

**FSIGN 804****Customer Care Standards***Old Inst.: SFS:K020:a1**Issue date: Jun 2004**800 Series: Audit & Quality  
Assurance***Summary**

This Note is intended for internal use, providing information and guidance on the standards that should be achieved when carrying out fire safety regulation work.

This Note is one of a series produced by Fire Safety Regulation HQ Policy Groups to provide additional advice and guidance to officers and Fire Safety Teams on various subjects related to their role.

Where appropriate this Note should be used for learning and staff development purposes.

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# 1 Introduction

1.1 The London Fire Brigade's principal aim is to make London a safer city by minimising the risks and the social and economic cost of fire and other hazards. The Fire Safety Department plays a significant part in making London a safer place to live, work and visit through statutory enforcement work, education, research and advice. This note sets out the customer care standards that we will strive to achieve, with respect to our responsibilities for statutory fire safety work.

1.2 To achieve a quality service we will:

- Be courteous and efficient.
- Respond to every inquiry.
- Set and achieve high standards.
- Learn and improve continuously.
- Work co-operatively with clients.
- Identify ourselves by name (and produce identification when appropriate).
- Provide a contact point for any further dealings.
- Help identify and reduce the risks from fire in the workplace.
- Make sure we are clear, concise and easily understood when dealing with people.
- Confirm in writing the result of our visits and on request to detail informal advice, explaining why action is required and over what timescale.
- Discuss any fire safety recommendations or requirements with clients and explore the alternatives.
- Distinguish clearly between what must be done to comply with the law and what is recommended best practice.
- Minimise the cost of compliance by not requiring action unless it is proportionate to the risk involved.
- Give reasonable time to comply (unless immediate action is necessary in the interest of safety).
- Notify clients if a matter is reported for consideration of legal proceedings.
- In case of dispute advise of the procedure for making a complaint or representations.
- Maintain confidentiality.

## 2 Customer service standards (2011/2012)

2.1 The Authority intends to achieve the following standards:

- We will respond to alleged fire risks within three hours of them being reported.
- When required, we will issue an Enforcement Notice under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Order) within 14 days of an inspection being carried out, unless material alterations are required.
- A formal reply will be sent within 14 days of receipt of application for a new / amended petroleum certificate.
- We will respond to applications under the Licensing Act 2003 before the appointed Licensing Authority representation date. Where representation is necessary, it will be confirmed by a written report being sent to the Licensing Authority within 28 consecutive days. The Licensing Authority will be informed in writing should the representation be withdrawn.
- Within 14 days of consultation, following the Building (Approved Inspectors etc.) Regulations 2000 (as amended), a response will be made to the appropriate inspector.

- We will aim to achieve the targets laid down in the departmental plan, and complete all the programmed / scheduled audits due during the year.
- Within 10 working days from agreeing to a request for exemption from the Fire Precautions (Sub-surface Railway Station) England Regulations 2009 a notice will be issued.
- All external (non-casework) correspondence (either letter or e-mail) will be responded to within 10 working days (except in the case of a complaint or legal claim) or an acknowledgement sent within two days if a reply cannot be sent in 10.
- We will respond to requests for advice and information within 20 working days (as required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000).

(Note: All days quoted are calendar days unless otherwise stated)

### 3 Service user contact

- 3.1 Good customer service is an essential part of providing a quality service. It is not just about being polite and helpful, it is about establishing good working relationships, delivering the services we have promised and reinforcing the professional image that personnel have established.
- 3.2 The following details the most common means in which we communicate with clients, local authorities, fire safety professionals, engineers and other associated groups, and colleagues within our own organisation. The notes within each section identify the key points for consideration and, where appropriate, the action that should be taken.

#### Face To Face Meetings

- 3.3 The majority of face to face meetings will occur when carrying out audits/inspections on the customers premises, in line with the Inspecting Officers' duties (See Section 4). If held at Authority premises, visitors should be met at the entrance and accompanied to the meeting area. If the person meeting the visitor will not be present at the meeting, then the officer who they have come to see shall be informed that their visitor is waiting.
- 3.4 If a visitor attends Authority premises unexpectedly, the nature of the visit should be ascertained by whoever initially greets them and the following action is to be taken as appropriate:
  - (a) General enquiry or FS literature request – Any member of staff should be able to provide a satisfactory response to this type of request. If in doubt consult a colleague.
  - (b) Technical enquiry – If the visitor requires some technical advice they should be referred to the FS duty Inspecting Officer. If the individual has had previous dealings with an officer about a specific premises they should be referred to that officer. If they are unavailable, details shall be taken from the visitor and the officer requested to make contact.
  - (c) Compliment or Complaint - If a visitor has attended to make a compliment or complaint then listen carefully and record the details. Continue to deal with the matter in accordance with Authority Policy (External compliments and complaints procedure).

#### Telephone Contacts

- 3.5 In all instances the telephone shall be answered promptly and the greeting shall include, as a minimum, the London Fire Brigade and the Borough / Group name.
- 3.6 The first priority is to establish if the caller is through to the right office and the nature of the call. If the caller has the wrong office they should be given the correct number and then transferred to the appropriate office. The following guidance must be considered when dealing with calls,



- (a) General enquiry or FS literature request - Any member of staff should be able to provide a satisfactory response to this type of request. If in doubt consult a colleague.
- (b) Technical enquiry – If the caller requires some technical advice they should be referred to the FS duty Inspecting Officer. If the individual has had previous dealings with an officer about a specific premises they should be referred to that officer. If they are unavailable, details shall be taken from the caller and the officer requested to make contact.
- (c) Compliment or Complaint - If a caller wishes to make a compliment or complaint then listen carefully and record the details. Continue to deal with the matter in accordance with Authority Policy.
- (d) Alleged fire risks - Full details of the alleged risk must be recorded on form FS/G1/1 and the complainant advised that we will respond immediately. The Team Leader is to be notified of the call and in their absence the duty Inspecting Officer. Action is then to be taken in accordance with the Authority procedure for dealing with alleged fire risks.

NOTE: If the duty officer is not available to deal with a telephone call, explain to the caller that the officer is temporarily unavailable, take the callers details and contact telephone number and pass them to the officer for action as soon as practicable. Alternatively there may be a suitably qualified colleague who can deal with the call.

- 3.7 To avoid telephone calls remaining unanswered, all staff should ensure that when they are leaving their desk for any reasonable length of time (i.e. more than 20 minutes), their phone can be answered by someone who can take a message. If the telephone diversion facility is used, ensure that it is cancelled on return to your desk.

### **Answerphone Contact**

- 3.8 Each office shall maintain an answerphone facility to enable service users to leave messages for any member of staff. Under normal circumstances answerphones must be switched off during normal office hours and be operable for all other periods, including 24 hours a day at weekends and public holidays.
- 3.9 The answerphone is to be cleared of all messages at the start of every working day and a written copy of the message created and passed to the officer concerned. If the officer will not be available for more than two days or the matter is deemed urgent, the message is to be passed to the Team Leader.
- 3.10 The answerphone shall contain a clear concise message that identifies the name of the borough team, normal office hours and the action to take if the caller requires emergency assistance. The following is a suggestion of the style of message that could be used:  
  

"This is the London Fire Brigade, XX Area Fire Safety Team. If you require emergency assistance please hang up, dial 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade. If you wish to report an alleged fire risk please contact our Resource Management Centre on [REDACTED] extension [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. This office is open between ..... and ..... Monday to Friday. If you wish to leave a message please do so after the tone, clearly stating your name, contact number, the address of the premises your inquiry relates to and if appropriate the name of the person you wish to contact. Thank you."
- 3.11 Occasional checks are to be made by the Area team and Performance Review team to ensure that the facility is functioning and the correct telephone number is available to the public. E.G. via the Authority website.

## 4 Inspecting officer best practice

- 4.1 All appointments, including a contact telephone number, should be entered in the officer's electronic diary. Suitable access arrangements should be made to ensure that nominated staff can access appointment details. Access is important for many reasons, amongst which the following are considered essential:
- (a) Providing access complies with lone worker protocols, and helps maintain a safer working environment for staff when out of the office.
  - (b) In the event of an officer reporting sick, appointments can be cancelled or re-arranged.
  - (c) Urgent messages can be passed to personnel if their location is known.
  - (d) Joint inspections for vetting purposes can easily be arranged.
- 4.2 The purpose of the visit should be clearly understood by the client and the inspecting officer should be prepared to explain and answer any questions raised.
- 4.3 Ensure that any advice given is clearly understood and that the service users' legal responsibilities are clarified.
- 4.4 All correspondence should contain the name of the individual dealing with the inquiry, the Authority fire safety reference and any client reference that has been provided.

## Document History

### Impact assessments

An Equality or Sustainability Impact Assessment was completed on:

Equality Impact Assessment	23/05/2012	Sustainability Impact Assessment	30/03/2015
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### Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
All	Rewritten throughout & FSIGN format	28/02/2012
All	General update of processes and references	10/09/2015
Page5/index	Refreshed index to reflect correct Sections. Removed an empty bullet and unused paragraph number	24/02/2016