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LONDON
FIRE SERVICE OFFICE
HORSEFERRY HOUSE
15 OCT 1993

HOME OFFICE
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The Chief Executive, County Councils
in England and Wales
The Clerk to the Fire and Civil Defence
Authority
The Chief Fire Officer

12 October 1993

Dear Sir or Madam

**FIRE SERVICE CIRCULAR 10/1993
TRAINING OF FIRE CONTROL STAFF**

1. Fire Service Circular 2/87 contains advice on training for Fire Control staff, including recruit and continuation training and examples of syllabuses, a qualified operator's test and assessment criteria. It also refers to the need for Fire Control staff to be familiar with the principles of fire safety, the aim being to equip staff with the basic knowledge which would enable them to give advice; - get out, close the doors etc.

2. While this approach is adequate in the vast majority of cases, in some cases a different approach may be needed. In the situation where, for example, the caller is prevented from escaping due to location (such as high rise flats) and/or smoke density, or for some other reason is in danger, the operator taking the call may need to give very specific safety instructions in addition to establishing the location of the incident for mobilising purposes. Additionally, in circumstances such as these a fire control operator may need to take into account that the normal procedure of calming the caller may not be appropriate, and may even be dangerous in some circumstances.

3. In the light of this, in June 1991 the Joint Training Committee of the CFBAC agreed to set up a working group to review and update Fire Service Circular 2/87.

4. Having reviewed the circular the working party concluded that the majority of the recommendations contained within the document remain valid and require little change. However the following recommendations are commended to brigades.

5. Initial / Recruit Training

All recruits to the fire control should be given a training course lasting a minimum of 3 weeks (during which time the recruit should be regarded as non-operational). The course should cover a number of specific areas (listed in Appendix A) but it is for individual brigades to decide what emphasis to give particular subjects and to decide the order in which they should be taught, according to their own circumstances. It is, however, recommended that at the end of the course recruits should be assessed to see whether they are of a sufficient standard to perform as an operational member of control or whether they need further training.

6. Recruits with between 8 and 12 weeks of service who have gained some initial call handling experience should be given further training in emergency call handling techniques and fire survival guidance, to enable them, when dealing with callers who are trapped in domestic accommodation, to make a proper assessment of the situation, give appropriate advice where necessary and otherwise assist in minimising the hazard to the caller. An example of an appropriate training programme is given at Appendix B.

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7. Continuation Training

Following completion of initial training, when the recruit is attached to the watch, further (continuation) training should be carried out progressively with the aim of improving skills and knowledge gradually. This should include the training set out in Appendix B.

8. Probationer Training

All Fire Control staff are appointed under conditions which include a probationary period (of varying lengths). It is therefore recommended that:-

- a. During the induction course the recruit should be introduced to a probationary period syllabus and given a basic appreciation of the skills and techniques in which they must become efficient during the probationary period.
- b. The officer in charge of the watch should be appraised of strengths and weaknesses the recruit may have and should be primarily responsible for their progress during their probation. The use of personal training records is recommended, as is the use of counselling interviews.
- c. The probationer should be issued with training notes and any other notes for guidance which will be of assistance.
- d. The training programme should be geared to a series of work programmes each covering a set period of probation with a minimum list of skills that the probationer should acquire during the period. Some of the probationer's training needs will be met during watch training, others will need to be met by personal study. Proficiency tests should be held at regular intervals and progress reports made to monitor the probationer's progress on a regular basis.
- e. On completion of the probation it is recommended that a final interview be held at which further career development and scope for improvement can be discussed. (A check list of items that may be of use in the assessment of a recruit, not only at first interview but throughout probation, is at Appendix C.)

9. Post Probationer Training

In the post-probationary period, training should be designed firstly to advance the operator towards fully qualified status and secondly to provide refresher training, particularly when new equipment is introduced.

During the third year of service Fire Control Operators should undertake a training programme to consolidate the training received during and since completion of their probation period, and to identify areas of further study which may be necessary to prepare for the Qualifying Test. An example is given at Appendix D.

10. The Qualifying Test

To fully qualify as a Fire Control Operator an operator must pass an appropriate test compatible in terms of standard with a fully qualified firefighter's test. Such a test (which will normally be taken after the operator has completed between 3 and a half and 4 years service) should comprise 3 parts; - oral, written and practical. So far as the oral and written test are concerned, a list of the areas which should be covered is at Appendix E. Advice on an appropriate practical exercise is at Appendix F.

11. Watch Refresher Training

It is recommended that on-watch refresher training should be given to all fire control staff on a systematic basis, i.e. it should be both scheduled and monitored. The subject matter will depend on local circumstances but emphasis should be given to little-used procedures or areas of weakness. It is recommended that Brigade Training Officers should be encouraged to participate in the training to augment the efforts of Fire Control Officers.

12. Familiarisation Training

A familiarisation course should be provided for personnel returning from absence through sickness, injury or maternity leave of six months or more, to update them on brigade procedures and ensure that they are of the correct professional standard for return to duty. The course should last a minimum of two days.

13. Progression Courses

It is sometimes difficult for brigades to run training courses exclusively for Control staff. Consideration should therefore be given to developing integrated training suitable for Control and other brigade staff, to perfect current skills and prepare personnel for higher rank. Examples are given at Appendix G.

14. Fire Service College Courses

There are three courses specifically for Control staff provided at the Fire Service College:- The Junior Control Room Course, Senior Control Room Course and Control Management Course. Modular management courses, designed primarily for operational officers, are also available to Fire Control Officers. The modules cover a range of areas of fire service work, and there are particular modules covering Employee Relations, Interviewing and Selection, Management and Finance. Full details are available from the College.

15. There are no significant financial implications arising from these recommendations.

16. This circular supersedes Fire Service Circular 2/87.

Contact point:

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HMI Phillips



Yours faithfully

M. J. Addison

M J ADDISON
Head of Fire Services Division

Recruit Training - Areas to be covered

Induction and Familiarisation

Introduction to Brigade: kit issue; personal presentation, wearing of uniform etc; Brigade Headquarters visit; role of the fire control operator; conditions of service, duty systems, pay, leave, trade-union and individual rights, welfare; Health and Safety at Work Act; discipline code and procedures.

History and Structure of the Fire Service

Fire Service History; Fire Services Act (relevant sections); standards of fire cover; NJC, Home Office, role of the Fire Service College; Structure of Brigade and establishments; rank structures, markings and salutations; brigade orders; terminology and standard abbreviations.

Function of Fire Control

Administrative procedures; operational procedures; mode of operation; mobilising theory; types of incidents; standing instructions; operational resources (number, type and location, officers and appliances); telephone systems; call out equipment; fire alarm systems; radio schemes; maps and wall displays, where appropriate; tape recording systems; use of over the border resources.

Communications

Public and Brigade telephone systems; radio schemes - call signs - procedures; call out systems; paging schemes; alerter schemes; fire station information; fault recognition and reporting procedures; miscellaneous equipment eg public address, keyboard skills.

Information systems

Predetermined attendances; location index; availability/ resource information; general operational information; hazardous substances; topographical aids and information; statistical records.

Incident handling

Accepting emergency calls; retrieving mobilising information; operating call out system; officer mobilising; station procedures; incident record keeping; special procedures; Emergency Call Handling Techniques.

Use of Radio

Standard message procedure; operating the radio scheme.

Use of Administrative Telephones

Operating administrative switchboard; telephony.

Fire Alarm Systems in Fire Control

Private lines; alarm panels; autodiallers etc.

Tape Recording Systems

Use; procedures.

Fire Ground Operations

A general appreciation and description of Fire Brigade Operations; types of appliances; extinguishing media; crew levels; special services (a) procedures (b) equipment; fire ground communications; control units; breathing apparatus procedures; hazardous substances (a) protective clothing (b) decontamination (c) coding systems.

Fire Prevention

General principles of Fire Prevention.

Public Relations

The role of the Control Operator in public relations.

Secondary Control

An explanation of the facilities available to enable operations to continue in the event of failure or environmental evacuation; emergency power supplies etc.

Where possible and in order to complement the foregoing it is suggested that appropriate visits take place, eg to police, coastguard or ambulance controls, telephone exchanges and fire stations etc.

Emergency Call Handling Techniques
Fire Survival Guidance

Structure

The training should be presented jointly by fire control and fire safety personnel and should comprise a lecture session of 1 to 1½ hours followed by a practical role play session to confirm the instruction.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Instructor</u>
1. Fire Control - Introduction	Fire Control Officer
2. Call Handling Techniques	Fire Control Officer
3. Fire Safety - Introduction	Fire Safety Officer
4. Effects of Fire	Fire Safety Officer
5. Escape from Fire	Fire Safety Officer
6. Assessing the Situation	Fire Safety Officer
7. Giving Advice	Fire Control Officer
8. Summary	Fire Control Officer
9. Practical Session/Role Play	Fire Control/Fire Safety Officer

Suggested Training Aids

Audio: Tape of an incident.

Video: 'The Front Room Fire' or similar film showing effects of a typical domestic fire. A video of a simulated incident showing the correct techniques in use might be produced for use in training.

Leaflets: Home Office leaflets 'A Fire Survival Guide' and 'Fire Safety Advice for Disabled People'.

Role Play: A selection of suitable role play scenarios should be prepared for the practical sessions.

Assessment Check List

1. Mobilising systems familiarity.
2. Ability to operate all ancillary equipment.
3. Knowledge of procedures.
4. Effort as a watch member.
5. Technical knowledge.
6. Skills in verbal communications.
7. Ability to work under pressure.
8. Individual effort and enthusiasm.
9. Attitude.
10. Appearance and bearing.
11. Compatibility with colleagues.
12. Ability to absorb new instruction.
13. General progress.
14. Mobilising system operation.
15. Radio operation.
16. Manual mobilising equipment and procedures.
17. Attitude and proficiency during practical tests.
18. Fire control equipment.
19. Brigade administrative procedures.
20. Brigade organisation.
21. Brigade operational procedures.
22. Brigade communications and standard message procedure.
23. Brigade topography, including special risks.
24. Brigade special appliances.
25. Neighbouring Brigades - stations and equipment.
26. Fire Services Act. Sections 1, 2, 12, 30 and 31.

Third Year Fire Control Operator Course

Areas to be Covered

Administration

1. Report Writing.
2. Administrative Procedures.

Communications

1. Operation and testing of control equipment.
2. Recognition and reporting of faults.

Keyboard Skills

Command and Control System

Hazardous Substance Retrieval

Fire Extinguishers

Responsibilities of Ranks

Preparation and Presentation of Mobilising Exercise

Fire Control Operator - Qualifying Test

Areas to be covered

Mobilising Procedures

1. Acceptance of emergency calls.
2. Dispatching predetermined attendances.
3. Types of incidents and attendances.
4. Methods of alerting stations and mobilising appliances.
5. Notifications of officers and other public services.
6. Specialised mobilising procedures.

Standard Fire Control Equipment

1. Predetermined attendance retrieval.
2. Action/information retrieval.
3. Appliance resource displays.
4. Availability displays.
5. Direct/private line connections.
6. Fire Control associated forms.
7. Location of information duty rosters, Hazardous Substance Library etc.

Specialised Fire Control Equipment

1. Use of hazardous information retrieval systems.
2. Use of tape recording and associated equipment.
3. Use of secondary/emergency call out equipment.

Manual of Firemanship Book 10 and Fire Services Acts

1. Familiarisation with contents of Manual Book 10, with the exceptions of paras 4 and 6.
2. Familiarisation with the Fire Services Act, Sections 1, 2, 12, 30 and 31.

Brigade Appliances and Equipment

1. Distribution of appliances.
2. Types of appliances within the brigade.
3. Special equipment available, ie animal rescue.

Topography of the Brigade

1. Water authorities and undertakings, Gas Board, Electricity and District Councils.
2. Major routes.
3. Location of divisions, workshops etc.

Emergency fire control procedures

1. Evacuation - fire/bomb alerts.
2. Familiarisation with procedures.
3. Familiarisation with equipment.

Command and Control System - Management Information

1. Preparation of management reports.
2. Security arrangements.
3. Recognition of faults.

Brigade Radio Scheme

1. Operation of radio equipment within fire control.
2. Recognition and reporting of faults.
3. Principles of brigade radio scheme.

Brigade Communications Systems

1. Operation and testing of communication equipment within fire control.
2. Recognition and reporting of faults.
3. Call out procedures and testing of call out equipment.
4. Breakdown in communications/secondary control operating procedures.
5. Routing of calls/distress call procedure and other operator services.

Brigade Radio Procedure and Standard Messages

1. Call signs.
2. Format of standard messages.
3. Passing of calls/information to other brigades.
4. Phonetic alphabet.

Structure of Brigade

1. Brigade organisation.
2. Rank structure and markings.
3. Standard abbreviations.
4. Designation of duty officers.
5. Brigade orders, routine orders.
6. Standards of fire cover.

Fire Control Operator - Qualifying Test

Practical Exercise

So far as the practical test is concerned, it is recommended that the candidate should be able to undertake an exercise containing 2 or more simultaneous emergency incidents and designed to demonstrate their efficiency in all or any of the areas listed in Appendix C. Candidates will be marked for reliability under pressure, logical thought, alertness and common sense. Clear diction and a good memory will also be important. After mobilising to the exercise incident, the candidate should demonstrate an awareness of the need to maintain adequate fire cover and be able to discuss with the examiner appropriate stand-by moves to key stations and the co-ordination of the Brigade's resources etc.