

REPORT TO:	08 COMMITTEE
DATE:	6th SEPTEMBER, 2007
REPORT NO.	CFO/156/07
REPORTING OFFICER:	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
CONTACT OFFICER:	STATION MANAGER FINDLAY, TEL NO. 606 5042
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STATION MANAGER MURPHY, WATCH MANAGER GIBBINS
SUBJECT:	NEW BUILD HIGH RISE BUILDINGS

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the approach taken by the Service to combat the risk from fire in high rise buildings currently being developed in Liverpool City Centre.

Executive Summary

- This report seeks to advise the Committee of how the risk from fire to both occupiers and Firefighters is being mitigated in newly built high rise buildings.
- That the new high rise buildings in Liverpool have been constructed to include the recommendations of the Capital of Culture and City Centre Projects Team.
- That access and facilities for the Service are an integral part of the fire strategy for the design of these buildings.

Recommendations

2. That Members note the report.

Introduction and Background

3. High rise buildings present a number of challenges to Fire and Rescue Services in terms of access, communications, Incident Command and logistical support. The inherent features of high rise buildings can generate arduous working conditions which will create high physiological demands upon Firefighters. It is therefore essential that this issue is recognised in a new high rise buildings design and MF&RS is operationally prepared to deal with incidents in such buildings.

4. All new buildings must conform to Building Regulations. Inclusive within those regulations is the requirement placed upon the developer to provide access and facilities for the Fire Service. The building shall be designed and constructed so as to provide reasonable facilities to assist Firefighters in the protection of life. Reasonable provision shall be made within the site of the building to enable fire appliances to gain access to the building. Usually to within 18 m of the main entrance to the building, allowing fire appliances to be brought near to the building for effective use. In addition sufficient means of access into, and within, the building for fire-fighting personnel to effect rescue and fight fire are also required. In tall buildings internal fire mains and other facilities are provided to assist Firefighters in their tasks. Upon application for Building Regulations approval the Service are consulted as to the means of achieving and securing the aforementioned access and facilities. Where appropriate the Team has required additional or enhanced features to be included as part of the overall design in conjunction with the fire strategy of the development. For example the addition of a dedicated fire-fighting lift may be deemed to be of particular importance to enable Firefighters to undertake their work.
5. To meet the challenge the Service has embarked upon a process of collaboration between all stakeholders internal and external. Understanding the issues and the application of pre-planning and the adoption of contemporary fire-fighting techniques specific to high rise buildings has been a primary objective for the Team. The recommendations of the Building Disaster Assessment Group (BDAG) and subsequent Fire and Rescue Service circulars 55-2004, 32-2006 and 71-2006 have been considered and disseminated to the Building Control body during the Building Regulations approval process. The Team have also made a valuable contribution in providing support to Operational Planning in the form of technical paper and have facilitated a number of visits to relevant buildings. The anticipated outcome from this collaborative working will be to develop a modern and effective fire fighting strategy in tall buildings.
6. To ensure the operational effectiveness of the current hand held portable UHF communications a series of live tests have been conducted in Liverpool's tallest building, West Tower. The Service's communications partner Telent provided the technical back up during the tests. The tests confirmed that our system remains suitable and sufficient for the task of maintaining incident communications.
7. Further research of particular interest to BDAG is the physiological effects of disasters on rescuers. Evidence suggests that there is limited information available to Incident Commanders on whether a task might exceed Firefighters physiological limits. There is also a need for Firefighters to be conscious of the symptoms of heat disorders which may be encountered by personnel at operational incidents. There appears to be no historical data to suggest any UK Fire Service having attempted to tackle the issue of physiological stress placed on Firefighters, as typically these issues are in countries of warmer climates. MF&RS will break new ground and be the only Fire and Rescue Service in the UK to have risen to the challenges posed by the stressful environments facing Firefighters, by introducing a specialist recuperation and care vehicle (RACV). An extensive research project has recently been undertaken in particular with Liverpool John Moores University and will be the subject of a separate report.

Equality & Diversity Implications

8. None arising from this report;

Financial Implications

9. None arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A