Evaluation of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Integrated Risk Management Plan

2021 – 2024

Contents

1. Overview

This report was produced by staff from the School of Computer Science and Mathematics in Liverpool John Moores University following a request from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) for an evaluation of their Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2021 – 2021.

The elements of the evaluation were:

- Compliance with relevant Integrated Risk Management Planning Guidelines (UK Home Office Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, UK NFCC Competency Frameworks for Community Risk Management Planning, and UK Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning)

- Addressing stakeholder needs (Local community, MFRS staff (safety / training), Partner agencies (collaboration), funders)

- The MFRS IRMP Methodology (risk identification, risk assessment, risk management)

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2. Introduction

Integrated Risk Management is the development of a balanced approach by a Fire and Rescue Service to reduce risk within the community. This combines prevention, protection and emergency response, on a risk-assessed basis in order to improve the safety of the community and also create a safer working environment for firefighters. All English fire and rescue services have duties and responsibilities defined by legislation including: The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004; The Civil Contingencies Act 2004; The Fire Safety Order 2005; and The National Framework 2018

Merseyside is an area in the north west of England, that includes the metropolitan districts of Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral. Merseyside spans 249 square miles (645 km^2) of land containing a mix of urban areas, suburbs, semi-rural and countryside locations. In 2019 Merseyside had a population 1,429,910. Merseyside is one of the most deprived areas in England, with Knowsley being the 3rd most deprived local authority in England and Liverpool being 4th. Large areas of Merseyside fall within the highest ratings of social deprivation.

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3. Compliance with relevant guidelines

For the purposes of the evaluation of the MFRS IRMP compliance with the following English national guidelines was examined:

- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018

- NFCC Competency Frameworks for Community Risk Management Planning

- Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning

3.1 Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018

The Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018 states that all English Fire and Rescue Services have to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Under the framework, Fire and Rescue Services should:

- Make appropriate provision for fire prevention and protection activities and response to fire and rescue related incidents
- Identify and assess the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks their areas face
- Collaborate with emergency services and other local and national partners to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the service they provide
- Be accountable to communities for the service they provide
- Develop and maintain a workforce that is professional, resilient, skilled, flexible and diverse

In particular, the MFRS IRMP should include:

- The types of fire and rescue related risks that could affect Merseyside
- Fire and other types of emergency prevention
- Incident response
- Working with other organisations
- Use of resources
- Inspecting fire safety management by businesses and organisations
- Public / trade unions / staff associations consultation

The MFRS IRMP would appear to have provided a detailed discussion and justification of all the elements defined by the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018.

3.2 NFCC Competency Frameworks for Community Risk Management Planning

The National Fire Chief Council Competency Frameworks for Community Risk Management Planning guidelines concern the delivery of effective community risk management planning in terms of:

- Identifying and managing the risks faced by the local community

- Prioritising activities

- Allocating the right level of resources to each area of services

- Evaluating the outcomes of activities and incorporating this learning into future planning

In particular, the MFRS IRMP should:

- Demonstrate how protection, prevention and response activities have and will be used collectively to prevent and/or mitigate fires and other incidents to reduce the impact on its communities (including Business), firefighters and to promote economic wellbeing

- Effectively consult and engage with communities, MFRS staff and stakeholders at appropriate stages of the community risk management planning process

- Use a robust risk analysis process (giving due regard to existing and emerging local, regional, and national hazards) to support evidenced, transparent, and inclusive decision-making regarding resource deployment

- Ensure resource deployment decisions are balanced against an assessment of internal and external resource availability (including collaborative and cross-border working opportunities and via National Resilience) and other key organisational influences that inform the overall strategic planning process

The MFRS IRMP would appear to have provided a detailed discussion and justification of all the elements covered by the National Fire Chief Council Competency Frameworks for Community Risk Management Planning guidelines.

3.3 Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning

The Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning guidelines concern a fire and rescue service assessing foreseeable community related risks and deciding how those risks will be mitigated.

The MFRS IRMP should:

- Utilise and share accurate data and business intelligence (from both internal and external sources) to support evidenced-based decision making, horizon scanning, cross border risk identification and organisational learning
- Ensure transparency in the community risk management planning process through ongoing engagement and formal consultation processes
- Ensure that organisational decisions and the measures implemented support equality, diversity, inclusivity, are non-discriminatory and meet legislative, framework and governance requirements linked to Community Risk Management
- Be able to evidence its external and internal operating environment and the strategic objectives the community risk management plan is seeking to achieve
- Identify and describe existing and emerging local, regional and national hazards, the hazardous events that could arise and the risk groups (People, Place, Environment and Economy) that could be harmed
- Analyse risk, and determine the risk levels and prioritise risk accordingly
- Make decisions about the deployment of resources based on the prioritised risk levels and planning assumptions involved.
- Continually evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency and delivery of the community risk management plan and the organisational impact of risk management decisions
- Provide training and/or support (where required) to all who are involved in the development, management and implementation of the community risk management plan

The MFRS IRMP would appear to have provided a detailed discussion and justification of all the elements covered by the Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning guidelines.

4. Stakeholder analysis

Under the NFCC guidelines a key requirement is to ensure transparency within the process of developing an IRMP, therefore stakeholder and public engagement is essential to seek feedback and raise awareness. There should be effective consultation throughout the IRMP development and at all review stages with the community, its workforce, and representative bodies and partners.

The MFRS IRMP provides clear information regarding how MFRS conducted detailed stakeholder analysis in terms of the local community, MFRS staff (with regard to safety and staff training), partner agencies (with regard to collaboration), and funders.

4.1 Local community

To address the needs of local residents the MFRS IRMP includes plans to broaden fire prevention activity to include providing free home fire safety checks for vulnerable people living in more deprived areas in addition to continuing to focus on older Merseyside residents. In addition, the MFRS IRMP plans the creation a new super-station to replace two fire stations that are reaching the end of their useful life, whilst securing an improvement in response times.

The MFRS IRMP addresses the needs of local businesses via plans to increase the ability to inspect high risk buildings and assist building owners and occupiers to comply with fire safety law by recruiting more fire safety inspectors.

MFRS consulted the public, MFRS staff and partner organisations such as Councils and the Police before writing the IRMP, and before publishing the final IRMP.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to appropriately address the needs of the local community.

4.2 MFRS staff (safety / training)

As part of the IRMP MFRS intend to create a new Training and Development Academy which will support expansion of staff training. The MFRS Equipment and Stores teams research and review fire engines and equipment and follow developments in new fire kit and uniform to keep firefighters safe.

The MFRS IRMP covers operational preparedness to provide firefighters and officers with training and information in order to deal with all emergency incidents safely and effectively. This includes the Operational Assurance Team (OAT), who along with Senior Officers monitor incidence response and consider the health and safety of MFRS staff when responding to or dealing with fires and other emergencies. The team recommends improvements following incidents attended and training and recommend training, equipment or changes that are needed to improve and protect the safety of MFRS staff. This also includes the MFRS Health and Safety (H&S) Department that also manages performance monitoring systems, carries out investigations following accidents and other events and supports all departments with risk assessments, technical advice and training.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to appropriately address the needs of MFRS staff in terms of safety and training.

4.3 Partner agencies (collaboration)

Under the English National Framework, fire and rescue services should identify those at greatest risk from fire, and work closely with other organisations in the public and voluntary sector, as well as with the police and ambulance services. Fire and rescue services are also expected to develop partnerships to support risk reduction services to those identified as vulnerable, including from exploitation or abuse, and wherever possible to share intelligence and relevant risk data.

MFRS utilises information that partner organisations collect to identify those who would be most likely to have a fire or other emergency and who would be most likely to suffer harm.

The MFRS IRMP includes detailed analysis of information from the NHS regarding people aged over 65 that are targeted for fire prevention services. The IRMP also includes work done with other partner agencies to help their vulnerable clients.

MFRS conducts approx. 10,000 Safe and Well visits per year which are carried out by Prevention Advocates across Merseyside. The Safe and Well visit focuses on key aspects of health and in most cases connects people with partner agencies for further assessment as well as addressing fire safety concerns in the home.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to appropriately address the needs of partner agencies in terms of appropriate forms of collaboration.

4.4 Funders

Under the English National Framework, fire and rescue authorities must manage their budgets and spend money properly and appropriately, and ensure the efficient and effective use of their resources, pursuing all feasible opportunities to keep costs down while discharging their core duties effectively. Fire and rescue authorities should regularly review the numbers and deployment of firefighters and other staff to ensure that their fire and rescue service has a workforce that is commensurate with the risks that they face.

MFRA receives funds from grants from central government and Council Tax payments. MFRS operates in an environment of ongoing government funding challenges. The MFRS IRMP proposed operational changes have been created within existing planned budgets covering spend on staff, equipment, and services.

The needs of funders have been addressed in the IRMP via operational changes, including the use of a range of approaches to staffing fire stations and fire engines flexibly to meet demand and risk.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to appropriately address the needs of funders in terms of detailed discussion and justification on the use of funds provided.

5. MFRS IRMP methodology

The MFRS IRMP Methodology was evaluated in terms of risk identification, risk assessment, and risk management.

5.1 Risk identification

Under the English National Framework, every fire and rescue authority must assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national in nature from fires to terrorist attacks. Regard must be had to Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate.

MFRS conducted work around the National Security Risk Register and the Community Risk Register created by the Local Resilience Forum in order to identify risks in Merseyside for the IRMP. MFRS identified six high impact incident types within Merseyside: Terrorist Related Incidents, Marine Incidents, Wildfires, Flooding, Fires in large buildings, and Fires at recycling and waste processing plants.

The IRMP also covered risks associated with other types of incidents including air, road, rail, tunnels and heritage sites, as well as the more common risks including road traffic collisions and house fires.

As part of the IRMP MFRS used local and national information to assist in identifying over 65,000 places in Merseyside that needed to comply with the Fire Safety Order, and assigned appropriate risk categorisation.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to utilise a thorough and robust risk identification approach for all the likely risks that may be encountered.

5.2 Risk assessment

Under the English National Framework, fire and rescue authorities must put in place arrangements to prevent and mitigate relevant risks, either through adjusting existing provision, effective collaboration and partnership working, or building new capability. Fire and rescue authorities should work through the Strategic Resilience Board where appropriate when determining what arrangements to put in place.

The MFRS IRMP covers the detailed analysis of the locations of emergency incidents and the link between deprivation and fire incidences, and also covers the work done through the Strategic Resilience Board.

The MFRS Operational Preparedness directorate considers all the foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect the local community, from fires to terrorist attacks. MFRS Operational Preparedness staff work alongside partners, such as local councils, the NHS, the Police and the Ambulance Service.

The MFRS IRMP describes how MFRS continues to review how up to date operational risk information is gathered and provided to operational staff at incidents and how this can be shared with other fire and rescue services across borders to work together effectively.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to utilise a thorough and robust risk assessment approach for all identified risks.

5.3 Risk Management

Under the English National Framework, fire and rescue authorities must make provision for promoting fire safety, including fire prevention, and have a locally determined risk-based inspection programme in place for enforcing compliance with the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 in premises to which it applies. Fire and rescue authorities should target their fire safety, prevention and protection resources on: those individuals or households who are at greatest risk from fire in the home; those most likely to engage in arson or deliberate fire setting; and on those non-domestic premises where the life safety risk is greatest. Consideration could also be given to non-domestic premises which are at risk from fire in order to mitigate loss to economic wellbeing.

The MFRS IRMP covers the detailed analysis of the locations of emergency incidents (which is used to plan the locations of fire stations, fire engines (and other specialist equipment) and staff) and the detailed analysis of the time of day of incidents. As part of the IRMP MFRS will be introducing a new Management Information System and mobile technology in order to be more efficient and effective.

The MFRS IRMP includes plans to increase the ability to inspect high risk buildings and assist building owners and occupiers to comply with fire safety law by recruiting more fire safety inspectors. The IRMP factored the risks identified in the risk assessment exercise into the wider training and exercise programme within MFRS. Site specific risk information is gathered for operational plans for high risk places, in addition to holding large scale exercises with partner agencies to test such plans.

The IRMP includes plans to broaden fire prevention activity to include providing free home fire safety checks for vulnerable people living in more deprived areas in addition to continuing to focus on older Merseyside residents.

The IRMP includes risk management in terms of analysis of the locations of vulnerable people based upon information about people aged over 65 from the NHS that is used to target prevention services at this most vulnerable group. The IRMP discusses the effectiveness of MFRS prevention activities in terms of the falls in number of both deliberate and accidental dwelling fires.

MFRS fire crews carry out approx. 50,000 Home Fire Safety Check per year as well as approx. 10,000 Safe and Well visits which are carried out by Prevention Advocates across Merseyside. The Safe and Well visit focuses on key aspects of health and in most cases connects people with partner agencies for further assessment as well as addressing fire safety concerns in the home.

Supporting the Home Safety Strategy, MFRS has Community Safety Strategies that help to reduce arson and other deliberate fires, and improve road and water safety.

The MFRS IRMP would appear to include a thorough and robust risk management approach.

6. Action plan

The action plan contained in the MFRS IRMP included the creation of new / combined fire station locations and duty systems; the creation of specialist fire stations; the development of a training academy; enhancements to fire protection, fire prevention, and partner agency working; and environmental planning.

6.1 New / combined fire station locations and duty systems

The MFRS IRMP included the introduction of a hybrid duty system at Kirkdale fire station; the combination of the stations at Aintree and Croxteth to create a super-station (Hybrid/Specialist Rescue station); and the combination of the duty systems at Liverpool City and Kensington fire stations to create a Dual Station Hybrid – including a Specialist Command and Control function.

The above would appear to be an appropriate response to changing staffing requirements and the need for a specialist command and control function for major events.

6.2 Training academy

MFRS had identified that as well as increased demand for specialist fire and rescue services, there were also changes in the frequency and nature of the types of fires and other incidents attended. For example, increases in the number of wildfires and flooding incidents.

Therefore, there would be an increased demand for more specialist training in terms of the use of a wider variety of specialist equipment (e.g. Hazmat and Marine and Ships Firefighting equipment), and in terms of training for previously less common incidents such as wildfires and flooding incidents.

The development of a training academy would appear to be an appropriate response to address the predicted volume and level of training required for future fire and incident response.

6.3 Specialist fire stations

The MFRS IRMP included the creation of specialist fire stations:

LIVERPOOL CITY – Command and Control (Incident Command Unit and Welfare Pods)

WALLASEY – Marine and Ships Firefighting (Off Shore capability) – Breathing Apparatus Support Unit (BASU), General Purpose Unit (GPU) and Marine & Tunnel Pods

ST HELENS – Hazmat – Hazmat Environmental Protection Unit (HMEPU) & Bulk Foam Unit Pods

LONG LANE – Search & Rescue (Urban Search and Rescue Mods – Specialist Rescue Appliance)

KIRKDALE – Terrorist Response Specialist Capability and Flood Response (Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU) / Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) Specialist Responder)

BELLE VALE – Water (High Volume Pump)

HESWALL and FORMBY– Wildfire – All terrain vehicle

The geographic positioning of the specialist fire stations would appear to be appropriate in terms of the proximity to specific local risks. For example, the wildfire specialist stations are positioned near to the largest areas of grassland and woodland in Merseyside, and the Hazmat specialist fire station in St Helens is near to the main area of industrial / chemical works.

The addition of specialist equipment at the specialist fire stations (e.g. all terrain vehicles for wildfires; marine and ships firefighting equipment; Hazmat equipment; flood response equipment) would appear appropriate to the current and future anticipated risks affecting Merseyside.

6.4 Fire protection

With regard fire protection via the implementation of PORIS (Provision of Operational Risk Information System) within Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service:

The approach developed was clearly evidence-based, using both national and local data. The approach was valid as it adopted all the aspects of the national PORIS guidelines.

The validity of the approach was assessed via the number of fire incidences at premises during the last five years, the number of enforcement orders, and the incidence / level of anti-social behaviour. Reliability was assessed via trialing the approach with firefighters over a period of time.

Clear guidance regarding the use of the approach by firefighters was provided via linkage of the descriptors used in PORIS for severity and likelihood to standard operating procedures. A mechanism for updated guidance from national / international / organizational sources being incorporated into the approach had been created.

Overall, the use of a variety of sources of data, the adherence to PORIS guidelines, and the thoroughness of implementation (especially in terms of the descriptors being linked to standard operating procedures) would indicate that the approach to fire protection via PORIS implementation within MFRS is both thorough and professional.

6.5 Fire prevention

MFRS had undertaken research both internally and with external partners to identify those most vulnerable to fire incidences, injuries, and fatalities. This was then used to appropriately target fire prevention activities with regard to Home Fire Safety Checks and Safe and Well visits. In particular, MFRS undertook detailed examination of the effects of old age and deprivation upon fire incidences, injuries, and fatalities, and the different mechanisms for targeting fire prevention.

The MFRS IRMP continues the person-focused approach to Home Safety, which targets those over 65 and the most vulnerable due to socio-economic deprivation in Merseyside. This is corroborated by smoke alarm ownership having diminished in areas of higher levels of deprivation. The IRMP plans to

reach homes in the highest deprived neighbourhoods using targeted campaigns based on analysis of accidental and fatal fires data in addition to the Index of Deprivation 2019 which identifies the areas of highest poverty and deprivation.

MFRS fire crews carry out approx. 50,000 Home Fire Safety Check per year as well as approx. 10,000 Safe and Well visits per year are carried out by Prevention Advocates across Merseyside. The Safe and Well visit focuses on key aspects of health that can be associated with increased fire risk such as smoking and alcohol consumption and mobility impairments.

Overall, it would appear that MFRS has appropriately identified, assessed, and managed fire prevention by addressing the needs of those most vulnerable to fire risk.

6.6 Partner agency working

MFRS fire crews carry out approx. 10,000 Safe and Well visits per year which are carried out by Prevention Advocates across Merseyside. The Safe and Well visit focuses on key aspects of health and in most cases connects people with partner agencies for further assessment as well as addressing fire safety concerns in the home. The MFRS IRMP continues to review how up to date operational risk information is gathered and provided to operational staff at incidents and how this can be shared with other fire and rescue services across borders to work together effectively.

Overall, the MFRS IRMP would appear to address the needs of partner agencies and develops the framework for enhanced data sharing.

6.7 Environmental planning

Changes in weather patterns are increasing the risks of wildfires and flooding within Merseyside. The MFRS IRMP appeared to appropriately address changes in weather related risk patterns with the creation of specialist fire stations at Heswall and Formby that have all terrain vehicles suitable for tackling wildfires in nearby grassland and woodland, and flood response in Kirkdale. Overall, the MFRS IRMP would appear to include appropriate actions to address increased fire and flood risks due to changing weather patterns.

6. Conclusions

The MFRS IRMP appeared compliant with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, the NFCC Competency Frameworks for Community Risk Management Planning guidelines, and the Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning guidelines.

Stakeholders needs in terms of the local community, MFRS staff (in terms of safety / training), partner agencies (in terms of collaboration), and funders appeared to have been appropriately addressed.

A thorough and robust approach to risk identification, risk assessment, and risk management appeared to be present in the MFRS IRMP.

Overall MFRS has shown achievements in fire prevention activities in terms of the falls in number of both deliberate and accidental dwelling fires. In addition, the average attendance time for fire incidents attended by MFRS is 5 minutes 55 seconds from a fire engine being alerted to an incident by Fire Control to it arriving at the incident, which is one of the fastest response times in England. It would appear that MFRS operates in a professional, effective, and efficient manner, as demonstrated by the thoroughness and care in the development of the IRMP.

7. References

Fire Standards Board Community Risk Management Planning
https://www.firestandards.org/standards/approved/community-risk-management-planning-fss-rmp01/

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