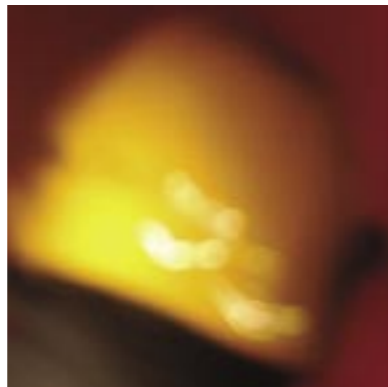
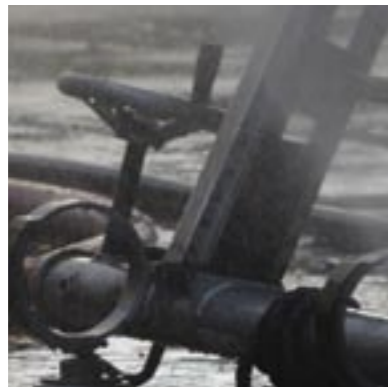


Violence

at work strategy



www.merseyfire.gov.uk



statement of commitment

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) recognises the threat that violence in the work environment poses to individuals, the organisation and the provision of our services.

It considers all forms of violence and aggression against staff to be unacceptable.

Working together with our staff, we are committed to addressing these risks in a proactive way, by employing good risk management systems and practice.

As far as is reasonably practicable, we aim to avoid staff exposure to violence and aggression whilst at work.

Where this is not possible, we aim to implement a range of actions supporting the continual development of safer working practices, and provision of appropriate support for staff.

MFRS acknowledges the need for tangible investment in taking this Strategy forward, and will endeavour to ensure that the necessary resources are made available.

MFRS also acknowledges its responsibility to monitor the implementation and progress of this Strategy, and to review it accordingly on a periodic basis.

To this end, both Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service and the Fire Brigades' Union are committed to the newly formed Violence at Work Steering Group that is to be created to oversee this Strategy.

It will also refer to independent research to ensure the effectiveness of these measures.



introduction

This Strategy relates to all incidents of violence directed at staff during the course of their work whether directly or indirectly.

A Violence at Work Strategy is really about:

- **Being the best at responding to the threatening environment that increasingly exists in some areas of our work;**
- **Finding new and better ways to both reduce the incidence of violence and minimize its impact.**

Violence could arise from abuse/threats via telephone, letters or email, or be actual face-to-face abuse or physical assault.

Any form of violence against staff is considered to be unacceptable and MFRS seeks to reduce the risks of it arising.

Being subjected to violence, whether verbal or physical, may not only be demoralising and stressful for an individual, it can affect their personal performance at work as well as their life and relationships outside work.

In some cases it can have more tangible results such as physical injury, absence or an inability to return to work.

Some incidents can lead to permanent incapacity or, in the worst case scenario, be life-threatening.

Violence against staff, together with other associated security risks, such as vandalism and damage to MFRS vehicles or buildings, theft of MFRS property or personal belongings, all have an impact on the way we are able to deliver our services.

MFRS is therefore determined to reduce risk of violence to personnel, wherever possible, and support staff in every way practicable.

This Strategy has been drawn up with due regard to SOP HS0059 and the organisational framework and strategy for all risk management.

We have proactive risk management systems in place, which allow individual members of staff to highlight risks, take part in risk assessment processes and contribute to the development of appropriate control measures.

The management of violence against staff relies to a great extent on staff informing MFRS about incidents of violence or other security issues as and when they occur.

MFRS has a Violence at Work Reporting System in place.

Staff are actively encouraged to report all types of untoward incidents, no matter what their severity, to support proactive as well as reactive management of the risks.



definition of violence

The Health & Safety Executive's working definition of violence is:

'Any incident in which an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted by a member of the public, in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of his or her employment'

(Any such incidents involving fellow employees will be dealt with under Equal Opportunities, see Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) ADM0086).

responsibilities & reporting lines

responsibilities

All employers have a legal duty under section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.

This duty can extend to protecting employees from assaults.

MFRS will, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that all employees are protected from acts of violence, arising out of or in connection with work activities.

Where it is identified that employees are at risk, effective control measures will be introduced to reduce that risk.

reporting lines

In certain circumstances violence at work is reportable to the HSE under the Reporting of Injuries and Dangerous Occurrence Regulations 1999.

On every occasion where violence or the threat of violence occurs, including those incidents where crews have been exposed to verbal threats or gestures from members of the public, the reporting procedure must be strictly adhered to.

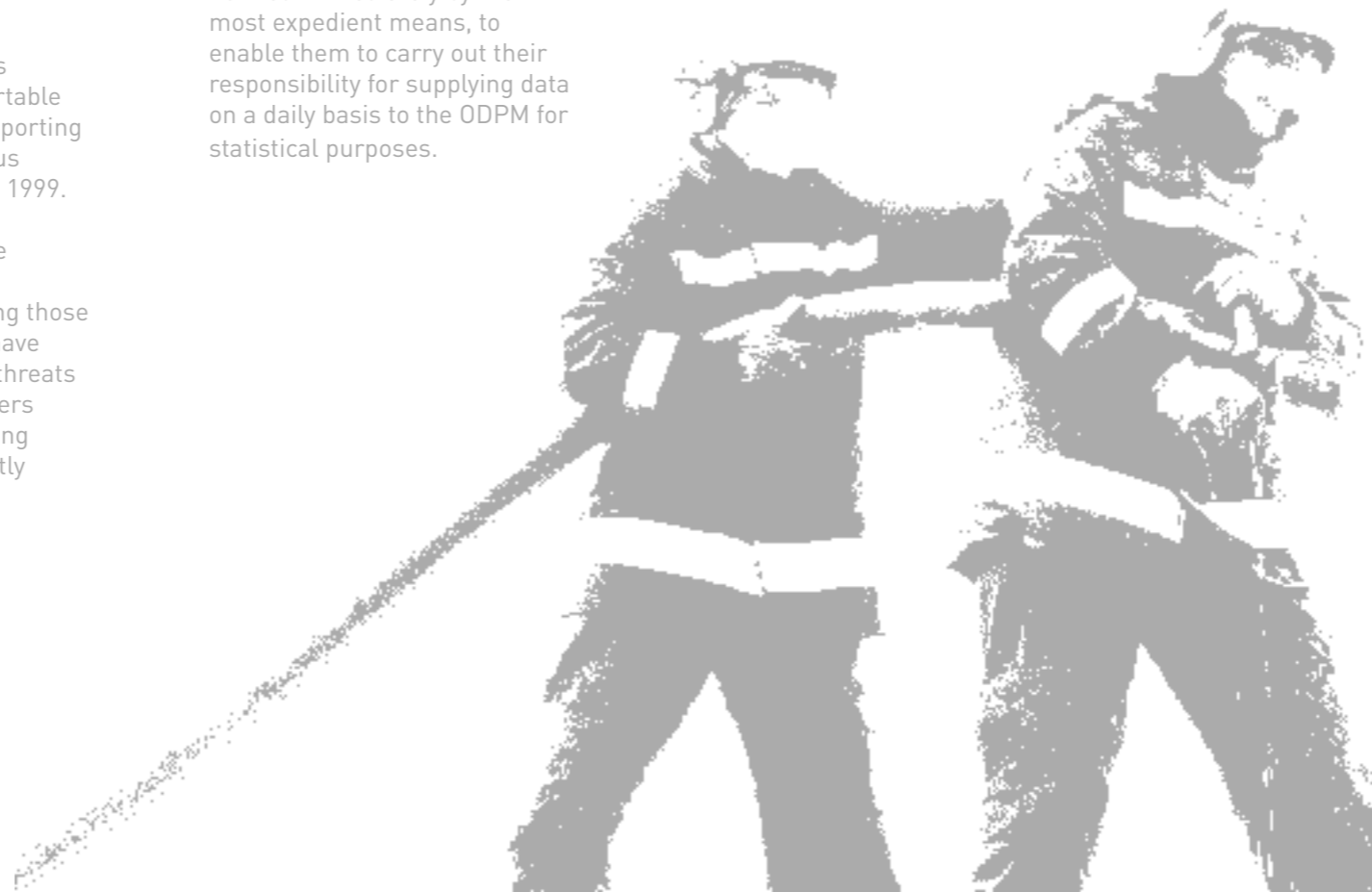
In an effort to determine trends (common causes, times, areas etc), all incidents must be recorded on form VAW 1 which can be accessed via Forms within Public Folders.

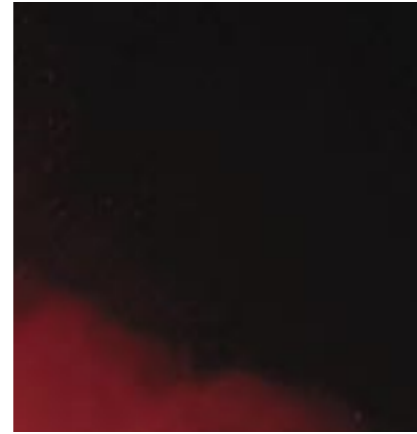
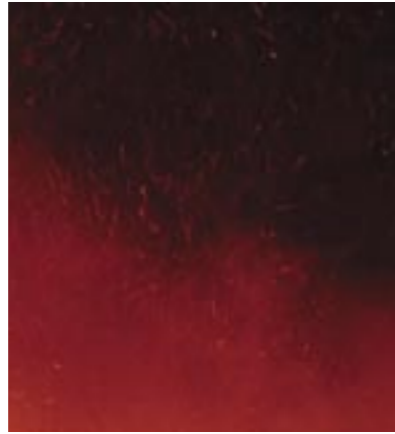
The VAW 1, form should be completed electronically by the victim, or on the victim's behalf, and forwarded by email to the Operational Performance Team.

Additionally, in all cases, the Mobilising and Communication Centre (MACC) must be notified immediately by the most expedient means, to enable them to carry out their responsibility for supplying data on a daily basis to the ODPM for statistical purposes.

TYPES OF INCIDENT	RESULT
INVOLVING PHYSICAL CONTACT	FATAL INJURY MAJOR INJURY INJURY OR EMOTIONAL SHOCK REQUIRING FIRST AID, OUT PATIENT TREATMENT, COUNSELLING OR ABSENCE FROM WORK
INVOLVING SERIOUS PERSISTENT THREATS OR VERBAL ABUSE	EMOTIONAL SHOCK REQUIRING COUNSELLING OR ABSENCE FROM WORK FEELING OR BEING AT RISK OR UNDER GREAT STRESS
MISSILE OR STONE ATTACK	CAUSING INJURY OR HARM

Incidents of violence (causing injury) should also be reported to the on-duty Incident Investigation Team member who will confirm that the matter has been reported in the correct manner to the relevant departments and organisations.





what can be done if you are a victim?

- **In the first instance, all incidents must be reported to your immediate line manager;**
- **Police to be informed of incident.**

The Home Office has published a useful leaflet called 'Victims of Crime'.

Further help may be available from victim support schemes that operate in many areas.

MFRS will provide counselling for employees who have been victims of violence. Employees should contact the Welfare Department.

response

intelligence

In an effort to determine trends (common causes, times, areas etc.), all incidents that fall into any of the categories identified previously must be recorded on form VAW 1.

The VAW 1 form can be accessed via Public Folders, completed electronically by the victim, or on their behalf, and forwarded by email to the Operational Performance Team.

Incidents of physical violence (causing injury), which result in the victim being absent from work, will be dealt with by the Incident Investigation Team (IIT).

In these cases the forms F2508 and FS53 Injury Report should be held on station, pending the arrival of the IIT. The forms are self-explanatory and should be completed for all incidents. Where acts of violence occur at an operational incident, the incident log number must be obtained from MACC and entered in the top right hand corner of the FS53 form.

If it is identified that certain areas or groups are particularly at risk, the Health & Safety Department will ensure that the appropriate control measures are put into place to reduce that risk.

geocoding of Incidents

To enable MFRS to develop strategies and tactics that will reduce the number of incidents of violence at work, it is necessary to provide accurate information.

This accurate information will then be used to identify trends or areas that show repeated occurrences.

This information will then be used in partnerships with other agencies, to identify and prosecute (where necessary) those responsible.

The geocoding system in place for recording vehicle fires, should be used to correctly identify the incident by means of a twelve-figure map reference.



research into violence against firefighters

Violence

introduction

MFRS is determined to reduce the incidence of violence against firefighters. The development of preventative measures necessitates a clear understanding of the nature of the problems and the sorts of people who are causing it. Independent research has been commissioned to systematically collect information about where and when these instances occur, what occurs during this time, any information on the perpetrators and any proactive or reactive action taken by MFRS. The intention behind the research is to use it as a base upon which a targeted prevention strategy can be developed.

research findings

The research, that included a comparative study with a neighbouring Fire Service, confirmed the concern that violence against firefighters was being under-recorded. This confirmed the importance this strategy must place on the reporting of all incidents.

The research shows that violence is associated with smaller type incidents such as rubbish and bonfires. Typically, these will have been fires deliberately started and under the general label of anti-social behaviour. The location of such fires is well known to the Fire Service.

The age groups of those perpetrating the violence are typically below 18. Again, this is a common profile of people who start the fires that require a Fire Service attendance. One striking feature of the research was the welcome behaviour change in young people once firefighters become 'real' rather than anonymous figures. In other words, until young people engage directly with firefighters or fire service personnel, they see them as establishment figures and, therefore, acceptable targets.

It is clear that any Violence at Work strategy must include means to influence the behaviour of these young people if there is to be any prospect of striking at the root cause of the problem.



risk assessment training and dynamic operational risk assessment (DORA)

creation of a safe person

Within an occupation like the Fire Service, it is often impossible, particularly in the 'emergency' environment, to create a safe working environment. The alternative is to create a 'safe person', one who follows procedures and practices that minimise occupational risk. That is not to say that appropriate protective equipment is not important such as PPE and CCTV (covered further below) but without the human being applying equipment properly, it is not enough. Risk Assessment training is carried out at all levels in MFRS, including initial training to new firefighters. This is supported by SOP OPS0161 – Civil Disturbance, and Risk Assessments EN (revised).

risk assessment training

MFRS has issued 'A Guide to Risk Assessment' to operational staff. Crew and Watch Command courses (and their recent equivalents) at the

Fire Service College include a Health and Safety Risk Management Module.

Trainee firefighters are issued with a guide to 'Dynamic Management of Risk at Operational Incidents'.

To improve this level of training, future trainee firefighter courses will include a dedicated 'Health, Safety and Risk Management Module. The Supervisory Management Development Programme currently under development will include enhanced health and safety training by way of the IOSH Managing Safety Module with accreditation. All future crew and watch managers will undertake this development as will existing junior officers identified as requiring development.

dynamic operational risk assessment (DORA)

Emergency situations are not simply events. They are processes. This is particularly the case when fire crews are faced with actual or potential violence and abuse. Consequently, the risk to rescue personnel on the incident ground is dynamic in nature. It is subject to constant change, and may be complex with hidden and uncertain hazards and, potentially, catastrophic outcomes. In relation to reducing the risk to firefighters from violence and abuse (and, indeed, other risks), MFRS seeks to adopt a common culture of safety in which the views of management regarding risk are disseminated to those with responsibility for making important safety and risk-related decisions on the ground.

DORA assists personnel in making professional judgements in a structured and considered manner to enable tasks to be carried out in circumstances that may be unforeseeable and/or changing constantly. DORA can be applied by all personnel at an incident to aid decision making whilst overall responsibility rests with the Incident Manager. With incidents where there is threat of, or actual violence, it must be remembered that a judgement is required to ensure that risks to personnel are not out of proportion to the benefits to be gained from achieving a given task.

maintenance of competence

Following the acquisition (training) phase, all operational staff must apply their skills, knowledge and understanding to maintain their competence. This will be facilitated by ongoing assessment of performance in the workplace. This assessment will be carried out by suitably qualified workplace

assessors against the relevant role map and in line with the Service Workplace Assessment Strategy. The National Occupational Standards dictate that all staff must display knowledge and understanding of the following areas in respect of Risk Assessment.

- **Risks and hazards of the workplace affecting people and the environment;**
- **How to make and apply decisions based on the assessment of risk;**
- **How to apply practices that maximise the health, safety and welfare of yourself and others in the workplace.**

If, following assessment of performance, it is deemed that competence has not been demonstrated and a development need is highlighted, the assessor, in conjunction with the line manager (if different) will formulate and agree an immediate development plan with that individual.

Violence

ence



closed circuit television (CCTV)

MFRS is running a pilot scheme with the aim of reducing attacks against operational staff. CCTV is fitted to an appliance that will be able to capture instances of anti-social behaviour directed at firefighters. This type of behaviour is unacceptable. CCTV has proved an effective tool in deterring theft and violence in other fire services, which gives confidence that this success can be repeated in MFRS.

The evidence from CCTV will be used as an information and learning tool to help deal with future incidents. However, in line with the commitment that this behaviour is unacceptable, there will be cases where the evidence gathered by CCTV will be used to assist the Crown Prosecution Service to bring those that perpetrate violence to justice. Clearly, this is a sensitive area that will be applied in a way that maintains the high standing of MFRS in the community.

training for dealing with conflict, aggression and violence

MFRS is committed to providing training that will assist staff in being prepared for events that may happen in the workplace. Clearly, however, there are limits as to the application of new skills.

For instance, the scenario of 'a group of kids throwing stones at us from 25 yards' is typical of what can be experienced by operational staff. Material relating to defusing conflict relies on a level of human interaction that is not possible in the scenario described above. The Fire and Rescue Service is not alone in facing these situations; the Police and Ambulance Service also suffer this abuse and do not have any easy answers for their staff. The earlier section on DORA is pertinent to that problem.

However, there are situations where MFRS staff are face-to-face with others who are aggressive and potentially violent. MFRS will provide training for dealing with conflict, aggression and violence that will present participants with a range of strategies they can employ in diffusing situations of aggression and potential violence.

course content includes:

- Exploring feelings around aggression and violence
- Assault cycles and other theoretical underpinnings
- Practical strategies for dealing with difficult situations
- Respecting signs and situations
- Worker safety; a basic introduction to breakaway techniques and the legal context
- Teamwork and implications for the work.

The whole emphasis in the training is on diffusing situations with guidance on protective measures for personal safety and control measures. It does not extend to restraint.

Whilst this training will be directed at operational staff with a targeted approach in the first place, any other member of staff who can face this type of threatening environments can be included in this programme.



youth intervention initiatives

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service already operates a range of youth intervention initiatives - two of the main ones are summarised to the right:

- The Prince's Trust Programme – MFRS is a Delivery Partner with The Prince's Trust. This programme helps young people who may not otherwise have had the chance to succeed, including young people marginalised through lack of qualifications, a criminal conviction or unemployment. The aim is to give youngsters aged between 16 and 25 self-confidence, motivation and resilience to overcome difficult circumstances and assist them to economic independence and employment. Teams currently operate from Kirkdale, Huyton and Speke and should expand in the future.

- For some time, MFRS has run a number of 'Beacon' programmes aimed at 11-16 year olds already excluded or at risk of school exclusion. These youngsters often come from marginalised sections of the community and do not fully understand the impact that their actions have on those local communities. The courses usually involve one day a week for 12 weeks and are designed to help young people understand fire safety, prevent arson, provide positive role models and help youngsters develop confidence and self esteem. They take referrals from the Local Education Authorities, Youth Offending Teams, Youth Inclusion Programmes, Juvenile and Magistrate Courts.

Along with other youth initiatives, the programmes aim to develop better individuals for the future. If such programmes could include some of those young people threatening firefighters with violence and abuse, then they may well be able to change behaviour for the future.

Research identified that intervention with the young people who are the source of the deliberate fires and subsequent violence is essential. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has recently introduced dogs and dog-handlers for both Fire Investigation and Search and Rescue. Whilst their emergency response role is obvious, such combinations of dogs and fire service personnel provide a 'gateway' to young people. Once 'through' that gate, it is possible to influence young people's behaviour by breaking the perception of anonymity.

The dog handler and dog would visit areas known to be associated with violence against firefighters ahead of the time events were known to take place. They could also link with schools and youth groups in the target areas. A number of control measures would be put in place in line with a lone-working approach, including training, Criminal Bureau (CRB) checks, mobile phone and clear details of their planned visits.

It is proposed to 'embed' a firefighter at six schools that are located in the areas that have been subject to the highest number of this type of anti-social behaviour. These personnel would attend the school one day a week. It is intended to begin with a pilot scheme at one school that will be evaluated over the spring term 2005 which, if successful, will be rolled out to all six schools.

Firefighters have an essential role in initiatives designed to build positive relationships with young people. Local fire station initiatives designed to engage with young people following proper local consultation, will be encouraged.

Additionally, there is an existing network of youth and outreach workers operating in the community and a large number of initiatives. There is an opportunity to integrate with that network to add value to youth work rather than, effectively, be in competition.

Therefore, underpinning this strategy, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service will employ a Youth Co-ordinator. This role will be threefold: -

- **Deliver an intervention and diversion outreach programme, reaching the young people known to be likely perpetrators of violence against firefighters working with existing personnel, including firefighters, community safety staff, Fire Investigators and Search and Rescue Teams**
- **Integrate with the existing youth-work networks operating throughout Merseyside communities**
- **Deliver the training referred to in Research Findings and other youth awareness training to firefighting and community safety personnel in Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service.**



performance monitoring and reporting

The Health and Safety Department collates Violence at Work data, which is then forwarded to the District Management Team.

District Managers will then bring incidents to the attention of the Joint Agency Groups, where proactive action by the Police or other relevant agencies can be sought.

Station Managers will take ownership of local initiatives, and will be subject to performance measurement in this regard in the form of a local performance indicator relating to violence against personnel.

evaluation and review

A Violence at Work Steering Group will be formed and chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Members will include Lead Officers and Representative Bodies.

This Group will be tasked with overseeing this strategy.

The effectiveness of this strategy will to a large extent be dependant upon the degree of participation from Crew and Watch Managers with regard to the reporting of incidents on form VAW 1.

The first stage of the evaluation process should therefore determine the extent of participation.

Station Managers are best placed to carry out this evaluation, and indeed have a vested interest in doing so, on the basis that they are measured against the outcomes.

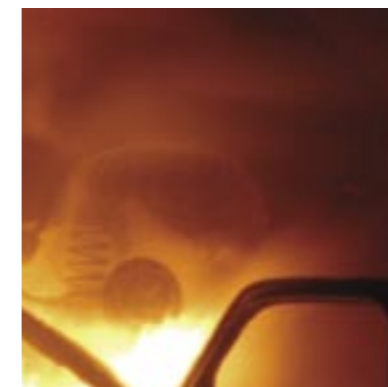
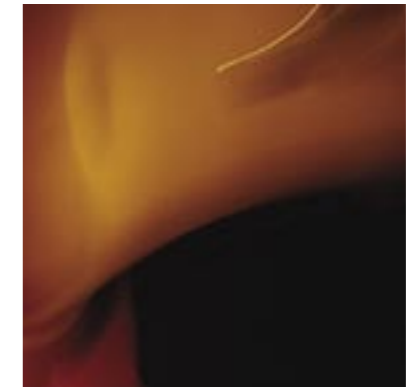
A continuous programme of evaluation and review of the overall strategy will be overseen by the Violence at Work Steering Group.

In the first instance the Steering Group will meet on a quarterly basis to evaluate and review progress.

Simultaneously, Station Managers will be set Local Performance Indicators.

Ownership will then be devolved on a progressive basis to the Station Managers, to be managed on a local basis to meet local needs.

The outcome of this evaluation will be reported through the Corporate Leadership Team.





2004-2005
Services for Older People

Violence



Bridle Road | Bootle
Liverpool | Merseyside
L30 4YD | t: 0151 296 4000
www.merseyfire.gov.uk