



Home Office

Report by the Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue Authorities' progress with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

July 2016

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Authorities' progress with the Fire and Rescue
National Framework for England**

**Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue
Services Act 2004**

July 2016



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at Home Office
2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

Print ISBN 9781474135092
Web ISBN 9781474135108

ID 24061603 07/16

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by the Williams Lea Group on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 – Report by Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue Authorities’ progress with the Fire and Rescue National Framework

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (“the Framework”), made under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, is published on the Gov.uk website¹.

Section 25 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires the Secretary of State to report to Parliament every two years on:

- a) the extent to which fire and rescue authorities are acting in accordance with the Framework; and
- b) any steps taken by her for the purpose of securing that fire and rescue authorities act in accordance with the Framework.

The last section 25 report to Parliament was in July 2014. Following the publication of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report on the Financial Sustainability of Fire and Rescue Services on 17 February 2016, the Home Office agreed to continue to check that all fire and rescue authorities in England have published assurance statements to confirm that they have complied with the requirements of the Framework. In addition, the Home Office agreed to conduct a rigorous examination of a random sample of fire and rescue authority assurance statements to seek evidence that authorities have complied with the Framework. This has now been completed.

A representative sample of 20% of fire and rescue authorities was chosen across the different governance models for fire and rescue services – 3 combined fire and rescue authorities, 2 county fire and rescue authorities, 2 metropolitan fire and rescue authorities, a unitary authority and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority. Their 2014/15 assurance statements and, where appropriate, other documentation (for example their integrated risk management plans, governance statements or other available information) were examined to seek evidence that they had taken into account the requirements of the National Framework in reaching their decisions. Where evidence seemed to be inadequate or missing from published material contact was made with the authority to seek clarification.

The Home Secretary is satisfied that all are compliant, however there were some areas where practice could be strengthened and the Home Office will liaise with fire and rescue authorities to explore where further guidance in relation to this would be valuable. These include the consistency of approach on how fire and rescue authorities present their evidence and the information in support their Assurance Statement; sign off by the Chair of the fire and rescue authority; the timing of revisions to integrated risk management plans; the provision of more information on how National Resilience requirements were being met; and the value of highlighting examples that could constitute

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england>

best practice on assurance statements such as including a table of the requirements of the National Framework with references to evidence showing how each requirement was met.

All fire and rescue authorities are aware of the requirement to publish their annual assurance statements on-line and the Home Secretary is satisfied that all fire and rescue authorities have published their assurance statements for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

The assessment of compliance does not include an assessment of compliance with the fitness principles that were an addendum to the National Framework in December 2014. This reflects the more recent addition of the principles to the Framework, and the commitment to a thorough independent review when fire and rescue authorities will have had a reasonable period to ensure their policies and practices are in line with the Framework and when evidence of how these have worked in practice will be available. However, best practice guidance on firefighter fitness, published jointly by the Home Office, and the employers' and employee sides of the National Joint Council, includes a range of examples of positive action taken by fire and rescue authorities to support firefighter fitness.

In accordance with the above requirement, the Home Secretary is satisfied that fire and rescue authorities in England have been acting in accordance with the Framework, and has not taken any formal steps to secure compliance.

The Home Secretary is satisfied that each fire and rescue authority in England has:

- **Complied with the publication of their annual statement of assurance for financial year 2014-15;**
- **Complied with the publication of their updated Integrated Risk Management Plan element;**
- **Complied with the national resilience assurance elements.**

ISBN 978-1-4741-3509-2



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