# OPERATIONAL NEWS

LFB

The quarterly newsletter for all London Fire Brigade operational staff Issue 20 **November 2011**


## Firefighting in basements

Firefighting in basements can be a high risk activity. Physically demanding conditions caused by extreme temperatures are often encountered, along with risks associated with the thermal barrier and ventilation, high fire loadings and communications difficulties.

Ventilation of the basement must be considered by the incident commander (IC) prior to committing BA teams. This decision must take into account the impact this action may have on people in the premises and the increased potential for uncontrolled fire spread. These risks should be weighed against the potential benefits for firefighters entering or people evacuating the building. Ventilation must only be undertaken on the order of the IC and, under no circumstances, should a building be ventilated whilst BA teams are committed in the basement.

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# High rise firefighting

Pre-planning continues to form the foundation for the successful conclusion to any incident. The new high rise procedure reflects this by recommending that training and exercises are included in station and borough training plans. These plans should take into account issues likely to be experienced, such as the failure or absence of fixed installations.

Any visit to a high rise building should be used as an opportunity to pre-plan; this will include the location of the LFB premises information box (if fitted) as well as the accuracy and completeness of information provided including evacuation plans. Any high rise buildings which pose a particular risk should be subject to 7(2)d visits. During any visit

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**INSIDE**



Operational News reflects important operational issues for staff. Topics are identified from our robust audit and review processes which include performance reviews of command and operations, supplemented with articles on new equipment or procedures that reduce risk. Where appropriate training packages on page 4 provide further information on the topics covered.

### High rise firefighting
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to a high rise properly crews should be looking out for defects or modifications which may compromise the buildings inherent fire safety features. These checks should include damaged self closing doors which would allow smoke travel, pipe runs not fire stopped and missing or damaged rising mains. Defects should be reported to borough management fire safety teams using form FSR-A020-a2b(rev 2).

On arrival at an incident, the first crews in attendance must secure a water supply. The hydrant supply and deliveries must be twinned with 70mm hose.

Consideration must be given to the risk posed from debris which may fall around the base of high rise buildings and injure people or cut through hose lines.

Where dry rising mains (DRM) are not available or water requirements exceed the maximum capacity of the DRM (1500 litres/min), other options for supplying water to upper floors should be used, such as hauling hose aloft, use of aerial appliances or laying hose up staircases.

The fire lift should be identified and a firefighter detailed to take control of the lift car. It is of vital importance that the IC identifies the fire floor and briefs crews accordingly before personnel ascend the building. Crews should exit the lift at least two floors below the fire floor.

Breathing Apparatus (BA) must be worn by all personnel proceeding beyond the bridgehead. The only exception is in circumstances where a search is required in an area not affected by fire or smoke and the IC has confirmed the building construction and any fire engineered solutions have not been compromised.

A safety officer should be appointed at the earliest opportunity to monitor conditions in the staircase or shaft where the bridgehead is located. If conditions deteriorate, it may become necessary to re-position the bridgehead and in these circumstances, the IC should consider the need to immediately withdraw all BA crews.

# USE OF AKRON TURBOJET BRANCH

Information from recent accident investigations and incident monitoring data has highlighted the following issues regarding the use of the Akron Turbojet branch:

- Crews are not setting the flow rate on the branch prior to entering the fire compartment or
- They are setting it too low for the task being performed.

A failure to adjust the settings of a branch may lead to firefighters placing themselves at risk by having either insufficient water to extinguish or control the fire or inadequate protection if the fire escalates.

The Akron Turbojet branch has four flow settings, 115, 230, 360 and 475 litres per minute (l/min)and its operating pressure is 7 bars. Before entry to the fire compartment or building, the branch must be tested to ensure an effective working jet and spray are available and all flow rate settings are available.

The correct flow rate should be set before entry and relayed to the pump operator as this information is important in determining whether additional jets can be added. To extinguish a fire the amount of water applied must be sufficient to absorb the heat generated. Factors to be considered when determining which setting is used include:

- Size of the compartment and building.
- Contents of the compartment and building.
- Extent of the fire and potential for spread.
- Signs of or potential for rapid fire development.
- Effects of ventilation on the fire.

The 115 l/min setting should only be used for damping down and turning over or for using the Akron Turbojet branch at the head of a ladder.

The initial flow setting for carrying out gas cooling must be a minimum of 230 l/min which can be quickly adjusted up to a higher setting should a greater volume of water be required. Crews are reminded that gas cooling techniques are used to make the fire environment safer for firefighters and are not designed to be used to replace a direct style of fire attack. Firefighters must be aware that the application of an appropriate sized jet is still required to ensure a fire is extinguished quickly while providing maximum protection for crews.

Hose reels should not be used as a substitute for main jets and the Akron Turbojet branch should always be used for the following type of incident:

- Basements.
- High rise premises.
- Large volume commercial structures.
- Premises with high ceilings (over 5m).
- Structural fires (where fire has breached original compartment).
- Railway arches.
- Any signs and symptoms of flashover/backdraught.

### Firefighting in basements
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In order to enter a basement that is alight, BA teams may need to pass through thermal barrier. BA teams should descend as quickly as possible with the branch set to spray to protect them from heat.

BA teams entering a basement must have a sufficient weight of attack of a minimum 45mm jet, their exit route must also be protected by a minimum of one additional 45mm jet in order to maintain safe exit routes for committed BA teams. Once these teams are in place as described, a message should be sent to Brigade control stating "basement procedure implemented", and the IC must ensure that Stage II BA entry control is set up.

# MULTI-AGENCY LIAISON AT INCIDENTS

During the past year there have been several entries recorded on the Incident Monitoring Process Database regarding liaison with other agencies.

Many comments made related to working with officers of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). It is expected that we will work closely with officers of the MPS because many of the incidents we attend are also attended by the police. A recent example highlighted the importance of accurate and complete information exchange and the need to ensure that information from other agencies is correct, current and valid.

LFB crews were mobilised to a house fire. On arrival, the officer in charge was informed that persons were believed to be involved. Subsequent information from the police revealed that the casualty had been lead from the premises prior to the arrival of the Brigade and was in the care of the London Ambulance Service.

It is imperative that the incident commander makes early contact with the most senior police officer at the scene to share all available information and agree a coordinated approach to resolving an incident.

Comments on the database relate to the interaction between services at incidents involving hazardous substances and the importance of developing a safe system of work that all attending agencies understand and work within.

It should be remembered that LFB have the lead role in resolving incidents involving hazardous materials. This includes emergency decontamination and assisting health services in the event of mass decontamination. LFB are currently the only agency at this type of incident with an appropriate range of detection identification and monitoring (DIM) equipment to assess that levels are within safe limits and to declare an area safe.

There have been occasions recently when responders have been called to attend chemical suicides where LFB staff have been informed that the area has been declared a crime scene and they cannot enter. It should be noted that, as with any other call to a chemical/hazmat incident where people are involved, the LFB and LAS have primacy to enter and establish a safe environment for the LAS to confirm life extinct. Only when this has been achieved should the scene be handed over to the MPS to proceed with their investigation.

# FIRE SURVIVAL GUIDANCE CALLS POLICY

A policy on fire survival guidance (FSG) calls will be published shortly. The following article explains what a FSG call is, the resources mobilised and describes the actions required by personnel on the incident ground.

A FSG call is a call received into control where the caller believes that they are unable to leave their premises due to the effects of fire, and where the control room operator remains on the line providing appropriate advice.

The policy lists the information that control should pass to the incident ground and explains how this information will be recorded and retained for use by the incident commander (IC).

Control will treat a single FSG call to a house or building as persons reported and mobilise that pre-determined attendance (PDA). It is still the IC's responsibility to send a priority and subsequent informative message if the incident involves or is suspected to involve persons.

Two or more FSG calls or a FSG call at a high rise attendance, in addition to attracting a persons reported attendance will attract a further dedicated attendance of a pump ladder, a command unit and a station manager. This attendance is additional to any other resources that have been requested or are en-route.

Control should gather the following information from the caller as it becomes available and pass it to the incident ground:

- Number of flat/house.
- Number of people involved.
- Location of caller within premises and access point.
- Condition of their location, for example heavy smoke, slight smoke.
- Proximity to fire if known.
- Latest advice given by Control.
- Time of FSG call.
- Time updated.

This information will be recorded on the incident ground on a Control information form which will be available on every front line appliance.

It is vital that Control is kept informed of the actions being taken to resolve each FSG call. The fact that Control is aware of the actions being carried out on the incident ground will greatly enhance the advice given to FSG callers.

As soon as resources allow, the IC should give priority to appointing a dedicated officer (minimum role of SM) to collate, record and retain all the information on FSG calls received and the subsequent actions on the incident ground.

CUs carry a casualty information form to record information on all FSG calls in progress at an incident. The casualty information form will also be available on the incident information board (on trial) for use at a bridgehead or other scene of operations. This will allow accurate information transfer between a CU and scene of operations.

## WATCH TRAINING PACKAGES

Training packages, associated with operational news issues, are available for your immediate use. They can be accessed via an ICON on your desktop which links to all the current training materials related to the items below and previous packages. Additionally there are links to trainee packages and support material. Just click on this ICON on your desktop.


Red represents training themes are mandatory for all watches.

Amber represents training themes are mandatory for all watches to which they are relevant. These will be detailed within the training guidance.

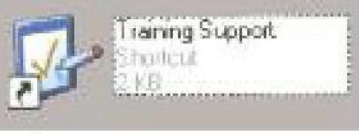
Green represents optional and can be included in the watch training programme at the discretion of the WM based upon identified watch training needs.

| Article | Training | Guidance and supporting information | STEP – Recording reference (Create on STEP) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High rise firefighting** | Article and package | Training support pack (high rise incidents) available through training support icon – training presentations – operational news training<br>This is an updated package | Lecture/training notes/training/ high rise incidents |
| **Firefighting in basements** | Article and package | Training support pack (basement firefighting) available through training support icon – training presentations – operational news training<br>This is an updated package | Lecture/training notes/training/ basement firefighting |
| **Use of Akron Turbojet branch** | Article | Policy 632 – Branch Akron 1720 Turbojet<br>Training support pack (BA refresher and real fire training) available through training support icon – training presentations – operational news training | Lecture/assets – equipment/ OPS equipment – hose and hose accessories/branch Akron 1720 Turbojet<br>Lecture/training notes/training/BA refresher and real fire training |
| **Multi-agency liaison at incidents** | Article | Policy 65 – Cooperation with the police<br>Policy 408 – Incident command | Lecture/incident management – liaison with other agencies/police/cooperation with the police – 65<br>Lecture/incident command – command procedures/incident command procedures/incident command – 408 |

A range of practical drill options for the above subjects are recordable under – drill/*use pull down list for appropriate drill.

## SENIOR OFFICER COMPUTER BASED TRAINING (CBT)

Computer based e-learning training packages are available for your immediate use. They can be accessed via an ICON on your Desktop which links to the Brigade's knowledge centre.




| Article | Training | Guidance and supporting information | Knowledge Centre – Recording reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fireworks** | CBT package | Bespoke e-learning modules with support materials are now available through the knowledge centre which is accessible through the training support icon on your desktop.<br>**These e-learning packages are mandatory for all group and station managers. They must be completed within three months of the publication of this Operational News.** | All package completions will be recorded on individual training records (ITR) which will be updated on a monthly basis allowing managers to monitor progress. |
| **Roof structures** | CBT package | | |
| **Dealing with roof fires** | CBT package | | |
| **Fire investigation** | CBT package | | |