

Section 5 - CONSULTATION

This section provides a brief overview of specific proposals on which we are inviting comment. The full reports on which these proposals are based can be viewed at www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk and it is strongly recommended that these are accessed to gain a fuller picture of the relevant issues.

This year we are seeking a broader view on three specific issues before determining a way forward regarding our:

1. Provision of specialist rescue and support over and above that which is available on front line fire engines;
2. Approach to unwanted fire signals and the major problem of false alarms; and
3. Retained duty system stations and the catchment areas from which we recruit staff.

As always we will consult widely and have allocated twelve weeks for this purpose commencing 16th August and ending on 7th November. The consultation process will include:

- Physical distribution of the report
- Electronic publication on our website
- Presentations to all staff on the subject matter
- Face to face dialogue with the public via our scrutiny panels and other meetings
- Debate with other interested parties e.g. elected members, local authorities
- Discussion with the business sector
- Dialogue with staff trade unions

The Fire Authority's Planning Committee will consider the outcome of the consultation at the end of November following which it is anticipated that any decisions will be made by the full Fire Authority on 13th December.

HOW TO RESPOND

We welcome your views and will be happy to receive any feedback by letter or e-mail. If you need any further assistance or clarification please ring 01772 862545 and ask for the risk management team. Please send any comments to:

The Risk Management Team
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5.1 SPECIALIST RESCUE AND SUPPORT

The full report on which these proposals are based can be accessed at www.lancsfirerescue.org.uk.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 requires us to make provision for the rescue of people from road traffic collisions. For this reason - and for rescue purposes at other non-fire emergencies - all sixty LFRS front line fire engines carry a range of modern rescue equipment. Whilst this equipment is often adequate, a level of provision over and above that which is available via this route is sometimes needed. This may be due to the nature of the emergency, or it may be that we require more specialised equipment, or skills, which are not available on a traditional fire engine.

Whilst the demand is low, there are occasions where it would be extremely difficult - if not impossible - to safely resolve

some incidents without this enhanced provision. In recent years we have added to our specialist response capability through both local and national provision and as a result, we now believe some rationalisation/consolidation is needed. To improve services and/or to deliver better value for money, we have therefore examined three areas of specialist support in detail:

- Major incident support/heavy rescue
- Boat provision
- Rope Rescue Team

5.1.1 Major Incident Support/Heavy Rescue

At present, our major incident support/heavy rescue capability comprises a major incident support unit (MISU) located at Preston fire station and an Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team based in Leyland.

The MISU - which is fully funded by the fire authority - comprises a prime mover vehicle and demountable equipment pod which was introduced in 1996 as part of a new rescue strategy. With the provision of rescue equipment on all sixty front line fire engines and other changes over the years, this strategy has now been superseded. The MISU is alternately crewed with other vehicles at Preston and staff have a wider operational remit i.e. they may be on a conventional fire engine one day and the MISU the next. Four posts are included on the station's staffing establishment to reflect this provision and the MISU is immediately available 24 hours a day.

The USAR team - which is fully funded by central government - was introduced in 2007 as part of a national resilience project (19 other USAR teams are located across the country) and comprises three prime mover vehicles, a range of demountable equipment pods and fifteen specialist staff whose sole function is specialist rescue i.e. they do not fight fires. Whilst the equipment and skill sets within the USAR unit significantly exceed those of the MISU, the working arrangements of the USAR team mean that they are immediately available only during the day (normally 0800 - 1800). At night, staff are on call from home and the attendance time to an incident will therefore increase by up to 45 minutes. On this basis, the current dual provision i.e. MISU and USAR, has been sustained with joint attendance to incidents during the day and utilisation of USAR at night only where an extended response time has been acceptable.

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Activity levels for the MISU are very low as evident from tables 5.1 and 5.2 opposite which cover a three-year period and show:

- mobilisations i.e. the number of occasions the vehicle was despatched to an incident; and
- attendances i.e. the number of occasions the vehicle actually attended an incident.

Water rescue incidents are not included as this aspect is considered separately in section 5.1.2.

The USAR team activity is similarly low i.e. 300 mobilisations/135 attendances over the same period and it is evident that a rationalisation of resources is feasible.

Providing the specialist rescue and support function through the USAR team alone would facilitate the optimum emergency response - in an

**Table 5.1 - MISU Activity (Excluding water rescue) 2007/09
24 - Hour Period**

Year	MISU Mobilisations	MISU Attendances
2007	82	30
2008	69	29
2009	71	33
Total	222	92

**Table 5.2 - MISU Activity (Excluding water rescue) 2007/09
1800 - 0800 Hours**

Year	MISU Mobilisations	MISU Attendances
2007	36	18
2008	23	11
2009	33	16
Total	92	45

equipment and skills sense - whilst also enabling a cost saving through the reduction of four staff at Preston fire station in the absence of the MISU. It must be recognised, however, that an extended deployment time at night i.e. up to

45 minutes will ensue unless USAR working arrangements are modified to allow immediate 24-hour response. The 'day crewing plus' duty system - which was successfully introduced into LFRS in 2010 - offers a cost effective way

of providing an immediate USAR response capability whilst still achieving significant overall cost savings.

We are therefore proposing that the MISU at Preston is removed from service and that the USAR team provide the sole major incident support and heavy rescue capability in the future.

In making this proposal, two options can be considered:

Option 1 - Maintain existing working arrangements for USAR staff and accept an increased response time at nights.

Operational Implications - Table 5.2 shows that the MISU attended 45 incidents over the three-year period between the hours of 1800 and 0800. Adoption of this option would mean that an extended deployment time of up to 45 minutes would result for an average of 15 incidents per year.

Staffing Implications - Reduction of 4 firefighter posts at C50 Preston.

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Financial Implications - Annual revenue savings of £150,000.

Option 2 - Upgrade USAR to a day-crewing plus (DCP) type system to provide an immediate 24-hour response.

Operational Implications - Improved response capability.

Staffing Implications - Reduction of 4 firefighter posts at Preston and one USAR Watch Manager (a DCP duty system would require 14, rather than the existing, 15 USAR staff).

Financial Implications - Annual revenue savings of £113, 000. Capital costs for temporary accommodation of £25,000 and up to £300,000 for a permanent facility (the USAR team is currently located in temporary accommodation at Leyland pending the construction of a new Chorley fire station in late 2013. The £25,000 temporary accommodation costs would facilitate the transition in early 2011 pending a permanent provision at the new Chorley station).

In respect of either option, it is also acknowledged that the USAR team has a national role i.e. it could - however unlikely - be deployed outside Lancashire for a protracted period. Contingency arrangements to provide the major incident support/heavy rescue function for LFRS in such circumstances will be needed though a number of alternative solutions exist and this is not considered to be an obstacle to implementation.

5.1.2 Boat Provision

In contrast to 5.1.1 detailed previously, there is no legal requirement for us to provide a water rescue capability.

Notwithstanding this, the absence of any alternative provider (no agency has responsibility for inland water rescue at the present time); a legal requirement to protect employees' health and safety; and a public expectation that the fire service will respond to requests for assistance where water related 'emergencies' occur, has meant we have maintained a boat provision for emergency response purposes since 1997. Two boat units are currently provided: one - the principal resource - at Preston and a second back up at Penwortham.

Whilst the boat(s) provided the sole response for 10 years, our water rescue capability was significantly improved in 2007 through the upgrade of seven strategically located fire engines across the county to a 'water

rescue pump' status. Equipment was provided and enhanced training given to staff at these stations to enable them to operate safely and effectively in water. At any such incident, one or more of these vehicles now forms part of the initial attendance and the demand for a boat - and the associated trained staff - has been significantly reduced.

Table 5.3 on page 33 details the extent of boat activity at Preston which is deployed via the MISU whilst the Penwortham unit operates as a fallback and is not routinely mobilised. As is evident, activity is very limited, and whilst the requirement remains for a boat to support the water rescue pumps, an opportunity exists to revise existing arrangements and consolidate on one, rather than the existing two boat units.

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Table 5.3 - MISU Water Rescue Activity 2007/09

Year	Mobilisations	Attendances
2007	49	15
2008	62	26
2009	24	13
Total	135	54

Of the two stations, Penwortham is much less busy operationally and is thereby less prone to disruption. Moreover, as a DCP station, 14 as opposed to the 60 staff at Preston are required to maintain their swift water rescue (SRT) and boat handling skills, both of which are resource intensive from a time and cost perspective. A consolidated approach based on a Penwortham boat unit would also permit the removal of Preston as a designated swift water rescue station eliminating the training requirement and associated costs.

We are therefore proposing that the boat and SRT provision at C50 Preston is removed and that we consolidate on one boat unit (whilst maintaining two boats for resilience) at C57 Penwortham.

Operational Implications - Restricted capacity to mobilise boat out of County.

Staffing Implications - None.

Financial implications - Revenue savings of £18,000 through reduction in annual training costs.

5.1.3 Rope Rescue

Since 1995, we have maintained a rope rescue team at St Annes fire station to provide a level of expertise over and above that available on front line fire engines. The team responds to the more complex incidents involving rescue of people or animals above or below ground and/or in confined spaces, and supports other operational activity. Whilst there is no legal requirement for us to make this provision, the team was formed

following a number of high level rescues e.g. Blackpool Tower, where the shortcomings of conventional equipment and training were apparent.

As tables 5.4 and 5.5 following show, the team's activity levels have been very low. From a staff safety and service effectiveness standpoint, however, the rope rescue team has been an important resource when needed.

**Table 5.4 - Rope Rescue Team Activity 2007/09
24-Hour Period**

Year	Mobilisations	Attendances
2007	33	12
2008	36	16
2009	81	43
Total	150	71

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**Table 5.5 - Rope Rescue Team Activity 2007/09
 1800 - 0800 Hours**

Year	Mobilisations	Attendances
2007	18	7
2008	13	7
2009	33	18
Total	64	32

Historically, all rope rescue team members have been volunteers drawn from the wholetime and RDS workforce at St Annes, and whilst this volunteer ethos is extremely commendable, it has proved problematic in two respects:

- difficulties have been experienced in maintaining sufficient team members to provide a continuous availability; and
- the ability to relieve rope rescue team members at protracted incidents due to the absence of other qualified staff has been experienced.

With the transition of St Annes station to day crewing plus (DCP) in July 2010, all 14 DCP staff are now required to be members of the rope rescue team as a condition of their service at the station. Taken alongside existing RDS volunteers, this provides greater resilience in terms of overall staff numbers though the problem of relieving team members at protracted incidents remains.

Alongside these developments at St Annes, the USAR team - who are routinely trained in rope rescue as a consequence of their primary role - have all recently qualified to the same standard as our rope rescue team. This action was

taken in order to provide continuity of rope rescue provision up to, and immediately following, the change in staffing arrangements at St Annes which resulted in a number of long standing rope rescue operatives transferring off the station and leaving the team. The USAR team is currently deploying alongside colleagues from St Annes though the response time at night is increased for reasons outlined in section 5.1.1 previously. In respect of future provision, a number of options can be considered:

Option 1 - Utilise the St Annes unit (made up of DCP staff and RDS volunteers) as the sole rope rescue capability.

Operational Implications - Accepting that no guarantee regarding RDS volunteers can be provided, 14 DCP staff may be adequate for immediate response but problems of relieving staff at protracted incidents will remain.

Staffing Implications - Continuing, though reduced, reliance on RDS volunteers.

Financial Implications - None

Option 2 - Maintain existing working arrangements for USAR staff and use as the sole rope rescue capability, accepting the increased response time at nights.

Operational Implications - Table 5.5 previous shows that the rope rescue team attended 32 incidents between the hours of 1800 and 0800 over the three-year period which - if this option is adopted - would mean that an extended response time of up to 45 minutes would result for an average of 11 incidents per year. 14 USAR staff may be adequate for first attendance needs but problems of relieving staff at protracted incidents will remain. Contingency arrangements in the absence of the USAR team due to a national deployment will also be required.

Staffing Implications - None

Financial Implications - None

Option 3 - Upgrade USAR to immediate 24-hour availability and use as the sole rope rescue

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capability (only viable if the option to upgrade USAR for major incident support/heavy rescue as detailed in 5.1.1 is adopted).

Operational Implications - 14 USAR staff may be adequate for immediate response but problems of relieving staff at protracted incidents will remain. Contingency arrangements in the absence of the USAR team due to a national deployment will also be required.

Staffing Implications - As per 5.1.1 option 2.

Financial Implications - As per 5.1.1 option 2.

Option 4 - Utilise both the St Annes (DCP staff only) and USAR teams to provide a dual provision which is mobilised on a geographical and/or time-based model.

Operational Implications - Dual approach offers enhanced resilience and addresses issue of relieving team members at protracted incidents.

Staffing Implications - RDS rope rescue volunteers no longer required at St Annes.

Financial Implications - Capital cost of £10,000 to fully equip USAR team for rope rescue response.

On the basis of long-term sustainability and enhanced resilience, we are proposing option 4 as the optimum approach.



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5.2 UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

Advancements in technology have made fire alarm systems much more affordable and this, together with the impact of new fire safety legislation, has caused the number of installations to increase. Alongside this growth, a corresponding increase in the number of false alarms has occurred.

Whilst a permissible level of 'false alarm' is acceptable within the relevant standard for fire alarm systems (see BS 5839), this is very low at i.e. one unwanted fire signal per detector head per hundred years, emphasising the reliability of effectively managed systems. As a life and building protection feature, fire alarm systems - when properly installed, maintained and managed - clearly enhance public safety. Unfortunately, not all systems are installed correctly and/or maintained, and building management arrangements sometimes fall short of what is required. As a result, fire alarm systems generate 'unwanted fire

signals' (UwFS) i.e. an emergency call generated by an automatic fire alarm which proves to be a false alarm.

In 2009/10 we attended 20,367 emergency incidents of which almost one-third were UwFS. This has a huge impact in a number of respects e.g.:

- the emergency response poses a risk to staff and other road users;
- fire engines are unavailable for genuine emergencies;
- disruption is caused to other fire service activities e.g. fire safety visits, training etc;
- disturbance for retained duty system staff and their employers; and
- significant response costs are incurred.

Quite clearly, any emergency response arrangements need to be carefully balanced against the related risks, and this is particularly important when considering calls from automatic systems. Tables 5.6 and 5.7 on the following page show the total number of fire alarm incidents in Lancashire over a five-year period broken down as 'public/commercial' e.g. shops, offices, schools, hospitals etc and 'domestic' e.g. single private dwellings, sheltered housing, flats etc. As is evident, very few such calls turn out to be actual fires - and these in turn are often minor - and even less result in injury.

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Table 5.6 - automatic fire alarm incidents 2005/10 Public and commercial buildings

Year	Total AFA calls	Resultant fires (actual numbers and as % of afa calls)		Fires involving casualties (total numbers and as % of calls)		Total Casualties	Casualties receiving other than precautionary check or first aid at scene
2005/06	6301	255	4.0%	2	0.03%	2	1
2006/07	6439	236	3.7%	8	0.12%	11	9
2007/08	5766	161	2.8%	4	0.07%	4	3
2008/09	5712	134	2.3%	2	0.04%	2	1
2009/10	5914	159	2.7%	7	0.12%	15	0
Total	30132	945	3.13%	23	0.07%	34	14

Table 5.7 - automatic fire alarm incidents 2005/10 Domestic Premises

Year	Total AFA calls	Resultant fires (actual numbers and as % of afa calls)		Fires involving casualties (total numbers and as % of calls)		Total Casualties	Casualties receiving other than precautionary check or first aid at scene
2005/06	2171	341	15.7%	21	0.97%	27	15
2006/07	1821	249	13.7%	10	0.55%	12	5
2007/08	1489	204	13.7%	18	1.21%	21	12
2008/09	1447	172	11.9%	10	0.69%	10	4
2009/10	1974	182	9.2%	51	2.58%	56	10
Total	8902	1148	12.89%	110	1.23%	126	46

Whilst it is fully accepted that an automatic fire alarm call can result in a fire and/or injury, the likelihood is very low, particularly in public and commercial buildings.

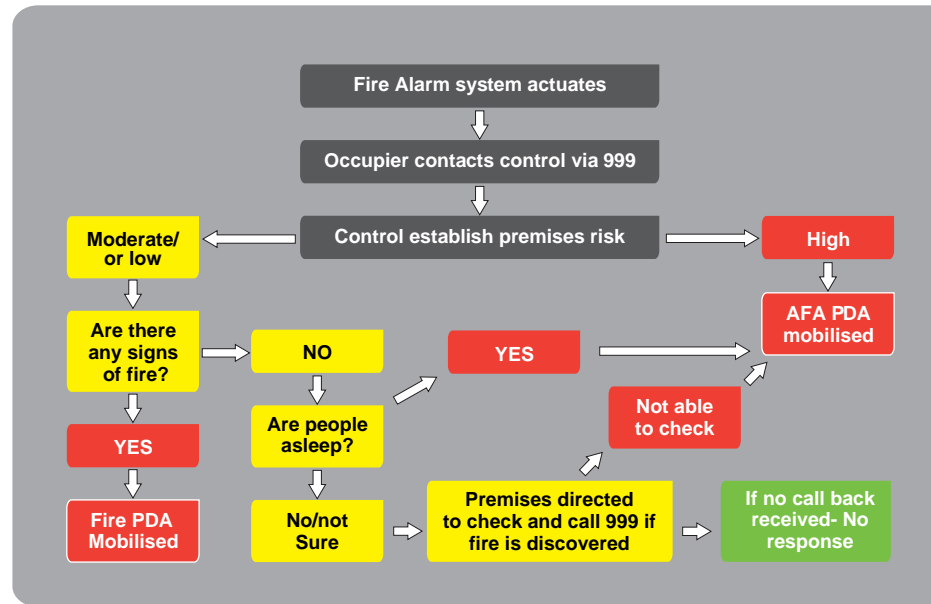
In 2004, we revised our response arrangements to automatic fire alarms and made a number of changes whereby the majority of calls now only receive an immediate attendance of one fire engine, rather than the two or even three as in the past. We have also worked extensively with premises occupiers to address problem systems and to ensure that effective managerial arrangements are in place. This approach has helped to free up resources and to reduce the actual numbers of UwFS in the intervening period. Notwithstanding such improvements, the level of false alarms remains unacceptably high and we believe further action is warranted.

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We are therefore proposing the introduction of a 'call challenge' process in order to reduce the level of mobilisations to unwanted fire signals. This will apply to all calls originating from an Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) system, thereby ensuring that a response is only automatically made where a premises is categorised as 'high risk', or where the call is likely to be a genuine fire. An example process for a call received in Fire Control via the 999 system is shown right.

In addition, we are also proposing to:

- Enter into agreements with Alarm Receiving Centres (ARC) to ensure that where a premises is not categorised as 'high risk', the ARC will contact the occupier to confirm if there is a fire before passing the call to us;
- Adopt a more robust enforcement approach in



Operational Implications -
 Reduction in mobilisations to unwanted fire signal incidents

Staffing Implications - None

Financial Implications - Reduced operating costs

respect of 'problem premises' i.e. those where the number of false alarms is high;

- Zone the larger, more complex 'high risk' premises to allow a varied pre-determined attendance dependent on risk e.g. on a hospital site, some buildings may attract a greater or lesser weight of attendance;

- Promote robust 'off line' policies where premises are occupied and a responsible person can make a 999 call in the event of fire;

- Consider the adoption of a 'drive to arrive' approach for problem premises i.e. a fire engine response made under non-emergency conditions.

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5.3 RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM STATION CATCHMENT AREAS

Retained duty system (RDS) staff are a key component of our workforce and deliver a range of prevention and emergency response services across the County. In contrast to their wholetime duty system colleagues (where the fire and rescue service is the primary employer) RDS staff often work for other employers, or are self-employed, whilst also giving cover for up to 120 hours per week during which time they are available by alerter to respond to an emergency. RDS staff also attend one evening per week for training and carry out community safety work e.g. home fire safety checks, in their station areas. Due to the 'on-call' nature, RDS staff live and/or work in close proximity to their respective stations which are often located in the more rural areas of Lancashire. Thirty-two of our sixty fire engines are staffed exclusively by RDS personnel and there were 429 RDS staff as of 1st July 2010 providing an essential and very cost-effective service.

Due to the 'on-call' requirement and the need to mobilise fire engines as quickly as possible, RDS stations have historically recruited staff from a catchment area which allows for a response into the station within five minutes when an emergency call is received. In recent years, it has proved increasingly difficult at some stations to recruit suitable RDS candidates from within the defined catchment areas. As a result, some RDS fire engines have been unavailable to respond to emergency incidents, particularly during the day.

Whilst our policy of deploying the nearest available fire engine to emergencies has been met by sending those from neighbouring stations, there are a number of RDS stations which are geographically remote and which - if an extended catchment area was permitted - would still enable a faster response than if fire engines from neighbouring station/s were sent. Whilst we are not advocating a

general extension of catchment areas, we believe that improvements are possible at some more isolated stations if we allow up to seven, rather than the existing, five minutes. This would give us a bigger pool for recruitment, which in turn could help improve RDS fire engine availability.

We are therefore proposing - in line with our existing policy of sending the nearest available fire engine to an emergency call - that the catchment area for recruitment at the following RDS stations be extended from five to seven minutes.

- Longridge
- Clitheroe
- Silverdale
- Hornby
- Garstang
- Preesall
- Bacup
- Earby
- Ormskirk

Operational Implications - Improved availability at some RDS stations and consequential faster response to emergencies.

Staffing Implications - Greater catchment area and larger pool for recruitment.

Financial Implications - None.

Glossary

Accidental Dwelling Fire - A 'Primary Fire' occurring in a property classed as a private dwelling where the cause of the fire is recorded as accidental or not known.

CFA - Combined Fire Authority - the body responsible in law for the provision of a fire and rescue service in Lancashire.

Critical Fire - Any fire likely to involve a significant threat to life, structures or the environment.

Deliberate Fire - Any fire (primary or secondary) where the cause is recorded as deliberate, doubtful or malicious.

LFRS - Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service - employed by the CFA to deliver the fire and rescue service in Lancashire.

Malicious False Alarm - A call made with the intention of getting the fire and rescue service to attend a non-existing emergency.

Primary Fire - Any fire involving casualties, rescues or escape OR any fire involving damage to property (excluding derelict buildings and vehicles) OR any fire attended by 5 or more fire appliances.

Secondary Fire - Any fire not classified as a 'Primary Fire', which did not involve casualties or rescues and was attended by four or fewer appliances. Fires in derelict buildings or vehicles are classified as secondary fires, as are chimney fires confined to the chimney structure.

Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS) - A call initiated as the result of the actuation of an automatic fire alarm system where the fire and rescue service attended and the actuation was not the result of a fire.

Wholetime (W/T) - Uniformed operational staff whose primary employment is with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and who work 42 hours per week on a day/night shift system.

Retained Duty System (RDS) - Staff whose primary employment is with a non-fire service employer, but who agree to provide a pre-determined level of cover for emergency response ranging from 40 to 120 hours per week.

Day-Crewing - A duty system which provides an emergency response through a combination of wholetime and retained duty systems.

Day-Crewing Plus (DCP) - A more flexible duty system which was introduced into Lancashire in 2009 and which involves a combination of 'on call' and 'standby' provision whilst maintaining an immediate response and which utilises purpose built accommodation in close proximity to fire stations for the standby periods.

Prime Mover - A specialist vehicle onto which can be mounted interchangeable equipment pods.

Alternately crewed - refers to certain specialist vehicles which are crewed at the discretion of the officer in charge or when required.

Major Incident Support Unit (MISU) - An emergency vehicle carrying specialised equipment over and above that carried on front line fire engines.