

OPERATIONAL NEWS

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR ALL LONDON FIRE BRIGADE OPERATIONAL STAFF

ISSUE 13
AUGUST 2009

This issue of *Operational News* once again reflects important operational issues for staff. The majority of *Operational News*' content is identified from our robust audit and review processes which include performance reviews of command and operations. This is also supplemented with articles on new equipment or procedures that reduce risk. Where appropriate training packages detailed on the back page provide further information on the topics covered.

Operational Professionalism Audits

Operational professionalism audits were introduced in November 2008 following a successful pilot in January 2008.

Themed audits follow a rolling quarterly programme based on a two and a half year cycle. In that time frame, every watch at every station will be audited on at least one occasion. To date, four audits have been carried out involving 180 different watches and approximately 1,300 personnel.

Each audit involves three elements and takes place whilst appliances are on strategic resource. The elements include a multiple choice questionnaire, a practical assessment and the analysis of Bodyguard data. The theme of each audit is based upon the topics discussed and training interventions prescribed in earlier issues of *Operational News*. It is therefore vital that these topics are fully covered in the watch training programme.

The questionnaire utilises new technology from 'Quizdom' and allows individual responses to be entered via a digital handset directly onto a central database. The questions are constructed from existing policy and procedures and maintain a theme in line with the common aim of the audit. Generally, a satisfactory level of performance in this area has been shown continually throughout

the audits but there will always be room for improvement in the underpinning knowledge of station based personnel. Where staff perform poorly in either the written or practical assessment, they and their line manager are immediately informed and action is taken to address identified development needs. In a number of cases staff have been placed on light duties until this development has been achieved.

A consistently high standard of achievement has been displayed in the practical element of all audits with more than 90 per cent of personnel demonstrating an excellent level of skill. Bodyguard download and its subsequent analysis has shown a marked improvement in the testing regime of breathing apparatus (BA) sets. So far, there has been a significant increase, 31 per cent, in the number of BA sets being tested correctly and a notable 60 per cent reduction in BA sets not being tested but signed for as tested in the BA log book. Staff who are identified as having not tested their BA set in accordance with policy on one occasion have been issued with a pre-procedural letter. Staff who have signed BA log books but not properly completed the relevant BA test on more than one occasion have

been managed through the Brigade's disciplinary procedures.

The audit results clearly demonstrate an improvement in the knowledge and practical skills of station based personnel. Analysis of individual responses to the questionnaire has identified a number of areas where further training is required throughout the Brigade. Watch officers are also able to use the information to tailor their training programmes and help identify individual development needs. In addition, the audit process has identified a number of anomalies in Brigade policy. When identified, these have been brought to the attention of the relevant departments and resolved as quickly as possible.

As the audit programme continues it is becoming clear that the Brigade is benefiting from this structured approach to the auditing of our operational professionalism. The audit teams have been consistently well received on stations and staff have participated enthusiastically with the process. The opportunity to provide feedback on how the process can be improved has been offered at the end of each audit and staff are encouraged to make any further observations by using the IMP mailbox at any time.

IN THIS EDITION WE COVER

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Firefighting Shafts in Buildings

The maintenance of firefighting shafts is required under the Fire Regulations and any deficiencies must be reported to Regulatory Fire Safety.

Calls to Automatic Fire Alarms

Recent operational incidents indicate that on some occasions when attending calls to automatic fire alarms (AFAs), ICs have not carried out robust en-route planning or adopted appropriate on arrival tactics, including the correct siting of appliances. There may be a temptation to relax standards because 'it is only an AFA', however, ICs must keep in mind that a small percentage of AFA initiated calls develop into fire situations.

On arrival, the IC must carry out an immediate dynamic risk assessment (DRA). The DRA must take into account the size and nature of the building involved, indications from the AFA control panel, additional information available from on site sources, the operational information folder and observations carried out by fire service personnel. A request for CRR information must also be considered and the main scheme radio must be monitored in order to facilitate the receipt of additional information from Brigade Control.

Particular attention must be given to indications from the AFA panel that the incident is located in any type of plant room or a computer suite. Recent incidents have demonstrated that detector heads have actuated as a result of the uncontrolled release of hazardous substances or a CO₂ fire suppression system in these areas.

If results of information gathering and the DRA show any other indication of a fire then an immediate priority message must be sent to Brigade Control requesting a full fire attendance or the requisite number of pumps required. This is of particular relevance when the initial call has attracted a single appliance PDA.

No attempt must be made to enter a fire compartment or hazard zone until sufficient resources have arrived on scene to allow tackling the situation with safe systems of work in place. Initial crews must concentrate efforts on any necessary evacuations, securing water supplies and positioning covering jets until supporting appliances arrive.

The Incident Monitoring Process Database

The incident monitoring process database (IMPD) was successfully introduced into the Brigade in April 2005. As the central point for the collection and storage of comment on operational performance, the IMPD has attracted over 32,000 entries from a range of operational staff. All staff are encouraged to use the database using the principle of 'exception reporting', i.e. where the performance of an individual or team has either fallen below or exceeded the procedural standard.

There is also a facility to make comment on organisational issues relating to the operational environment, equipment, procedures and liaison with partner organisations.

Although the database suggests that it is used primarily for incident monitoring, it is also utilised for recording observations made at performance reviews of operations (PROs), performance reviews of command (PRCs), training events and exercises. Individuals and teams who have attracted performance observations are sent an email attachment with the observation made for their information. This is copied to their line manager for discussion. Organisational issues are forwarded to the appropriate department within the

Brigade and a copy is sent to the report author. When recording a comment on the IMPD, there should be no surprises! It is considered 'best practice' to discuss the observation with the recipient prior to recording the comment on the database.

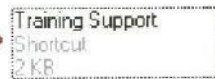
On 1 July 2009, the IMPD was upgraded in order to take advantage of incident management system (IMS) software. The enhanced system includes the self population of primary information direct from end of incident reports from MOBIS and drag and drop facilities. These features will undoubtedly make the system more user-friendly and save time when completing reports. The system also benefits from a link

to the safety event reporting database (SERD). This allows the user to immediately identify whether a safety event has occurred at the incident. A further benefit is an automated prompt for managers when a report is required. This feature allows the user to clearly identify any outstanding reports that require completion.

Observations placed on IMPD are analysed on a quarterly basis and incorporated into a report to the Operational Directorates Coordination Board (ODCB). The Board consider the content of IMPD along with information from the Operational Review Team (ORT) and safety events in order to assess the Brigade's operational performance and what training interventions may be required. This information forms the basis of the quarterly publication of *Operational News* and the station training that is detailed within it. The effectiveness of this process depends upon prompt completion and reporting of PROs and PRCs. The more current the IMPD data is, the more effective the training interventions will be at reducing risk to firefighters and improving our performance.

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.



Article	Training to be completed	Guidance and supporting information	STEP – Recording reference (Create on STEP)
Operational Professionalism Audits	Article	Further information Operational Professionalism Audits can be obtained from: http://hotwire/news_centre/publications/operational_news/pdfs/operational-news_issue9.pdf	
Hazardous Material Incidents	Package	Training Support Pack (Hazardous material incidents) available through Training Support Icon – 2.1 Presentations Policy 44 – Conveyance of dangerous substances Policy 411 – Notification of possible contamination by material(s) hazardous to health Policy 483 – CBRN rapid response team Policy 518 – Messages from incidents Policy 527 – Fires and incidents involving hazardous materials Policy 584 – Firefighter decontamination Emergency Action Code – Hazchem & Decontamination Card – Form 4758 is available through POMS	Lecture/Training notes/Training/Hazardous material incidents Lecture/Incident Management – Sites/CIMAH Sites/Conveyance of dangerous substances – 44 Lecture/Incident Command – Command Procedures/Incident Command Procedures/Contamination by material(s) hazardous to health – 411 Lecture/Incident Management – Incident Type/Hazmat/CBRN rapid response team – 483 Lecture/Incident Management – Incident Command/Incident Messages/Messages from incidents – 518 Lecture/Incident Management – Incident Type/Hazmat/Fires & incidents involving hazardous materials – 527 Lecture/PPE – BA Wearers Guidance/Firefighter decontamination – 584
Firefighting Shafts in Buildings	Package	Training Support Pack (Firefighting shafts in buildings) available through Training Support Icon – 2.1 Presentations Policy 633 – High rise firefighting Policy 467 – Breathing apparatus sub-surface procedure Further information can be obtained from the Training Support Pack (High Rise Incidents) available through Training Support Icon – 2.1 Presentations	Lecture/Training notes/Training/Firefighting shafts in buildings Lecture/Incident Management – Building & Structures/Building & Structures/Firefighting in High Rise Buildings – 633 Lecture/PPE – Breathing Apparatus/BA sub-surface procedure – 467 Lecture/Training notes/Training/High Rise Incidents
Calls to Automatic Fire Alarms	Article	Training Support Pack (Dynamic Risk Assessment) available through Training Support Icon – 2.1 Presentations Policy 449 – Central risk register Further information can be obtained from: Fire Service Manual Volume 3: Fire Safety – Fire Protection of Buildings – available at: http://hotwire/management/library/online_resources.asp#fire – Click on OHSIS icon then search	Lecture/Training notes/Training/Dynamic Risk Assessment Lecture/Risk – Strategic Risk/Ops Event Planning/Central Risk Register (CRR) – 449
The Incident Monitoring Process Database (IMPD)	Article	Policy 421 – Performance reviews of the command function (PRC) Policy 417 – Performance review of operations (PRO) Policy 414 – Incident monitoring process Policy 424 – Monitoring officer Further information can be obtained from the Incident Monitoring Process Database User Guide available at: http://hotwire/operations/iris/media/IMP_User_Guide.pdf	Lecture/Incident Management – Post Incident Action/Performance Reviews/Performance Review of Command Function (PRC) – 421 Lecture/Incident Management – Post Incident Action/Performance Reviews/Performance Review of Operations – 417 Lecture/Incident Command – Command Procedures/Incident Command Procedures/Incident Monitoring Process – 414 Lecture/Incident Management – Incident Command/Command Staff/Monitoring Officer – 424

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

Key	Red	These training themes are mandatory for all watches.	Amber	These training themes are mandatory for all watches to which they are relevant. These will be detailed within the training guidance.	Green	These are optional and can be included in the watch training programme at the discretion of the Watch Manager based upon a training needs analysis of their watch.
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