

Background History

1 Standards of Fire Cover

The way that the response to incidents has been reported to the Authority and the public has changed since the inception of the Service in 1948. For most of its history the Service was bound by the national 'Standards of Fire Cover'.

Historically, the term 'fire cover' has been used describe the disposition and deployment of firefighting equipment and personnel.

UK fire services usually respond to calls in fire appliances, which carry four or five crew and appropriate firefighting and rescue equipment. Most appliances are general purpose vehicles which are sent to all types of incidents. Some appliances are more specialised and carry specialist equipment.

Until c. 2004 the UK had national guidelines for the weight and timeliness of responses to fire calls. These guidelines were first formulated by the Riverdale Committee in 1936 and were modified a number of times, most recently by the Joint Committee on Standards of Fire Cover in 1985. The guidelines depend largely upon the risk of fire spread within an area. The risk of fire spread in an area was ascribed to one of four broad categories; 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D'. In each risk category, the required response was specified as a number of 'pumps' (first line pumping appliances) which must arrive at an incident within the time limits shown below.

Risk	1st appliance	2nd appliance	3rd appliance
A	5 mins	5 mins	8 mins
B	5 mins	8 mins	
C	10 mins		
D	20 mins		

Table 1-1: Fire Risk Categories and Attendance Standards

These standards applied only to calls to fires (and only those which do not occur whilst another fire is being attended by the brigade). There were no standards for special service calls, although draft guidelines were introduced but were for guidance only, with FRS required to provide performance reporting based upon them.

These standards remained in place until the implementation of the recommendations of the 'Independent Review of the Fire Service,' carried out by Professor Sir George Bain in 2002 (the 'Bain Report') at the request of the UK Government. This looked at how FRS were operated and managed and the working conditions of firefighters. On publication, the report set out recommendations for how UK fire and rescue services should change to meet the

demands of the twenty-first century. The Bain report made several recommendations that led to wide ranging changes in the approach to fire and rescue in the UK. These were enabled in law by Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. The Act's provisions included a requirement for FRS to produce Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP). Within this, FRS were directed to develop their own local standards of fire cover based on local risk.

2 Origins of our current attendance time targets

Up until the end of 2006/7 BFRS was still working to the old Standards of Fire Cover but the IRMP Action Plan for that year included a comprehensive review of response standards:

KTA 07/05: Formulating a Revised Standard of Operational Response		
What are we planning to do?	What benefits will result from these changes?	Any additional resources needed?
As part of our move to integrated risk management planning we are conducting a phased review of operational response standards across the range of incident types that we would normally expect to attend. During 2006/07 we will revise and test changes to response standards for automatic fire alarms, flooding, lift incidents, animal rescues, road traffic accidents, lock-ins/outs, hazardous material incidents, and line rescues. Any changes will only be permanently adopted following an appropriate period of public consultation.	Improved public safety by ensuring that resource targeting more accurately reflects the distribution of risks across our communities. More efficient and effective use of resources by ensuring that the scale of response is appropriate to the nature of the incident.	No. These activities will be resourced from existing capacity.

By 2007/8 BFRS had introduced a ten minute response standard for 'risk to life' incidents on 75% of occasions:

Risk to life

In addition to reviewing the scale of our response to particular incident types, our new risk-based approach aims to ensure that our speed of response is proportionate to the risk. Our highest priority is, and has always been, to respond as quickly as possible to any incident that presents a risk to human life and we will always mobilise the nearest/fastest resources to life risk incidents. This normally results in an attendance time of only a few minutes.

Analysis of the configuration of our resources, our current performance capabilities and regard for the safety of the wider public and our own staff has led us to set a maximum response time to life risks of 10 minutes, from time of call to time of attendance (which includes the time taken to handle the call and mobilise our crews). We have further set ourselves a demanding target of achieving this standard on at least 75 per cent of all occasions and we will look for opportunities to improve this as we work with the new standards.

The 2009-12 IRMP introduced the framework that we still work to today¹. Page 53 of the document referred to an "*extensive trial undertaken during 2007*" as being the basis for the new standards which were as follows:

- Attendance of the first operational resource for all emergency incidents within 10 minutes on 75 per cent of occasions;
- Attendance of the first operational resource for all emergency incidents within 20 minutes on 98 per cent of occasions;
- Ensuring that all pumping appliances required at an incident where a pre-determined attendance standard applies are present within 20 minutes on 90 per cent of occasions.

In 2012/13 The Public safety targets contained within this IRMP period were reviewed. The ones relevant to operational response performance were set as follows:

- Achieve attendance with the first operational resource for all emergency incidents within 10 minutes on 80 per cent of occasions, and 99 per cent of all emergency incidents within 20 minutes;
- All pumping appliances required as part of the predetermined attendance arrive within 20 minutes on 90 per cent of occasions.

These are the response standards that we currently report against.

¹ - <N:\Common\IRMP\2009-12 Strategic IRMP\Final Approved IRMP\CFA approved 2009-12 IRMP 31 March 2009.doc>