

REPORT OF THE PERFORMANCE INSPECTION OF TAYSIDE FIRE BRIGADE 2004



HM Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland





PERFORMANCE INSPECTION REPORT
TAYSIDE FIRE BRIGADE

NOVEMBER 2004

A Report by
HM Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh

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ISBN 0 7559 4488 7

Scottish Executive
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for the Scottish Executive by Astron B39626 02-05

Published by the Scottish Executive, February, 2005

Further copies are available from
Blackwell's Bookshop
53 South Bridge
Edinburgh
EH1 1YS

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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Recommendations	6-7
Section 1 The Strategic Management of the Service	9
Section 2 Integrated Risk Management Planning	10
Section 3 Integrated Personal Development System	11
Section 4 Community Fire Safety and Local Government (Scotland) 2003	13
Section 5 Fire Safety Issues	15
Section 6 Heads of Agreement	16
Section 7 Diversity and Equality Issues	17
Section 8 Health and Safety	19
Section 9 Information/Communications	20
Section 10 Personnel Attendance Levels	21
Section 11 Freedom of Information Act	22
Section 12 IT and Data/Information Capture	23
Section 13 Duties under the Civil Contingencies Bill	24
Section 14 Funding	25





TAYSIDE FIRE BRIGADE

PERFORMANCE INSPECTION – 1, 2 AND 3 NOVEMBER 2004

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Background

As all Fire and Rescue Services across Scotland move towards implementation of The Modernising Agenda, the Inspectorate will inspect the Services between October 2004 and March 2005. The findings of the inspection will be reported to Ministers, the relevant Fire Authority, the Firemaster and will be available to the public.

Aims and Objectives of the Inspection

The aim of the inspection is to support, assist and, where appropriate or necessary, challenge the Fire Authority and the Service's progress towards modernisation in accordance with National Guidance and within Best Value.

The objectives of the inspection are -

To assess:-

- ◆ The overall strategic management of the Service;
- ◆ Progress on the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), including compliance with National Guidelines and timetables;
- ◆ Progress on the introduction of Integrated Personnel Development System (IPDS), including Rank to Role and the opportunities this presents particularly for retained/part-time and support staff;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's preparedness for the new Statutory Duty (Fire Service Bill) of Community Fire Safety and the duties contained within The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's plans to become the enforcing authority for all fire safety issues (Fire Service Bill);



- ◆ The degree to which the Fire Authority is utilising the service delivery flexibilities arising from The Heads of Agreement signed between The Employers and the Fire Brigades' Union in 2004;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's and the Service's progress on Diversity, Equality of Opportunity and Cultural Change and compliance with all relevant legislation;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's performance on Health and Safety at Work in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance;
- ◆ The Fire Authority and the Service's information flow, staff communications and general consultation arrangements across all groups of staff;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's performance in terms of staff attendance levels;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's performance and compliance with The Freedom of Information Act and general handling of complaints etc;
- ◆ The Service's ability to maximise Information Technology (IT) and central data capture;
- ◆ The Fire Authority's progress on identifying realistic efficiencies to enable the transitional funding for whole-time operational staff (provided by the Scottish Executive) to be absorbed over the Spending Review 2004 period; and
- ◆ The opportunities taken by the Service and/or the Fire Authority to review the uniformed Service establishment (Section 19 of The Fire Services Act 1947).



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is evident that the Service and the Fire Authority are in the “achieving” category in terms of service delivery and Best Value. The competency of the Firemaster and his team is evident throughout the organisation and this, coupled with the professional approach of the Fire Authority, is producing excellent progress in many areas.

The recommendations contained in this report are intended to both confirm areas which the Service is already addressing or presently considering, and to complement the existing action plans of both the Service and the Fire Authority.

I am pleased to report that the Service and the Fire Authority are effectively discharging their duties in accordance with the Fire Services Act 1947 against a backdrop of continuously striving to improve staff and public safety within a Best Value framework.

JEFF ORD

HM Chief Inspector of Fire Services

December 2004

Note: For further information relating to Tayside Fire Brigade visit their website www.taysidefire.gov.uk



RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 1 – The Strategic Management of the Service

1. Whilst not losing or diluting the improving IT arrangements that will support staff communication, the issue of face-to-face communications is of sufficient importance as to require additional consideration by the Firemaster and his team. The further empowerment of managers in all sections of the Brigade will assist this vital change management area. (Para. 1.3)

Section 2 – Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

2. The IRMP team should consider presenting an intervention options paper to the Firemaster in relation to house fires and road traffic accidents. (Para. 2.3)

3. Following the formal IRMP consultation period a first-year draft action plan should be produced prior to the introduction of IRMP (April 2005). (Para. 2.4)

4. The IRMP document should contain a reference to the agreement regarding appropriate/necessary working on nightshifts and public holidays. (Para. 2.5)

Section 3 – Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS)

5. An implementation programme and impact study for rolling out IPDS across the Service should be undertaken and reported to the Fire Board. (Para. 3.1)

6. The Brigade may wish to reconsider its approach to training reserve in light of the forthcoming removal of the recommended standards of Fire Cover. (Para. 3.9)

7. The Brigade may wish to examine the level of guide line scenarios included in multi pump exercises. (Para. 3.11)

Section 4 – Community Fire Safety and The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003

8. The Brigade should consider carrying out a strategic review on the impact, success and level of commitment in community fire safety work to identify priorities and evaluate the Brigade's capacity to deliver. (Para. 4.1)

9. The benefits of the work of FSEC should be fully utilised to support community fire safety initiatives. It is particularly important where areas of good practice have been identified such as the Electric Blanket initiative in Perth, which has highlighted a higher than average failure rate on these items. Examination of incident data may support the implementation of this initiative across the Brigade area. (Para. 4.4)

10. As the balance of work increases in the area of community safety, the Brigade may wish to review the many initiatives being developed by operational staff so as to maximise the benefits to all of the communities across the Brigade. (Para. 4.5)

11. With the continued development of new duties in this area, it would seem appropriate to further consider alternative staffing options to undertake certain elements of community fire safety work. (Para. 4.6)



Section 5 – Fire Safety Issues

12. Whilst the Brigade is presently reviewing the current and future workload in relation to all elements of fire legislation, the implications of the shift in staff from the legislative work to community safety should be monitored to ensure that the resulting workload is appropriately balanced with the new staffing arrangements. (Para. 5.2)

13. It is suggested that the Brigade should further consider the full range of staffing options available to them to deliver some elements of legislative work. (Para. 5.3)

14. The Brigade should monitor the legislative workload to ensure that it does not exceed staff capacity, particularly whilst the review process is being undertaken. (Para. 5.4)

Section 6 – Diversity and Equality Issues

15. The Equal Opportunities Orders would benefit from being edited into a more user-friendly form, perhaps a booklet, which covers the basics. (Para. 7.1)

16. More effort should be made to contact, and work in partnership with, the LGBT organisations in the Tayside area. (Para. 7.6)

17. Monitoring of the use of Contact Officers should be undertaken and a pro forma for reporting of cases developed. Ownership of the information held should be by the Equality Officer only and all records kept confidentially in a lockable drawer/cabinet. This evidence should be analysed regularly for any emerging patterns and training requirements. (Para. 7.3)

18. Tayside Fire Brigade must look at the ownership of the duties of the RRA. Its current Race Equality Scheme (RES) must be audited and reported on and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) undertaken for all new and existing relevant policies and procedures. These EIAs must also be published where any adverse results emerge. These requirements need to be part of the duties of each Head of Department, or delegated appropriately. They should not be the responsibility of the Human Resource or Equalities staff. The Senior Management Team need to take corporate responsibility for the duties under the Act and the reporting of progress. Reporting on the progress of the RES should be an ongoing agenda item in Management Team meetings. (Para. 7.5)

Section 7 – Health and Safety

19. The Brigade may wish to review both the Brigade Order and the application form relating to secondary employment.

Where appropriate, any application should require the secondary employer's endorsement so that they also fully understand and accept the primary employment conditions set out in the contract by the Fire Authority to prevent a conflict of employment interests. (Para. 8.5)

Section 8 – Information/Communications

20. The Brigade may wish to consider further engaging specifically with Retained staff on community safety and release for duty issues. (Para. 9.2)



Section 9 - Personnel Attendance Levels

21. The Brigade may wish to consider changing the title of the Sickness Absence management procedure to the 'Attendance Management' procedure to emphasise the employee value message that the latter engenders. (Para. 10.1)

22. The Brigade may wish to consider cross-linking the Riddor reporting procedure to section 2.2.3 of the attendance policy to assist with this issue. (Para. 10.2)

Section 10 – Freedom of Information Act

23. The Brigade should continue to support the introduction of this new legislation by ensuring that staffing is commensurate to the workload identified and to progress document control and information management as appropriate. (Para. 11.2)

Section 11 – Information Technology and Data/Information Capture

24. Further work should be carried out on the interface between FSEC and the BOSS software system and this needs to be progressed as soon as possible. (Para. 12.3)

25. There is also a need to produce limited amounts of data from the FSEC model, which is already being gathered, to stations and departments. This would allow staff to analyse the data and the running of planning scenarios which in turn would build up confidence in the use of the FSEC model at both strategic and practitioner level. (Para. 12.3)

Section 12 – Duties under the Civil Contingencies Bill

26. The Brigade should review existing business and contingency plans to identify the potential impact of a national emergency direction being made which could impact on existing service delivery and joint emergency planning assumptions. (Para. 13.1)

27. It is recommended that the Brigade enhance its training and exercise programme to further test arrangements and involve the deployment of mass decontamination facilities in neighbouring Brigades to test mutual aid and validate planning assumptions. (Para. 13.3)

28. In light of the type of scenarios now envisaged, the Brigade needs to widen its horizon in planning terms. This planning should also involve those emergency services and other agencies that would be expected to provide mutual aid or other specialist support to such an event. (Para. 13.5)

Section 13 – Funding

29. The Absorption of transitional funding provided by the Scottish Executive will have to be factored in to future budgetary plans. (Para. 14.1)



SECTION 1

1. The Strategic Management of the Service

1.1 During the inspection it was noted that the strategic management of the Service and the leadership it provides is of a highly competent standard. Without doubt the strategic direction and vision of the Service is driven by a quality management team and their values and standards are permeating throughout the organisation. Credit must go to the Firemaster and his team for their professional approach to all tasks, but equally so to the Fire Authority who pride themselves in the principles of setting policy and then allowing management to manage the Service whilst being accountable to the Authority and the community at large.

1.2 The challenges presented by the modernising agenda in the Service are considerable. However, the strategic ability of this team, coupled with the noticeable work rate of all staff, does place the organisation in a confident position to achieve good results. This is clearly assisted by the team's ability to prioritise issues and review on a regular basis coupled with a sincere desire to communicate in an open and transparent manner.

1.3 The Service is currently going through a restructure which inevitably leads to a degree of uncertainty amongst staff at all levels and the lengths management have gone to in order to communicate the proposals with staff is commendable. However, despite this, there is still a strong desire for even more communication. In particular, staff are concerned that as the Brigade's use of Intranet and other IT facilities improve, the opportunity for face-to-face communication will diminish. The Firemaster and his team are aware of this issue and are continually seeking ways to improve this area within the resource and staff time available. During the inspection the Firemaster and his team discussed with the Inspector the possibility of further empowering staff at the appropriate level (middle and junior managers) with even more information to allow them to complement the current range of staff communication methods.

GOOD PRACTICE

The Service recently embarked upon a branding exercise which is clearly more corporate than the previous Brigade Badge. Whilst the tradition of the Brigade Badge has not been lost, the new corporate brand appears on all aspects of the Service's image and profile. This has been a progressive exercise and has not incurred a budgetary increase. The benefits are a clear corporate identity and demonstration of a modern organisation which still has traditional values. It is helping to create an inclusive message to all staff about the culture of the Service. The Board and the Brigade are to be congratulated for this small, yet important, step towards a cultural shift in the Service.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Whilst not losing or diluting the improving IT arrangements that will support staff communication, the issue of face-to-face communications is of sufficient importance as to require further consideration by the Firemaster and his team. The further empowerment of managers in all sections of the Brigade will assist this vital change management area.



SECTION 2

2. Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)

2.1 The Brigade is on course to achieve the majority of milestones and guidance compliance as determined by the Scottish Executive. The relatively small number of areas in which the Brigade differs are acceptable as they are still achieving the same aims. In particular, the Fire Authority and the Brigade are to be congratulated for ensuring that IRMP is already embedded in the budgetary and planning processes of the Service.

2.2 The production of the draft IRMP ('Towards a Safer Tayside Consultation Document') is now available to all stakeholders and, once again, the Fire Authority is demonstrating a real commitment to meaningful consultation. The Service is making good use of the various software packages provided by the Scottish Executive in order to create the necessary databases and the predictive tools to assist in identifying future resource needs.

2.3 The IRMP team are in the process of gathering statistics and evidence on all risks. However, they do not now have sufficient historical evidence on house fire and road traffic accidents to enable them to present intervention options to the Firemaster and his team whilst still gathering evidence on other risks, i.e. commercial buildings etc.

2.4 At the time of the inspection, due to the consultation process entering its formal period of 90 days, it was not possible to view a definitive first-year action plan (as recommended in Scottish Executive guidance). However, the Firemaster is aware of the need to produce such a plan prior to the implementation of IRMP and to consider the results of the consultation exercise.

2.5 The long-running dispute which the Service has endured was ended with agreement on both sides relating to appropriate and necessary work being undertaken during nightshifts and on public holidays. In order that crew, watch and station commanders can utilise this flexibility (in a responsible manner) it is essential they have authority to do so. Inclusion in the IRMP of the "Agreement" will be of considerable assistance to managers who need empowerment to deliver safer communities, safer staff and achieve Best Value.

2.6 It is encouraging to note that in terms of operational planning scenarios and resulting resource requirements, the Service is utilising a range of reference materials in addition to incident experience and multi-tasking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. The IRMP team should consider presenting an intervention options paper to the Firemaster in relation to house fires and road traffic accidents.

3. Following the formal IRMP consultation period a first-year draft action plan should be produced prior to the introduction of IRMP (April 2005).

4. The IRMP document should contain a reference to the agreement regarding appropriate/necessary working on nightshifts and public holidays.



SECTION 3

3. Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS)

3.1 The Service, in partnership with The Scottish Fire Services College (SFSC) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association, is on course for the implementation of IPDS across the whole-time uniformed staff element. As highlighted in audits undertaken recently, they will now have to consider an implementation programme and impact assessment for extending IPDS to all other groups of staff. The senior management team are aware of this and the need to ultimately seek Fire Board approval for such dissemination.

3.2 It is commendable that the Board and the Service have introduced IT access to all fire stations and departments which will greatly enhance access to e-learning available from the SFSC and incorporated within the IPDS structure.

3.3 The delay in national guidance becoming available for the transition from Rank to Role has been disappointing. The Service has now taken the initiative to shadow a pilot scheme on this transition in another Brigade. This is sensible and should reduce further delay and duplication.

3.4 The Brigade is well advanced in its work on the introduction of IPDS. It has taken advantage of staffing opportunities arising from the review of the Brigade Emergency Tenders/Heavy Rescue capability to redeploy two staff into training support and training delivery. The Brigade is engaged at all levels on the issue of IPDS with its project plan due for review in January 2005.

3.5 Watch level training is being delivered at present to refresh previous training delivered prior to the national dispute which has clearly delayed some aspects of IPDS preparedness. Workplace awareness issues are being actively addressed.

3.6 The Brigade has a clear strategy on qualifying all watch officers as IPDS assessors and is working towards that objective.

3.7 The Brigade is actively developing its IT systems in support of IPDS and has developed its Intranet system to provide excellent underpinning for staff information availability. This, together with the pending Brigade restructure for training delivery and training support and the excellent training facility at Perth, is showing clear signs of an improving Service and improving staff development opportunities. Of particular note was the flexible, student-driven approach being taken at the Perth training centre with regard to Retained personnel. This allows Retained staff to attend mix crew courses/part courses should their full-time duty rota allow them to be off on days that courses are running.

3.8 The Brigade has a clear policy on training in relation to Hot Fire Training and is making full use of its Unit at Perth. All staff have completed the technical input required whilst there remains around 10% of all uniformed staff still requiring to go through the simulator. The flexible, student-led approach being used in relation to Retained staff is greatly assisting in this area.

3.9 'Training Reserve' is arguably being covered by dispatching all spare on-duty personnel, on a daily/needs basis to the training centre whilst all appliances remain on the run during exercises utilising them as 'last pump' for incidents. There appears to be a reluctance to consider utilising the full concept of training reserve, preferring to adopt the above alternatives.



3.10 The Brigade has fully developed the Incident Command system and it is in full operation.

3.11 Multi pump exercises are being undertaken within the training structure. However, the use of guide-lines during such exercises was missing, although the Brigade has identified this as a core element for 2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. An implementation programme and impact study for rolling out IPDS across the Service should be undertaken and reported to the Fire Board.
6. The Brigade may wish to reconsider its approach to training reserve in light of the forthcoming removal of the recommended standards of Fire Cover.
7. The Brigade may wish to examine the level of guide line scenarios included in multi-pump exercises.



SECTION 4

4. Community Fire Safety and The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003

4.1 The Brigade has a number of established partnerships and is involved with various external groups. In light of the increasing emphasis on community fire safety and the forthcoming expansion of existing statutory duties, staffing issues were part of the Brigade review of management restructure. This will consider resource implications to manage both existing obligations and developing challenges.

4.2 The new staffing arrangements create five Community Safety Liaison Officers (CSLO) and three Community Leading Firefighter (CFF) posts. These are designed to develop and support the change from intervention to prevention which supports its status as the first priority in the four key aims within the Brigade's corporate mission statement of "Protecting the Community".

4.3 Tayside Fire Brigade is full and active partners in the three local authorities' areas. These cover a variety of community and fire safety initiatives, such as Electric Blanket testing, Young Firefighters' programme and the Princes Trust. The development of the new posts within the department are clearly designed to better serve these community safety projects and to enhance co-ordination and development of local initiatives across the Brigade area.

4.4 At the time of inspection the use of validated data or evidence to provide a true measurement of the outcomes in regard to the success or otherwise of certain initiatives was only partly being achieved. However this issue has been recognised by the Brigade and the developing work resulting from the FSEC toolkit will be utilised to better inform and more accurately measure results and target resources.

4.5 It was noted that the Brigade has a clear policy to involve all operational staff in both community fire safety and, where appropriate, legislative work. There are some notable initiatives being driven both centrally and locally, such as in Kingsway Fire Station in Dundee, where staff were very proactive in identifying operational activity trends and implementing appropriate intervention strategies which are clearly having a positive impact on incident reduction and community safety.

4.6 Whilst the Brigade works closely with various council departments, police and numerous other partners in delivering many elements of its Community and Fire Safety initiatives, at present non-uniformed staff are not utilised at the front-end delivery side and the outcome of the recent review does not appear to consider utilising alternative staffing options for this purpose.

4.7 The Community Fire Safety toolkit is available and utilised across the Brigade. At present this is predominantly within the wholetime sector. The Brigade has also developed its own specific school toolkit for use by operational crews.



GOOD PRACTICE

The Firemaster and his team are encouraging (in a monitored and co-ordinated manner) the development of “bottom up” fire safety/awareness and educational initiatives from staff throughout the Brigade. This has the obvious benefits of allowing local staff to initiate local solutions to local risks. This is not being undertaken at the expense of national or strategic initiatives; it is simply complementary and encourages ownership of these challenges at the local level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. The Brigade should consider carrying out a strategic review on the impact, success and level of commitment in community fire safety work to identify priorities and evaluate the Brigade's capacity to deliver.
9. The benefits of the work of FSEC should be fully utilised to support community fire safety initiatives. It is particularly important where areas of good practice have been identified such as the Electric Blanket initiative in Perth, which has highlighted a higher than average failure rate on these items. Examination of incident data may support the implementation of this initiative across the Brigade area.
10. As the balance of work increases in the area of community safety, the Brigade may wish to review the many initiatives being developed by operational staff so as to maximise the benefits to all of the communities across the Brigade.
11. With the continued development of new duties in this area, it would seem appropriate to further consider alternative staffing options to undertake certain elements of community fire safety work.



SECTION 5

5. Fire Safety Issues

5.1 Following the recent Brigade restructure and in light of the forthcoming additional responsibilities under the Fire (Scotland) Bill, the department has recently undertaken a paper review of its inspection programme and reclassified them in order of risk. The outcomes of the reclassification process are now being validated as part of an ongoing physical inspection process to better identify workload in accordance with risk.

5.2 Currently, the profile of staff within the legislative section of the department is well balanced in terms of expertise and experience and there is a reserve of appropriately trained personnel throughout the Brigade who can be utilised where necessary. The Brigade does not experience difficulty in attracting staff into the department which is seen as an important element of career progression.

5.3 The Brigade utilises wholtime operational crews to undertake the majority of routine inspection work in the city areas and the recent restructure has created five inspecting officer posts for work in the rural areas of the Brigade.

5.4 Fire Safety legislative staff in Dundee indicated concerns that existing and future work may exceed the capacity of current staffing within the department.

GOOD PRACTICE

The Service is currently developing a Fire Safety Legislation/Inspection training programme for all operational staff. Once complete, this programme is to be adopted by all other Scottish Fire Brigades. This is an "in house" initiative on a Scottish-wide collaborative scale which is most welcome and will assist all Brigades in Scotland to achieve a consistency in terms of fire safety inspection programmes undertaken by operational crews.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Whilst the Brigade is presently reviewing the current and future workload in relation to all elements of fire legislation, the implications of the shift in staff from the legislative work to community safety should be monitored to ensure that the resulting workload is appropriately balanced with the new staffing arrangements.

13. It is suggested that the Brigade should further consider the full range of staffing options available to them to deliver some elements of legislative work.

14. The Brigade should monitor the legislative workload to ensure that it does not exceed staff capacity, particularly whilst the review process is being undertaken.



SECTION 6

6. Heads of Agreement

6.1 Evidence was found of good progress in all areas covering the Heads of Agreement. This was not just at Brigade level but also in terms of policies approved by the Fire Authority.

6.2 Recently, due to the flexibility afforded by the Heads of Agreement, the Brigade has been able to create new posts for Community Liaison Officers (five posts) and three leading firefighter liaison officers for the three local authority areas. All of these posts have been achieved through efficiencies and redeployment from elsewhere in the organisation. The Brigade is to be commended for its use of the Heads of Agreement and the afforded flexibility which is allowed for this type of redeployment. In total it is estimated that the value of the savings and efficiency this has created is almost £600,000 per annum and this amount has been redeployed into posts such as those in community fire safety.

6.3 The use of overtime is subject to a further review, particularly covering the two pump wholetime stations. This review will arise from the consultation period and following the implementation of Integrated Risk Management.

6.4 The Brigade and the Fire Authority went to great lengths to explain that at no time since 1979 has the establishment of Tayside Fire Brigade ever been increased. They consider this to be against a backdrop of all other Brigades in Scotland having increased their establishment over that period of time. This view is accurate and the Fire Authority and the Brigade is to be congratulated for having managed in this prudent manner. As a result of this, it is not envisaged that any early opportunities will be forthcoming to reduce the establishment. However, as stated earlier in this report, opportunities have arisen to create new vacancies for much needed areas of community fire safety and local authority liaison.



SECTION 7

7. Diversity and Equality Issues

7.1 Tayside Fire Brigade has done much to take forward issues of fairness and diversity in the workplace. There are a number of excellent policies and procedures which deal with these issues. The Equal Opportunities Orders are very comprehensive, if somewhat bureaucratic.

7.2 There are many examples of good practice and in particular, the work that has been carried out prior to the removal of the exemption relating to the Disability Discrimination Act. The Brigade had already taken steps to ensure reasonable adjustments are made for personnel prior to the exemption being removed. It has progressed well with the requirements of the Act and evidence was provided in support.

7.3 The Brigade has produced an equality training strategy which shows a great deal of thought being put into how equality training can be effectively delivered throughout the Brigade. This is an example of very good practice and should be shared with other Brigades.

7.4 Evidence was provided on the commitment to funding of equality and diversity, which was not previously seen as a priority. This is a welcome change and will assist in taking the agenda forward.

7.5 With regard to the responsibilities of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, there is little evidence that a corporate mainstreaming view has been taken. The responsibility for this piece of legislation remains with the Equalities Assistant and Human Resource Manager. This is not in the spirit of the legislation and will not achieve the required results. It is unfortunate as the Brigade has the best Race Equality Scheme of all Scottish Brigades, but a paper document is of no use without action to progress the issues contained within.

7.6 There was evidence to suggest that staff are becoming increasingly more aware of diversity and equality issues and this is to be commended. Recruitment figures show a slight increase and attendance at positive action events has increased also. One area which has been neglected slightly is building links with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) groups in Tayside. This should be looked at for progression.

7.7 The Brigade recently undertook an employee satisfaction survey of all staff. The work that has been done to take forward the issues arising from the survey is excellent. The communication between management and staff has been excellent in this regard and this is another area where the Brigade should be commended for tackling difficult issues with maturity and professionalism.

7.8 The Brigade has developed a number of good partnerships with local organisations to assist them in taking forward the equality and diversity agenda. The work that has already been undertaken and that which is planned for the future will serve to take Tayside Fire Brigade closer to a model of good practice in the equality and diversity field within the Scottish Fire Service.



RECOMMENDATIONS

15. The Equal Opportunities Orders would benefit from being edited into a more user - friendly form, perhaps a booklet, which covers the basics.
16. More effort should be made to contact, and work in partnership with, the LGBT organisations in the Tayside area.
17. Monitoring of the use of Contact Officers should be undertaken and a pro forma for reporting of cases developed. Ownership of the information held should be by the Equality Officer only and all records kept confidentially in a lockable drawer/cabinet. This evidence should be analysed regularly for any emerging patterns and training requirements.
18. Tayside Fire Brigade must look at the ownership of the duties of the RRA. Its current Race Equality Scheme (RES) must be audited and reported on and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) undertaken for all new and existing relevant policies and procedures. These EIAs must also be published where any adverse results emerge. These requirements need to be part of the duties of each Head of Department, or delegated appropriately. They should not be the responsibility of the Human Resource or Equalities staff. The Senior Management Team needs to take corporate responsibility for the duties under the Act and the reporting of progress. Reporting on the progress of the RES should be an ongoing agenda item in Management Team meetings.



SECTION 8

8. Health and Safety

8.1 The Brigade Health and Safety reference is being managed in a very professional and competent manner. The Brigade has employed a non-uniformed staff member to act as the 'Competent Person' and this has clearly had the effect of revitalising risk management. The Brigade is addressing a modernising agenda and attempting to ensure full integration of safety issues into the day-to-day management through a clearly defined Strategy and Policy structure.

8.2 The Brigade has been proactive in the appointment of a non-uniformed Safety Officer. However, there is evidence to suggest that performance indicators are only being developed by uniformed officers. There also appears to be a lack of support staff within the section.

8.3 The apparent historical problems the Brigade has had in maintaining an effective and fully inclusive safety committee structure have been actively addressed by the Safety Manager using alternative methods to achieve the same aim.

8.4 The Brigade is to be complimented on the 'virtual team' approach being developed of using multi-skilled middle managers to act in support of the safety function. This is to be commended and may be of interest to other Brigades working on integration issues. Equally, the Brigade is to be commended on its adoption of a modern and flexible approach to personnel studying for Safety Qualifications with some personnel being able to attain Neboosh Certificates through an open-learning programme.

8.5 The Brigade has an established secondary employment procedure for staff and formal approval is required before a member of the Brigade can undertake such work. This is incorporated in Brigade Orders, Part 15. This part sets out the rules applicable for staff making such a request. However, there appears to be an inconsistency between the Brigade Order and the application form.

The application process does not require the applicant's secondary employer to endorse the application confirming that they also accept the conditions set out in these procedures.

RECOMMENDATION

19. The Brigade may wish to review both the Brigade Order and the application form relating to secondary employment.

Where appropriate, any application should require the secondary employer's endorsement so that they also fully understand and accept the primary employment conditions set out in the contract by the Fire Authority to prevent a conflict of employment interests.



SECTION 9

9. Information/Communications

9.1 All senior staff had a clear understanding and commitment to the modernising agenda and could engage on a wide range of issues affecting the Brigade.

During visits to retained/part-time staff, they apparently saw no great change to how they currently deliver the service. They expressed concerns that the modernisation agenda would have a detrimental effect on aspects of their role.

9.2 The retained staff saw issues such as community fire safety as not having much application to them. They believed that work in this area would place greater pressures on employers not to release them as an issue needing to be addressed.

9.3 The opportunity was taken to speak to Trade Unions representing various departments in the Brigade and the feedback was generally positive, although everyone made mention of the amount of change that is occurring in the Fire and Rescue Services across the UK. It was also noticeable that many events have been held to raise money for charities. In particular, the work that is undertaken across the Brigade for the Scottish Burn Children's Fund is extremely impressive and evidence of the commitment of staff towards these important areas of need which, in turn, improves morale.

9.4 Opportunities were taken to visit a number of fire stations throughout the inspection period. Generally the morale and the spirit appears to very positive, although there are some areas of uncertainty and concerns, particularly in the control room and also found in the retained element of the Service. However, overall staff have confidence in management's and the Fire Authority's ability to lead them through the reform agenda.

9.5 The Brigade has a formal procedure in place for handling both complaints and letters of appreciation and, on the evidence provided, the level of complaints is low. Examination of the examples provided a clear and concise audit trail on the outcome of each investigation and the feedback to the complainant.

RECOMMENDATION

20. The Brigade may wish to consider further engaging specifically with Retained staff on community safety and release for duty issues.



SECTION 10

10. Personnel Attendance Levels

10.1 It was noted that the Brigade has employed 'Geneva' consultants to deliver core training to senior staff on managing attendance. From this it has developed a robust 'Sickness Absence management procedure'. The policy is a proactive management tool and is currently being revised.

10.2 Under the 2002 policy, personnel had no need to indicate after three days if they were continuing on sick leave, whilst the draft 2004 policy requires personnel to indicate at day four if they are continuing on sick leave and for how long. It was noted during the Health and Safety section inspection that the Brigade has some problems with identifying personnel whose absence constitutes a Riddor event.

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. The Brigade may wish to consider changing the title of the Sickness Absence management procedure to the 'Attendance Management' procedure to emphasise the employee value message that the latter engenders.

22. The Brigade may wish to consider cross-linking the Riddor reporting procedure to section 2.2.3 of the attendance policy to assist with this issue.



SECTION 11

11. Freedom of Information Act

11.1 The Brigade is collaborating with the Scottish CFA forum to establish the necessary policy and procedures. The model Publication Scheme developed in this arena has been adopted and approved by the Scottish Information Commissioner. A copy of all the relevant documentation setting out the procedures and arrangements for the Brigade on the discharge of functions and responsibilities was provided as evidence.

11.2 It is recognised by the Brigade that this work is likely to place additional demands on staff and resources and they have utilised an existing staff member to manage this work and additional support for this post is being considered.

11.3 The Brigade has also carried out separate information audits, both internally and by external consultants, to inform on the establishment of appropriate and robust record management and to catalogue information in standard format.

11.4 The Brigade has resources and trained staff in place to manage these arrangements and provide appropriate staff training and an awareness programme. All information is fully available on the Brigade intranet system. To support these arrangements, a bid has been made to fund the provision of a complete record management system. This has not been progressed at this time due to competing financial pressures.

RECOMMENDATION

23. The Brigade should continue to support the introduction of this new legislation by ensuring that staffing is commensurate to the workload identified and to progress document control and information management as appropriate.



SECTION 12

12. Information Technology and Data/Information Capture

12.1 The Brigade appeared to be clear about the future direction and resources required in order to make sure that all staff, no matter on which site location, are connected through information technology. The recent appointment of an Information Technology Manager is another clear signal of the commitment both the Brigade and the Fire Authority have to this important area.

12.2 A private network, using broadband technology, has recently been established and is connecting up all stations and sites. At present the roll-out programme is extending across retained fire stations. All members of staff had their own password and full internet, intranet and e-mail access.

12.3 The Brigade, under the direction of the IT Manager, has adopted the Fire Service Emergency Cover software coupled with the BOSS software package. They are now utilising these with their own Terrian software system. There is no evidence at present to show that all three of these integrated software packages are beginning to be used or show any benefits at fire stations or the Community Fire Safety Department. However, it is hoped that this will be evident in the near future.

GOOD PRACTICE

The roll-out of IT access to all stations/departments has allowed the Brigade to initiate e-procurement practices. In particular the ability of fire stations and departments to order work wear on line direct from the supplier is an excellent example of utilising e-procurement. The Service has been able to make efficiencies within their procurement section as a direct result of this initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

24. Further work should be carried out on the interface between FSEC and the BOSS software system and this needs to be progressed as soon as possible.

25. There is also a need to produce limited amounts of data from the FSEC model, which is already being gathered, to stations and departments. This would allow staff to analyse the data and the running of planning scenarios which in turn would build up confidence in the use of the FSEC model at both strategic and practitioner level.



SECTION 13

13. Duties under the Civil Contingencies Bill

13.1 The existing emergency co-ordinating structure within the RECAP group for the Tayside Fire Authority area provides an established strategic and working group arrangement which supports multi-agency business continuity planning. The Brigade is an established partner and work in this area is being developed to manage any additional responsibilities emanating from this Bill.

13.2 The development of a risk register is being undertaken as part of IRMP and a specific mutual aid arrangement has been formulated to support resource deployment to catastrophic incidents outwith the Brigade area.

13.3 The Brigade has established and implemented an appropriate training and deployment strategy for decontamination arrangements in Tayside, and awareness amongst the staff sampled indicated a satisfactory understanding of these arrangements.

13.4 The Brigade has actively participated at tactical and strategic level in multi-service exercises within the RECAP arrangements. However, the recent industrial dispute has restricted operational involvement with the equipment to test capability, competence and procedures.

13.5 The Brigade has established a clear policy and appropriate deployment strategy for this new area of work. This has been incorporated into the development of the new demountable appliances for the replacement of the existing emergency tenders in Dundee and Perth, to provide the flexibility necessary to support both normal operational requirements and national resilience.

13.6 The Brigade, along with their partners on the RECAP emergency co-ordinating group, are reviewing existing contingency plans for the risk register in their area. However, on the evidence provided, this review has not presently covered or identified all potential risks commensurate with current planning assumptions. It is encouraging that Principal Officers of the Brigade are included in regular briefing with their Police colleagues on contingency matters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

26. The Brigade should review existing business and contingency plans to identify the potential impact of a national emergency direction being made which could impact on existing service delivery and joint emergency planning assumptions.

27. It is recommended that the Brigade enhance its training and exercise programme to further test arrangements and involve the deployment of mass decontamination facilities in neighbouring Brigades to test mutual aid and validate planning assumptions.

28. In light of the type of scenarios now envisaged, the Brigade needs to widen its horizon in planning terms. This planning should also involve those emergency services and other agencies that would be expected to provide mutual aid or other specialist support to such an event.



SECTION 14

14. Funding

14.1 Both the Fire Authority and the Brigade operate within Best value Criteria and it is accurate to state that a "prudent Regime" is established within both the Revenue and Capital budgets. The Capital Expenditure involved in the recent upgrade to the training facility at Perth is an excellent example of innovative procurement processes.

The Fire Authority will have to plan for the absorption of the transitional funding which has been made available by the Scottish Executive to part fund the Modernising Agenda and, whilst it is accepted that the opportunity for short-term efficiencies and/or savings is limited, this "absorption" will have to be factored into future budgetary planning.

RECOMMENDATION

29. The absorption of transitional funding provided by the Scottish Executive will have to be factored in to future budgetary plans.



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Astron B39626 02/05



ISBN 0-7559-4488-7



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