



NRAT

Assurance

The logo for Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service is a rounded rectangular banner. The left side is yellow and features a silver fire helmet with a central shield containing a red and white wave and two crossed axes. The right side is dark blue with the word "Merseyside" in yellow, spaced-out letters above a thin yellow horizontal line. Below the line, the words "FIRE & RESCUE" and "SERVICE" are written in large, bold, yellow, sans-serif capital letters.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
Urban Search & Rescue Review
29th – 30th April 2010

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Fire & Rescue Service	Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service
Period of Assurance	29th and 30th April 2010
Report Submission	7th May 2010

NRAT Assurance Team Members	Allocated Assurance Area
John Fairweather	Crewing and Attributes Training Health & Safety Communications Mobilising
Simon McNamara	Crewing and Attributes Training Health & Safety Communications Mobilising
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Assurance Objectives

1. To identify the organisational strategies, policies, training and procedures that supports the Urban Search & Rescue assets in meeting the National Resilience programme expectations for responding to national level incidents.
2. To identify and confirm that programmed vehicle and equipment maintenance, servicing and defect records for National Resilience assets are completed in accordance within the terms and conditions of use.

Assurance Process Criteria

Firebuy LTCM Contract Operations Manual	Issue 1	1 st Dec 2008
Urban Search & Rescue Key Performance Indicators	V 1.0	
Fire & Rescue Service Circular 08/08 (USAR mobilising document)		2008
Urban Search & Rescue Prime Mover Manual		
Urban Search and Rescue module Terms and Conditions (includes equipment maintenance test cards, equipment notes, manual handling assessments, Hazard assesments & Risk assessments, Module training document)		
Urban Search & Rescue Equipment Notes and Standard Operating Practices (via the web)	Current issue	Various
Urban Search and Rescue Equipment Manual Handling Notes and Operational Procedure HA/RA documents (via the web)	Current issue	Various
Fire & Rescue Service Circular 68/2008 and 36/08 and 52/08 (USAR consumables)		2008

Summary

The New Dimension programme, as a collaboration between Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) has enhanced the ability of the FRS to respond to Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) events such as, building collapse and major transport incidents. Following the successful rollout of the New Dimension capabilities, responsibility for the long term management of the assets, policies and assurance was transferred to a National Resilience Board (NRB).

Assurance of the USAR capability is obtained through a range of methods; fundamental to which is the Assurance Review process. The aim of which is to identify by means of a systematic, objective and documented procedure that all USAR assets issued to FRSs throughout England are able to respond to national level incidents in accordance with and to the standards identified in relevant national guidance documents. To facilitate this, an Assurance Review team consisting of National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) members are responsible for undertaking reviews. The purpose of these reviews is to gather information at both strategic and tactical levels on the assurance objectives identified and established for the year 2010/11 as approved by the NRB.

The Assurance Team visited Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) on the 29th and 30th April 2010 as part of the national 2010/11 assurance review programme. As detailed above, the assurance reviews are part of a wider assurance process within the National Resilience framework; designed to provide evidence to the NRB and key stakeholders that the USAR capability provided by CLG, are ready to respond to major or catastrophic incidents requiring mutual aid.

The Assurance review was greatly assisted by the provision of a comprehensive submission of evidence that was clearly aligned to each of the question areas and was supported by relevant documents that were conveniently hyperlinked into the electronic documentation. During the visit the Assurance Review team visited the Training academy, the Command and Control suite and the USAR station.

MFRS had already been involved with collapsed structure rescues prior to the provision of USAR by CLG due to the local circumstances. The provision of USAR resources provided an opportunity that has been rigorously pursued by the management team to develop the USAR capability beyond the national requirements and provide the flexibility to enable the USAR team to respond to a wider span of incidents.

This development has resulted in a highly trained and highly motivated USAR team that now responds to all technical rescues. Evidence clearly showed that the USAR capability has been fully integrated with core business for both the USAR team and traditional firefighters.

There was evidence of USAR support through both Fire Authority members and senior management which has enabled the USAR capability to be developed at an impressive rate and afford the management opportunities to develop further.

Interim Report

The clear commitment and support of USAR by senior management has enabled the USAR capability to develop to its current position, which is beyond the initial scope of operations and now includes water rescue and rope rescue within MFRS.

It was also noted that the MFRS has a comprehensive approach to training and development of skills of the USAR team and the USAR strategic reserve. The processes and systems to support training should prevent skill fade.

As can be seen from the overall matrix, MFRS are well advanced in their development of the USAR capability.

It was evident that the areas the Assurance Review team were tasked to look at had been integrated into core business and that the discharge of statutory duties (The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) order 2007) with relation to USAR could be discharged by MFRS.

The Assurance Team would like to place on record their gratitude to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service and its staff for their hospitality and cooperation shown during the planning, undertaking and feedback of the review.

Conclusions and recommendations arising from the review can be found at the end of this report.

PROCESS DESCRIPTION

The assurance process uses a 'traffic light' system to categorise the various levels of compliance with the assurance process criteria.

NOTABLE

Areas of notable practice are those practises, procedures or policies that significantly enhance the National Resilience capability and are also suitable for national dissemination subject to the hosting FRS approval.

In addition, any area of notable practice is recorded separately.

ADVANCED

This category identifies those areas where the FRS has met the identified standards as detailed in the Assurance process criteria and has also developed them beyond the standard requirements.

ESTABLISHED

This category identifies those areas and procedures where the FRS has met the identified standards as detailed in the Assurance process criteria.

DEVELOPING

Issues identified as developing are based on the assumption that a FRS with NR assets has carried out work in relation to their responsibilities to those assets and the requirement to respond to incidents.

However areas or specific issues may be identified where it is evident that the systems in place would benefit from a review or support that would allow the FRS to further develop its policies and procedures to the standards identified in the assurance process criteria documentation.

ASSURANCE FINDINGS

NOTABLE

Mobilising

The USAR capability has been developed and delivered into FRS since 2004 and national mobilising guidance was only published in 2008 (FSC 08/2008). Nationally there has been considerable confusion within control rooms over terminology and inaccurate requests from incident commanders and other control rooms. MFRS have also experienced difficulties at Mobilising and Command & Control (MACC) during exercises and have provided an internal solution.

If a USAR mobilisation is required MFRS have decided to place a USAR advisor in MACC to provide assistance with mobilisations and provide interpretation where confusion or conflict may arise. All of the USAR advisors have a working knowledge of the Fire Service Circular 08/2008.

Communications

Ensuring that national communications have reached all USAR personnel has been problematical across the country.

All MFRS USAR personnel have their own e-mail addresses and have access to the National Resilience website and the documentation on it. All MFRS USAR personnel have login details to access the national USAR documentation, information notes, meeting minutes and other relevant documents on the site.

Communications are disseminated to all personnel which includes all information notes. Watch Managers (WM) record important items in the risk critical information handover book which is signed off by each WM. This is supplemented by the e-mail system to each Firefighter who will catch up with communications should they be away from station. Links to the USAR National User Group via Watch Manager/Station Manager (SM) are also available through the station direct or the e-mail system.

ADVANCED/ESTABLISHED

Policies have been developed for USAR, these are embedded within the mainstream policies of the Service. The development of the maintenance of skills was developed and actioned before the national guidance had been agreed. This has resulted in the agreed level of maintenance of skills being at a higher frequency than the minimum guidance level. The training policy guidance and Delivery Service Instructions clearly identify how USAR training is to be delivered, not just to USAR personnel but also to all MFRS operational personnel and the timetables that support this training programme.

Training programmes are developed and agreed in line with the national learning outcomes. These provide the framework for the MFRS training material and timetable/check sheet that is used by the personnel delivering the training. This is all held on the service's Learnpro system. The trainers are monitored by assessors and the whole system is monitored by the USAR SM. This system is well established within the organisation and delivers a high volume of training.

Interim Report

The USAR training courses delivered within MFRS are Phase 1 training, safe working at height and line access casualty extrication. They are also prepared to deliver confined Space operator and hot cutting courses in the near future.

The crewing model is based on a 48 wholetime with 48 on-call contracts that support the wholetime cover. This is backed up with the USAR strategic reserve personnel who have been trained to technician level.

This far exceeds the expected level of personnel to be USAR trained and affords MFRS a greater flexibility and resilience. At the time of the review MFRS had a full complement of USAR personnel.

Establishment levels are maintained through the provision of additional personnel available within the strategic reserve. The strategic reserve is continually replenished with all new operational personnel being trained to support USAR and also from existing members of staff who express an interest. The strategic reserve provides cover for any attrition experienced by the USAR team which is currently at a low rate. The skill levels within the USAR team are well in advance of the national KPI requirements.

Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) exist for support with all neighbouring FRS, this will include USAR support where requested.

The Local Training Facility (LTF) has been developed and is supplemented by a subterranean network of tunnels and rubble pile. This provides an excellent training opportunity for all USAR personnel. There are plans to extend this facility to provide additional training opportunities, including working with USAR equipment at height and different forms of collapse.

All USAR personnel are part of the electronic monitoring system (Sophlogic) that records training and can highlight any identified training needs.

Lessons learnt through operational incidents and exercises are captured and followed up through structured debriefs (level 3) and where necessary an individual action plan is produced. This is entered onto the 'OSHENS' (operational assurance) system where it is monitored by the performance and compliance team.

Submissions are also made to National Resilience operational assurance on the approved template to ensure that a national record of incidents is able to be monitored.

The MFRS USAR capability has an active engagement with Police, Ambulance HART and local authority building control. This results in joint training and also USAR awareness training has been provided to these organisations. There are also plans to co-locate the Ambulance Hart team with the USAR team which will afford even greater opportunities.

MFRS has already developed the USAR capability to include the areas of rope rescue and water rescue. This development has resulted in the USAR team being mobilised to all technical rescues.

USAR canine arrangements are fully in place with a UK USAR qualified dog and succession planning through additional dogs is already underway. The training is integrated with the USAR team and the LTF facilities provide excellent support.

Interim Report

Testing and maintenance of equipment systems have been developed and appear to work well. The test records provided nationally are accurately completed and maintained at the USAR station. Frequency of testing is as per the test card guidance. The testing system is monitored through the OSHENS electronic system.

Defects are monitored by the USAR SM and issues are resolved through the VT Group business relationship manager when appropriate. Inventories are checked as directed by the Service Instruction note and monitored by the SM. Information Notes are distributed through a robust system and information is recorded in the risk critical handover book. This is also monitored by the USAR SM.

MFRS have provided additional charging facilities to ensure all prime movers and modules have their own chargers, this is in excess to the national provision.

USAR Health and Safety requirements have been fully embraced and developed within MFRS. MFRS have clear processes for all H&S systems and records & log books were complete and available. PPE and respirators are covered through the issue of personal log books.

Reporting of H&S events are covered within the Service Instruction and will be reported through MACC to the FRSNCC.

USAR Mobilising has been established to meet local incidents needs and comply with FSC 08/08 for national incidents. There are predetermined attendances in place for collapsed structures and all technical rescues that are non fire related.

DEVELOPING

None

CONCLUSIONS

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service (MFRS) have been instrumental in the development of a number of aspects of Urban Search and Rescue through the support to the New Dimension project with some key support officers and their continued support to the national team through the National Working Group and National User Group.

The commitment to the FRS USAR response is shown through the continued support at a high level. As a result of this commitment there is now a very robust arrangement to support any national request for the USAR capability from MFRS.

The level of information provided within the electronic documents prior to the review visit enabled the team to understand the structure and approach of MFRS and covered all levels within the FRS from the IRMP to the individual training record. This provided the team with clear evidence of the common thread running through the organisation.

The development of the USAR capability to the advanced level in so many areas has only been possible through the investment of both time and financial resources.

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service have made a significant commitment in resources and have embedded the USAR capability into core business to ensure that they will be fit for purpose should they be required for a national level operational incident.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUPPORT

The NRAT have (within the scope of the assurance process) a key role in supporting the individual FRS to act on the findings.

The following details those areas that are identified as FRS recommendations and recommendations that can be supported by the NRAT.

FRS ISSUES

None

NRAT SUPPORT

Provide an index for the Information Notes on the National Resilience Website.

Interim Report

Assurance Area	Level	Question Number	Notable	Advanced	Established	Developing
Crewing & Attributes	Strategic	1				
	Strategic	2				
	Strategic	3				
	Strategic	4				
	Strategic	5				
	Operational	14				
	Operational	15				
	Operational	16				
Training	Strategic	6				
	Strategic	7				
	Strategic	8				
	Strategic	9				
	Strategic	10				
	Strategic	11				
	Strategic	12				
	Strategic	13				
	Operational	17				
	Operational	18				
	Operational	19				
	Operational	20				
	Operational	21				
	Operational	22	N/A			
	Operational	23				
	Operational	24				
	Operational	25				
	Operational	26				
	Operational	27				
Operational	28					
Operational	29					
Vehicle & Equipment Maintenance	Operational	30				
	Operational	31				
	Operational	32				
	Operational	33				
	Operational	34				
	Operational	35				
	Operational	36				
Health & Safety	Strategic/Op	37				
	Strategic/Op	38				
	Strategic/Op	39				
	Strategic/Op	40				
Communications	Strategic/Op	41				
	Strategic/Op	42				
USAR Mobilising	Strategic	43				
	Strategic	44				
	Strategic	45				

Crewing and Attributes

1. Does your FRS have specific policies relating to USAR?

2. What is the establishment level of your USAR team and what crewing model is in place? (KPI - line 30 and 31)

3. What is your strategy for maintaining establishment levels and ensuring trained crews and attributes are available in sufficient numbers? Do the USAR team have other commitments that could impact on a USAR mobilisation?

4. What arrangements are in place to mobilise the required attributes in terms of personnel in the event of mobilising the USAR PDA? (FRSC 08/08)

5. Are any agreements in place to support non USAR FRS and if so is there a restriction on the incidents that you will support?

Training

6. As a strategic policy, how is USAR training delivered within your FRS?
(Initial training, refresher training, maintenance of skills, officer awareness training, other agencies, other FRS)

7. How is training (not provided through the NR centralised training programme) assured to meet the nationally agreed learning outcomes?

8. How has the USAR Local Training Facility been developed?

9. How is maintenance of skills achieved and monitored within your FRS?
(KPI – Line 82, 83, 84 and the USAR training standards & frequencies document approved at NUG and NWG)

10. Is USAR training mainstreamed into the organisational training plan?

11. What processes are in place to ensure that post-incident/exercise evaluation lessons are incorporated into future training and practice?

Interim Report

12. How is awareness of the USAR capability disseminated across the region and other agencies?
Is there any engagement with other Cat 1 and 2 responders (regional exercises etc.)?
-

13. Do you have a strategy to develop USAR and if so, in what areas and over what time scale?
-

URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONAL

Crewing and Attributes

14. What is the establishment level of USAR trained personnel at your location?

What is the actual strength of USAR trained personnel at your location, and are sufficient numbers available at all times? (KPI - line 30 and 31)
-

15. What arrangements are in place to forecast personnel and USAR skills attrition, and ensure the maintenance of sufficient numbers of competent personnel with the necessary USAR skills at your location? (KPI – line 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78)
-

16. What arrangements are in place in your FRS to mobilise the required attributes in terms of personnel in the event of mobilising the USAR PDA? (FRSC 08/08)
-

Training

17. How do you achieve the targets of the USAR Maintenance of Skills standards?
-

18. What is the training recording mechanism and how is this monitored?
-

19. What levels of USAR specialist skills are currently within the team (KPI – line 68, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78) and what is the level of the instructors within the team (KPI line 69, 70, 77,79)?
-

20. Where is USAR Phase 1 training carried out and recorded?
Do you have a set programme for Phase 1 training?
Who delivers this training?
(Delivered locally to the nationally agreed learning outcomes)
-

21. How is National USAR guidance documentation made available to your personnel and how is it used?
-

Interim Report

22. What arrangements are made for ensuring that your personnel are able to train or exercise with other FRS rescue elements?
(Boat teams, Rope rescue etc.)

23. What arrangements are made for ensuring that your personnel are able to train or exercise with the other agencies which could comprise a USAR attendance?

24. What arrangements are made for ensuring that post-incident/exercise evaluation lessons are incorporated into future training and practice?

25. How is USAR training validated and evaluated?

26. What training is provided to non USAR crews?

27. How is awareness of the USAR capability disseminated across the region and other agencies?

28. What system is in place to maintain a satisfactory level of consumables?
How do you ensure that the USAR Timber grade (C3) is being maintained?

29. Do you have a USAR dog within your FRS?

If yes:

Has it been assessed as competent against the CLG USAR canine standard?

- Is it on the FRSNCC mobilising list?
- What training is undertaken to maintain dog and handler competency?
- How often do the dog and handler train with the USAR team

If no:

- What arrangements are in place for the provision of a USAR dog to your team?
 - How often do your USAR personnel train with the sub contracted USAR dog?
-

VEHICLE & EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE, SERVICING & DEFECT RECORDING

30. What systems are in place to ensure test record cards are accurately completed?

31. What criteria are used to identify the frequency of testing and servicing?
How is this monitored?

Interim Report

32. What systems exist to ensure vehicle, module and equipment logbooks are completed and accurate details recorded?

33. Are all FRS external chargers fitted and working? Is there a charging lead for each module (Modules 1, 2 and 3 only)?

34. What procedures are utilised to ensure defects are dealt with in accordance with contractual expectations?

35. What are the frequencies of inventory checks and the procedures for them being carried out?

36. What procedures exist to ensure compliance with any information notes issued?

Health and Safety

37. How do you access and utilise the H&S documentation (Risk assessments HA/RA's)?

38. How do you record the hand/arm vibration exposures?

39. How do you monitor USAR PPE including respirators?

40. What is the reporting process for a Health & Safety event that involves National Resilience assets?

USAR Communications

41. What arrangements are in place to communicate relevant information to all personnel in your FRS USAR team, including Fire Service Circulars and Information Notes?

How is information disseminated to/from FRS USAR team members?

42. Do the USAR team have engagement with the National User Group and Regional Group?

Mobilising

43. What is your policy for mobilising USAR on a local, regional and national level?

44. What PDA's for USAR are in place?

45. What is the reporting process for a Health & Safety event that involves National Resilience assets?
