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Subject

Incident Command Developments

Brief for

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This report updates members on the improvements that have been made to the functions and performance relating to incident command at high rise incidents. These improvements cover the items specifically referenced in the Coroner's Rule 43 recommendations as well as the other changes that have been introduced since the Lakanal House fire in 2009.

Rule 43 Recommendation

As members will be aware one of the specific recommendations detailed in the Coroner's Rule 43 letter, dated 28 March 2013, related to incident command and certain tactical matters covering high rise operations.

The Coroner made particular reference to the number of changes to the Incident Commander (IC) and asked the Brigade to consider giving training to enhance staff performance in relation to the following:

- Use of the dynamic risk management model and other management tools to enable ICs to analyse a situation
- To recognise when to escalate attendance by more experienced ICs
- To anticipate that a fire might behave in a manner inconsistent with the compartmentation principle
- To be aware of the risks to those above and adjacent to the fire flat
- Handover from one IC to the next and effective deployment of outgoing ICs
- Use of methodical search patterns
- The collection of information from all possible sources

Some of the issues detailed above were already being progressed prior to the inquest as they had been identified by the internal reviews of command performance that are routinely undertaken after a large incident. This was acknowledged by the Coroner in her letter to the Commissioner dated 28 March 2013.

In response to the Coroner's recommendations all of the above issues were comprehensively reviewed and the following is a summary of the actions taken:

Changes in Command

In November 2013 the Brigade changed the command thresholds for incidents to better reflect the scope of responsibility for each officer role, i.e. Station Manager (SM), Group Manager (GM), Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC), etc. These revisions involved middle and strategic command roles as detailed below:

- GMs now take command of 7 – 10 pump incidents (previously the range was 7 – 9)
- DACs now take command of 11 – 15 pump incidents (previously the range was 9 – 12)
- Assistant Commissioners are now responsible for 16 pump + incidents (previously 13 + pump incidents)

Whilst these revisions to incident command thresholds were not solely driven by the issues raised following the Lakanal House fire, they do have the effect of reducing the number of changes in command at the larger more complex incidents.

Enhanced Training

In relation to all of the training related issues the Brigade asked Babcock (the Brigade's training provider) to undertake a full review of all the Incident Management related courses and development programmes to assess whether they fully covered all seven issues detailed by the Coroner. This review confirmed that all seven issues were adequately covered in the existing command training portfolio, but highlighted the potential to make more use of high rise incident related scenarios to orientate the training towards this theme. As a result Babcock have been directed to take every opportunity to reference high rise incidents when devising and delivering relevant training. A spreadsheet detailing all of the courses where these particular issues are covered in the current portfolio of incident management training is appended at Appendix 1.

In addition to the formal training inputs, Babcock have also been directed to theme all the routine Incident Command Exercises (ICEs), for both middle and strategic managers, on incident types that include various high rise premises. Further opportunities to reference the challenges of managing high rise incidents have been taken through the Incident Command assessments that form an integral part of the promotion process. In 2013 this covered SM, GM and DAC selection rounds.

Some of the incident command related themes highlighted by the Coroner have also been addressed by policy updates and/or the introduction of new policy guidance. All new policy developments are reviewed against the existing training inputs to ensure that these are updated as appropriate. Additional information relating to the way the Brigade introduces new/revised policy is covered in more detail in a later section of this report.

Station Based Training Activities

To reinforce the routine training inputs and incident command exercises described above, a number of the incident command themes highlighted by the Coroner have been included in the Brigade's Operational News publications. These publications are produced and circulated approximately every three/four months and detail a range of key issues and themes that the Brigade wishes to highlight. The content of the publication is informed by a wide range of data sources that are consolidated into a regular report presented to the Operations Directorate Coordination Board (ODCB).

Using these data sources, such as monitoring reports, fire investigation reports, feedback from Performance Review of Command (PRC), etc., the Board is able to identify key themes that need to be addressed. Since the date of the Lakanal House fire, a wide range of articles that impact on the command and operational performance of crews at high rise incidents have been featured. Examples of some of these articles are detailed below :

- Incident Command * (a further training package covering incident command is scheduled to be published at the end of January 2014 as part of the next Operational News publication)
- Operational Support *
- Briefing and debriefing on the incident ground inc. breathing apparatus crews
- On arrival knowledge and tactics *
- Pre-planning and the use of mobile data terminals (MDTs)
- High rise incidents *
- Compartment firefighting tactics
- Search and Rescue procedures *
- Firefighter Emergency and tactical withdrawal
- Use of Aerial appliances
- Hazards associated with cable entanglement and the introduction on new cable cutting equipment

*articles that were supported with a dedicated training solution

For each Operational News article the publication will include a bibliography of reference material including links to all the current policy and technical guidance notes. For certain articles, the Brigade will initiate a bespoke station and senior officer training package that will typically need to be completed by all operational staff within a specified time period.

The Brigade is in the final stages of producing a 'case study' style training package that will incorporate the specific learning outcomes from the Lakanal House fire and some of the issues/challenges that other Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) have experienced at high rise incidents. This package will be tailored for both operational crews at station with a slightly amended format for the senior office audience. Staff will be given approximately 3-months to complete the case study and completion of this training will be tracked through the Brigade's normal performance management systems.

In June 2013 the Brigade also published an article in its 'Shout' magazine detailing the outcomes from the Lakanal House Inquest and actions being taken to address the Coroner's recommendations.

Post Lakanal Actions

As with all large scale incidents the Brigade undertook a review of the operations and command performance immediately after the Lakanal fire using the established debriefing protocols; Performance Review of Command (PRC) and Performance Review of Operations (PRO). These debriefs served to highlight the unusual challenges that the officers faced, due to the rapid and unprecedented fire spread within the Lakanal House building.

As a result of the unusual circumstances of the Lakanal fire the Brigade identified a number of issues that needed to be addressed to assist in the management of future high rise incidents. These issues fell into three main categories; high rise procedure and the requirement to provide guidance on moving a Bridgehead, the recording and sharing of information relating to fire survival calls (FSC) and operational pre-planning.

High Rise Risk Assessment and Operational Procedure Review

London Fire Brigade has, on behalf of CLG/CFRA, led on the revision of the national Generic Risk Assessment (GRA) for high rise firefighting. This has been a long term and significant piece of work which has involved significant engagement and consultation with other FRS, bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive and national representatives of the Representative Bodies.

The revised GRA, which is now in its final draft and awaiting publication, incorporates all the 'lessons learned' from the Lakanal incident, as outlined by the Coroner and also the wider issues covered by the investigation.

The revised GRA incorporates newly identified hazards to firefighters and the public that were exemplified by the Lakanal incident. These include the potential for the rapid failure of lightweight (UPVC) wall panels and for fires to spread laterally and vertically in a downwards direction – hazards which are not unique to the Lakanal incident, but which had not previously been recorded in the current version of the GRA or other relevant national guidance.

As a result of the GRA being a national document, subject to national input and consultation, it also incorporates and reflects 'lessons learned' from other key recent high rise incidents, such as that attended by Hampshire FRS at Shirley Towers in Southampton. This incident highlighted the hazard posed to firefighters from fallen surface-mounted cables and this relatively new danger to firefighters was duly covered in the GRA. The Brigade has since incorporated cable cutters as standard ancillary equipment for all breathing apparatus sets and amended its breathing apparatus procedures and training to ensure firefighters are able to extricate themselves, should they become entrapped in fallen cables.

The Brigade used mature drafts of the GRA to revise its own risk assessments and operational procedures in November 2011 and now the GRA is complete, further revisions to the Brigade's risk assessment and operational procedure have been made and are scheduled for consultation through the Brigade's Joint Committee for Health, Safety & Welfare shortly.

Data Recording and Sharing

In response to this issue the Brigade undertook a review of its management of fire survival calls and, in particular, the way information is recorded and shared between Brigade Control and the officers attending the incident. This review led to the publication, in February 2012, of a new policy (Policy Note 790 refers), which includes revisions to the way Brigade Control and the Incident Command team handle FSC information.. A key development introduced through this policy is the requirement for both Brigade Control and the incident to share the key information about the fire survival situation. To support this requirement, when two or more FSC are being managed by Brigade Control an additional Command Unit (CU) and Station Manager (SM) will be mobilised specifically to manage the fire survival call element of the incident.

To compliment the FSC information sharing protocol the Brigade has introduced a Forward Information Board (FIB) that is carried on all Pump Ladders. The FIB is designed to be a portable and easy to use item of equipment for the recording of key information at locations that are remote from the CU, such as:

- A Bridgehead
- Sector command point
- Forward command point

The FIBs were introduced in January 2013 and have been successfully used to support the recording of operational information at a range of incidents, including those involving FSCs and complex search and rescue operations.

Operational Pre -planning

Since 2009, the Brigade has been using a range of technology that enables operational crews to access a wide range of premise and risk information whilst en-route and/or in attendance at incidents. This technology includes Mobile data terminal (MDTs), which were introduced to all

frontline pumping appliances at the end of 2009 and this development was complimented by the introduction of the Operational Risk Database (ORD) that acts as the repository for all the information that the Brigade holds regarding premises and risks.

Since these facilities have been introduced they have been supported with a number of policy enhancements. In July 2012, the Brigade published a new policy entitled 'Information Gathering and Contingency Plans', which provides specific guidance to station personnel regarding the risk assessment process for sites in their area. This covers identifying and gathering operationally important site risk information (SRI) and other supporting data that needs to be recorded on the operational risk database (ORD), such as the location of water supplies. This policy is currently being further reviewed in response to one of the recommendations detailed in the Coroner's Rule 43 recommendations. This further enhancement to the policy is due to be published early in 2014.

Other Initiatives

Some of the other initiatives that the Brigade has been proactively progressing also indirectly support the effectiveness and performance of operations at high rise incidents. These are detailed below:

Major Training Exercises

Over past few years the Brigade has taken every opportunity to practice high rise operations at realistic venues. This has resulted in a number of large scale training exercises being held at high rise premises. This included exercises involving the Shard, a residential tower block in Southwark and most recently a derelict Tower Block in Barking, East London. The exercise in Barking involved over 75 LFB firefighters and officers and included full multi-agency participation. The exercise made use of the Casualty Union who acted as the residents and casualties during the exercise.

These types of training opportunities have allowed personnel to practise their response to high rise incidents and have been used to test/validate some of the changes to our operational procedures and equipment that have been introduced since the Lakanal House fire. Each Area Deputy Assistant Commissioner has also been directed to establish an on-going number of training exercises involving high rise premises, as part of their respective Area training plan.

Premise Information Plates

One of the other issues highlighted through the Brigade's internal review following the Lakanal fire, recent high profile national incidents and the subsequent Coroner's recommendations, is the need for housing providers (responsible persons) and fire services to review the availability and provision of building information to crews. Premises Information Plates (PIP) are one example of how such information can be made immediately available, in a simple, easy to understand format at little expense with low on-going maintenance.

The PIP has been developed as a quick visual indicator for the first emergency crews arriving at incidents. It has been designed to provide building information for high rise residential premises, including such features as where the stairwells and lifts are located, the number and layout of the floors and other relevant information.

These plates have proved popular and successful in a number of Fire and Rescue Services in various formats and the Brigade, working with Local Authority partners have agreed to trial the plates on high rise residential social housing, within a number of identified London Boroughs. This pilot will be used to evaluate their benefits and potential for wider roll out across London.

The pilot project will last approximately 6 months from the instalment of the first batch of PIPs, which will be handed over and installed on the outside of the premises in a prominent location by the housing provider. The pilot is scheduled to finish in April 2014 where a full evaluation will be

made of the format of the information. It is then anticipated that a wider roll out of PIPs will be supported across London.

Summary

This report describes the wide range of activities that have been undertaken by the Brigade in relation to its performance at high rise incidents since the tragic fire at Lakanal House in 2009. Whilst some of these activities relate to the specific outcomes from the Lakanal House fire Inquest, the majority have been identified and driven by the existing management processes used by the Brigade to evaluate its own performance.

The Brigade has a very comprehensive review system, called the Dynamic and Intelligent Operational Training (DIOT), that identifies the key themes emerging from operational performance and training exercises. This system is used to routinely assess the Brigade's performance and is one of the key management controls for determining where resources are focussed to deliver continuous improvement. A copy of the DIOT policy is appended (Appendix 2) to this report for reference purposes.

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