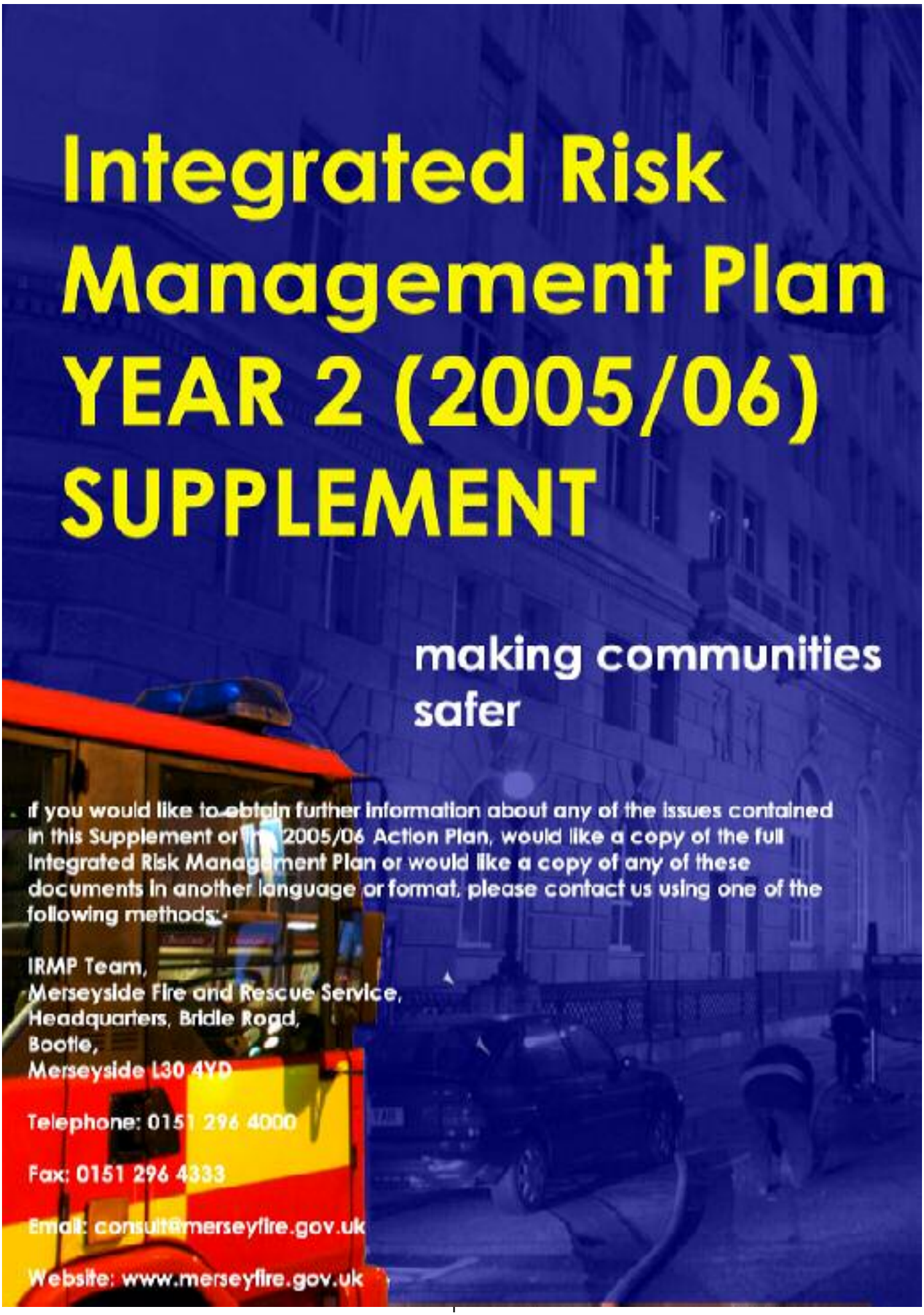
Integrated Risk Management Plan YEAR 2 (2005/06) SUPPLEMENT



making communities safer

If you would like to obtain further information about any of the issues contained in this Supplement or the 2005/06 Action Plan, would like a copy of the full Integrated Risk Management Plan or would like a copy of any of these documents in another language or format, please contact us using one of the following methods:-

IRMP Team,
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service,
Headquarters, Bridle Road,
Bootle,
Merseyside L30 4YD

Telephone: 0151 296 4000

Fax: 0151 296 4333

Email: consult@merseyfire.gov.uk

Website: www.merseyfire.gov.uk

MERSEYSIDE FIRE & CIVIL DEFENCE AUTHORITY

INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN YEAR 2 (2005/06) SUPPLEMENT

PREFACE

Following an extensive consultation exercise, Merseyside Fire & Civil Defence Authority published its first Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) "Making Communities Safer" and the associated first year (2004/05) Action Plan on 25 March 2004. The original IRMP is a strategic document with a medium term (3 year) life. This document, which covers the year 2005/06, should therefore be considered as a supplement to the strategic document. It is cross-referenced to the IRMP but is not intended to duplicate information contained therein, rather to supplement, expand upon & update information where appropriate. It should be read in conjunction with the IRMP. A separate document sets out the Authority's Action Plan for 2005/06 and covers issues arising from both the original IRMP and this Supplement.

It is proposed that the Authority will issue a further supplement to the IRMP next year (2006/07) which will follow the same principle, together with an IRMP Action Plan specific to that year, but that in Year 4 (2007/08) there will be a completely rewritten IRMP which covers a further 3 year period.

The Year 2 IRMP Supplement & the Action Plan have been combined with other documents to form an integral part of the Authority's overall Service Plan for 2005/06. However the IRMP Supplement and Action Plan are capable of extraction from the combined document and of "standing alone" because the Authority has a requirement to consult widely on these documents.

FOREWORD

Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service has a reputation for quality and for innovation. We are very proud of that well-deserved reputation and believe strongly that our undoubted success is a simple reflection of the people who work in Merseyside. We never cease to be amazed by the results our colleagues in Merseyside achieve, and much of what they do is real groundbreaking activity, yet they continue to deliver high quality results, time after time after time. A perfect example of this is the award of Beacon Council status for our services to elderly people on Merseyside.

It is certainly true that we do some things differently. We recognised some time ago that many of the traditional ways of doing things in the Fire Service were no longer appropriate or relevant. However, we have also worked hard to hold on to the important core values on which the Service has been built, whilst at the same time developing modern, innovative approaches and techniques.

This second year of our IRMP reflect this dual approach to developing innovative ways to improve our service, whilst at the same time improving our core skills in areas such as rescue.

Although we are technologically advanced, and utilise up-to-date business practices and techniques, that is certainly not the full story. Above all else, we value our people and have managed to create an environment where they are able to flourish and develop; in short, they achieve because they want to.

They do things effectively because they have identified the need and found a way of addressing it, rather than because they are told to. It would of course be naïve or even dishonest to pretend that this change of emphasis has been easy or that it is complete. We still have a long way to go before we can feel confident that everyone in the organisation shares our vision, but the sheer pace and scale of improvement reflected in our approach is testimony that things are changing for the better.

We have less fire deaths, fire injuries, and fewer fires that we have ever had, and personnel in well-paid, satisfying and stable careers are delivering our improvements. We hope you enjoy our second year IRMP and I would very much welcome any comments or feedback you feel able to give.

Tony Newman, Chairman, Merseyside Fire and Civil Defence Authority
Tony McGuirk, Chief Fire Officer, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our Vision:

To make Merseyside a safer community

Our Mission:

We will continue to work in partnership with the community to provide a value for money service which will:

- Further reduce death, injury and property loss due to fire and protect the people and the environment including visitors to the region.
- Provide a high quality fire and rescue service within the resources that are available in accordance with Best Value principles.

Corporate Aims 2005/06:

1. **Prevention and Protection**

   To take action to prevent fires and other emergencies whilst protecting life and property in the event of such an emergency

2. **Emergency Response**

   To respond to all requests for emergency assistance with a level of resources appropriate to the risk.

3. **Business Continuity**

   To provide prevention, protection and post-incident recovery services to businesses on Merseyside.

4. **Organisation**

   To deliver an effective, modern and learning organisation.

INTRODUCTION

There have been a number of key developments in the Fire and Rescue Service at both national and local levels since the original IRMP was published, further details of which are set out in the following paragraphs and sections. The letters and numbers in brackets at the end of certain paragraphs refer to the page containing the reference in the original IRMP.

The Fire and Rescue Services Bill received Royal Assent on 22 July 2004 and becomes the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This Act makes a statutory duty of promoting fire safety, which will help save more lives and reduce injuries from fire. It also places on a statutory footing other activities the Service has taken on over the last 50 years since the previous legislation was put in place. These activities go beyond firefighting and include rescue from road traffic accidents, response to serious environmental disasters and to the growing terrorist threat. The Act replaces the Fire Services Act 1947 and is intended to drive forward the Government's agenda to establish a modern and efficient Fire and Rescue Service designed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first Century. The Act also makes provision to place the Fire and Rescue National Framework (see below) on a statutory footing (p.6).

The Fire and Rescue National Framework was published in July 2004, following a lengthy consultation process. This document sets out the Government's aim to save lives and reduce unnecessary injuries through more effective action to prevent fire and by ensuring that the Fire and Rescue Service is well prepared and equipped to respond to the many challenges it faces. The National Framework sets out the strategy for meeting these objectives and delivering an improved, value for money service to the communities it serves. It recognises that the Government and authorities must work in partnership to achieved shared goals and sets out to provide the Government leadership that many fire authorities have been seeking (p.6).

This IRMP Supplement has been prepared to meet the requirements of both the National Framework and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Copies of both documents are available via our website: *www.merseyfire.gov.uk*

Local government elections were held on 10 June 2004 and all elected members on the Authority were up for re-election in their constituent District Councils. As a result, although there are two new members of the Authority in 2004/05, the overall political composition and balance remains unchanged for the current municipal year (p.8)

The Boundary Committee has been considering a range of options for changes to the Local Government structures in Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire, of which some, if implemented, could affect this Authority. The final recommendations of that review have now been published and the Boundary Committee has decided not to make recommendations regarding Fire Authority structures in light of the provisions of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which empowers the Secretary of State to establish combined Fire Authorities for the region, if the Secretary of State so decides. It should be noted that a referendum concerning the proposals for an elected Regional Assembly for the North West of England has been postponed and no date has yet been set for such a referendum to take place (p.8).

The North West Fire and Rescue Service Management Board continues to meet on a regular two monthly cycle. The Board is working to meet Government requirements in six key areas of work (p.58/9):

- Common and specialist services
- Effective resilience plans for large scale emergencies
- Personnel and human resource functions
- Regional approach to training
- Regional control rooms
- Regional procurement within the context of a national procurement strategy

The 2001 Index of Multiple Deprivation, which provided underpinning information for the IRMP, showed Merseyside as the most deprived area in the whole of England. This creates special challenges for the Authority as there are strong links between deprivation and incidences of fire. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 has recently been published. It is difficult to provide accurate comparisons between the 2001 and 2004 data as the former provides information on an electoral ward basis while latter uses "super output areas" which

are much smaller areas covering groups of properties. Whilst work is ongoing analysing the 2004 data, it is already apparent that deprivation, with it's associated fire related problems, continues to be prevalent in Merseyside as 40 of the 100 most deprived super output areas in England are in Merseyside (p.23).

The Hierarchical Phased Approach

Central to any effective risk-based strategy to promote fire safety is a systematic and integrated risk management process, which identifies and assesses the risk posed by fire and seeks continuous improvement in the risk control measures adopted. This risk management process is embodied in the RAPID (Risk Assessed Programme for Incident Deployment) system adopted by the Service. The implementation of the RAPID approach is a continuously developing process, however to-date its application has demonstrated the effectiveness of the hierarchical, phased approach to promoting fire safety within Merseyside (p.14).

The most effective strategy for promoting fire safety has the same common features as those adopted for all other major hazards subject to health and safety regulation. That is, a hierarchical phased approach giving "defence in depth":

- Firstly, as far as practical, by removing or reducing the potential for fire hazards;
- Where this is not possible, measures should be put in place to detect and prevent significant fire hazard development;
- Provision is made to mitigate the consequences of any reasonably foreseeable fire hazards.

1. PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

Fatal Fires in the Home

The annual analysis of fatal fires was again conducted in 2003/04 and has been published as a separate document. The key issues from this analysis are summarised in the following paragraphs.

Our corporate objectives set demanding targets for reductions in fire deaths. Our target for 2003/04 was less than 11 fire deaths and whilst every fatality from fire is a tragedy we are pleased to report that there were only 9 accidental fire deaths last year. This is the lowest annual figure since we started keeping records and is a testament to the Authority's continuing commitment to its pioneering community fire safety strategy.

The following table shows the reducing annual trend in accidental fire deaths on Merseyside

Pre 1999	-	20+
1999/00	-	13
2000/01	-	16
2001/02	-	17
2002/03	-	12
2003/04	-	9

Where are people dying?

As in the previous year, all of these victims died in their own homes. Five deaths occurred in terraced property, three in houses of multiple occupation/flats and one in a semi detached residence. Four of the victims were in the room where the fire started and five elsewhere in the property. Of the five that were elsewhere, two were on the same floor as the fire and three on the floor above.

Who died in fires?

Of the nine accidental fire deaths, all were white, six were female and the ages of the victims ranged from 25-97. The vulnerability of older persons to fire is again demonstrated by the fact that six of the nine were over the age of 60. Nine of the 12 accidental fire deaths last year

were in this age group. Only three of the victims had a recognised condition that affected their mobility and who relied on walking aids although it is likely, because of their age, that others had mobility difficulties.

What were the causes of fire?

Four of the fires that resulted in a fatality were the result of careless use of smoking materials or matches, the same number as last year. Two were as a direct result of misuse or careless use of cooking facilities, one was the result of radiated heat, one by an open fire setting fire to combustible items and one by careless use of candles.

The most significant common underlying cause of the fires is the fact that six of the nine deceased had been drinking alcohol shortly before the fire started. The effects of alcohol are well documented and there is no doubt that in each of these six instances, alcohol not only contributed to the fire starting but also to the inability of the casualties to become aware of the fire and escape. In five of the six cases, the victims were believed to be in an alcohol-induced sleep as the fire developed. It is worth noting that the three casualties for who alcohol was not a factor were the three oldest victims of fire.

How many of the victims had smoke alarms fitted?

Only three of the properties in which people died had properly installed and fully functioning smoke alarms. In these three properties, the occupiers, for various reasons, were unable to react to the sound of the alarm. In another property the smoke alarm was incorrectly sited to provide proper protection and in another the battery had been removed. The other four properties did not have smoke alarms fitted.

Last year only two of the 12 affected properties had functioning smoke alarms.

Where did the fires occur?

Wirral	3
Liverpool	2
St. Helens	2
Knowsley	1
Sefton	1

When did the fires occur?

Once again, most of the fires resulting in death occurred during the late evening and early hours of the morning, with seven of the nine fires starting between 2100 hrs and 0600hrs.

Summary

Whilst it is pleasing to note that fire deaths are falling our main priority is to continue this trend. To achieve our vision we need to access those in our community that are “hard to reach”, vulnerable groups who are more likely to suffer fires. We are committed to working in partnership with other agencies across Merseyside to achieve our vision of a “fire safe community”.

Home Fire Risk Assessments (HFRAs)

Stopping fires occurring in the first place is the most effective way to save lives and make communities safer. Recognising that it is not possible to stop all fires occurring, the next best approach is to detect the fire and prevent harm by getting the household out before there is a significant fire hazard development.

The programme of HFRAs and fitting of free smoke alarms continues to form the cornerstone of our Community Fire Safety initiatives. We have already carried out some 290,000 HFRAs since 1999 and we have a target of 48,000 HFRAs in 2004/05, which roughly equates to 100 for the crew of each fire engine every month. We continue to utilise the services of a call-

handling company to provide our Fire Service Direct service to book HFRAs for our firefighters to carry out.

The HFRA not only reduces the potential for fire hazard, by identifying the fire risks and measures to reduce the potential, but also provides measures to detect and prevent significant fire hazard development with working smoke detectors fitted. Provision is made to mitigate the consequences with an agreed practical “fire plan” established with the occupants.

The effectiveness of Merseyside’s HFRA programme has been independently analysed by Fire Data Research Ltd. This has been done by exploring and quantifying the relationship between the incidences of domestic dwelling fires, the outcomes of each incident in terms of fatalities and other casualties and the implementation of the HFRA programme.

The research clearly establishes that the HFRA programme has made a significant impact upon the levels of accidental dwelling fires in Merseyside. It also clearly shows that the HFRA programme has had a significant beneficial impact upon the numbers of both fatalities and non-fatal casualties resulting from accidental dwelling fires.

The report states that not only are the combined efforts of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service reducing accidental dwelling fires and associated casualties and fatalities but that the tailored and targeted use of HFRAs as a key component in risk reduction is achieving reductions net of the national trend in all three of these key measures. These reductions also have a significant impact upon the economy of Merseyside, equating to savings of many millions of pounds.

The conclusion of the external “impact analysis” is that there is significant additional potential for further reductions to be achieved through the continuation of the HFRA programme.
It is intended to increase the number of HFRA's being undertaken by better use of our MIS systems. Operational crews will be provided with information relating to those properties that have not taken up the offer of a free HFRA. In addition it is now five years since some of the original HFRA's were carried out and a re-contact strategy will be undertaken in partnership with a call handling company contracted to the Authority.

Sprinklers

We continue to promote residential sprinklers as the ultimate fire safety measure. During 2004/05 we are pleased to say that we were instrumental in having residential sprinklers installed in two new housing schemes for vulnerable people in New Heartlands areas of Merseyside. We are working, with partners, to develop a low cost, self-contained “first attack” sprinkler system (p.28).

We also continue to work with Local Education Authorities to promote school sprinklers as a cost effective risk reduction measure. We are delighted to report that sprinkler installations have been commissioned in at least three schools in Merseyside during 2004/05 and we will carry on working to promote further sprinkler installations, with a target of four further schools in 2005/06 (p.28).

We will lobby Government, from both a National and European aspect, and work with building developers and designers to encourage the widespread use of sprinklers for the protection of the community, business and firefighters.

Working with the Voluntary Sector

The funding from the Active Community Unit of the Home Office which had been provided for the last three years to support the work of the Fire Support Network (formerly Friends of Merseyside Fire Service) ended on 31 March 2004. Subsequently, the Authority has entered into a three year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Fire Support Network commencing on 1 April 2004. This SLA will provide funding for the charity’s key business, dependant upon the delivery of set annual targets;-

- To generate 8,000 HFRAs through the initiation of partnerships and networks, particularly with vulnerable groups

- To generate requests for and undertake battery changes to smoke alarms in 5,000 properties
- To deliver and arrange completion of 1,000 questionnaires to Merseyside residents
- To deliver 60,000 fire safety leaflets

Additional funding has been secured by the charity from the ODPM to undertake work involving arson and juveniles. The Network, which currently has some 100 volunteers, has also facilitated the engagement of the Fire and Rescue Service's first fire investigation dog, which in addition to this work, also assists the charity in the education of juveniles around arson issues.

The Board of Trustees has reviewed the performance and direction of the charity and has initiated a range of changes to both the staffing of the organisation and the way volunteers will operate. The charity was re-launched under its new name on 5 August 2004.

Advocates

In the current year, the Authority has appointed five older persons advocates to work with this vulnerable group, providing fire safety advice and arranging HFRA's. Two advocates have been appointed specifically to work with the deaf community. Further advocates have been appointed with a more general role to work in the community and to help spread the fire safety message and ensure the maximum number of people, particularly from the most vulnerable groups, receive HFRA's. In addition, five District based arson reduction advocates have been employed. Funding for these last five posts has come from the Arson Control Forum.

To increase our capability to provide HFRA's to more vulnerable groups more advocates will be employed in 2005/06. They will have particular skills relating to the community in areas such as mobility, sensory challenges, age, ethnicity and gender. These posts will be established as revenue becomes available from the redirection of other CFS resources.

An external evaluation was carried out on the first 12 months operation of the Bilingual fire safety advocates project. The main findings of the evaluation were:-

- A high level of satisfaction was reported with the HFRA's
- Bilingual workers are key to delivering HFRA's in community languages
- Many individuals reported changes in their knowledge, awareness and behaviour around fire safety issues following their HFRA
- The people who received HFRA's through the bilingual initiative would not have received a service had there not been such a project

The evaluation showed that the project did achieve its identified aims and objectives to a large extent but, not surprisingly, found there is room for improvement in areas of work. The Service has adopted an action plan to generate these improvements, building upon existing work to develop a good quality service to minority communities. The Service will continue to utilise the services of bilingual advocates to further develop this initiative.

Youth Initiatives

The Princes Trust Volunteer scheme has now been extended to Speke/Garston and Knowsley areas using Fire Service premises to provide a base and a link to the community. It is proposed to further extend the scheme to Southport.

Further 'Youth Diversionary' courses will be delivered with the aim of providing positive role models and creating fire-safe citizens of the future with enhanced 'self esteem'. This will include an expansion of the Fire Cadets and Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) schemes from locally delivered bases. It is hoped that such initiatives will reduce anti-social behaviour including hoax calls and violence towards firefighters.

The Authority, through its members and officers, will investigate best practice in public interaction and education with regard to community fire safety. This will require investigation of interactive experiences recognised as best practice in previous reports to the Authority,

including those provided by New York Fire Department. The opportunity will also be used for members and officers to formalise a partnership with New York Fire Department to support sharing of best practice at all levels of the organisation, and individual/personal development as a part of IPDS. Particular areas of interest include special and urban rescue, community fire safety and e-learning.

Misuse of Fireworks

Firework misuse is a significant and growing danger in Merseyside and the rest of the UK, driven by a massive illegal market accounting for up to 20% of firework sales. The misuse of fireworks represents a particularly dangerous form of anti-social behaviour in local communities. The vast majority of call-outs for explosive experts in the UK are to firework incidents, yet there is no single agency or body with the responsibility to deal with firework misuse. As a result, there is no central source of information or advice and few national statistics.

Merseyside Fire Service and Merseyside Police have created a joint operations team and centre of excellence to monitor, track and tackle the issues and causes of firework misuse. The creation of a Merseyside joint operations team has national significance as it is widely recognised that we are the most experienced and qualified in this form of incident and already work at a national and European level on firework issues. A lot of interest has been generated in the proposal, including local and national politicians, government departments and other agencies working in the field.

2. EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Even with the active promotion of fire safety and the risk-based targeted focus on fire prevention in the home, it is an unfortunate fact that fires will still occur and rapid firefighting intervention is essential to save life and minimise property damage.

Emergency Response Standards

The extensive research initiated following the “Out of the Line of Fire” report in 1998, which is reported in the RAPID approach document, highlights the importance of confining the fire to the room of origin in reducing the risk to life, both to the public and firefighters, and of minimising property damage. The research demonstrates that the “probability of death of a person involved in fires” rapidly increases if effective firefighting intervention is delayed for more than 10 minutes. Similarly, the available international research gives the optimal maximum intervention time to confine a fire to the room of origin as eight minutes.

Nationally prescribed fire cover standards were withdrawn with effect from 1 April 2004. Using the research detailed above, the Authority implemented the following interim response standards for property fires (definitions of each risk area are in the IRMP):-

- “A” and “B” risk areas. One fire engine in 5 minutes and a second in 8 minutes
- “C” risk areas. One fire engine in 8 minutes and a second in 10 minutes
- “D” risk areas. One fire engine in 10 minutes and a second in 12 minutes
- If an aerial appliance is required, we aim for it to arrive within ten minutes in high risk areas, within 15 minutes to commercial risk and within 20 minutes to other incidents
- We aim to achieve these attendance times on at least 85% of occasions
- If persons are reported to be inside the property we will send three fire engines

We continue to monitor our performance against these standards.

Furthermore, we have continued to gather evidence and undertake analyses to produce updated risk maps of Merseyside. We are using the latest technology and providing appropriate resources to help us in this, including the FSEC toolkit. The FSEC toolkit is a computer based risk model developed by the ODPM, which has been made available nationally to all Fire & Rescue Services. The model is based on a Geographical Information System (GIS) and draws on socio demographic census information, historical incident data,

disposition of stations & appliances and an unedited road network to determine response times. This enables Fire and Rescue Services to:

- Assess the risks from fire and other incidents within their areas
- Allocate responses appropriate to that risk
- Predict the effectiveness of any risk reduction strategies employed.

As work continues on the development of the RAPID approach, in particular to incorporate the risk profiling of Merseyside based on the FSEC model, for 2005/6 the standard of intervention with respect to fire risk will be:

- High Risk - First attack within 5 minutes with additional support within 8 minutes
- Medium Risk - First attack within 6 minutes with additional support within 9 minutes
- Low Risk - First attack within 7 minutes with additional support within 10 minutes

These times to be achieved on 90% of occasions.

Appliance Crewing Levels and Firefighter Safety

The "old" national standards of fire cover included an expectation that, in most cases, the first attending appliance, which could be the only attending appliance, should have a crew of five, and that any subsequent support appliance might have a crew of four. This expectation was based upon "custom and practice" and empirical evidence of the activities to be performed.

Along with the review of the general standards of fire cover, we have reviewed the crewing levels associated with the current interim intervention times set out above and the proposed standard of fire response of two appliances attending all property fires within ten minutes with, typically, two to three minutes between their arrivals.

The conclusion of this review is that two appliances with eight crew are highly effective in dealing with most property fires, and that the effectiveness of the firefighting response for all reasonable foreseeable scenarios is not significantly enhanced by a ninth crew member. In practice, those '"worst case planning scenarios", such as a fire in a mid-rise property with multiple casualties, which require more than eight crew members, can, typically, only be effectively addressed by attendance of a third appliance. The review confirmed the view that each appliance required a crew of four to provide the base operational unit of a firefighting jet and a breathing apparatus facility within a safe system of work.

We continue to actively manage the risk posed to our personnel through attendance at a fire situation via the establishment of safe systems of work. This is achieved on a day-to-day basis via the dynamic risk assessment of each situation but is underpinned by continuous improvement in all aspects of firefighting response, including vehicle safety, personal protective equipment, the use of thermal imaging equipment, high-pressure hosereels and continuous driver and firefighting training.

Notwithstanding established safe systems of work, the review concluded that this Service does not possess a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to warrant exposing additional personnel to the risk inherent in attending and dealing with a fire situation, when the presence of those personnel will not enhance the intervention capability.

On this basis we intend to apply a default crewing level of four for all pre-determined attendance appliances. However, the actual crewing level for the appliance at each single pump station will continue to be determined on the basis of the local operational circumstances. We will give consideration to supplementing the default crewing level of four with an additional firefighter where operational circumstances dictate, such as for reasons of crew safety, appliance security etc.

The impact of the revised default crewing level will be kept under continuous review, particularly where changes in working practices are proposed.

Fire Stations

The major development of the Paradise Street/Canning Place area of Liverpool city centre has now started following the report of the Public Inquiry. As a result it is now anticipated that our new City Centre fire station will be built at St. Anne Street during 2005 and that the new station will become operational no later than March 2006 (p.61).

This successful partnership will be a useful model to follow as we explore innovative ways to deliver modern community based fire stations

Once the new City Centre station is up and running, there is a possibility of both Kirkdale and Low Hill fire stations being relocated to better serve their communities. Work on assessing the feasibility of various options and locations will be undertaken using our GIS systems.

Unfortunately our joint bid (with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service) made in early 2004, for the redevelopment of 16 fire stations (13 of which are in Merseyside), under the Private Finance Initiative, was unsuccessful. However we are continuing with the production of an Asset Management Plan which will include a condition survey report on all our premises, a risk analysis of station locations and a property development management plan to allow us to improve and correctly site our building stock (p.61).

In addition, we are working with Sefton Borough Council on the feasibility of a joint vehicle workshop which would meet the needs of both organisations and improve the servicing of our fleet of vehicles.

Station Boundaries

Current station boundaries have been in place for a large number of years and were established to meet national standards of fire cover. However, these standards are no longer relevant and have been superseded by the local standards detailed above. With the advent of strategic stand-by and dynamic mobilising it is now time to look again at the station boundaries. Changes to station boundaries have also been proposed by our partner agencies in local Joint Action Group meetings. We therefore intend to realign these boundaries to match District Council ward boundaries. This will allow much closer working with District ward councillors and local community groups.

Senior Officer Cover

The number and role of senior officers who provide cover for emergency incidents is being critically examined to ensure that we employ the appropriate senior officers to provide the necessary senior officer cover for the whole of Merseyside, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. With this we will carry out a review of the flexible duty system and shift pattern. In addition to applicability within Merseyside, we will work in collaboration with our neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to produce a system will permits cross border cover arrangements for senior officers.

Strategic Reserve

Historical incident data illustrates that the greatest demand for our operational resource occurs during the late afternoon and early evening. The demand at other times of the day and night does not justify maintaining all of our operational appliances for immediate response. Our risk assessment shows that we are able to utilise up to ten appliances at a time on a delayed response basis during these off peak hours to facilitate superior quality training events and more comprehensive community fire safety work.

Strategic Stand-by

Fire Service activity varies geographically according to the time of day. More calls are received to commercial property during the working day whilst more domestic incidents occur during the evening and night-time hours. FSEC data will determine peak activity periods in the highest risk areas and those communities will be made safer from fire by ensuring that our operational response in terms of fire appliances are in the best place at the right time. This

may involve having appliances and crews 'standing by' at pre-determined strategic locations within the community during those times of peak activity.

Automatic Fire Alarms

As described in the IRMP, AFAs divert essential resources and create unnecessary risk to both firefighters and the general public. Therefore our revised AFA attendance policy, as set out in the 2004/05 Action Plan, will shortly be put in place and this will be reviewed after 12 months operation, during 2005/06 (p.38/39).

We have put in place a new system to reduce unwanted calls from AFA systems. We will continue to work closely with building owners, occupiers and fire alarm engineers to ensure fire alarms are correctly installed and maintained. In addition we will help, wherever possible, to develop good building management practices. Where this fails, we will be prepared, where appropriate, to publicise this and take enforcement action to improve the management of buildings. All Station Commanders have been given individual targets to achieve, which will be monitored by the Performance Management Team.

The final additional risk critical measure will be a reduced attendance of one fire engine to premises where the building owners/managers fail to manage their fire alarm system satisfactorily.

MaCC Enhance Project

Although the proposed move to a regional Control is ongoing (as described below), it has proved necessary to replace our aging mobilising system as an interim measure. The following information summarises developments on the project to enhance the MACC by the provision of new command and control and ICCS systems. The systems should be in place by the end of 2004 and will facilitate the following in relation to IRMP:

- Data collection in accordance with DCOL 1/2001
- A breakdown of incident types into sub-types
- Support for enhanced information service for emergency controls (EISEC). This assists in more accurately locating incoming calls and reduces call-handling time
- Telephony call history, which assists in identifying hoax/repeat calls
- Support for supplementary questions to ensure the correct information is collected and the appropriate resource dispatched
- Geo-coding – incident location using a 12 figure grid reference
- Dynamic mobilising – the ability to dispatch the nearest appropriate resource by identifying the nearest available appliance using an automatic vehicle location system (AVLS) and geographical information system (GIS)
- Ability to set-up temporary procedures and responses for any geographical area and given time of day
- Structured data collection at incidents
- Ability to define a response against a specific geographical location eg. housing estate, tower block
- Dynamic performance monitoring – web based reports and statistical analysis of data dynamically downloaded from the command & control system
- Ability to determine travel time of up to the 10 nearest appliances to an incident. This may assist incident commanders in their dynamic risk assessment.

Call Handling

We have implemented the policies set out in the IRMP and have new procedures in place to deal with hoax and abandoned calls. We will set up procedures to monitor and review how these procedures work in practise. In addition we now have procedures in place to refer all reported gas leaks to Transco (p.44/45).

Regional Control Centre (RCC)

The Government have directed that there will be a number of strategically located RCCs. This FiReControl Project programme states that the North West RCC will go-live anytime between

April 2006 and May 2007. In relation to IRMP, the ODPM recognise that the systems that they provide in each RCC must be able to support the constituent services differing IRMP's.

ODPM have also pledged that they will provide an interface between all existing Management Information Systems (MIS) and the new systems they provide. Given the plethora of such systems within the UK Fire Service, this is considered a very bold claim. This Authority has a number of MIS type systems, which we depend upon for various elements of IRMP. The Authority must carefully consider how we manage our MIS during the migration period to the new centre.

It is proposed that RCC's will act as a "data-hub", providing management information support for each Service including:

- Data capture – Data capture will be provided by the Command & Control system and reported to each Service
- Analysis of management information will still be undertaken by Services
- Update of PDA's and location risk information will be undertaken by Services using an interface to the Command & Control system

There will be a recognised set of national status types that appliances will book to when undertaking non-operational duties such as HFRA's, eg. mobile immediately available, mobile with delayed attendance of three minutes etc.

Appliances

We have developed our rescue and support pump concept and utilised available resources to provide each rescue pump with the appropriate rescue and firefighting equipment. We intend to supply the necessary resources to equip all support pumps with the required stowage facilities and equipment (p.40).

We also intend to carry out further research into the adaptation of our fleet of fire appliances (and the purchase of any new vehicles) to enable them to be used safely and effectively by a diverse workforce, whilst adopting the principle of affordability set out in the IRMP (p.56).

The aerial appliance that was situated at Croxteth fire station has been removed from front line operations and placed into the reserve fleet. The risk analysis undertaken has shown that with our remaining four aerial appliances we will be able to cover the remainder of Merseyside and reach incidents within the times set out above (p.41).

We intend to examine other options for staffing our remaining aerial appliances.

Whilst it is still our intention to progress the issue of Combined Pump Platform (CPP) appliances with a view to their eventual introduction in Merseyside, we are now aware that Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service are shortly to obtain a vehicle to a similar specification. We therefore propose to liase with Strathclyde during the course of the next year to ensure that the vehicle is suitable for purpose and can be used successfully by a diverse workforce. We do not intend to order any CPP appliances until this is complete (p.41).

We have centralised our special appliances (prime movers and pods) at Operational Resource Centres situated at Kirkdale and Birkenhead fire stations (p.43).

In 2004/05 we fitted Closed Circuit Television cameras as a trial on one of our fire engines as part of our approach to placing the safety of our personnel at the heart of our response to emergency incidents. We intend to evaluate the results of this trial and, if appropriate, extend this to other fire engines where we feel this will have the maximum benefit.

The IRMP includes proposals to change the staffing arrangements for the third pump at Southport fire station. Detailed risk assessments on the proposed staffing arrangements have been carried out and extensive consultation undertaken with representative bodies. The scheme will initially involve wholetime retained personnel and soon after, both wholetime retained and retained personnel recruited from within the Southport community (p.36).

An Incident Command and Continuity Team have been established, an appropriate vehicle provided and the working practices agreed (p.40).

Targetted Response Vehicle (TRV)

A TRV is being obtained and should be available for operational use by November 2004. This vehicle will be used to extinguish rubbish and other minor (not building) fires in the Kirkdale, Low Hill, Croxteth and City Centre areas between 1600 and 2200hrs each day. This is the period of the day when the greatest number of such incidents occur. Use of the TRV will allow rescue pumps within these areas to be reserved to attend fires and accidents involving a life risk. The TRV concept will be monitored and evaluated for a trial period and, if appropriate, will be extended to other areas of Merseyside (p.45).

Water for Firefighting

The Authority has a statutory duty to provide water for firefighting purposes and Water Companies now have both legal and financial obligations to reduce wastage of treated water. Water supplied through fire hydrants is an ongoing cause for concern. Although some 95% of incidents attended by the Service are tackled without utilising hydrants to provide extra water, when they are required, problems often occur as a result of insufficient water pressure in the mains. This is due to the fact that the Water Companies are continually reducing supply pipe size, pressure and flow rates with consequent effect upon the suitability of supplies for firefighting purposes.

At a number of recent operational incidents water shortage has been a major problem. Provision of alternative supplies of water as detailed in the 2005/06 Service/Action Plan will give the officers-in-charge of an incident the opportunity to offensively fight a fire given poor water supplies.

Stations have produced lists of worst water supply risks and are now producing action plans to deal with them. Some of these action plans may require changes to pre-determined attendances, information on turnout sheets for further responding appliances and alterations to 1.1.(d) records. Main problems include very poor water supplies to Liverpool, St Helens and Southport Town Centres and Formby Pinewoods

Work is also proposed on the strategy for the use of bulk foam at incidents and the means of transport of foam supplies to such incidents.

New Dimension

“New Dimension” is the term given to planning for potential acts of terrorism following the events of September 11th 2001. We are continuing the preparation and planning for potential terrorist activity and working closely with other agencies. This preparation includes our involvement in a series of multi agency exercises to hone our ability to respond to such an event.

A Government funded Incident Response Unit equipped with an array of specialist equipment is now available for use within Merseyside. This Unit gives us a vastly improved capability to respond to a major or catastrophic event anywhere in the United Kingdom, if required. Personnel from five core stations have been fully trained in the use of the extensive array of equipment carried on the vehicle. All other operational Service personnel have received familiarisation training on the unit and equipment.

A high volume pumping unit with hose laying capability will soon to be provided as a regional resource. This will be invaluable in the event of a major disruption to water supplies, damaged mains or natural flooding. The pump unit will also be of enormous value at large firefighting incidents. The most appropriate location for the unit will be determined by incident analysis and risk assessment.

Future developments in New Dimension planning are likely to include command and control communications facilities, water safety and rescue equipment, in addition to procedural guidance for mobilising to major incidents, convoy arrangements and control room protocols.

Rescue

A Special Rescue Team (SRT) has been created, trained and deployed (with effect from 1 November 2004) and is based at Croxteth fire station. A fast response vehicle has been obtained and is used by the Team. The SRT has, inter alia, responsibility for urban search and rescue and an interim Urban Search and Rescue Vehicle has been provided, free of charge, by the Government and is ready for use when required. The SRT has undertaken specialist training in the safe use of the specialist equipment carried on the vehicle. This vehicle is also available regionally and nationally in the event of a major or catastrophic event occurring. A search and rescue dog and handler are currently undergoing training and will eventually form part of the SRT. It is proposed to further extend the urban search and rescue capability of the SRT by including specialist roles, sourced by partnerships from outside the Fire and Rescue Service, as appropriate. The SRT will be continually developed with appropriate training to enable them to respond to a wide variety of incidents including major transport accidents (p.46).

The ODPM are to provide us with further specialised equipment commonly referred to as Heavy Rescue Vehicles and Medium Rescue Vehicles. These vehicles will improve our capability and resilience to major or catastrophic incidents above and below ground.

We are also reassessing our requirements for extended duration breathing apparatus (EDBA). This has been necessitated by our planning in the New Dimension arena and also because some of our existing EDBA is reaching the end of its useful life.

The outcomes of the River Mersey risk assessment, which is being led by the Maritime Coastguard Agency, are awaited. These will be used to inform future response arrangements to not only the tidal River Mersey but also our response to other water rescue situations. We will continue to provide appropriate training to our personnel to allow them to work safely on or near water during emergencies (p.46).

Conscious of the workload of this (and other) Fire and Rescue Service(s) from attending road traffic accidents (RTAs) in a rescue capacity, we are producing and maintaining a map, using our GIS facilities, which will show the location of RTAs over time to identify potential “accident black-spots”. We will use this map to both plan our emergency response and to work with other agencies to reduce risk to life from RTAs.

During the course of our work we are requested to deal with a range of non-life threatening and non-fire related incidents that divert us from our core business of saving lives and property. In partnership with relevant agencies, District Councils and other partners as appropriate, we will explore the means by which to reduce the number of such incidents that we have to deal with each year.

Resilience

As well as the Interim Urban Search and Rescue Vehicle detailed above, new chemical detection equipment has been provided by the Government. This is one of only eleven such sets of equipment in the country. Hazardous materials (Hazmat) officers have been trained in it’s use and it is expected that further detection, identification and monitoring equipment will be provided by the ODPM within the next 12 months. (p.47).

Co-Responder Scheme

The Special Rescue Team is trialling the co-responder scheme in liaison with Mersey Regional Ambulance Service (MRAS) out of their base at Croxteth fire station and also whilst mobile throughout Merseyside. The team have been appropriately trained to respond to “Priority A” (life threatening) calls. This trial will be evaluated during the course of 2005/06 and, if appropriate, it will be extended to (some) rescue pumps (p.51).

It is also intended to provide defibrillators on certain ancillary and other vehicles and provide training to relevant staff to use these pieces of vital life saving equipment.

3. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

The Economic and Social Cost of Fire

The Central Economic Advice Unit of the Analytical Services Directorate of the ODPM has recently carried out some work on establishing the economic and social cost of fire.

The cost of fire to the economy of England and Wales each year is some £6.4 billion. This can be broken down into three distinct areas:-

- Consequential costs £2.4 billion. This includes property loss, business interruption, loss of output due to injuries and death, the cost of ambulances & hospitals dealing with injuries and the associated human costs such as pain, grief and suffering to the individuals and their family and friends.
- Response costs £1 billion. These are the direct Fire Service costs.
- Prevention costs £3 billion. This covers the costs of providing domestic smoke alarms, commercial fire prevention measures such as alarms and sprinklers, insurance costs and fire safety related campaigns.

Using information from every type of fire, the average cost to the economy of each individual fire is £16,000. For commercial fires and public sector buildings, the average cost rises to £133,000.

It therefore makes economic, as well as commercial, sense to prevent as many fires as possible, an undertaking that the Authority has been pursuing for a number of years and this remains a key objective.

Disaster Recovery

The IRMP recognises the importance to the community of a business being able to continue to function effectively following any incident involving fire or other emergency. The devastation that fire can cause to the business community is illustrated by information from the National Audit Office which estimates that 80% of all companies which suffer a major fire never actually recover.

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 maintains the Service's statutory duty to undertake salvage operations. In an effort to improve salvage options available, the Authority has entered into a partnership with one of the most experienced and technologically sophisticated disaster management companies in the United Kingdom. Through careful risk assessment by fire officers at incidents, the services of this company will be offered, in appropriate circumstances, to owner/occupiers of premises affected. The company will provide a free disaster recovery advisory service for up to four hours and the owner/occupier is under no obligation to sign up to the services offered. The partnership will be rigorously reviewed after 12 months of operation to ensure that it is meeting its objectives.

Flood Map

The summer of 2004 has made the population of the United Kingdom acutely aware of the danger of flooding, with extreme consequences in both Cornwall and Scotland. We are working with appropriate agencies to produce a potential flood map for Merseyside using our GIS technology and with other agencies to plan to reduce the potential for interruptions to business continuity from flooding.

Emergency Planning

Officers from the District Councils have reviewed the way emergency planning is currently organised and have recommended that the current arrangements be ended and the functions and duties be carried out wholly by the District Councils with effect from 1 April 2005. These recommendations are shortly to be submitted for approval by the Authority and by the District Councils and if agreed, the Authority's current responsibilities in respect of emergency planning will cease from that date. The Authority will retain it's statutory duties in respect of

COMAH, pipelines and REPPIR. We are considering incorporating current Headquarters based emergency planning staff into the Fire and Rescue Service Operational Planning Team (p.53).

Civil Contingencies Act

The Civil Contingencies Act is likely to be on the statute books by the end of 2004. Whilst the exact details of the Act are not yet known, it is certain that there will be statutory requirements placed upon the Authority in respect of planning for a range of emergencies, not just fire. Detailed Regulations will underpin the Act and we will develop the appropriate strategies and procedures to ensure that we are able to carry out our legal duties. We will also work with other appropriate agencies to develop a major emergency response and recovery plan.

Capital of Culture

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service will be fully engaged in all the Liverpool Regeneration Schemes, up to and including Capital of Culture 2008. This will give an enhanced service to the 'Business Community' who will access our services on a 'one-stop shop' principle with our staff based at Liverpool Regeneration Services. These services include all aspects of fire safety and operational planning and policy. A Service Level Agreement will be implemented to turn round all planning applications and queries. These schemes will require extra resources to deal with the volume of work that is being generated, which have been budgeted for.

Fire Safety Specialists

The ongoing review of Fire Safety specialists will be implemented following consultation with representative bodies. The review has taken account of National Occupational Standards/Role Maps; greater availability of uniformed specialists who will be working a 42 hour flexible duty system; further use of specialist Technical Officers; and the Regulatory Reform Order which is a risk based inspection regime due to be enacted in Spring 2005. It is intended to test the market along Best Value principles as regards the entire provision of Fire Safety Services in 2005/06. All of the above would open up opportunities for a wider group of the community to access these careers and add value to the business community.

To assist building owners and occupiers meet their fire safety responsibilities, our Fire Safety specialists will encourage them to use only registered companies who have been independently assessed by a participating third party certification body, to install fire protection products and systems.

Special Operations Directorate

We propose to adopt a more integrated approach to the issue of service delivery. To this end the areas of New Dimension, Operational Planning, Operational Resource Centres, SRT & Emergency Planning will be brought under the umbrella of a Special Operations Directorate.

4. ORGANISATION

Corporate Risk Management Strategy

Our Corporate Risk Management Strategy is the policy and the process that we use to identify the risks to the Authority that may jeopardise the Service's ability to deliver this IRMP and Service Plan. The Authority has approved a policy which includes a framework that allows the identification of all areas of activity and their associated risk. A risk register is being developed that captures all risks faced by the Authority, a rating of each risk and the means by which these risks are either eliminated or controlled. This is a "living" document that is kept constantly under review to inform the policy and planning cycle.

Human Resources

Rank to Role

The move from a rank-based structure to a role-based structure (rank to role) is a standing item on the agenda for Joint Secretaries meetings in Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service. The full consultation and assimilation processes are due to be concluded by the end of March 2005. A number of key principles have already been agreed at both local and national level, however full consultation on a range of other key steps in the process commenced in early October 2004. The Service is committed to a scheme of workforce succession and redeployment planning.

Crew Level Maintenance Team

It is still our intention to establish a Crew Level Maintenance Team, with the aim of ensuring the overall staffing levels are maintained at a level required to establish an appropriate life-saving response on rescue and support pumps in the most efficient way possible. Consultation and negotiation with the representative bodies is taking place during 2004/05 with regard to pay and conditions issues contained within the development of such a flexible Crew Level Maintenance Team which will provide for staffing levels in the IRMP (p.38).

Workforce Development

We propose to more closely align our training delivery to the needs of the Service by developing individuals and the organisation to mitigate the risks to the community. This Service is committed to a strategy of continuous personal and organisational development to meet regional and local Service objectives and to create a flexible and high performing workforce. We will review training and development protocols to meet the needs of the IRMP.

Specifically we intend to extend the delivery of training and development through the crew based training concept to meet and mitigate the local risk profile as identified by historical incident data and the FSEC toolkit. The SRT and ICCT will deliver advanced skills training based upon the needs of a specific locale, relative to the risk profile.

We are carrying out a fundamental review of the work of our Safety Training Centre and training and professional development departments to enhance our ability to address identified training and development needs.

Improved Working Practices

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service continues to strive towards working practices that respond not only to the needs of the communities in Merseyside that we serve, but also work/life balance options required by our employees.

We are committed to reviewing our duty systems and crewing arrangements and to redesign, or instigate new patterns of work, which will ensure service delivery at the times demanded by the people of Merseyside.This will include greater use of those periods previously designated as “stand-down” time, where that greater use facilitates this IRMP, is commensurate with the employees role and is appropriate during these times. We will also enhance the opportunities for all our employees to meet both family and lifestyle commitments. We will examine, evaluate and, if appropriate, implement an array of crewing arrangements to allow greater flexibility in staffing appliances.

We will do this by continuing to enhance the variations in working practices that are currently utilised by our employees. This will include further enhancement of the availability to undertake part time working and to explore all options available to allow our employees to work different or alternative shift patterns. We will also develop opportunities for our employees to consider options such as a condensed working week as well as seeking to extend the facility for employees to work a flexible hours system.

We will also support these actions with employees being given, where appropriate, the options of pre-planned overtime, additional part time hours or bank holiday working so that those employees who wish to undertake additional paid duties will facilitate the options for other employees who wish to take specific periods of leave or time off. All pre-planned overtime will be utilised solely to enhance the needs of the Service and will be subject to

continual performance management to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources is maintained.

Collaboration

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service intend to develop existing collaborative arrangements with other fire and rescue services in pursuance of both regional and inter regional 'best practice'. These collaboration initiatives will not, however be restricted to local authority fire services. Consideration will be given to the potential for collaborative working with a variety of other agencies, including; Merseyside Police, Mersey Regional Ambulance Service, HM Coastguard, other fire services (airport and works) and numerous local authority organisations. Our five District Managers are already working productively with local Joint Action Groups for the benefit of their respective communities and for Merseyside as a whole.

One of our key aims, under the direction of the Regional Management Board, is the production of a regional training strategy. To do this we will lead in the development and delivery of assessment and development centres within the North West region. We are also working with our colleagues in the region to produce a standard issue of both personal protective equipment and uniform for all our personnel and to include appropriate uniform for any youth schemes.

In addition, we have entered into an innovative collaboration exercise with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service on procurement. Merseyside has already developed many examples of good practice in this field through our Director of Procurement. We are now entering into a Service Level Agreement with Lancashire whereby Merseyside are employing an additional procurement professional officer to predominantly work within Lancashire. This has benefits to both authorities in sharing of expertise and costs.

Contestable Research Fund

The Authority established a Contestable Research Fund in 2004/05 of up to £25,000 per annum with the aim of encouraging academic research into fire related matters in Merseyside. Following meetings with representatives of the three Universities in Liverpool, it appears that awards of the size made available by the Authority have the potential to unlock many times that amount in additional research funding from other parties. The Authority is currently seeking competing submissions from Universities in Liverpool. Award(s) will be made, consistent with the corporate aims of the Service, where tangible benefits are proved to be deliverable.

Financial Issues

The framework of affordability set out in the IRMP applies equally to the 2005/06 financial year. The consultation draft of the Service Plan, incorporating the IRMP Action Plan for 2005/06, includes a number of items that have financial implications. Work is proceeding to fully cost these proposals and full costs and savings of all items will be included in the budget preparation documents considered by the Authority at the appropriate time. If the Authority has insufficient resources available in 2005/06 to fund any proposed IRMP Actions, they will have to be deferred until such stage as sufficient resources are identified. As in 2004/05, the final published version of the Action Plan (contained within the Service Plan 2005/06) will contain details of the costs or savings associated with each Action.

The Authority is mindful of the impact of Council Tax increases upon the local community and in its three year financial plan has given a commitment to try and maintain tax increases below 4%. This represents a significant challenge as the Authority manages the implementation of the firefighters' pay award and finds the resources for all its new roles, whilst maintaining its innovative fire safety work.

Performance Management

We continue to monitor the performance of our stations in meeting our aims and objectives. In order to make this process more open and transparent, we intend to facilitate public access to a range of performance indicators via our website and headquarters reception area (p.62).

The first Station Locality Manager is now in place at Southport fire station. This new post is initially on a 12 month contract, at the end of which the role will be re-evaluated, refined and if appropriate, extended (p.63).

Supplementary Bibliography

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- IRMP Guidance Note 7, Revised Response Policies for Dealing with Unwanted Fire Signals from Automatic Fire Alarms, 3 September 2004
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- Evaluation of a Bilingual Fire Safety Advocates Project, Andrea Newman, Liverpool John Moores University, March 2004
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- The Future of Local Government: Developing a 10 Year Vision, ODPM, July 2004.
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Supplementary Glossary of Terms & Abbreviations used

Hazmat: Hazardous Materials
Joint Secretaries: Management/Trade Union negotiating body
MIS: Management Information System
MRAS: Mersey Regional Ambulance Service
Priority A calls: Calls for emergency medical assistance which are classed as “life-threatening”
RCC: Regional Control Centre
REPPIR: Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001.