

AGENDA ITEM:

REPORT TO:	MERSEYSIDE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING
DATE:	16TH DECEMBER 2010
REPORT NO.	CFO/219/10
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	GARRY WILLIAMS, HEALTH & SAFETY MANAGER
SUBJECT:	REPORT OF THE INSPECTION BY THE HEALTH & SAFETY EXECUTIVE

**APPENDIX A TITLE: REPORT OF THE INSPECTION BY THE HEALTH
& SAFETY EXECUTIVE**

APPENDIX B TITLE: ACTION PLAN

ATTACHED – HARD COPIES

Purpose of Report

1. Firefighters and other staff are safer today as a result of the investment and decisions of the Authority. Members are asked to note the report following an inspection by the Health & Safety (HSE) and endorse the Action Plan that is in response to the report's recommendations.

Recommendation

2. That Members:
 - (a) Note the report and recommendations contained; and
 - (b) Endorse the action plan formulated to deliver improvements to the health and safety of employees;
 - (c) Agree the Consultation and Negotiation Committee receive reports relating to the establishment of a Staff Communications Forum as part of a wider role to oversee an Authority Community and Consultation Strategy.

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an inspection of the management of health and safety at Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) carried out by the Health and Safety Executive in June 2010. The inspection process has been thorough, with the inclusion of extra days for the inspection over and above any other fire & rescue service. The report is a very positive reflection of the organisation's arrangements for the delivery of health and safety and the commitment of its employees, and the Inspectors found Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service to be an organisation which is innovative, committed and which continues to strive to improve its health and safety culture.

Introduction & Background

3. Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service was inspected by the Health & Safety Executive commencing the 29th June 2010. The inspection was scheduled for four days but was extended by another two to ensure completeness of the inspection process.
4. The inspection was undertaken by a team of four inspectors drawn from across the HSE's Field Directorates and led by MFRS's local HSE Inspector Ms Sarah Wadham.
5. The inspection concentrated on the following issues:-
 - Training and competence in core firefighter skills including breathing apparatus, associated procedures and compartment fire behaviour training;
 - Competence for Incident Command;
 - Provision of risk critical information to inform operational decision making.

This is in keeping with the inspections of eight fire & rescue services undertaken by the HSE in 2009/10 and reported within the Consolidated Report published in October 2010.

6. The summary of recommendations contained within the Consolidated Report relate to the following specific areas:-
 - BA & Compartment Fire Behaviour training – effective arrangements for training, assessing competence and the maintenance of accurate training records, and the monitoring of rapid deployment;
 - Ensuring a training framework for the maintenance of core skills;

- Effective training and assessment of all those who carry out incident command; and
 - The provision of risk critical information – provided to the incident commander, systems to capture and maintain risk critical information are robust, system to actively collect risk critical information.
7. The local inspection of MFRS found that operational personnel are ‘well equipped and adequately trained to carry out tasks associated with operational activities covered by their inspection’.
 8. The Inspectors commented that the Training and Development Academy, core skills, breathing apparatus and crew based training are ‘particular strengths, with the provision of risk information described as ‘a significant strength of the service’. They also reported that ‘firefighters expressed confidence in their ability to recognise and mitigate the symptoms of flashover and backdraught’.
 9. The report contains a number of recommendations which are being addressed by the attached action plan, which has also been communicated to the HSE. The two key recommendation they identified are:-
 - To conduct a staff survey to identify why staff perceive there to be a lack of health and safety communication; and
 - To monitor the use of ‘Rapid Deployment’, second appliance attendance and the role of BAECO, and to communicate this to operational staff.

Measures are already being taken to address the reports recommendations.

10. One specific recommendation of the HSE related to improving consultation with non-union employees. This is consistent with a previous Operational Peer Assessment that referred to the need to ensure ‘greater buy-in from staff is achieved’. This issue of staff communications was discussed at a recent Consultation and Negotiation Committee meeting and any decision was deferred to this meeting of the Authority. It is proposed, therefore, a Staff Communications Forum is established and that Members agree the Consultation and Negotiation Committee receives reports as to its operation as part of a wider role to oversee an Authority Communication and Consultation Strategy.

Equality & Diversity Implications

11. Excellent health and safety arrangements contribute to the well-being of all staff regardless of their background or beliefs.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

12. Excellent health and safety arrangements are part of a best value approach by the Authority.

Health & Safety and Environmental Implications

13. Completion of the action plan will further improve the arrangements for the management of health and safety and further embed the safety culture within the organisation.

Contribution to Achieving Our Purpose:

“To Make Merseyside a Safer, Stronger, Healthier Community”

14. Further improvements in training and monitoring arrangements for competence will improve safer working, further reduce firefighter injuries and improve operational performance.

BACKGROUND PAPERS