 - ii) Do you have any other comments from the perspective of supplying these data?

3. Other comments relating to DCLG Fire and Rescue statistics

Further comments and suggestions from users would also be welcome, including for example:

- i) on the range of Fire and Rescue Statistics publications that it produces (list below), and
- ii) on methods of engagement with users of Fire and Rescue Statistics, for example in relation to the Fire and Rescue Statistics User Group (<http://www.frsug.org/>), and of possible new approaches, for example whether an opt-in email notification facility for dates of publication, and perhaps other notifications, would be of value.

DCLG Fire and Rescue statistics publications

Title	Content	Next edition
Fire and Rescue Service Operational Statistics	Data from annual returns as described in section 2.2.	September 2011 (data to March 2011)
Fire Statistics Monitor	Headline statistics and accompanying tables, of which 25 have FRS level figures.	Late January 2011 (data to September 2010)
Fire Statistics UK	Wide ranging data including analysis of fires and causes.	2009/10 edition by Summer 2011
Fires in the Home	Incidence of fires and smoke alarm ownership, with analysis by household characteristics.	By spring 2011 (data to March 2009)

4. Confidentiality and data protection

- 4.1 Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be disclosed in accordance with the access to information requirements (mainly the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, *Data Protection Act 1998* and the *Environmental Information Regulations 2004*). If you wish the information you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the *Freedom of Information Act*, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals with, amongst other things, obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation. However, we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality notice generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.
- 4.2 A summary of the responses to this consultation will be published on the Department's website www.communities.gov.uk. Any confidential responses will be included in the statistical summary of numbers of comments and views expressed, although the respondent will not be identified.

5. How to respond

- 5.1 This statistical consultation will run for four weeks from **Friday 26 November 2010** to **5pm on Friday 14 January 2011**.
- 5.2 When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents, and where applicable, how the views of the members were assembled.
- 5.3 Comments are invited from all interested parties who wish to be involved in this consultation process.
- 5.4 Please send your consultation response (by email or post) to:

Daniele.bega@communities.gov.uk

Daniele Bega
Fire and Resilience Directorate
Department for Communities and Local Government
3/E1, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

6. About this consultation

- 6.1 This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills and is in line with the seven consultation criteria, which are:
1. Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.
 2. Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.
 3. Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
 4. Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
 5. Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.
 6. Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.
 7. Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.
- 6.2 Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent, and where relevant who else they have consulted in reaching their conclusions when they respond.
- 6.3 Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the *Freedom of Information Act 2000* (FOIA), the *Data Protection Act 1998* (DPA) and the *Environmental Information Regulations 2004*).
- 6.4 If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.
- 6.5 The Department for Communities and Local Government will process your personal data in accordance with DPA and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

- 6.6 Individual responses will not be acknowledged unless specifically requested.
- 6.7 Your opinions are valuable to us. Thank you for taking the time to read this document and respond.
- 6.8 Are you satisfied that this consultation has followed these criteria? If not or you have any other observations about how we can improve the process please contact:

DCLG Consultation Co-ordinator
Zone 4/J1
Eland House
London
SW1E 5 DU

Or by e-mail to: consultationcoordinator@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Appendix A

Fires of Special Interest

Arrangements have been in place for some years for the Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department) to be notified of key fire safety matters. These are termed “Fires of Special Interest” . Details of FOSIs are passed to DCLG in accordance with Fire and Rescue Service Circular 22-2006.

The arrangements outlined in Circular 22-2006 include the use of four electronic templates for reporting Fires of Special Interest (FOSI) under the following headings:

- 1) “FOSI A” Standard FOSI notification
 - A1 Fire fatality
 - A2 Significant impact on the general public
 - A3 Abnormally fast fire spread
 - A4 Exceptional (over or under) performance of fire safety/CFS measures
 - A5 Significant operational difficulties
 - A6 Fire on Crown premises

- 2) “FOSI B” Death of a firefighter on duty
 - B Death of a firefighter

- 3) “FOSI C” Attacks on fire fighters and civil disturbances
 - C Attacks on firefighters and civil disturbances

- 4) A monthly return of the numbers of FOSI Cs

There is also a form for incidents involving acetylene cylinders although not formally part of the FOSI collection, is widely considered to be part of this data collection.

A FOSI form is an electronic word document that is completed by an individual within an FRS when incidents outlined above occur. They contain very basic information about an incident. They are emailed to the Department for collation.

It was intended that the data would be used by the Department to identify and monitor trends and to provide advice to Fire and Rescue Services. The data was also to be used as background information for ministers and other senior officials.

None of the information collated by the Department is published but it is made available upon request.

There are significant issues with this data collection that challenge its validity and reliability leading to both under-reporting and over-reporting of events depending upon the type of incident. The manual completion and return of forms to the Department by Fire and Rescue Service staff is also time consuming and burdensome.

Much of the data collated via Fire of Special Interest returns now can be retrieved from other, more reliable sources. For instance attacks on firefighters are now recorded in the new Fire and Rescue Incident Recording System which went live nationally on 1 April 2009. The first full year of data (up to March 2010) has been available since the end of August 2010.