

# FSIGN 802

## Auditing the fire safety function

*Old Inst.: SFS:K010:a1*

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*800 Series: Audit & Quality Assurance*

### Summary

This Note is intended for internal use, providing information and guidance on the assessment process of the fire safety function.

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 An audit is a systematic, independent and documented process that involves collecting and objectively evaluating evidence. It is used to determine the extent to which the interpretation, application and effectiveness of systems and procedures conform to pre-determined standards and expectations.
- 1.2 The auditing activity is an excellent tool for bringing about quality improvement. An independent auditor, someone not based at the workplace, can sometimes spot problems or inefficient working methods that the staff performing the function have missed because they are too familiar with the processes and take certain things for granted. The auditor provides information to management about the quality management systems and it is management that has the responsibility for taking appropriate action.
- 1.3 The audit process involves the auditor(s) and workplace staff working together as a team to evaluate procedures and systems, which may lead to change. Progress and improvement are dependent upon the clear identification of good and bad practice, problems and solutions. The process is an aid to development and should never be considered as punitive.
- 1.4 The auditing of the statutory fire safety function will be co-ordinated by the Audit and Performance Group under the direction of the Assistant Commissioner (Fire Safety). The Audit and Quality Assurance Group will be responsible for carrying out the audits and reporting the findings.
- 1.5 The range of work within fire safety is diverse and it would not be possible, effective or desirable to audit the whole system or workplace in any single audit. Audits will therefore focus on specific work systems, elements or processes within the fire safety function, analysing samples that will be indicative of the standards achieved.
- 1.6 As a general rule, auditors will not audit within their own workplace in order to maintain the independent status of the audit.

## 2 Auditing the Fire Safety function:

### what will be audited?

(To be read in conjunction with Appendix 1)

- 2.1 Fire Safety in conjunction/consultation with Fire Safety Principal Management Board will determine which work systems, elements or processes, within the workplace, require auditing.
- 2.2 These could include the following:
  - Processing of work through the Area Team or Community Safety department (examining workflow).
  - Documentation currently in use.
  - Inspection of data accuracy on the fire safety computer system.
  - The monitoring function within the Area Team or Community Fire Safety Department
  - Fire safety workloads and standards at fire stations.
  - Community fire safety youth engagement activities
  - Any other aspect of delivery of the fire safety function

## **when will audits occur?**

- 2.3 Audits, targeting specific work systems or processes, will be programmed on a regular basis with an annual plan being agreed by Fire Safety Principal Management Board for the proceeding year.
- 2.4 In addition to the above, supplementary audits may be requested at any time by the Director of Operations and/or the AC (Fire Safety) in order to target specific areas of the fire safety function. Any such requests may also be instigated by Area Fire safety Managers /CS Group Heads via the Assistant Commissioner. Requests should be made in writing for consideration. In these circumstances the required period of notice to the auditee may be waived (see paragraph 4.1).

## **how is the audit carried out?**

- 2.5 The Area Fire Safety Manager/CS Group Head will be notified at least one month in advance of the audit. The notification will be in writing from the Assistant Commissioner (Fire Safety), stating the proposed date(s), location and scope of the proposed audit.
- 2.6 The audit team will consist of the Audit & Performance Group and any other specialised staff as required by the Audit & Performance Manager,
- 2.7 Information considered necessary for the audit, e.g. procedural documents, will be assembled and issued, for prior study, before the audit commences.
- 2.8 On the first day of the audit, the audit team will commence with an '*Opening Meeting*' between the auditors and the local management team, at which they will introduce themselves, discuss the scope and objectives of the audit and give staff the opportunity to ask questions.
- 2.9 The audit team will use a number of techniques, e.g. observation, interview, questioning, examination of documents, sampling of the system and examination of procedures to carry out the audit. Detailed records of the findings will be made. It must be noted that auditing is a sampling activity. The auditor cannot and should not try to examine everything. The auditor will choose a representative sample and base conclusions upon the findings. Quality auditing is a verification activity. The auditor must be objective and unbiased. Auditing is not about finding fault and criticising.
- 2.10 During the audit process activities may be identified that are not in accordance with our prescribed system of work. These deviations may enhance the process or have an adverse effect on the working systems or on the service delivery. If non-conformities are found they should be noted. Reference to the standard or procedure that has not been followed must be made.
- 2.11 If during an audit something is identified that is not strictly a non-conformity, but is evidence of good or poor practice, this should be reported as an observation. An observation is an item that has the potential to improve or adversely affect the quality of the service delivery. Observations may indicate where a procedure is unclear and review or clarification is required.
- 2.12 Non conformities and observations will be recorded on a standard form FSIGN802\_01a.
- 2.13 It is not the auditor's job to 'correct' staff or to lecture to them on the importance of following procedures or to suggest how the non-conformance is to be dealt with. The auditor's job is to record the issue together with any supporting evidence.
- 2.14 On completion of the audit, the audit team will close the audit with a '*Closing Meeting*' with the local management team. At this meeting the lead auditor must summarise the audit, which will include:
- A review of the scope and objectives.
  - Confirmation that the audit results are based on samples.



- An overall summary of the results.
  - Thank staff for their time and co-operation.
- 2.15 Any comments made by the local management team will be taken into consideration. At this stage the local management team should respond to any non-conformance and suggest remedial action and an implementation time limit. Action plans and completion dates will be recorded on the non-conformity report. On occasions it may not be possible to determine completion dates as additional investigation is required. On these occasions a time-scale must be agreed by which the date will be determined. There may also be occasions when required actions are not appropriate to be dealt with in the workplace as they have Authority wide implications (e.g. policy/procedural amendment required). These should be recorded within the non-conformity report and will be included within the final report.
- 2.16 The discussions during this meeting will form the basis of the workplace specific report, which in turn will contribute to the final audit report.

### 3 Audit reporting

(See form FSIGN802\_02a)

- 3.1 The structure and management of the fire safety function dictate that there are two key areas of reporting that need to be carried out. The first within the workplace with the local management team, and the second at principal management level. This naturally creates an audit that consists of two distinct parts:
- The gathering of evidence from the workplace, its analysis, the reporting of the findings and preparation of a workplace specific report and
  - The collation of information from the workplaces involved in the audit and the compilation of a final audit report that summarises the findings and reflects the standards achieved across the statutory fire safety function.
- 3.2 The workplace specific report and the final audit report are to be structured in the same manner. The reports will contain the following sections:
- A title and audit number
  - Audit dates, location, team members and workplace representatives
  - Audit scope and objective
  - Summary of findings (Good and bad)
  - Observations, recommendations and conclusions
  - Name and signature of report author
  - Appendices listing supporting documentation
- 3.3 The Audit team will prepare the workplace specific report and forward it to the Fire Safety Principal manager responsible for the team and the Area Fire Safety Manager/Group Head. Confidentiality is important and therefore the audit team must ensure that the report is forwarded direct on completion. The Audit & Performance Group will use this opportunity to:
- Identify Authority trends based on local observations
  - Identify additional areas that may be considered for future audit
  - Ensure consistency in report formats
- 3.4 The final audit report, summarising the findings of the workplace audits and action required, will be prepared by the Audit and Performance Group to present at the performance scrutiny panel. As a general rule, the intention is to share the findings of the final audit report, not only with the team(s)/CS Group audited, but more generally to promote good practice.

## **4 Action plan implementation**

- 4.1 After the audit, the local management team is responsible for ensuring that any necessary corrective and preventive action identified and recorded within the workplace audit is carried out.
- 4.2 The response to action(s) identified within the final audit will be the responsibility of Area Fire Safety Manager/Group Head.

## **5 The 'close out' – corrective action & follow up**

- 5.1 Audit and Performance Group has the responsibility to independently check that the action(s) have been taken and are effective. This may involve checking that a document has been revised or a procedure changed or even a follow-up audit may be carried out. The check is largely dependent upon the findings of the original audit. The results of the follow-up activities will be recorded upon the non-conformity report and the outcomes reported to the Principal Manager/Area Fire Safety Manager/Group Head and copied to the local management team.

## **6 Audit records**

- 6.1 It is essential to maintain internal audit records. These will predominantly consist of audit reports, non-conformity reports, audit checklists and schedule of auditors. The Audit & Performance Group has responsibility for this function. All records will be kept in a secure manner due to the confidential nature of some of the information.

## Appendix 1 – Audit of the fire safety function



## 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	FSIGN Format	28/02/2012
All	Updated to reflect current structure	18/09/1015