

Report title

Revalidation of Incident Command Competence

Meeting

Corporate Management Board

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Report by

Head of Development

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Summary

A process for the revalidation of incident command is outlined that will provide organisational assurance that officers are performing incident command at the required level. It also sets out a method of providing an auditable trail of incident command practice and development, and encourages continuous improvement through the uptake of professional development opportunities.

This process includes:

- A knowledge test – to ensure an officers technical and procedural knowledge is at an appropriate level and is current ;
- An incident command exercise – to demonstrate that the appropriate level of command skills are maintained and that technical knowledge can be applied; and
- Logging Continuous Professional Development activity demonstrate the consistent application of command knowledge and skills in the workplace, including a minimum number of command hours.

Recommendations

That the proposals outlined in paragraphs 88 to 93 are recommended to CMB for formal adoption which include:

- A formalised incident command revalidation process is implemented to ensure that all Operational Officers are assessed on their command competency as detailed in this report.
- Head of Development and Training establishes a cross-directorate working group in collaboration with the Operations Directorate and the Operations Review Team to progress the implementation of the revalidation process and the supporting developments outlined in this paper, namely:

- Development of detailed implementation plans for each level of Incident Commander
 - The development of formal policy guidance to support these recommendations on the revalidation of incident command.
 - The implementation of an operational mentor scheme
 - Proposals for a schedule of CPD for incident command, including quarterly Incident Command seminars and self directed maintenance of command competence for all operational roles including computer based training solutions
- Agree the implementation of the revalidation process in two phases. The knowledge tests and incident command exercises will be implemented in the first phase from April 2016 and the minimum number of command hours/CPD being implemented from April 2017.
 - Agree that the implementation of the revalidation runs as a project under corporate governance arrangements, as outlined in appended Project Initiation Document.

Background

1. One of the most significant corporate risks is recognised as the occurrence of a death or serious injury as a result of our staff not operating a safe system of work (CRR1). This is a theme echoed during the Staff Engagement Phase 1 workshops, where when asked *'What has the most impact on making London safe?'*, staff commonly responded *'competence of staff'* and *'ensuring they are assessed correctly'*.
2. London Fire Brigade (LFB) have been clear in their commitment to Firefighter safety, which is a key Aim in the London Safety Plan 5. This has been further demonstrated with the recent appointment of a Director of Safety and Assurance. LFB have consistently led and invested in work to drive operational effectiveness and advance the future of incident command. A process to ensure the revalidation of incident command competence will serve as a key control measure for CRR1, supporting firefighter safety by ensuring that the Brigade is satisfied and has the necessary evidence of the ongoing competency of those making risk critical command decisions.
3. Incident Commanders are expected to work in challenging and highly pressured situations. The responsibility of employers to prepare incident commanders to operate in such environments effectively and safely has been heavily emphasised by the Health and Safety Executive in *'Striking the Balance between operational and health and safety duties in the Fire and Rescue Service'*. The importance of ensuring command development and competence is clear, with this document recognising that the quality of the decision making at an incident illustrates whether individuals have been adequately prepared by the Service.
4. Over the recent years, the number of incidents attended has fallen. At the same time the management of emergencies has become more demanding and complex as a result of the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the introduction of Local Resilience Fora, the designation of a wider range of agencies as Category 1 and 2 responders and the requirement upon emergency services to operate more collaboratively both in the preparation and planning for emergencies and during the response to them.
5. There is considerable public and legal scrutiny into the way in which incidents are dealt with. Formal scrutiny may come from a number of quarters, including the Health and Safety Executive, Fire investigators acting for loss adjusters, as well as judicial enquiries. Scrutiny of command competence and/or command decisions has been applied to Fire and Rescue Services following several high profile incidents. This includes recent incidents involving Firefighter fatalities¹ and other serious incidents involving deaths of members of the public². It is important therefore that the Brigade can demonstrate that individuals have been adequately prepared and are competent.
6. A formalised and recognised process to revalidate individuals to practice incident command will help to ensure that consistent standards of maintenance of competence are applied to incident commanders. The implementation of such systems to 'revalidate' command competence varies across the UK, although typically involves a formal assessment every 18-24 months.
7. This paper examines the systems and practices currently in place in London and elsewhere in the UK and seeks to introduce a robust process for the revalidation of incident command. This aims to provide organisational assurance that command competence is of the standard required, and

¹ Harrow Court, Hertfordshire (2005); Marlie Farm, East Sussex (2006); Atherstone-on-Stour, Warwickshire (2007); Balmoral Bar, Strathclyde (2009)

² London Bombings, London (2005); Galston Mine Incident, Strathclyde (2008); Lakanal House, London (2009)

to encourage the uptake of further development opportunities, thus reducing risk to individuals and to the Authority.

8. The system proposed is in line with the following key corporate aims from LSP5:
- Aim 3: Response** – Respond to fires and other emergency incidents quickly and effectively.
 - Aim 5: People** – Work with our training providers to secure a modern, best in class training programme for our staff.
 - Aim 6: Principles** – Improve Health, Safety and Welfare of our staff.

LFB Current Practice

9. LFB currently has a suite of Incident Command training courses delivered by Babcock International. The content and delivery of these courses are currently being considered under the 'course review' process, which seeks to deliver improvements aligned with current LFB policy and National Operational Guidance. There are currently formalised training courses for Levels 1-3 of incident command, with options for the delivery of Level 4 incident command training being scoped. Currently, the initial Level 1 incident command course (LIM) is the only course which has an assessable element. However, through the course review process there is the potential to include additional assessable elements to initial and refresher courses. A break down of the training, including the assessable elements, is provided in Appendix I.
10. An annual schedule of Area exercises exists requiring each watch to facilitate a 3 or more appliance exercise per year. Each borough is required to plan a 6 pump exercise, and each area, a 12 pump exercise which are recorded locally. This equates to:
- 408 exercises that are at least 3 pumps
 - 33 exercises that are 6 pumps or more
 - 4 exercises that are 12 pumps
11. There are also a number of large scale exercises conducted by specialist groups such as Special Operations Group, like the recent Strong Tower MTFA exercise.
12. There is currently no process in place to record individual involvement in such exercises or to validate involvement as part of on-going CPD.

Operational Exposure

13. The attendance rate of officers to incidents has remained relatively unchanged, though there has been a reduction in the number of times officers have been required to undertake the role of incident commander. This means that the opportunity to practice the skills required for incident command under the realistic pressures of an incident have also reduced (see Table 1). This data focused on time in command as opposed to other roles as this requires specific command skills to be exercised under pressure. The requirement for officers to attend as Monitoring Officers, sector commanders and for specialist roles which are critical to safe systems of work is much higher, and is not reflected here. These other roles may provide an opportunity to learn from an incident and reinforce knowledge, however they do not provide the opportunity to exercise the skills used to make risk-critical command decisions.

Table 1. Time spent as incident commander averaged from 2012-2015.

	Level	Average number of times IC role adopted per annum	Current Annual Exposure (hours)
FF (to act up)	Level 1	Not recorded	Not recorded
SM	Level 2	3	4.48
GM	Level 2	1	3.45
DAC	Level 3	1.5	5.30
AC	Level 4	0.3	1.53

A 10% sample of commanders at each level from SM-AC was examined through MOBIS reports for each incident attended by each officer. The time taken from the first message indication command had been assumed, to the time a hand over took place was recorded. It should be noted that the amount of command exposure here for DACs is higher than predicted, as it includes spate flooding conditions experienced in 2014.

Assessable Command Performance: Promotional Assessments

14. Currently, incident command for officers is assessed on entry to that role through an incident command exercise (ICE) at promotional assessment centres. The average scores of these assessments at the level of SM, GM and DAC over the last three assessment centres are set out in Appendix II. The pass mark is set at 75%. Candidates who achieve between 50% and 75% are considered to require development and those who score below 50% fail the assessment outright.
15. To give an indication of the current performance of incident commanders entering these levels over the past three assessment centres, 25% of candidates passed the Station Manager ICE with no development required, 25% passed the Group Manager ICE and 36% passed the DAC ICE. It is anticipated that an effective revalidation process with a focus on effective development would see a significant increase in success at assessable command elements, it would provide an effective guide to readiness for promotion as well as improving performance on the incident ground in role..

Existing Revalidation Processes

16. Consultation has been conducted with a number of Metropolitan and other Fire and Rescue Services³ currently using a revalidation process to identify the systems adopted. Three of these services (Greater Manchester, Hampshire and Hertfordshire) were approached as a result of experiencing firefighter fatalities, and therefore have experienced recent external scrutiny of command competence during the subsequent investigations.
17. There was a trend towards a common approach to a two yearly assessment of command competence. Each service provided a variety of development to support both initial training and revalidation at each IC level. The details are provided in Appendix III. Some of the common themes included:
 - Initial training
 - Requirement to log evidence from incidents as maintenance of competence
 - Regular assessments
 - Use of workplace assessors
 - Use of simulations, written tests and debriefs

³ Fire and Rescue Services consulted with include Tyne and Wear FRS, Greater Manchester FRS, Hampshire FRS, Derbyshire FRS, Hertfordshire FRS.

- Clear role for the line manager in assessing against evidence from actual incidents
- Process for staff who fail assessments including additional training, assessment, observations and line manager support

Proposed LFB Incident Command Revalidation Process

18. The revalidation process should:

- Provide assurance that officers are performing incident command at the required level
- Provide an auditable trail of incident command practice and development
- Encourage continuous improvement through the uptake of professional development opportunities
- Consider future options to provide an assessment of operational competence for future promotion rounds

19. In order to effectively revalidate incident command competence several component areas should be considered. The process will ensure that:

- an officer's technical and procedural knowledge is at an appropriate level and is current (knowledge test)
- the appropriate level of command skills are maintained (incident command exercise)
- such knowledge is consistently applied effectively in practice (CPD)

20. This paper proposes that these three areas are assessed over a biennial period overall, with command hours and the knowledge test being considered annually. Line managers will take responsibility for assuring that officers achieve the required level. This process will demonstrate action against a key theme emerging from staff engagement where staff suggested that effectively assessing competence of staff should be a measure of staff effectiveness (*Staff Engagement Phase 1 data, 2015*).

21. There are currently 1,511 officers⁴, which includes 217 senior officers with Incident Command responsibilities, according to authorised establishment figures. The revalidation process would only apply to officers previously assessed and verified as competent in role, following completion of a development programme. There are currently 76 senior officers on development, meaning that 141 would require revalidation. As this figure is likely to fluctuate, resource requirements are outlined on the basis that all officers are competent in order to illustrate the maximum requirement. It is recommended this process is used as an opportunity to assess the operational suitability of staff wishing to access both temporary promotion and substantive promotion to the next role, which will be explored in a subsequent paper (see 'Further Developments', paragraph 85).

Revalidation Process Part 1: Technical and procedural knowledge

The Knowledge Test

22. A knowledge test is proposed in order to confirm officers technical and procedural knowledge at a level appropriate to their role. Testing knowledge in this way has two key advantages, to provide the Brigade with the assurances required, and to encourage officers to actively refresh themselves with key operational policy to maintain currency of knowledge.
23. It is recommended that the knowledge test uses questions based on the Policy Notes and other guidance directly associated with incident command, including command support, command

⁴ This figure is comprised of 29 FF+, 675 CM, 590 WM, 140 SM, 60 GM, 12 DAC, 5 AC

skills and prioritised incident types. In particular it should incorporate any key policy changes that should be reflected in officers current level of knowledge.

24. The administration of biennial knowledge tests would be in line with other industry examples (see appendix III) where incident command revalidation processes are administered, which include a test of operational knowledge.
25. An annual knowledge test for 1,511 officers would be required.
26. There are several options for the administration of the knowledge test using the Questionmark system. The licence allows the Brigade an unlimited amount of use so there is no additional cost beyond the licence fee. The question set would, however, require further development which would need support in terms of officer time.

Options

Self-directed Test

27. Knowledge tests could be undertaken at the usual place of work within a specific time-frame. This would be the least onerous and have the lowest cost implications as no supervision is required. However, the balance is a limited ability to validate the results.
28. There are no cost implications for this option.

Line-manager supervised test

29. This option would require the administration of each test to be line manager supervised at the usual place of work, which would require a minimal draw on individual officer time as it would normally take around 40-60 minutes to complete.
30. This has the advantage of providing a level of supervision to ensure test conditions are maintained, although this administration is not as likely to be as rigorous as offered at an assessment centre. Station based supervisory officers could undertake the test during their normal working duty without requiring specific release. In the event where they receive a call to an incident during the test, additional questions should be built into the system. This would allow the test to be paused and the current question disregarded and replaced by an unseen question. There are no cost implications for this option.

Assessment Centre supervised test

31. This would involve assessments being supervised and facilitated by either assessment centre staff, or at individual borough hubs. For an assessment centre model, a schedule of dates per year may be released and attendance arranged via the self-managed booking system, which is an existing (but currently unused) feature of the e-recruitment system.
32. There are no costs in terms of financial outlay for this option, however there are some resourcing requirements. An annual license fee is paid for Questionmark with no limitation on the number of times it is used. The assessment centre can accommodate 40 candidates per session. Therefore approximately 38 assessment centre days per year would be required with facilitators to ensure all officers take an annual test. It is envisaged that the test will be computer generated and scored, thereby negating the need for skill requirements for facilitators.

Borough Hubs

33. It would be the responsibility of Borough Commanders to arrange sessions at an appropriate location where the knowledge test can be taken by personnel within the Borough. These tests

should be supervised by an appropriate officer. Where the Borough is small, it may be suitable to pair the knowledge tests with a neighbouring borough to reduce the amount of sessions that are required to be run, though this is a matter for local determination. These Borough Hubs should be supplemented by a small number of sessions run at Head Quarters to capture staff based centrally. There is no cost associated with this option and the resourcing issues will be negligible. However, there may be issues with the availability of computer terminals within Boroughs.

34. A combination of borough hubs and a small number of assessment centre supervised tests is recommended as it will ensure that supervision is robust and the results give an accurate reflection of the level of knowledge of officers. It also guarantees a corporate database is maintained and updated. Borough hubs provide additional flexibility for station based staff to undertake the test whilst minimising the impact of geography. The availability of computer terminals may prove prohibitive, though this will be further explored through the implementation working group (paragraph 89). Additional assessment centre sessions will provide an option where the availability of computer terminals within Boroughs proves restrictive. Further discussions will be held with Babcock to explore the viability of introducing a knowledge test during Level 1 refresher courses, which will reduced the number of tests required per annum to 217. The outcome of these discussions will be known in January 2016.

Failure to meet the required standard

35. Where individuals do not reach the agreed pass mark, their line manager will be provided with a break down of their results which will inform a personal development plan for the required areas.
36. Individuals who fail the test will have a 30 working day improvement period to develop their knowledge and re-take the test. This relatively short period will ensure that emphasis is placed on the achieving the developments required, and minimise the period where an individual may respond to fires with an identified knowledge gap. It is also regarded as sufficient time for staff to undertake the necessary learning to achieve the standard. In exceptional circumstances this could be extended. During this time they will be referred to the Operations Review Team for consideration for tagging, to ensure that a competent officer of the rank above is mobilised when they are in command in order to ensure that the identified knowledge gap does not detrimentally impact on their period in command. Should an officer fail the re-test, they will be referred to the Incident Command Development Panel, outlined in paragraphs 80-83.

Revalidation Process Part 2: Application of Command skills

Incident Command Exercise

37. The test of technical knowledge should be supported by an assessment of command skills. It is proposed that every incident commander will undergo a formal incident command exercise biennially as part of the validation process.
38. This incident command exercise could be delivered as :
- Standalone assessments assessed by LFB Officers;
 - Confirmation of skills assessments integrated into the existing incident command training and refresher courses delivered by Babcock;
 - LFB delivered assessments integrated into incident command training and refresher courses delivered by Babcock.

39. These options and the associated costs are outlined below. Further details are contained in Appendix IV.

Stand alone assessments

40. Under this option, every incident commander from level 1-4 would be required to undertake a revalidation assessment in the form of an ICE once every two years.
41. As shown in appendix IV, this option would be the most costly, requiring an increase in the number of ICEs by 756 per annum, based on the actual authorised establishment figures,. In practice this may be less as the revalidation process would not apply to those in development. There would result in an additional 865 Training Units at an estimated cost of £55.2k (at 2016/17 prices). There would be further costs in terms of the provision of LFB assessors, which would equate to around 626 officer days (based on the assumption that 4 candidates would be assessed per day, requiring two officers to assess).
42. The scheduling impact would be significant because it would require in the region of 286 additional training days for the Incident Command delivery team in order to deliver 756 ICEs per annum. If there was no reduction in other incident Command requirements it is not known whether this would be deliverable by Babcock.
43. The greatest proportion of the cost and scheduling impact is associated with the costings for Level 1 Incident Commanders at FF+, CM and WM. In the absence of an existing ICE, these costs are based on the SM ICE used for a Level 2 promotional assessment. Should an alternative measure of competence be used for Level 1 incident commanders, the costs would be significantly reduced.

Babcock Delivered Confirmation of Skills

44. Under this option, a confirmation of skills element would be included in incident command refresher courses taken at each level. Should the assessable element be feasibly incorporated into existing courses, this option would have no additional cost implications.
45. All incident command courses are currently under review. Babcock have indicated that the inclusion of a 'confirmation of skills' element is possible and are currently exploring options.

LFB delivered assessment integrated into Babcock Delivered course

46. This option would include Babcock delivered incident command training courses, with the assessment being conducted by LFB Officers.
47. This could include LFB officers taking sole responsibility for the assessment element. This would reduce the impact on the SoTR, however would place a heavy burden on officer hours required for assessment of candidates.
48. Alternatively, LFB officers could sample the assessment of individuals in order to provide quality assurance. For example, two LFB officers observing a 10% sample would reduce this burden.

Recommended option for Incident Command Exercise

49. It is proposed that standalone assessments are introduced for Levels 2- 4 Incident Commanders, and that Babcock provide 'confirmation of skills' for Level 1 Commanders as part of the revised Supervisory Manager Incident Command Refresher (SMICR) courses. These should be sampled by LFB officers in order to provide quality assurance (for example, quality assuring 10% of SMIRC courses would require approximately 3 officer days). This option would significantly reduce the burden on officer time and the cost for the delivery of standalone assessments for all levels of

command.

50. Under this option, each incident commander would be required to undertake a revalidation assessment in the form of an ICE every two years. However, the frequency of assessments may be altered in response to one of the following:
- Safety events where a failure of/ineffective command was a contributory factor;
 - Individual underperformance evidenced by operational assurance measures such as a PRC or direct observation by either a monitoring officer or ORT member;
 - Significant procedural change;
 - Following a prolonged period of absence from operational duties;
 - When an individual fails to provide sufficient evidence of how they have maintained their command competence, including failure of a knowledge assessment;
 - As deemed necessary by the Incident Command Development Panel or appropriate Director;
 - Upon request of an individual who lacks confidence or has not been in charge of an incident for some time, e.g. over a year.
51. The assessments would be overseen by a very small number of approved, lead assessors. Area SSSOs and ORT members already have experience in assessing competence and could take on this role. Given the small numbers of the DAC/AC cadre, it is proposed that this group have the appropriate experience needed to peer assess each others command exercises, with support where necessary from ORT officers.

Resourcing implications

52. To accommodate additional standalone assessments for all officers of Level 2 and above, 218 TUs would be required at an estimated cost of £13,9k per annum (at 2016/17 prices). Assessor costs would require approximately 58.5 officer days of varying levels. This is in addition to 3 officer days to quality assure the confirmation of skills of a sample of Level 1 incident commanders on the SMIRCS.

Revalidation Process Part 3: Evidence of Application of Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace

Continuous Professional Development Logs

53. The HSE are clear in 'Striking the Balance' that Fire and Rescue Services have a responsibility to adequately prepare their staff to make decisions under the pressures they can reasonably expect to face (HSE, 2010). LFB acknowledge their organisational obligation to afford commanders the time and opportunity to engage in incident command 'practice' and development, and recognise that staff also have a responsibility towards their own continuous professional development, a view reinforced by the staff engagement exercise (*Staff Engagement Phase 1 data, 2015*).
54. It is proposed that incident commanders at all levels maintain records of both incident command experience and development activity. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) logs would provide the Brigade with an auditable trail of each individuals experience and exposure. This would enable the Brigade to accurately evidence the preparation given to employees should a post-incident investigation occur. The log would also allow for reflective learning following an incident and could be used to support an incident commander. It would act as a record of experience gained by an individual and over time it would form the basis of their personal development.
55. Activities to be logged would include:

- Operational incidents attended, including details of the incident, role, activities undertaken as a minimum. For unusual or high impact incidents, this process could include contemporaneous notes that would support future investigations.
 - Incident Command simulation, such as attendance at exercises. Details should be recorded in a similar way to operational incidents.
 - Incident Command development activities, including Tactical Decision Exercises, policy notes reviewed, CBT packages reviewed.
56. The Individual Training Record (ITR) system currently has the functionality to allow records of both incidents and development activity to be recorded.
57. It is recommended that the CPD logs are used solely for reflective learning and provide an auditable trail of experience and development. The logs will provide organisational assurance that the individual employee has been properly prepared to operate in the environments that are reasonably foreseeable. It is not recommended that the log is used to demonstrate command competence in place of satisfactorily passing the knowledge test and ICE elements. The CPD logs should not be used as way of appeal if the required standard on other parts of the revalidation process are not met.

Minimum Command Hours

58. The ability to lead and resolve operational incidents forms a key element of nationally agreed and recognised role maps. Gaining and maintaining the command competence required under these role maps needs practice. A recent CFA publication 'The Future of Incident Command' makes the point that across the UK there has been a traditional emphasis on gaining this practice through operational incidents. Given the reduction in incidents, this alone is highly unlikely to provide enough opportunity to practice command skills and learn the tactics necessary for incident command, and meet the requirements needed to mitigate CRR1.
59. Training and simulations will represent a significant proportion of operational experience moving forward. While it is accepted there must be a balance as incident command might represent a relatively low percentage of an officer's time, it also represents the highest risk. This risk is in terms of the safety of those who they command, and also of the people that they are protecting.
60. Many high risk industries, such as healthcare and the aviation sector, set annual targets for time spent practicing key skills (see Appendix III). This ensures that individual practitioners have adequate exposure to ensure that key skills remain current in line with agreed industry expectations.
61. In line with other high risk industries, annual targets for time spent practising incident command are proposed to demonstrably ensure that a corporately agreed volume of opportunities have been provided to prepare individual commanders. This would apply for all levels of commander, except for substantive Level 1 commanders on the assumption that they attend sufficient naturally occurring incidents to be frequently in charge. This would require organisational support and commitment from Heads of Service to commit to the time required for an increased amount of command training.
62. Firefighters who act up to Level 1 along with Level 2 – 4 incident commanders would be set an annual target. In addition to incidents, time spent in charge of practical exercises and computer simulation-based exercises would also be valid.
63. There is currently no body of evidence or comparative practice to provide a recommended minimum number of hours of practice. The proposal within this paper is, therefore, an

assessment which should be kept under continuous review and adjusted up or down as a result of the experience and knowledge acquired.

64. It is proposed that a minimum target of 20-40 hours is set for all level 2-4 incident commanders. This target takes cognisance of the outcomes of the audit of operational exposure (see Table 1), which shows that currently only between 1 and 5 hours per year are spent on incident command at operational incidents. However, the breadth of type of incident that commanders are required to deal with is extensive, meaning further opportunities to practice these would be required. It is also recommended that a target number of hours should be considered for Firefighters who act up.
65. An illustrative example of the proportion of an officers time that this may take is given below. This is a maximum example, based on the instance that all command hours are taken from exercises. This is based on the assumption that a period of command represents 1-2 hours, and each exercise requires half a working day. Senior officers are required to work one weekend in every four, meaning around 20 working days at weekends (once leave is deducted) are available to support incident command training hours. Should one half a day exercise be undertaken per duty weekend this could provide up to 20 hours worth of incident command practice. However, this figure is dependent on there being sufficient exercises being arranged to facilitate this.

Grade	Days Available	Number of Command Hours	Days per annum to achieve this through training	Proportion of working time
DAC	222	20	5-10	2%-5%
Group Manager B	179	20	5-10	3%-6%
Station Manager B	179	20	5-10	3%-6%
DAC	222	40	10-20	5%-9%
Group Manager B	179	40	10-20	6%-11%
Station Manager B	179	40	10-20	6%-11%

66. An unintended consequence of setting a target of annual hours could be that incident commanders may be reluctant to relinquish command. In order to counter this, each operational incident would count for a maximum of 2 hours towards the annual target. For DAC and AC this should be higher, given they are more likely to take command less frequently but for longer durations. These should be capped at 5 hours. Simulated exercises would count as a maximum of 2 hours per exercise. In addition, a certain amount of these hours can be included as IC support roles, providing a command responsibility is assumed. For example, this could include sector command, but not a tactical advisory role such as HMEPO.
67. The setting of such targets would motivate incident commanders to seek out opportunities to practise incident command either by participating in or organising training exercises. These could be those that form part of the brigade's exercise programme, XVR or Vector simulations, or exercises facilitated by other organisations. However, it would be necessary for the LFB to ensure that Level 2 – 4 commanders were provided enough opportunities to practise their command.
68. This may include increasing the numbers of exercises in areas, or making further Incident Command Exercises available on request.
69. A further option would be to explore ways of adapting the use of the incident command training facilities at Babcock sites to deliver additional exercises, providing opportunities for several

incident commanders to participate simultaneously. There would be a cost implication involved in terms of TU's which would require further discussion with Babcock following development. Increasing the number of Incident Command Exercises in the SoTR will have a cost implication. Some of this may be offset should the revalidation process successful reduce the burden on the requirement of Incident Command Exercises for promotion rounds, which will be explored in a subsequent paper.

70. Further contracted training opportunities using the command facilities at Babcock training venues could be explored through the incident command course review.

Recording of hours

71. In order to count towards IC hours, each entry should include a comment from a monitoring officer to confirm the quality of the performance.
72. An objective should be included in PRDS/SOLACE (where applicable) to achieve the target hours of practicing Incident Command. This will enable line managers to consider progress against the target, and development of incident command skills as an integrated element of personal development. This would provide an opportunity to evaluate progress, and plan additional opportunities at quarterly points, thus reducing the likelihood that the hours are not maintained. For firefighters eligible to act up who do not use PRDS, their progress should be reviewed by their WM annually and recorded on their ITR.

Achieving Incident Command Revalidation

73. The three areas of the incident command revalidation process must be passed in order to achieve command competence. The scoring criteria are summarised in Table 2.
74. The process should be owned and overseen by an individual's line manager in order to mainstream incident command development into all officer roles. It will encourage command to be seen as integral to an individuals role and not as a bolt-on activity.
75. High Scorers - Command competent individuals who scored over 75% and satisfactorily complete their command hours would make themselves eligible to become an operational mentor to those who would benefit from their support. These would include commanders who aspire to move to the next level of command and those who have significant development needs at their current level. There will be benefit in focusing support to commanders from under-represented groups (in line with the Equality Working Group Action Plan) who have been found to significantly benefit from additional support given during pre-promotional workshops and development days.
76. Pass - Commanders who score 75% in the knowledge test and ICE, who also satisfactorily complete their annual command hours would pass the revalidation process.
77. Improvement Required - Commanders who score between 50 – 74% in either the knowledge test or ICE would be subject to the completion of a development plan and reassessment within 30 days.
78. Significant Development Requirements - Commanders who score below 50%, fail a retest following their 30 day improvement plan or fail to reach their annual command hours would not pass the incident command revalidation process. These individuals would be passed to the Incident Command Development Panel.

Table 2. Incident Command Revalidation Standards

	Knowledge Test	Incident Command Exercise	Command Hours
Frequency	Biennial	18-24 Months	Consider Annually
Assessors	Line Manager	Babcock trainers to confirm skills for Level 1 incident commanders, LFB officers to assess level 2, Level 3-4 (DAC/AC) to peer assess	Line Manager
Successful pass mark	75%	75%	100% of annual hours
Development needed	50%-74% - results in 30 day improvement plan then retest	50%-74% - results in 30 day improvement plan then retest	NA
Further action required	Below 50% or failure of retest results in referral to IC Development panel	Below 50% or failure of retest results in referral to ICE Development panel	Failure to reach annual hours results in referral to ICE Development panel
Resource Requirement	Approximately 19 facilitator hours per annum	218 TUs at £13,9k per annum (2016/17 prices) Approximately 61.5 officer days of varying levels to provide assessors/quality assurance	Absorbed within existing working hours

79. The process of revalidation is resource intensive and has the potential to reduce the management time for which officers are available. The table below sets out the total resource implication if all elements are included as recommended. This covers both direct employee time and line manager supervision time. The net effect is the equivalent of approximately 7 officer posts at SM/GM level, based on the option of lower minimum command hours. As additional staffing is unlikely to be an option there will be a need to absorb this additional workload within existing working hours.

80. It is recommended that the CPD logs and requirement to perform a minimum number of command hours is implemented in a second phase, following the implementation of the Knowledge test and ICE. This will ensure ample opportunity is provided to explore options for the number of command hours, and to ensure adequate resourcing is available.

Incident Command Development Panel

81. Individuals who perform exceptionally below the required standard, or who do not improve following the completion of a 30 day improvement plan or retest will be referred to the Incident Command Development Panel.

82. This panel will be established with representatives from the three operational directorates with representatives from Central Operations, Development and Training, Operational Review Team and HR. It is the role of this panel to consider the interventions necessary to bring the individual to the required standard and to maintain firefighter and public safety whilst this development occurs. The panel will provide an additional level of both scrutiny and support, with regular reporting and case review being required.
83. There are a range of interventions which may be available to the panel to consider, including an "Intensive Incident Command" course which is under development. An early iteration of this course was piloted with commanders who are currently off the run, and feedback suggests all showed an improvement. Other options include intensive development plans, tagging of individuals or shadowing ORT. This will be regarded as equivalent to the informal stage of the Capability procedure. A continued failure to meet performance standards would result in a referral to Stage 2 of the Capability procedure.
84. As a final resort, individuals whose performance is deemed such that they are a serious safety risk may be removed from operational duties in order to protect the LFB, firefighter and public safety. This decision would be referred to the Director of Safety and Assurance, or their nominated Deputy, following the recommendation of the panel. Such cases would then be addressed at Stage 3 of the Capability procedure.

Industrial Relations

85. The proposals included in this paper support the continuous development of commanders and will improve firefighter safety by improving command competence. The trades unions will be consulted on these proposals through the normal IR and Health and Safety machinery.

Further Developments

86. Current operational assessments during the promotional process place demand upon the Recruitment Team, Operations Directorate and the Operational Review Team. This is due to the number of candidates involved and the time frame the assessments are required to be run within. A further paper is being developed that will identify ways in which the revalidation process may be extended to demonstrate competence at a higher level in order to access promotion. This would reduce the burden on the assessment process and would provide additional resilience for the rota groups and supporting succession planning for operational posts. Furthermore, it should support work in train on succession planning, following the recent MOPAC audit, ensuring that there are adequate levels of qualified officers available to fill predicted vacancies.

Conclusion

87. This paper sets out a process for the revalidation of incident command that will provide organisational assurance that officers are performing incident command at the required level. It also sets out a method of providing an auditable trail of incident command practice and development, and encourages continuous improvement through the uptake of professional development opportunities.

Recommendations

88. It is recommended that:
89. CMB agree the introduction of a formalised incident command revalidation process to ensure that all Operational Officers are assessed on their command competency as detailed in this report and associated project initiation document. This includes:

- A formalised knowledge test administered at the assessment centre
- Assessable elements of Incident Command refresher courses
- Minimum annual command hours
- A requirement for CPD logs to be maintained

90. Head of Development and Training establishes a cross-directorate working group in collaboration with the Operations Directorate and Operational Assurance to progress the implementation of the revalidation process and the supporting developments outlined in this paper, namely:

- Development of detailed implementation plans for each level of Incident Commander
- The development of formal policy guidance to support these recommendations on the revalidation of incident command.
- The implementation of an operational mentor scheme
- Proposals for a schedule of CPD for incident command, including quarterly Incident Command seminars and self directed maintenance of command competence for all operational roles including computer based training solutions

91. CMB agree the implementation of the revalidation process in two phases. The knowledge tests and incident command exercises will be implemented in the first phase from April 2016 and the minimum number of command hours/CPD being implemented from April 2017.

92. CMB agree that the implementation of the revalidation runs as a project under corporate governance arrangements.

Implementation Timescales

93. It is recommended that a phased implementation of the revalidation system commences in April 2016. Timescales for full implementation will be developed through the implementation working group.

Milestone	Deliverable	Completion Date
Establishment of cross-directorate implementation group		Established.
Review SoTR for 16/17 in relation to ICE allocation		December 2015
Revised SMICR to be piloted, to include 'confirmation of skills' element		January 2016
Update on progress of implementation, including options for the operational element for future assessment rounds	Commissioners Working Group for information	January 2016
Develop schedule of CPD for incident command, including quarterly Incident Command seminars		February 2016

Update on progress of implementation	Commissioners Working Group for information	February 2016
Draft policy for revalidation of command competence to be produced		March 2016
Guidance on logging of CPD to be produced		March 2016
Results of pilot revalidation process using selected commanders, and update on progress of implementation	Commissioners Working Group for information	March 2016
Commence a phased implementation of Incident Command revalidation process Part 1 (knowledge test) and Part 2 (ICE) and associated development packages. Encourage a soft target of command hours to be fully implemented later		Commence April 2016
Update on progress on the implementation of the revalidation process and other activity in relation to using the process as the operational element for future assessment rounds		April 2016
Implement activity required to use the revalidation process as the operational element for future assessment rounds		April-September 2016
Implement Part 3 of the revalidation process – the minimum command hours and the use of CPD logs, commencing with the inclusion of an objective in PRDS/SOLACE, and the use of operational mentors		April 2017

Consultation

Name / Role	Method consulted
Commissioner	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Director of Operations	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Director of Safety and Assurance	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Director of Finance and Contractual Services	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Head of Operational Assurance	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Head of Development and Training	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Head of Training Assurance	Discussion/Circulation of this report
Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service	Discussion
West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service	Discussion
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service	Discussion
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service	Discussion
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service	Discussion
Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	Discussion

Head of Legal and Democratic Services comments

94. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has reviewed this report and strongly supports its recommendations. These will provide assurance that the Brigade is meeting its statutory and other duties to staff and the community.

Director of Finance and Contractual Services comments

95. This report sets out a number of options for the delivery of a revised process for the revalidation of incident command. It then recommends which options should be progressed and sets out the resulting resourcing requirements, which include an additional £13.9k in training costs from 2016/17. This additional £13.9k and all other resources requirements, including staff time, will be contained within existing working hours and budgets.

Appendix I: Current Incident Command Training

Supervisory Manager Incident Command Refresher (SMICR)

A two day course for competent Crew and Watch managers. This is an opportunity for candidates to receive refresher training in incident command and practice commanding a variety of incident scenarios as IC, while being observed by trainers from our training provider Babcock. This is programmed for every two years but is not formally assessed. These numbers are variable from year to year based on current numbers of substantive officers in post.

In 15/16 the SoTR requirement is 384 delegates which is 32 classes.

National Incident Command System (NICS)

Also a two day course held at Babcock Incident Management training suites at Beckton and Harrow. This is for competent Station and Group managers and gives the candidate refresher input on command and control of incidents including spans of control, appropriate command structures and levels of responsibility using simulated Minerva type incident scenarios and Tactical Decision making Exercises (TDE's) over 2 days. Candidates are then required to return on a separately arranged day for half a days observation (below). This training is run and observed once again by Babcock and is programmed every 2 years.

In 15/16 the SoTR requirement was 13 classes for 104 middle managers.

A half day observation, arranged following attendance on a NICS course held within the Babcock Incident Management training suite currently at Beckton. This gives the candidate an opportunity to practice command and control of incidents, appropriate command structures and levels of responsibility using simulated Minerva type incident scenarios. This training is run and observed once again by Babcock and a member of the Operations Review Team (ORT) and is programmed every 2 years.

In 15/16 the SoTR requirement was 52 classes for the 104 middle managers above, with no formal assessment.

Incident Command Exercise (ICE)

A one day course held within the Babcock Incident Management training suite currently at Beckton and Harrow. This is for competent Station and Group managers and gives the candidate an exercise opportunity to practice command and control of incidents including spans of control, appropriate command structures and levels of responsibility using a simulated Minerva type incident scenarios, including role players, but is not assessed.

The SoTR requirement for 15/16 was 9 classes for 100 middle managers.

Principal Officer Exercise (POEX)

A one day refresher exercise for Deputy Assistant Commissioners (DAC) and Assistant Commissioners (AC) held within the Incident Management Training suite at Beckton and soon to be Park Royal. This gives participants the opportunity to practice their Incident Command skills using a simulated Minerva type exercise as IC. It also gives the candidate the opportunity to look at and address strategic and business continuity issues that may arise.

The SoTR requirement for 15/16 is 2 classes for 6 delegates.

Table showing current incident command training, frequency and assessment type

IC Level	Training	Frequency	Assessment
Level 1	Initial LIM	Initial course	Formal
	SMICR refreshers	Every 2 years (proposed to change to annual refresher under IC course review)	Under review
Level 2	National Incident Command System (NICS) course	Biennial	None
	Incident Command Observation	Biennial	Informal Assessment observed by ORT officer
	Incident Command Exercise	Biennial	None
Level 3	Principle officer exercise (Po-Ex)	18 months	None Informal feedback offered by ORT officer
Level 4	None currently offered (course being developed under IC course review)	NA	NA

Appendix II: Results of Incident Command element over the last 3 Assessment Centres

Station Manager ICE	Number of Candidates	Average score	Pass (75%+)	Require Development (50-75%)	Fail (<50%)
2012	58	58.95%	12 candidates (21%)	25 candidates (43%)	21 candidates (36%)
2014	32	55%	3 candidates (9%)	17 candidates (53%)	12 candidates (38%)
2015	50	71.05%	20 candidates (40%)	27 candidates (54%)	3 candidates (6%)
3 year Total	140		25% of candidates	49% of candidates	26% of candidates

Group Manager ICE	Number of Candidates	Average score	Pass (75%+)	Require Development (50-75%)	Fail (<50%)
2012	27	53.06%	5 candidates (9%)	10 candidates (37%)	12 candidates (44 %)
2013	20	77.47%	12 candidates (60%)	8 candidates (40%)	0 candidates
2014	24	67.46%	8 candidates (33%)	13 candidates (54%)	3 candidates (12.5%)
3 year Total	71		25% of candidates	44% of candidates	21% of candidates

Deputy Assistant Commissioner ICE	Number of Candidates	Average score	Pass (75%+)	Require Development (50-75%)	Fail (<50%)
2011	12	68.03%	2 candidates (17%)	9 candidates (75%)	1 candidate (8%)
2013	6	63.52%	3 candidates (50%)	1 candidate (17%)	2 candidates (33%)
2014	15	71.78%	7 candidates (47%)	7 candidates (47%)	1 candidate (6%)

3 year Total	33		36% of candidates	52% of candidates	12% of candidates
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Appendix III: Existing revalidation processes in other industries and fire and rescue services

High risk industries

An online review identified there is a history of licencing and competence assurance and revalidation processes associated with key, risk critical roles in other industries. There were:

- Aviation
- Nuclear Power
- Offshore Oil and Gas
- Healthcare.

The motivation for the introduction of licencing and attention being paid to competence for such roles was usually in response to a number of tragic incidents. For example, in the case of Healthcare it was the nefarious activities of Dr Harold Shipman which prompted a report into licencing and revalidation practises in other industries on behalf of the Department of Health.

This report reviewed the following roles:

- Airline pilots
- Unit Desk Engineers (Nuclear Power) – operate the control systems for one reactor
- Offshore Installation Manager (Oil and gas)

Whilst the report acknowledged that there were a number of caveats to be taken into account when comparing these industries with Healthcare professionals, e.g. cultural, hierarchical structures and standard operating procedures, it did identify an number of general principles (Flin, 2005, p 30):

- Independent regulator
- Regular formal proficiency checks
- Clearly defined standards of competence
- Trained and accredited assessors
- Focus on non-technical skills (human factors)
- Procedures for dealing with failures
- Use of simulators
- Regular health checks
- Linkage of competence assessment to safety management systems

Since the report was published in 2005 within *the healthcare industry* it is a legal requirement for surgeons and all other doctors to be licenced to practise under the Medical Profession (Responsible Officers) Regulations 2010. Surgeons must complete a minimum number of continuous professional development (CPD) training hours/credits per year as part of the revalidation process (Royal College of Surgeons, 2015). All doctors must be revalidated every five years. There are a clear set of revalidation standards and qualified appraisers undertake the appraisal of all doctors (Royal College of General Practitioners, 2014). More recently, a revalidation process is to be in place for nurses and midwives by the end of 2015 and the proposals include a minimum number of practise hours over a three year period along with a requirement to have completed a minimum number of CPD hours (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2015).

The aviation industry is regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which licences pilots for various types of aircraft. The CAA has stipulated the standards of performance required and these form the basis of a pilot's training and assessment. Whilst individual companies may provide the training, CAA qualified examiners conduct pilot assessments, which also focus on non-technical skills (human factors). Pilots also have to complete a minimum number of flying hours in order to qualify

to fly the different types of aircraft. The CAA also licence pilots to fly following a successful assessment and the completion of a specified number of annual flying hours (CAA, 2015).

The nuclear power industry does not require a specific number of individual operating hours as a precursor to be able to practise. Whilst it does not issue licences for unit desk engineers to practise as the CAA does for pilots they do authorise their unit desk engineers to practise. This is achieved every two years by assessing the competence of unit desk engineers, including a focus on human factors. The responsibility for designing and managing a competence assurance system lies with individual operators. The revalidation process is embedded in the safety management systems of the operators (Flin, 2005).

The offshore oil and gas industry, closely mirrors the nuclear power industry in relation to offshore installation managers. Whilst formal systems of authorisation and revalidation may vary between companies, in general they adhere to industry guidelines (Flin, 2005).

The maritime industry is currently developing revalidation processes for its Masters and ships officers. These are to be in place by 2016 and include a minimum number of hours in role over a specified time period along with a requirement to have completed related training (Maritime and Coastguard Agency, 2015).

Other fire and rescue services

A number of Fire and Rescue Services have had in place for many years a revalidation process for their incident commanders. A number of Metropolitan and other Fire and Rescue Services were consulted with and visited in order to explore their processes. Greater Manchester, Hampshire and Hertfordshire in particular were approached as a result of experiencing firefighter fatalities, and therefore have experienced external scrutiny of command competence:

- Greater Manchester (Metropolitan)
- Tyne and Wear (Metropolitan)
- Hampshire (Combined Fire Authority)
- Derbyshire (County Fire Authority)
- Hertfordshire (County Fire Authority)

Summary of existing revalidation processes

Greater Manchester FRS

Incident Command Academy forms part of their assurance framework relating to command competence. It applies to all personnel who may be required to assume a command role who must undertake formal command training and assessment in accordance with their role. It is the aim of the Academy to revalidate the incident command competence of incident commanders at all levels on an annual basis. However, the timescale between assessments for individuals will vary according to the degree of risk they pose as incident commanders as an outcome of their assessment. For example, high performing individuals may not need to revalidate their competence for 18 or 24 months.

The roles associated with the levels of command (see above) in the FRS are as follows:

- Level 1 (Initial) : Firefighters (to enable them to act up), Crew and Watch Managers
- Level 2 (Intermediate) : Station Managers
- Level 3 (Advanced): Group Managers
- Level 4 (Strategic): Area and Brigade Managers

The scale of incidents upon which the revalidation assessments are based are as follows:

- Crew Manager – incidents of 1 or 2 pumps
- Watch Manager – incidents of 1 to 3 pumps
- Station Manager – incidents of 4 to 6 pumps
- Group Manager – incidents of 7 to 10 pumps
- Area Manager – incidents of 11 pumps or more
- Brigade Manager – may take tactical command at their own discretion

Assessments are carried out by the FRS Academy for the following reasons:

- Confirming command competence
- As part of a promotion process
- At the conclusion of an action plan
- At the request of FRS management, e.g. where an individual is required to act up or undertake a temporary promotion

The revalidation assessment consists of a demonstration of command via either a practical exercise or a computer simulator, that is assessed by accredited assessors and overseen by a lead assessor for quality assurance purposes. Individuals are assessed against criteria based on the following:

- FRS SOPs
- National Occupational Standards
- The current FRS Manual on Incident Command
- Service specific requirements

At present there is no assessment of an individual's command skills.

The frequency of assessment is based upon the individual's previous assessment outcome. There are 3 potential assessment outcomes:

- Command Competent (over 60%)
- Action plan required (below 60% requiring reassessment within one month)
- Safety Critical (considered for removal from operational duties)

Command competent individuals who score between 60 – 70% will be required to revalidate their command competence within 1 year. Those who score over 70% will be eligible for a revalidation up to 2 years, but no longer. Those who score less than 60% and are not deemed safety critical will require an action plan approved by the Academy (the guidance acknowledges that most commanders, even competent ones, will have a development plan of some description) and will be reassessed within one month. Safety Critical individuals may be immediately removed from operational duties in order to protect the FRS and its employees from harm. A specified process to remove an individual includes agreement from the lead assessor and subsequently a principal officer. The Academy team are then tasked with devising an action plan for the individual and ultimately re-assessing them once this has been completed.

Failure of the incident command competence revalidation process is not the only event that may lead to an individual being removed from operational duties. The FRS policy states that it should also be considered when the Academy receives:

- A referral following a safety critical event at an incident or training exercise
- A self-referral from an individual who has identified that due to a lack of operational opportunities or self reflection they lack confidence

In the event of a failure, there is no appeal process for an individual to challenge the outcome of their assessment.

The FRS maintains a 'Command Competence Register' that records evidence of performance for all commanders, e.g. promotion round outcomes and revalidation assessments. It also contains individual incident command records. These records are used to identify performance trends in need of an organisational intervention; facilitate the removal of individuals from operational duties; and identify those who may be considered for a high potential scheme.

Commanders are expected to maintain their competence between revalidation assessments. A 'Maintenance of Skills' training programme provides e-learning packages for all levels of commander. Level 1 commanders are assessed annually on these packages by their line managers, whereas Level 2–4 commanders are assessed by accredited assessors. Level 4 commanders also complete an annual strategic command refresher course.

Hampshire FRS

Hampshire introduced their system 8 years ago. It requires all commanders to revalidate their incident command competence every 2 years (including firefighters who act up) to maintain a bespoke incident command qualification.

For Level 1 commanders the revalidation assessment consists of a multiple choice knowledge test and a demonstration of command via the Vector computer simulator. The multiple choice questions are based on SOPs and national incident command guidance. Level 2 commanders undergo a multiple choice knowledge test and a demonstration of command via XVR computer simulator. Level 3 and 4 commanders undertake a comprehension examination and an XVR simulation. Level 4 commanders complete an assessment that lasts up to 3 hours and includes: strategic brigade management (business continuity), command of a significant incident, facilitation of a tactical and strategic coordinating groups, and a media interview.

Currently there is not an assessment of an individual's command skills, but it is intended to incorporate one in the future.

The roles associated with the levels of command in the FRS are as follows:

- Level 1 (Initial) : Firefighters (to enable them to act up), Crew and Watch Managers
- Level 2 (Intermediate) : Station Managers and Group Managers
- Level 3 (Advanced): Area Managers
- Level 4 (Strategic): Brigade Managers

The revalidation assessment is assessed by non-accredited assessors and overseen by a lead assessor or a commander one role above that of the individual for quality assurance purposes. For the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) a CFO from an adjacent brigade is brought in to assess. All commanders are assessed against criteria based on the following:

- FRS SOPs
- National Occupational Standards
- The current national FRS guidance for Incident Command

If either part of an assessment is failed the individual has their command status removed. For Levels 2 – 4 this means they are taken off the run. Level 1 commanders may remain on the run, but not in a command capacity. An appeal process involves the lead assessor and a commander one role senior to the individual.

The support available for commanders centres round routine CPD, e.g. Level 2 – 4 commanders undergo an incident command training day once every 90 days. This training is based on emerging operational themes, SOPs and shared learning sessions. Individuals are provided with a development plan and expected to source the training activities themselves. The development plan dictates the

timescale within which the individual will be re-assessed which will vary according to the degree of failure, e.g. a minor fail will be covered by feedback in the assessment debrief and a development plan, whereas a major fail results in a development plan that may last several months.

At present the outcomes of revalidation assessments are recorded on a database managed by the incident command training team as well as the individual's personal development record. In the future all assessments will be videoed and placed on IT 'cloud system' so the individuals can readily access them and review and reflect upon their own performance. There are currently no organisational performance indicators associated with incident command competence.

The costs associated with the revalidation of incident command are those of trainer and commander time and expenses as it is delivered in house.

The revalidation process is also used on those returning to operational duties after a prolonged period of absence and whose incident command qualification has expired, e.g. secondments.

All levels of commander participate in CPD in relation to incident command (see above) and keep a written log of incidents attended and roles performed. At present these logs are paper based, but it is intended to develop an IT based replacement.

Tyne and Wear FRS

Tyne and Wear are in the process of introducing an incident command competence revalidation process for all levels of commander. At present commanders at all levels are informally assessed using Hydra and Minerva computer simulations. However, it is proposed to use the Vector computer simulation system to revalidate incident command competence for Level 1 and 2 commanders. The latter assessments would take place at fire stations as it is deemed a more efficient method of delivery. Level 3 and 4 commanders will be assessed using the Hydra and Minerva computer simulator. Individuals are assessed against the National Occupational Standards and additional FRS standards commensurate with their role. The assessment will not include a written examination, but it is intended to assess an individual's command skills.

The roles associated with the levels of command (see above) in the FRS are as follows:

- Level 1 (Initial) : Firefighters (to enable them to act up), Crew and Watch Managers
- Level 2 (Intermediate) : Group Managers
- Level 3 (Advanced): Area Managers
- Level 4 (Strategic): Brigade Managers

It is proposed that commanders of all levels would be expected to revalidate their incident command competence every 2 years. A one to one debrief would follow each assessment so commanders receive timely feedback on their performance and the FRS is able to initiate the appropriate development interventions to safeguard its standard of incident command. For Level 1 – 3 commanders, failure to revalidate incident command competence may result in a variety of outcomes for the individual. These are:

- For major issues, the loss of command status, a development plan and a '90 day improvement notice', i.e. command competence must be successfully revalidated within 90 days of failing to do so
- For moderate issues, a development plan is produced for the individual
- For minor issues, these are covered in the one to one debrief following the assessment

A mentor is assigned to those who fail and their line manager is responsible for overseeing the completion of their development plan.

It is proposed that Tactical Command trainers would facilitate the assessments and a small cadre of qualified assessors at Group Manager level would conduct them. The quality assurance of these

assessments will be completed by personnel from another FRS and/or the service's own operational assurance team.

Training provided for Level 1 – 3 commanders comprises an annual maintenance of command competence training day. In addition they complete 3 days of training based on prioritised standard operational procedures (SOP) related to emerging operational themes; core incidents such as fires involving BA and RTCs; and incident command.

Hertfordshire FRS

Hertfordshire have employed a process since the Harrow Court fire that requires commanders at all levels of command, including firefighters who are able to act up, to be assessed as competent incident commanders. For all levels of command the assessment consists of a knowledge test, i.e. a professional discussion in an open forum that is led by a trainer, and a demonstration of command via a computer simulator (Fire Studio). Level 1 commanders undergo 2 simulation assessments, one in their role as incident commander and a second in the role of first supporting officer. Level 2, 3 and 4 commanders complete just one simulation. Individuals are assessed against the BTEC incident command qualification performance criteria commensurate with their role. As such there is no assessment of an individual's command skills.

The roles associated with the levels of command (see above) in the FRS are as follows:

- Level 1 (Initial) : Firefighters (to enable them to act up), Crew and Watch Managers
- Level 2 (Intermediate) : Station Managers
- Level 3 (Advanced): Group Managers
- Level 4 (Strategic): Area and Brigade Managers

All levels of commander are required to revalidate their incident command competence on an annual basis. The cost of the revalidation of incident command is that associated with trainer and participant hourly rates and expenses multiplied by the number of assessments required.

A proposal is currently being considered for the removal of command status from those who fail, otherwise there are no prescribed support mechanisms in place to assist those who do so besides that specified within a personal development plan. The greatest failure rate lies within the Retained Duty System commanders. Historically, full time staff have rarely failed the assessment.

Level 1 commanders are assessed by Level 2 commanders. If an individual disagrees with the outcome of their assessment at Level 1 the lead assessor (Group Manager role) will intervene and adjudicate. Level 2, 3 and 4 commanders are assessed by the lead assessor.

Levels 1 – 4 (including firefighters who may act up) commanders are required to take responsibility for their own development and maintenance of incident command competence. Including gaining access to incident command experience in the training environment. Level 2 – 4 commanders are required to attend an annual incident command training day. In addition they participate in rota group based training in the evenings, which is based on emerging operational themes and/or service needs.

Besides completing an assessment to revalidate their incident command competence, commanders returning to work from a prolonged period of absence from operational duties undertake a specific 'Return to Operations' course if they have an identified incident command development need.

In support of all commanders the FRS provides them with an aide memoire for every operational procedure.

The FRS has a couple of performance indicators associated with incident command competence:

- The percentage of the workforce that are competent incident commanders
- The percentage of incident commanders that fail to maintain their incident command competence.

Derbyshire FRS

Incident Command Training and Assessment Service Procedure forms part of their assurance framework relating to command competence. It applies to all personnel who may be required to assume a command role who must undertake formal command training and assessment in accordance with their role. The assessment consists of written examinations and demonstration of command via a computer simulator. Individuals are assessed against the Skills for Fire and Rescue assessment criteria commensurate with their role. As such there is no assessment of an individual's command skills.

The roles associated with the levels of command (see above) in the FRS are as follows:

- Level 1 (Initial) : Firefighters (to enable them to act up), Crew and Watch Managers
- Level 2 (Intermediate) : Station Managers
- Level 3 (Advanced): Group Managers
- Level 4 (Strategic): Area and Brigade Managers

The frequency of assessment is role dependent. Firefighters (Level 1) able to act up must undergo an annual assessment; crew and watch managers (Level 1), every 2 years; and Level 2, 3 and 4 officers, every 3 years. This is based on the principle that a firefighter who acts up has little exposure or experience of incidents and consequently requires an annual assessment compared to Level 2 commanders whose experience negates the need for regular exposure. Failure to revalidate incident command competence via an assessment results in the removal of command status pending a reassessment.

In the event of a failure, an individual may appeal the outcome of their assessment on the basis that they were not provided with an equal opportunity to access required learning prior to the assessment, or, they were treated unequally during an assessment.

The frequency of assessments may be increased for the following reasons:

- Safety events where a failure of/ineffective command was a contributory factor
- Individual underperformance evidence by operational assurance measures
- Significant procedural change
- Change of role or for selection purposes as part of a promotion round
- Following a prolonged period of absence from operational duties
- When an individual fails to provide evidence of how they have maintained their command competence
- As deemed necessary by the head of Learning and Development
- Upon request of an individual

Levels 1 – 3 (including firefighters who may act up) commanders are required to attend annual incident command development training, which is based on emerging operational themes and/or service needs. Level 4 commanders do not have mandatory development training, but will have access to a gold command training programme.

In addition to this training, commanders at all levels of command are expected to undertake and record regular CPD. The FRS has made some learning resources in support of the maintenance of command competence available via a computer system. Commanders are responsible for maintaining their competence between formal assessments. Level 1 and 2 commanders are responsible for recording suitable and sufficient evidence of relevant command activities upon a

specific computer system every 90 days. It is the responsibility of an individual's line manager to assess the recorded evidence. Level 3 and 4 commanders are not required to do so because it is deemed an unrealistic expectation. However, they are expected to maintain their competence between revalidation assessments. Failure to demonstrate evidence of maintenance of competence may result in the loss of command status.

Conclusion

The introduction of a revalidation process for incident command competence would be in keeping with other high risk industries and FRS. There are a number of key features reflected across many of the organisations. For example:

- Specific frequency of revalidation assessments
- Specified CPD (including targets associated with its frequency and/or time spent practising in role) to be undertaken between assessments of command competence
- Theoretical and practical demonstrations of command competence
- Clear guidelines detailing when the process may be used

A major difference between other high risk industries and the FRS is the lack of revalidation of command skills (non-technical skills). However, some FRS are clearly intending to introduce assessment of these skills as a result of the introduction of the National Operational Guidance for Incident Command. However, there are a number of key similarities between the approach of other high risk industries and FRS and the CFOA guidance in relation to qualifications, assessment and competence. These features support the benefits listed in the LFB qualifications strategy, e.g. establish our own parameters and outcomes we wish to realise from a pathway for the professional development of our workforce, and provide a structured framework for personal and career development which will develop accredited transferable skills (recognised prior learning - RPL), knowledge and understanding and recognise individual achievement of competence.

Appendix IV: ICE element Costings

Application of command skills: estimated cost of biennial stand alone assessments

Role	Level	Assessment Scale	Staff numbers by Level	Annual training requirement	Estimated cost (TU)	Estimated cost (£k)	Estimated LFB Officer Assessor days ⁵
FF+	1	1-2 pumps	1,294	647	647	41.3	647
CM							
WM							
SM	2	5-6 pumps	200	100	200	12.8	100
GM							
DAC	3	11-15 pumps	17	9	18	1.1	8.5
AC							
DAC	4	SCG	17	9	TBC	TBC	8.5
AC							
Totals for Option 1		(L1-3 only)	1,511	756	865	55.2	764
Totals for Option 2		(L2-3 only)	217	109	218	13.9	117

⁵ Based on the assumption that 4 delegates are assessed per day, by two officers.