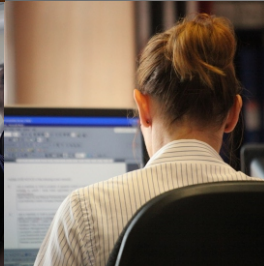


# Death in the Workplace

Toolkit for Fire and Rescue Service

Communication Teams



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### Thanks

This document was informed by many Services through the sharing of documents and information via the CFOA portal. The following individuals contributed directly to writing the guidance.

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## Introduction

Thankfully the unexpected death of a colleague in the workplace happens infrequently and most of us will never be involved in such a sad event. However, despite efforts to eliminate risk and employ safe systems of working, firefighting can never be fully without risk so it's vital we ensure our business continuity communication plans include consideration of what we would do should the need arise.

As emergency service communication professionals we're well practised in responding to incidents with the media and public; managing reputational issues; liaising with stakeholders and keeping our staff informed. From the experience of colleagues who have been involved in firefighter fatalities, we know these skills will be at the heart of the organisation's response strategy from the outset and will play a key role in protecting the Service's reputation during the resulting investigations or prosecutions.

Guidance can never be a completed works or prescriptive rule – every different situation needs a tailored response. However, when emotions are high and stress levels at their peak, it can be difficult to find the right words or formulate a clear action plan quickly and this is particularly the case when the event involves a colleague.

Simple checklists and reference materials can really help to get you started and that's the point of this document: not to tell you what to do, but to share the learning from others which could give you the head-start if you need it.

This guidance will be placed in the document library on the FirePRO pages of the CFOA portal. Please add any documents to the library relating to this topic that you think others may find helpful.

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## 2. Planning and Preparation

### Actions at this stage:

- ▶ Have a plan
- ▶ Know your audiences and prioritise them
- ▶ Be sure you would be notified
- ▶ Discuss your plan with your Chief Officers
- ▶ Have a grab bag
- ▶ Know what to expect
- ▶ Understand the timeline – the effects and demand are long-lasting

### Have a plan

The circumstances of any event will always be unique and a rigid or prescriptive communications plan prepared in advance won't help. However, it is useful to have an outline plan which can quickly be adapted and applied if you need it.

Make sure your plan is integrated to your Service communication strategy or policy and forms a part of any overall Service policy or operating protocol that could be invoked in the event of a workplace death. See Appendix one for an example of an initial response plan.

### Priority audiences

Your plan will need to address many audiences. Keeping it focused to family, watch, media, stakeholders in that order can help provide focus to decision making about how to communicate. Know how to contact people you would need to inform out-of-hours.

### Notification process

Early notification is critical as it offers much needed time to prepare an initial cohesive response. Some Services offer a 24-hour on-call media officer cover. Make sure trigger arrangements include death in the workplace but it would be preferable for you to be notified at the point at which there is immediate concern. If your Service does not have the ability to contact someone with professional communication expertise out-of-hours consider what you would do. If you can – make sure you have a communication professional available to be part of the responding management team.

### Relationship with Chief Officer Team

Knowing what your Chief would want to do and what they would require of you for this type of event can make your plan work or fail.

Notes

Your Chief Officer and their team will be under incredible personal stress in the immediate aftermath and that is not the time to begin creating working relationships. If you can, try to set some time aside to discuss the communication plan with chief officers as you are working on it or as a testing exercise. It is better to have mutual understanding of what role professional communications staff would have in advance of an incident than on the day itself.

## Have a grab bag

If you work on-call you will undoubtedly have a bag that you can grab if you are called to an incident. If you don't these are the sorts of things you might need to have at hand:

- Personal protective equipment (include hat and gloves if it is cold) include a tabard clearly marked media/press officer.
- Decision log – for keeping a note of what decisions you take and actions you make (work on the basis that everything you may write down is probably going to be disclosed in any subsequent investigation).
- Copy of your plan.
- Notebook/pen/contacts list.
- Phone and charger.
- Camera.
- Tablet/laptop.
- Snacks, drink, tissues, toiletries.
- Change of clothes – something more formal if you need to do a press conference.

## Know what to expect at each stage – “mayhem, mastermind, and manhunt”
















Whatever the nature of an emergency, the media and public response will generally follow three broad stages. With the growing use of social media, the lifecycle of these phases have reduced and become less defined but an understanding of the themes can help you plan to prepare your response. More information about these phases is in Appendix two.

## Timeline and key milestones

Your plan is probably only going to be enough to get you through the first few weeks. As facts emerge, investigations take shape and significant milestones are reached you will need to create new plans that will help your organisation through difficult impacts. Whatever the specifics of the incident, events will follow a similar timeline.

Notes

## Death in the Workplace summary of key milestones

-  **Fatal incident**
-  **Immediate actions** - notification, information controls at scene, comms staffing
-  **First hours** - breaking news management, next of kin, immediate internal comms
-  **Commencement of Police, HSE, Rep Body and FRS investigations**
-  **First week** - family, staff, stakeholders – less media
-  **One week on** - minute's silence, flags to remain at half mast until day after minute's silence, closing down of incident scene.
-  **Funeral preparation** - consider media requirements
-  **Funeral(s)**
-  **Memorial events** - opening of statues/gardens etc, special services
-  **Further landmarks** - one year anniversary etc
-  **Outcomes of the investigations**
  -  **Prosecutions?**
-  **Inquest preparations**
-  **Inquest** - possibly several weeks
-  **Post-inquest** - release of final report, development of learning tools, information sharing with FRS community

## 3. Immediate Actions

### Actions at this stage:

- ▶ Establish the facts and become part of the response team
- ▶ Take control of communication outputs
- ▶ Think about immediate crew welfare
- ▶ Think about what might happen where and what resources you may need to deploy if you have them
- ▶ Start a decision and action log
- ▶ Identify your spokesperson
- ▶ Speak with your police press office

#### Establish facts

What has happened? Has it happened in a public place? Could people see what was happening what was the likelihood of people taking photos or seeing what happened? Are media at the scene? What have staff already communicated internally or externally? Is there anything on social media – get monitoring? Make sure you are embedded as part of the Service's response team.

#### Take control of comms

Ensure the operational commander has instructed incident ground staff not to take photos unless instructed to do so, not to communicate information about the incident on social media (either work or personal accounts), to other staff not engaged at the incident or to friends and family. If media are at the scene make immediate contact with them by phone or

in person (by mobilising another member of the comms team to the incident ground). Issue a holding position if necessary:

- Dealing with an ongoing incident.
- Aware that there may have been some difficulties during the incident response.
- Looking to establish what has gone on.
- Will report fact when it is known.

#### Think about immediate crew welfare

Witnesses or staff who had been present at the incidents will benefit from early relief but may welcome being kept together off the incident ground as a group in order that a senior officer can provide immediate direction or support.

People involved in the incident are more likely to

prefer to have details confirmed face-to-face. Check to see if your HR department has any immediately available suitable advisory information on coping with trauma.

You may find this freely available from your local NHS or from your Service's occupational health advisor. An example is at Appendix three.

Notes

## Think about what may happen where

You will need to work out what resources you have and where they are best placed. Likely locations and roles you need to cover are:

- The scene of the incident. Media will congregate here.
- Control room/HQ/incident room. Your Service management will convene here.
- Communications department. This is where your calls will come and where you're best set up to monitor media and social media.
- The home station of the deceased staff. Media and public will try to speak to staff here.
- HQ reception/call centre. Enquires may be made.
- Strategic Co-ordinating Centre. If the incident is a major incident you may be required at your LRF SCC to participate in a multi-agency media cell.

## Start a decision and action log

Good practice suggests that you write down the decisions that you make and the actions that you take including the date/time and a brief description. Record facts not opinions.

This information records your contribution to the response which can assist in any debrief but may also be disclosed to the police/legal teams as part of any resulting investigations.

## Identify your lead spokesperson

This would normally be the most senior person available but you may need to be flexible about this. Better to have someone talking to fill any vacuum or correct any rumour than have a big wait.

## Make contact with the police press office

It can be useful to have a very early conversation with colleagues in your Police press office to make sure they have been informed and to establish an agreed protocol for informing media/public and the means through which further statements or information can be shared. At a later time it may also be useful to make contact with the Health and Safety Executive Press Office.

Notes



## 4. First hours

### Actions at this stage:

- ▶ Inform next of kin
- ▶ Support the family liaison role
- ▶ Start a corporate timeline/record
- ▶ Formulate your statement
- ▶ Inform FRS staff
- ▶ Inform Fire Authority Chairman or Portfolio Holder
- ▶ Confirm fatality to media and public
- ▶ Inform other FRS stakeholders
- ▶ Inform other local stakeholders
- ▶ Prepare to receive online condolences
- ▶ Understand the investigations
- ▶ Ask for help

### Informing next of kin

In an ideal world it's not helpful to confirm a fatality to media, staff and stakeholders until the next of kin has been advised. Sometimes though it is necessary to confirm that there has been a fatality to allay difficult or damaging speculation but if this is the case you must not name the individual. Remember though that it is for the police (acting on behalf of HM Coroner) who are legally responsible for putting on public record information about a fatality, although they may be happy for you to do this if you have agreed your course of action with them. They will only sanction this when they are satisfied that the next of kin has been advised or the deceased formally identified.

### Family Liaison Officer

The job of informing the next of kin will fall to the police but they will usually support undertaking this jointly with a representative of the Fire Service. Your Service may wish to appoint the person undertaking this task as a "family liaison single point of contact".

Family Single Point of Contact performs a very different role to a police FLO and is at risk of quickly getting emotionally attached to the family and their position and for creating family expectations that may be unreasonable/unrealistic going forward.

Notes

The temptation to blanket the family with support is great but it is very difficult to remove this. The Family SPOC must have a good working relationship with police FLO and ideally should be trained and prepared to undertake this role.

The SPLO will be a critical link between the comms office and the next of kin. In the first instance you should ask the SPLO to talk to the family about media considerations and try to obtain a photograph of the deceased that the family would like to issue. Offer support in helping them formulate their own statement and pen picture and help with interviews if you are able to offer this. Appendix 4 offers the SPLO some guidance on what media and communication issues they need to consider.

## Start a corporate timeline/record

As the various investigations begin to take shape and the need to issue information internally and to the media become more pressing, it can be helpful to start a corporate account of what happened – a narrative by which the organisation can present a clear picture and collective understanding of the timeline of events and the description of what is known at that time. This should be updated as more information becomes known but should only be based on fact and must not pre-empt any investigation. In itself it is not for public release but serves to focus the responding team on a collective position.

## Formulate your initial statement

The sooner you can begin to formulate a statement the better. This will form the basis of any information you give out to staff, on social media, in a media release, media interviews and information you give to other audiences. Focus on providing the who, what, when and where rather than the how – you must not prejudice the resulting investigations. Content should cover the emotions of pity, praise and promise:

- **Pity** for what has happened and compassion for those affected
- **Praise** the work of your crews and staff
- **Promise** to look after people in the aftermath, internally investigate and fully support any HSE or police led investigations.

There's no formula and pre-prepared statements will lack factual accuracy and may come across as cold or insincere. A script isn't necessary but heartfelt honesty is. Some of the phrases listed below may give you a head start when words are harder to find than usual.

- Tragic day for XFRS.
- Deep regret and huge sadness.
- We are devastated at the loss of our colleague, friend.
- Paid the ultimate price of bravery.
- Terrible and poignant reminder of the danger emergency responders put themselves in every day to help others.

Notes

- Commitment and courage to duty.
- Deeply saddened.
- Incredibly difficult time for their families and we send our heartfelt condolences.
- Sympathy, thoughts and prayers are with the affected families.
- We won't be speculating on what happened that is for the investigations to find out what has happened but we promise to work closely with police/HSE/trade unions to find out what happened.
- Thank communities for their kind words and praise ongoing support.

## Telling staff

As events unfold try to think the mantra “family, staff, stakeholder”. Which means telling family and staff before others. Telling those directly involved face-to-face may help provide the initial support in dealing with resulting trauma. Tell your staff using your usual “all user” channel – take care not to miss any individual or group out. If you need to make sure it is repeated on multiple channels. A Chief Officer should personally visit injured staff and offer to meet next of kin.

## Your primary stakeholders

You should tell your primary stakeholders before they see the news on the media. Primary stakeholders include your Fire Authority Chair and Members/Portfolio Holder; Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor, CFOA Presidential Team, FBU lead. These people may warrant/appreciate a direct telephone call. Secondary stakeholders can be sent an

email addressed from your CFO. This may include:

- All Chief fire officers
- Local authority leaders and chief executives
- MPs/MEP
- community leaders;
- Church leaders
- local dignitaries eg Mayor

Expect a flurry of return emails wishing your Chief well – an offer of helping collate these and providing a draft standard response may be welcomed.

## Managing news and social media

The pace at which you have to tell staff and confirm information to media will depend on the incident and the circumstances you face.

**If media and public are on the scene and have heard/seen** attempted rescue there will be more pressure to act quickly. Make sure there is a cordon in place to stop people getting too close. Stop staff from speaking to public, media and social media. Issue a holding position to present media and keep them in a holding position outside the cordon. Issue the holding position to social media. In this instance there will not be time to get lots of people viewing or confirming your message. Stick to known facts and do not confirm there has been a fatality – you don't know this for sure and at this stage it could be damaging.

Notes

Be proactive with social media speculation – keep talking, but be honest and don't be afraid to say that you don't know what is the outcome.

**If there is no media on the scene, social media comment is low or non-existent, if people cannot see** what is going on the chances are it will be in your gift to determine when you announce the news to media and social media proactively. Remember media deadlines – if it's the middle of the night, try to make sure they know in enough time for morning bulletins.

Once the media know, attention will be swift and intensive so you need to have a plan in place for providing interview opportunities. Don't underestimate time needed for 1-1 interviews – you might have to say no to some outlets, arrange for a secondary spokesperson to undertake them or suggest pooled interviews.

If the incident is still on-going do this at the scene – that is where the media will want to be. If time is tighter you may wish to operate a press conference at a suitable indoors location – although be aware the media will still want to visit the scene. Appendix 5 contains guidance on running a press conference.

Multi agency conference later in the day, next day can help to manage ongoing media demand.

Be reassured at this point – deal with this as you would any other incident. It is your bread and butter and you know what you are doing! It

can be really easy to doubt yourself when there is so much more emotion connected to the event.

## **Social media monitoring – online condolences**

Monitor and add comments where you can. Keep records of all that you post and all that is said. Use Storify to do this. It will be a useful record of what you have done and at a later date may be of interest for the family.

If your website can host it, set up an online book of condolence. If not, use your Facebook account to do this.

## **Commencement of Police, HSE, Rep Body and FRS investigations**

Depending on your role in your Service you may be required to attend initial meetings with the organisations charged with carrying out the resultant investigations. Listening first hand to the complexity that the investigations will bring to the organisation can help you to frame what you say. However, if you're not privileged to attend these meetings make sure you are briefed on the different investigations; who is leading them; what they are looking at; their timelines and relative importance. This is crucial if you are to ensure that your communication output does not prejudice the investigations in any way.

## **Ask for help**

If you need help from other FRS communication teams do not feel scared to ask for it. You may have mutual aid arrangements with neighbours or may want to approach FirePRO committee members for assistance. The immediate response can be draining but you will be under increased pressure for a number of weeks following. Those that have sadly been through this process would also be willing to offer advice (Manchester, Warwickshire, Hampshire, Hertfordshire).

## **Get some rest!..**

Notes

## 5. First week

### Actions at this stage:

- ▶ Support the family
- ▶ Keep staff informed
- ▶ Be welfare aware
- ▶ Respectful events of condolence and remembrance
- ▶ Investigation weighs heavy
- ▶ Media interest steady but will wane
- ▶ Recovery starts

### Support the family

Keep in touch with your family liaison SPOC and continue to offer help with media liaison if it is needed. If media interest is high you may need to be more forceful about encouraging the family to issue a statement or be interviewed.

### Keep staff informed

Set up a means of keeping your staff informed about what is going on using trusted methods. For example if you have a weekly newsletter consider producing it on a daily basis. If staff use an intranet for self briefing make sure this is frequently updated. Try to collate all information that needs to go to staff so that it can be co-ordinated and issued at the same time – too much at too many times can seem like you are bombarding people. If your Service is having a daily meeting – ask for staff communication to be a standing agenda item. Updates may include:

- Confirmation of what is known about the incident
- Tributes and comments received
- Information about trauma care or counselling services
- Details of the investigation strands
- Information about books of condolences/collections
- Message from family members
- Instruction on flag flying

Dedicated internal communication arrangements shouldn't last much longer than a fortnight. Cutting back on updates will be needed so listen out to what staff want – they may want a break from constant messaging.

Senior management team visibility through watch and station visits will be important in reassuring people that the leaders of the organisation care and are in control.

Notes

At some point in this week speculation and internal discussion will become concerning and it may be necessary to issue a clear warning about the importance of not compromising investigations. Being clear on what will and won't be given out about the incident and resulting investigation can help manage expectations.

## Be welfare aware

You will need to work closely with your HR lead to make sure that staff affected clearly know what support is on offer for them and how they can access this. Staff will expect the utmost care and compassion at this time. Failure to deliver this will be remembered at a later date.

## Respectful events

You may have an online book of condolence but hard copy books of condolence can be placed at key locations for people to sign if they wish. This will include the home station, Headquarters and the scene of the incident if it is in an accessible location. Arrangements need to be made to purchase these books and for people to be responsible for looking after them.

Your Service will have a policy on flag flying. Make sure you issue guidance on this as soon as you can and ensure all stations act upon it.

Key members of staff/Authority staff should lay floral tributes either at the scene or a suitable location. Arrangements need to be made to have a place to receive floral tributes. Family members may wish to visit the

site and they need to be briefed on whether media will be around to film this happening.

People may wish to make a financial donation to the family. The Family Liaison Officer should discuss this with the family as it can be done via the Firefighters Charity or directly to the family. Arrangements for buckets/suitable receptacles need to be made and care taken over their security. On-line donations can be accepted by setting up a paypal account.

A week after the event staff may wish to observe a minute silence.

Where the incident has been ongoing, a small service to mark the withdrawal of resources may be appropriate.

## Ongoing media interest

Media interest, although likely to be steep in the first twenty four hours will quickly wane – certainly from a national perspective, and particularly if fatalities are not multiple or there are quick criminal arrests which will restrict what the media can report on. You should focus your efforts on maintaining information links with your usual key media – your local BBC station, commercial radio and daily newspapers. They will be the channels more interested in the follow-up to the incident and will welcome anything new you may be able to offer them. Having a plan to withdraw between the incident and funeral will give you time to focus on internal

communication which is more important than media at this stage. You are already beginning to plan for recovery...although you will now face a new normal.

Notes

## 6. Funeral arrangements

The decision on what shape and form the funeral is to take is purely down to the deceased family. The family liaison officer or single point of contact will approach the family to discuss. They may want to have a formal service funeral or an entirely private event or a private funeral with a memorial service.

Full ceremonial funerals are likely to involve:

- Use of an ALP to bear the coffin.
- Ceremonial color party to escort the coffin.
- Procession past place of work.
- Personnel in uniform lining part of the procession route.
- Service standard on coffin.
- Pall bearers.
- Fire appliance escort to procession.
- Piper.
- Eulogy by Principal officer.
- Service wreath.
- Order of service.
- Provision of accommodation and refreshments.
- Invitation to every FRS.

Part ceremonial funeral may be preferred which are likely to include parts of the list above. And while some families may prefer a family service they may be happy for some fire service staff to attend.

Depending on your structure, you may be asked to organise the funeral or support a group that has been pulled together to organise the funeral.

Likely tasks that will fall to the communications function include:

- Producing the Order of Service.
- Helping to compile the Eulogy.
- Communicating arrangements to staff including seating arrangements and any protocol.
- Establishing provision of public address system and place outside for staff/visitors unable to gain access.
- Drafting, issuing and managing invitations.
- Handling media attendance – pooling facilities; interview opportunity; recording of the event; providing briefing pack - profile of the deceased and written tributes from key individuals.
- Creating a photographic record.

Notes

## 7. Beginning recovery/investigation phases

### Actions at this stage:

- ▶ Sensitive handling of any further commemorative/memorial events
- ▶ Careful handling of a “return to business” state
- ▶ Be aware of any developing blame culture
- ▶ Keep up-to-date with investigations

### Returning to business

Internally the organisation will begin to function fully again but your Service will need to be sensitive to the fact that your culture has changed significantly. Potential key messages may include:

- As we get over the initial shock and painful grief, the best way we can honour our dead colleagues is to continue to provide our very best service to keep the public safe.
- We are devastated by the deaths but we will learn and grow from these events.
- Firefighting is always going to be a dangerous environment we do all we can to mitigate risks but when things go wrong we thoroughly investigate the cause, are critical with our procedures and carry out immediate change if it is needed.
- Events are fortunately rare.
- We are carrying out our own internal investigation but are fully assisting police and HSE.
- Need to find out what happened so all FRS communities can learn lessons.

### Memorial events

As time goes on there will be other events that crop up which will require communication consideration. These should always be focused on family first and then staff and unions before external promotion.

For example:

- Addition to any memorial board at HQ
- Creation of a statue, memorial garden or other permanent feature
- Closure and hand over of books of remembrance and funds raised to family

### Be aware of any developing blame culture

It's only natural that people will be looking for someone to blame but this can be really harmful to investigations and ongoing internal relationships. You may need to reiterate the message about not impeding investigation.

Specifically look out for the types of blame emerging as you may need to counter them:

- Blame on the service for poor training, fitness or equipment.
- Blame on firefighters themselves for their own actions.
- Blame on the Service for poor fire safety awareness in communities.
- Blame on residents for ignoring fire safety advice.
- Blame on officers at the incident for decision making.
- Blame on the property owner.
- Blame on any person suspected of causing the incident.



## Keep up-to-date with investigations

There will be a number of investigations:

- Police – into the cause of the fire if arson
- Police – into whether there is any organisational/individual culpability/corporate manslaughter
- Health and Safety Executive – into whether the organisation has breached Health and Safety law
- Internal investigation – possibly undertaken by another Service on your behalf into any internal failings
- Trade Union investigation

It is helpful to make sure that you are kept up-to-date with timelines and possible outcomes or developments in order for you to prepare dedicated communication strategies.

Notes

## 8. Inquest

The Coroner's Inquest is held to establish the cause of death. It is usually opened and adjourned to enable any police or HSE investigation to conclude.

### Actions at this stage:

**Creating a dedicated communication strategy or plan with objectives to protect the reputation of the Service by being factual and challenging inaccuracies; delivering regular internal updates from the court and keeping stakeholders advised.**

### Important audiences and stakeholders

#### Internal

- Families/Family Liaison Officers
- Affected Watch(es)
- Other operational staff involved (especially inquest witnesses)
- Local FBU
- Members and management

#### External

- Police and other local agency partners
- Media, particularly local
- Affected local residents
- Health and Safety Executive
- MPs/Government

#### Internal communications

- Prioritise families and affected watch(es)
- Extensive support for witnesses and those involved in proceedings (briefings, reminders of available support, media advice/guidance)
- Comms teams to provide daily factual updates from inquest for all staff (via

intranet/email) – help to eliminate media rumour/spin

- Consider messages from Chief on weekly basis for clarity/reassurance
- Strong and open communication with police/other agencies – co-ordinate information/images being released throughout inquest

#### External communications/Media

- Media briefing in the weeks before inquest to set the scene and provide context for FRS actions and conditions at incident – also consider providing media pack at start of inquest with relevant info/background
- Briefings and support on likely media interest for all staff involved in inquest proceedings, especially witnesses, and families (via FLOs)
- Circulate consistent core messages to all stakeholders and identify likely media Qs/angles before inquest
- Legal advice likely to be to

avoid giving interviews during proceedings – Chief to give statement on first and last days to feed likely media interest

#### Preparation

- Review media coverage of incident to identify consistent messaging for inquest
- Review web/intranet content to ensure accurate and consistent information in line with inquest material
- Assess comms team resourcing needs – additional support/training possible, comms team likely to need at least two staff in court most days for media liaison and preparation of internal comms (with additional support from office)

## 9. Post Inquest/Proceedings

### Actions at this stage:

- ▶ Consider if any staff should be commended for their actions at the incident
- ▶ Consider creation of a longstanding award in the name of the deceased staff
- ▶ Ensure a written record of all events is kept in your Service archive
- ▶ Create a report and training materials for all other FRS
- ▶ Write reports for the fire trade press on the impacts and learning

This stage represents the conclusion of all legal proceedings and the point at which the Service can look to the future with a clearer picture.

It is important that this stage in the Service's history is commemorated and the contribution of your staff recognised forever.

It is also important that any significant learning is shared with colleagues in other services or organisations both on the nature of the incident and the experience of leading the response to what will have been a most de event for your service.

Notes

## Appendix 1. Sample response plan

SERVICE ORDER – HEALTH & SAFETY  
Section 3.33 Significant Event - Death and Serious Injury  
Response Protocol



## AIDE MEMOIRE

### Initial actions following serious injury / fatality or work - related death

#### FIRST EMPLOYEE

- Informs the Officer in Charge giving as much detail about the significant event
- Carry out first aid/assistance as necessary
- Continue to deal with the incident using standard procedures, taking instruction from the officer in charge
- Assist in preserving the scene

#### OFFICER IN CHARGE

- Notify Fire Control giving as much detail as possible. Declare incident emergency message as per OPS 150 7.19
- Continue to manage the incident and order any resources that are needed to tackle the incident. Be aware that by declaring the incident emergency message, additional resources of two pumps, ambulance plus the resources of the Tactical Support team will be automatically mobilised.
- Roll call
- Consider welfare of the crews including request for additional crews to take over if necessary
- Advise all staff not to make contact with friends, family, media or social media about the incident or to take photographs using personal equipment.
- Lead preservation of scene and incident ground liaison with police.

#### CONTROL

- Act on the incident emergency message and mobilise the Tactical Support team, including the set up of OpCon, ensuring a synopsis of information is known and can be shared.
- Inform the Duty Brigade Manager and if requested to do so, mobilise the strategic support team to SHQ.
- As directed by the Duty Brigade Manager, notify the Constabulary Force Incident Manager.
- identify the next of kin details of the casualties.

#### TACTICAL SUPPORT TEAM

- Attend the incident ground
- Take over organisation and command of the consequences of the incident at the incident ground. Assume command and control of the actual incident if the GM feels it is appropriate to do so
- Formulate initial media "if asked" position/holding statement.
- Make immediate contact with the Duty Brigade Manager.

## **DUTY BRIGADE MANAGER/STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM COMMANDER**

- Advise Control to notify Constabulary including a request that an LFRS senior officer accompany the police officer when notifying next of kin
- Advise Control to mobilise the strategic support group at Op Con to meet within one hour.
- Make early Contact with Chief Constable.
- Contact the Group Manager in charge of the Tactical Support group to establish what is being set up and current sitrep.
- Agree initial media holding statement with duty press officer (who will be attending incident ground with the tactical support group.
- Notify other Executive Board members
- Notify Authority Chairman
- Begin to identify roles and responsibilities using section 2.6 of the Service order as a starting point.

## **STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM**

- Attend OpCon at SHQ as soon as possible once mobilised by Control.
- Begin to prepare action lists using section 2.6 of the Service order as a prompt

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCOPE

A significant event is:

- Serious or fatal injury involving LFRS personnel whilst at work or travelling to/from work.
- The death of a third party either on LFRS property, or as a result of an act or omission by LFRS.

This protocol is not aimed at replacing any formal investigation undertaken by the Police or any other regulatory body such as the HSE but instead to assist LFRS in obtaining and providing the necessary information to maintain its health, safety and welfare standards and complying with its legal obligations whilst protecting its corporate reputation. This protocol operates alongside other policies and procedures and should be read in conjunction with Health and Safety Service Order 00, Section 3.3 Accident Injury Near Miss Procedure.

### 1.2 OBJECTIVES

Where a significant event occurs it is crucial that the necessary channels of command and communication are established from the outset.

This protocol sets out the response structure and actions that need to be taken by identified references in order to achieve the following objectives:

- To assume quick and effective control of the situation with prompt and competent management of the scene;
- To ensure a compassionate and sensitive approach, which recognises the distress for those people directly involved with the death; next of kin and the distress or potential distress of staff close to the deceased or involved with the incident;
- To minimise the impact on the continued functioning of the Service to its communities;
- To meet our legal obligations and provide support to any formal investigation by the Police or any other regulatory body such as the HSE;
- To protect LFRS corporate reputation and maintain staff and public confidence in the Service

### 1.3 NATIONAL WORK RELATED DEATHS PROTOCOL

A nationally agreed Work Related Death Protocol sets out the principles for effective liaison between all parties in relation to work-related deaths in England and Wales:

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO)
- British Transport Police (BTP)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Welsh Local Government Association
- Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA); and
- Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)

The Work Related Death Protocol emphasises the importance of working together to investigate thoroughly and to prosecute appropriately those responsible for work-related deaths in England and Wales. All signatory organisations recognise the need for investigating and prosecuting authorities to engage with each other and to share information and best practice.

To ensure that investigations into work-related deaths allow all the agencies to fulfil their roles, a Work-Related Deaths: Investigators Guide (England and Wales) 3rd edition September 2011 has

been published by the National Liaison Committee, which deals in greater detail with each stage of the investigation.

Copies of these documents are available by clicking on the links in Section 5 of this protocol.

## 2. ACTIONS BY LANCASHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AT AN INCIDENT

The following actions primarily are aimed at setting out the response to an incident ground. However, the principles are transferrable to a death in service in any other circumstances. However, if the event takes place outside an incident ground it is unlikely that the Tactical Support Team will be needed.

### 2.1 FIRST EMPLOYEE

The first employee aware of a significant event must:

- Inform the Officer in Charge giving as much detail as possible about the significant event
- Carry out First Aid/Assistance as necessary
- Assist in preserving the scene
- Continue to deal with the incident using standard procedures, taking instruction from the Officer in Charge

### 2.2 OFFICER IN CHARGE

The Officer-in-charge will:

- Notify Fire Control of the significant event with as much detail as possible declare incident emergency message dependant on nature but involving FRS staff (as per OPS 150 7.19).
- As part of the incident emergency procedures this will trigger the mobilisation of a Tactical Support Team (See Section 2.4).
- Continue to manage the incident and order any other resources they require to tackle the incident but be aware that by declaring the incident emergency message, they will automatically receive additional resources of two pumps and an ambulance plus the additional resources of the Tactical support team.
- Roll call to establish full staffing picture.
- Debrief any available staff to establish what happened and where.
- Lead the preservation of the scene. The protection of evidence is of prime importance as this will be needed to support the investigations that will come and ensure that the family of the casualty(ies) is best served.
- Consider the welfare of crews, requesting additional crews to take over if necessary.
- Advise all staff at the incident not to communicate with media or to engage in reporting details of the incident via their personal social media accounts including Twitter and Facebook. Ask staff to direct media in attendance or any media enquiries to the Duty Press Officer (who will be mobilised as part of the Tactical Support team or who will be present already if the incident has already met other mobilising triggers.)
- Assign a member of staff to gather photographic evidence using a Service camera only. Prohibit the use of other cameras or the taking of pictures by staff on personal cameras or camera phones.
- Advise staff that they must not attempt to contact the casualties friends or next of kin.
- Liaise with any police on-scene to strengthen outer cordon.
- Ensure documentation and contemporaneous notes are kept.

## 2.3 CONTROL

Fire Control will:

- Act on the incident emergency message and mobilise the Tactical Support team, including the establishment of Op-Con, ensuring a synopsis of information known is provided.
- Inform the Duty Brigade Manager and, if requested to do so by the Brigade Manager mobilise a Strategic Support team under their leadership.
- Identify the next of kin details of the casualties and inform the Duty Brigade Manager.
- As directed by the Duty Brigade Manager, inform the Lancashire Constabulary Force Incident Manager.
- Not pass on information or discuss the operation with Service staff unconnected to the incident.
- Issue any all user email or printer messages as requested by the Tactical Support or Strategic Support team.

## 2.4 TACTICAL SUPPORT TEAM

The Tactical Support team mobilised by Control will consist of:

- 1 X GM (Tactical Support Co-ordinator) mobilised to incident location
- 1 X SM mobilised to incident location
- 1 X IIO mobilised to incident location
- 1 X Duty Press Officer mobilised to incident location (if not already at incident)
- 1 X Op-Con Coordinator mobilised to set up Op-Con
- 1X Mobile Fire Station (if not already at incident)

The Tactical Support team will act as the on the ground management team for managing the consequences of the incident. It will not assume command and control of the incident unless the Tactical Support Team Group Manager believes it is necessary to do so on arrival, or if directed to do so by the Duty Brigade Manager.

The Tactical Support team will:

- Assume command and control of the incident if required. If not, liaise closely with the OiC
- Act as the liaison between the Duty Brigade Manager/Strategic Support Commander and the incident ground.
- Initiate preparation and collection of first account forms.
- Identify an area suitable to be a forward media briefing point and arrange access to this for media.
- Prepare initial media holding position (including Lines to Take) and issue accordingly to media if they are in attendance or if calls are received. (working example is available on the service intranet)
- Prepare initial staff holding statement and issue to all staff via all users email/printer message via Control.
- Be aware that only basic facts may be initially issued – confirmation of fatalities should not be undertaken without full consultation with the police to ensure next of kin are informed before anyone else. Incidents involving mass casualties can be treated differently.
- Monitor and respond (if appropriate) to social media being careful to scotch rumour not inflame rumour.
- Identify and brief initial Service spokesperson.
- Make on-the-ground arrangements for news conference (suitable indoor location but close to the incident ground. May need to be joint with police)
- Act as liaison co-ordinator with Constabulary and or HSE representatives at the incident ground
- Preserve the scene and direct staff in activities to achieve this
- Identify area near site for floral tributes



- Accompany any next of kin self-presenting at the site
- Identify and seek any additional resources required
- Carry out fire investigation, liaising with the police and Head of Safety, Health and Environment. Consider the potential for instigating the CFOA NW regional fire investigation protocol – raise with Strategic Support team
- Safeguard any operational equipment or PPE which may be needed by police or HSE

## 2.5 DUTY BRIGADE MANAGER/STRATEGIC SUPPORT COMMANDER

The Duty Brigade Manager/Strategic Support Commander will:

- Advise Control to notify the Lancashire Constabulary Force Incident Manager, including a request that we would like a senior officer to accompany the police officer when they inform the next of kin. Identify officer to attend notifying next of kin (be mindful that it may not be possible for the duty brigade manager to do this if they are in command of the response since they may not be able to spare the time away.)
- Ask Control to mobilise the Strategic Support Team to convene at the Op-Con within one hour of the call if possible
- Make early contact with colleagues in the Constabulary to establish clear lines of communication
- Make direct contact with GM in charge of Tactical Support team to establish what is being set up and what is happening at the scene. Agree initial media position with duty press officer (directly or via GM)
- Notify other Executive Board members
- Identify key roles and resources (set out in section 3)
- Organise notification of HSE (via head of Safety, Health and Environment)

For Serious Injuries/Fatalities as defined by the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) that occur within the workplace the first initial action following any preliminary internal investigation is to notify the HSE via the quickest possible means, usually by telephone. The HSE will then review the details provided to them on the accident and will establish whether they will undertake their own investigation or whether they decide to monitor the Service's own internal investigation process but be kept informed. The HSE may intervene at anytime during the course of any internal accident investigation by the Employer should they deem it to be necessary.

- Act as Service Spokesperson at Media Conference – attend scene only after arrangements for this are in place to avoid becoming the focus.
- Inform Chief Fire And Rescue Advisor by telephone.
- Seek assistance from those outside the organisation who have experienced similar events.
- Provide visible and clear leadership to maintain confidence – ensure capacity is created to provide that role.
- Be responsible for overseeing welfare arrangements for all staff involved including making sure that managers decisions are periodically double checked with an external view.
- Be mindful that for many staff involved – particularly those involved in the Strategic Support and Tactical Support teams – workload will be heavy and protracted and there will be a need to provide support through additional resources and reduction in demand for other activities.
- Brief Service Solicitor and seek advice on issues of litigation or criminal proceedings – consider invitation to join Strategic Support team meetings.
- Instigate and oversee Service contribution to funeral arrangements, as required by the families.
- Ensure contemporaneous notes and decision log is kept from all Strategic Support meetings and by all Strategic Support team members.

## 2.6 STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

The Strategic Support team or their nominated representatives in their absence will attend an initial meeting following notification of the significant event.

### Strategic Support team\*

Duty Brigade Manager (Strategic Support)  
 Director of People and Development  
 Duty Area Manager (AM)  
 Head of Human Resources (HoHR)  
 Head of Corporate Communications (HoCC)  
 Head of Safety, Health and Environment (HoSHE)  
 Op-Con Coordinator  
 Dedicated Administrator (office hours only)

Should the event arise out-of normal office hours or in the absence of the above team members departmental deputies/representatives will be contacted as part of existing Business Continuity arrangements. Other members of SMT should be included within the team as deemed appropriate to the significant event, for example, vehicle accidents – Head of Fleet Services, property incidents – Head of Property.

The Strategic Support team will:

- Support and direct the Tactical Support team
- Set, agree and manage all corporate actions
- Advise and support the Duty Brigade Manager/Strategic Support commander

### 2.6.1 AGENDA FOR FIRST MEETING OF STRATEGIC SUPPORT TEAM

Event overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide overview of details available – person(s) involved; station, watch or other workplace; type of incident; believed chain of events; current situation; which outside bodies are involved; demand by outside bodies</li> <li>• Establish means of obtaining sitreps from Tactical Support team via Op-Con</li> </ul>	Duty BM
Notifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check next of kin have been identified/notified</li> <li>• Constabulary</li> <li>• HSE or other Regulatory bodies</li> <li>• CFA Chairman and other Members</li> <li>• CFRAU/CLG</li> <li>• CFOA – but not with information for circulation to other Services immediately</li> <li>• Notify other NW Fire Services if there is a likelihood that the NW investigation protocol will be needed</li> <li>• Staff representatives</li> <li>• Insurers</li> <li>• Establish if/who other staff need to be notified and asked to join Strategic Support.</li> </ul>	Duty BM

<p>Investigation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Investigation by police or regulatory body</li> <li>2. Investigation into the fire</li> <li>3. Internal investigation*</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish investigation team and incident investigation room</li> <li>• Scope investigation (photos, witness statements SHEREP investigation form, RIDDOR forms)</li> <li>• Consider inviting other Service to undertake the fire investigation by invoking the NW protocol – may remove all conflict of interest</li> <li>• Identify Inter-agency liaison points, particularly with Constabulary</li> <li>• Ensure Service Solicitor is brief and advice sought in the early stage of the investigation/</li> <li>• Obtain list of equipment involved, standard test records, relevant service orders, organise collection and safeguarding of equipment or PPE used</li> <li>• Obtain station records, training records and course information for individuals</li> <li>• Impound fire safety file of premises if event occurs on industrial property</li> <li>• If event involves fleet, liaise with vehicle manufacturer, obtain records for vehicle maintenance and any driver records</li> </ul>	<p>Nominate investigation leads</p>
<p>Staff care and communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide sitrep and notification to all staff via email and teleprinter message ASAP before media</li> <li>• Establish counselling support availability to all staff involved (at all levels)</li> <li>• Review needs of crews affected – eg shifts, food, messages to family</li> <li>• Give staff in reception/station admin briefing note on what to say if calls are received</li> <li>• Invite staff to follow updates on their social media accounts</li> <li>• Ensure staff are aware of the nature of the investigation and what will happen</li> <li>• Advise crew/station staff of likely media doorstopping and establish with station manager what to do</li> </ul>	
<p>Media and External communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish media presence at incident ground</li> <li>• Establish if a holding position has been given has been given out</li> <li>• Check forward media briefing point and location for press conference</li> <li>• Draft full news release for issue proactively</li> <li>• Identify Spokesperson</li> <li>• Set up press conference and interview opportunities</li> <li>• Monitor social networks and respond accordingly - give summary of issues and responses given</li> <li>• Keep log of media enquiries and statements given</li> <li>• Update Service Website/Facebook/Twitter</li> <li>• Provide briefing note for partners</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up dedicated facebook page for messages of condolence. Issue a twitter hashtag.</li> <li>• Prepare updates for CFOA and other fire and rescue contacts</li> <li>• Ensure CFA is kept up to date and informed of progress.</li> </ul>	
Family care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominate family liaison officer, brief and provide link to Strategic Support team member</li> <li>• Visit by CFO</li> <li>• Letter of condolence/books of condolence</li> <li>• Organise travel, reception and accommodation to incident ground or station – see floral tributes</li> <li>• Fly Service flag at half mast</li> <li>• Identify a link officer with the Firefighters Charity</li> <li>• SERVICE to prepare floral tribute</li> <li>• Offer support to family with media – obtain initial family statement and photographs to issue to the media. Discuss media strategy with them in advance.</li> </ul>	
Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure resources are planned for – particularly where there may be a need to plan for a prolonged period with excessive demand.</li> <li>• Identify admin support for the Strategic Support commander and Strategic Support team</li> <li>• Record all decisions and ensure documents are retained. Request copies of contemporaneous notes. Remind staff of the fact that materials may be needed for disclosure.</li> </ul>	

## 2.6.2 LONGER TERM CONSIDERATIONS

### Media and communications:

- Communicate sitreps/update to staff after each meeting of Strategic Support Team
- Plan resources carefully – enlist mutual aid and bear in mind 24/7
- Identify dedicated social media monitoring officer
- Be flexible with lines to take but ensure all staff know what they are
- Plan for the story progression uncertainty, confirmation, drip feed of detail about what happened, floral tributes, family visit to scene, VIP visit to scene, MP comments, family statements/conference, funeral, statements from colleagues, arrests/charges, police or HS positions, anniversaries

### Family care:

- Amend personnel records to ensure there are no inappropriate communications to the deceased's address
- Deal with pay and pension issues
- Ensure funeral arrangements are in accordance with family wishes and that cultural or religious beliefs are understood – single point of contact with the Service through FLO
- Ensure they get to see copies of letters of condolence/books of condolence – copies to keep
- Ensure any internet/intranet references to deceased are removed eg from structure charts
- Return personal belongings to the bereaved family

## Investigation:

- Ensure the Service Solicitor is asked for advice on any legal issues or if requested to give statements by the Police or HSE
- Be prepared to contact product manufacturer to request inspection of equipment or other performance data
- Make sure staff are supported and know what to expect

## Business continuity:

- Identify the impact of the event on normal business proceedings, determine which can be mitigated and set in place plans to “normalise”.

## 2.7 STATION MANAGER FOR STATION OR STAFF AFFECTED

The Station Manager will:

- Identify a suitable area outside the station for floral tributes
- Consider welfare of crews – including implications for when next on duty, liaising with Head of HR to
- Organise book of condolence at the Station

## 3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF OUTSIDE AGENCIES

### 3.1 ROLE OF HSE

HSE (or another relevant enforcing authority, for example a Local Authority) will investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute breaches of health and safety law under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HASWA). However, the HSE cannot investigate or prosecute manslaughter (corporate or individual), or any other criminal offences outside its health and safety remit.

HSE and Local Authorities are responsible, under section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HASWA), for making adequate arrangements for the enforcement of health and safety legislation with a view to securing the health, safety and welfare of workers and protecting others, principally the public. Each has specific areas of responsibility.

When Inspectors from any division of HSE are called upon to investigate a fatal accident, it is HSE policy that early contact with the bereaved family is made in every case, in order to:

- make arrangements to meet the bereaved as soon as the bereaved wish;
- explain HSE’s role and responsibilities and those of others likely to be involved;
- advise the family about the possible length of time an investigation may take, to ensure the family are not given unrealistic expectations of the investigation;
- ask the family if they have any information that may be relevant to the investigation; and
- provide copies of the advice leaflets prepared by HSE for bereaved families.

### 3.2 ROLE OF THE POLICE

The Police are responsible for:

- investigating crime in general;
- initial attendance at the scene of a fatality, securing the scene/evidence
- notification of the deceased’s next of kin
- liaising with the coroner’s office re. removal/formal identification of the deceased
- referring cases to the Crown Prosecution Service for review.

Whenever a work-related death occurs and there is an indication that an offence of manslaughter (corporate or individual) or a criminal offence other than a health and safety offence may have been committed, the Police will conduct an investigation.

At present, only the Police can investigate serious criminal offences (other than health and safety offences) such as manslaughter and only the CPS can decide whether such a case will proceed. The Police will also have an interest in establishing the circumstances surrounding a work-related death in order to assist the Coroner's inquest.

A police officer of supervisory rank should attend the scene and any other relevant place to assess the situation, review actions taken to date and assume responsibility for the investigation.

When the Police are taking the initial lead in an investigation, a Family Liaison Officer may have been appointed to liaise with the family. Inspectors should keep the bereaved relatives informed of the progress of the investigation and any subsequent proceedings.

### 3.3 ROLE OF THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS)

Whenever the Police refer a case to the CPS, the CPS will decide whether there can and should be a prosecution. The CPS can prosecute health and safety offences, but generally they will only do so when there is also a prosecution for manslaughter or other serious criminal offences arising as a result of a work-related death.

### 3.4 ROLE OF THE CORONER

The role of the Coroner is to record and investigate deaths. Deaths are usually reported to the coroner by the police or by a doctor called to the death if it is sudden. The Coroner may order a post-mortem examination to discover the cause of death. The Coroner may also hold an inquest, which is an investigation into the circumstances leading up to the death.

The inquest is an inquiry to find out whom has died, and how, when and where they died, together with information needed by the registrar of deaths, so that the death can be registered. All inquests must be held in public and someone from the press is usually present in court. The inquest tries to get at the truth, and can often help to stop the spread of untrue stories about the death.

### 3.5 LIAISON WITH OTHER ENFORCING AGENCIES

The Service must always be aware of the involvement of other enforcing agencies when carrying out an investigation. These may include bodies such as the Environment Agency (EA), Ministry of Defence (MOD) Police and Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC). Their roles may be very different to that of HSE. Consequently, early arrangements for liaison can prevent difficulties with investigation at the scene, evidence collection and, at a later date, witnesses.

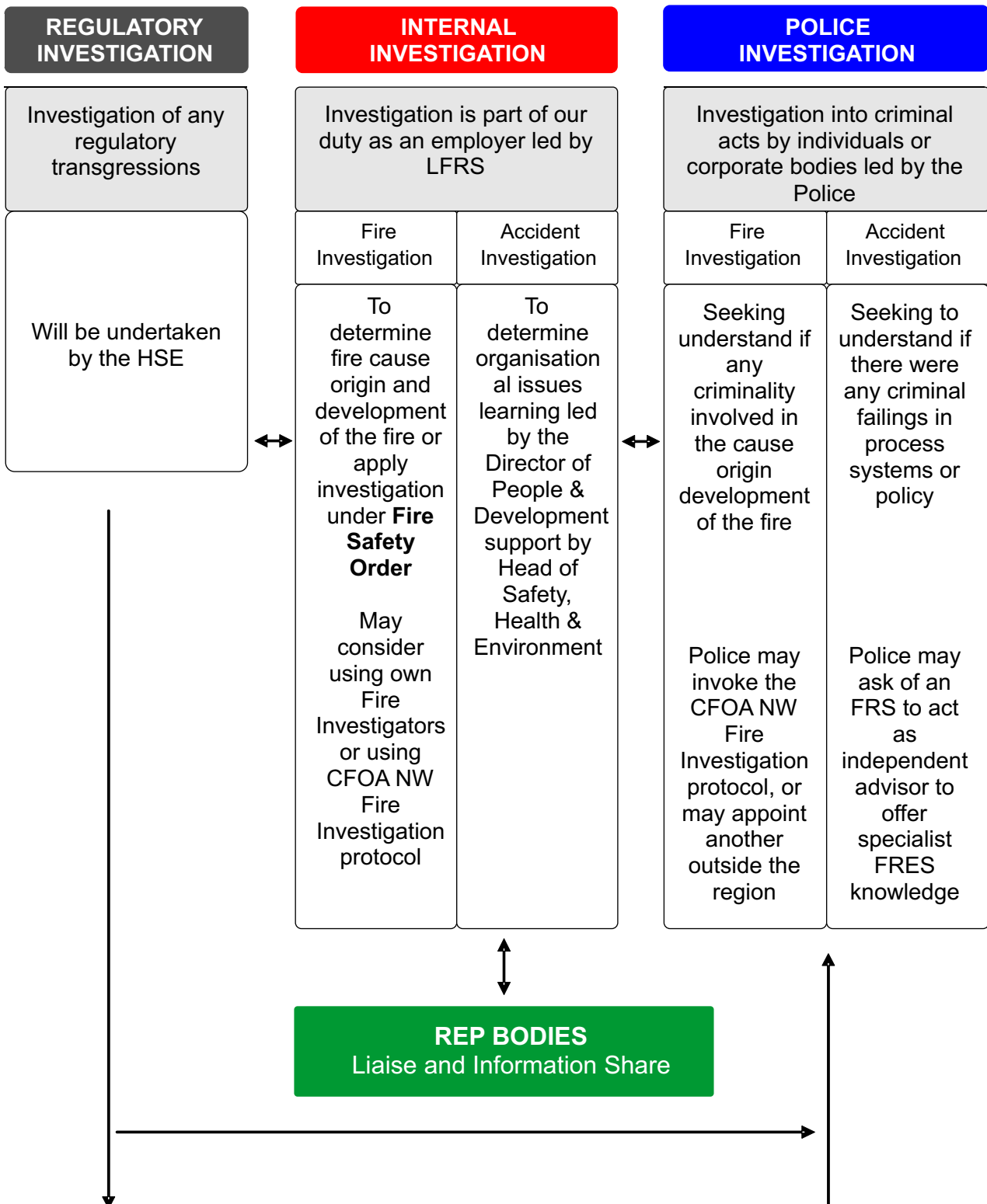
## 4. MANAGEMENT OF THE INVESTIGATION

### 4.1 INVESTIGATION INTER - DEPENDENCIES

Investigations should always be managed professionally with communications between the signatory organisations maintained. Investigations into work-related deaths should generally be jointly conducted with one of the parties taking lead, or primacy as appropriate. An investigation may also require liaison with any other enforcing authority that may have an interest and may include liaison with the CPS.

The following chart highlights how these investigations are inter dependent and indicates some of the resources that may be required to support each part.

## Investigation Inter-Dependencies



Staff employed in Fire Safety and Fire Investigation roles within LFRS may be required to carry out their role during a significant event that involves injury or death to LFRS employees. For further guidance refer to Prevention and Protection Service Order Section 4.4 Fire Safety Enforcement, Section 4.5 Prosecutions, Section 4.9 Fire Reporting and Investigation.

Throughout the period of the investigation, the Police and HSE, the local authority or other enforcing authority should keep the progress of the investigation under review. Milestones should be agreed and monitored and policy and key decisions recorded.

In general, the Police, HSE and Local Authority will agree upon:

- how resources are to be specifically used;
- how evidence is to be disclosed between parties;
- how the interviewing of witnesses, the instruction of experts and the forensic examination of exhibits is to be co-ordinated;
- how, and to what extent, corporate or organisational failures should be investigated;
- a strategy for keeping the bereaved, witnesses and other interested parties such as the Coroner, informed of developments in the investigation; and
- a media strategy to take account of the sensitivities of the bereaved and those involved in the incident, and to encourage consistency of approach in reporting.

When making a decision to prosecute, the CPS, HSE, the local authority or other enforcing authority will review the evidence according to the Code for Crown Prosecutors to decide if there is a realistic prospect of conviction and, if so, whether a prosecution is deemed to be in the public interest.

Where there is a Police investigation, material obtained during the course of the investigation should be shared, subject to any statutory restriction placed on HSE, for example by HASAWA. Agreement should also be reached as to which organisation will assume responsibility for the retention of exhibits. The retention and disclosure of material in relation to manslaughter, health and safety or other prosecutions brought by the CPS should follow CPS procedures.

Where a Death in Service occurs, the Director of People and Development as the nominated Health and Safety Director will take the Principal Officer lead with any internal investigation assisted by the Head of SHE. It is acknowledged that such an investigation will run in conjunction with an investigation by the HSE and possibly the Police and as such consideration must be given to their involvement. However, it is likely that the HSE may request the Service to undertake its own investigation but provide them with information updates at regular intervals as part of the monitoring role. In such an event, the Head of SHE will co-ordinate the Accident Investigation in accordance with current Service Policies. (Health and Safety Service Order Section 3.3 Accident Injury and Near Miss Procedure).

The appropriate representative bodies will be encouraged to become involved with such an investigation to ensure consistency and transparency in the information gathering and analysing aspects. The key to any accident investigation will be to identify the root cause of any failure which have contributed to the death in service and to put in place both short term and long term remedial action measures to prevent recurrence. NB: ensure that no physical changes are made to premises/vehicles or equipment etc without prior notification to the police and/or the HSE.

## 5. REFERENCES

The following documents are linked to the Service Intranet

- Work-Related Deaths: A Protocol for Liaison (England and Wales) 3rd edition National Liaison Committee
- Work-Related Deaths: Investigators Guide (England and Wales) 3rd edition September 2011 National Liaison Committee
- HSE HSG245 – Investigating Accidents and Incidents, A workbook for employers, unions, safety representatives and safety professionals.
- HSE L73 - A guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
- CFOA North West Fire Investigation Protocol



## Action Register

## APPENDIX A

Action No:	Date:	Action and result:	By whom:	Date completed:

## Appendix 2. The emergency communication lifecycle

Whatever the nature of the emergency, the media and social media response will always follow three broad stages (with reference to Mike Grannat who coined the terminology)

Mayhem – No-one will know what's going on – search for clarity and **fact**.

Mastermind – theories will be voiced on what happened – at this stage **emotions** are more evident in media coverage and public response.

Manhunt – the search for someone to blame – people share **opinions** on causes and consequences.

### Mayhem

- At a breaking incident the media will be drawn to the scene rapidly and there will be a lot of speculative comment on social media
- Priority will be getting pictures, preferably live coverage but with SMS user-generated footage being encouraged.
- The media will be in information gathering overdrive and will contact many sources – they will contact Control, press office and any other contacts they have within the service and in other organisations.
- Any coverage at this point will be live and will aim to capture what the nature of the incident is and the initial emergency response.
- At this stage the media move quickly, are highly competitive, demanding and there are lots of them. Speculation is rife and it is critical that initial statements are given out quickly to block any developing vacuum - getting it wrong here makes it difficult to recover and provide effective media liaison.

The media/social media will want facts at this stage and is likely to want to know the what's, when's and the where's at this stage, The strategy at this stage is to focus on establishing factual picture of the incident.

- **WHAT?** Has happened? Are there any casualties? Has material damage resulted/ Is the emergency at an end? What is happening now?
- **WHEN?** The time the incident began and the timing of subsequent events.
- **WHERE?** The location of the incident, together with maps/schematics for the site and buildings or plant affected.

### Mastermind

- In this phase the media will increasingly focus on causes and consequences.
- Talking heads or masterminds will be brought in to provide information where the media perceive there to be gaps, or to comment on officially provided information.
- If the facts are not clear, talking heads often reinforce incorrect positions.

At this point the media/social media will focus on the why's and will become less about quest for facts but a sharing of emotions. The Comms strategy at this stage should focus on sharing feelings.

- **WHY?** What was the cause of the incident who or what is to blame? Can it be linked to similar incidents in the past/ could lessons have been learned then? Could the event have been avoided?

### Manhunt

- In this phase media coverage often turns to who or what is responsible.
- If the initial response has been seen to be slow or inadequate first responders or organisations may be blamed.
- Coverage at this stage can be protracted and difficult to balance with the need to return to normality.

At this point the media and social media will ask **WHO?** - and will increasingly want to share opinions. **WHO?** – the identity of casualties, fatalities, those who rescued and the names of key people associated with the incident. At this stage the Comms strategy will need to focus on monitoring opinions and reaching accordingly.

## Appendix 3. Communicating welfare information

### Communicating welfare information

A large part of the communications activity in the initial phases will be sharing welfare information that supports and signposts staff to the places where they can access help.

Your service should already have some guidance and possibly even an advice leaflet that can be given out quickly following a critical incident. It is worth working with your HR, Occupational Health team or other relevant colleagues to see what material is available and know where to access it to ensure it can be widely disseminated in urgent circumstances.

Initial advice may include assistance in identifying the signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and / or helpful advice on coping with traumatic events. If there are no documents or guidance to hand when you need this information following a death in the workplace, the NHS Choices website <http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/HomePage.aspx> is a useful source of this type of information. Remember: others may have shared their documents on the FirePRO portal or FirePRO colleagues may be able to assist so please contact colleagues for support.

Details of how to refer people or report concerns about the welfare of colleagues should also be communicated – a variety of methods are usually available. Again, this it is worth discussing HR / Occupational Health's policies, plans and procedures in advance to ensure comprehensive understanding of the different options that colleagues will need informing of.

Please find below some sample text for communications materials of this nature. NOTE: for up-to-date information on stress and trauma-related conditions, please go to either an official NHS or NICE source:

Individuals may initially feel emotionally numb and feelings of distress may not emerge straight away. Common reactions can include:

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts
- Disturbed sleep
- Irritability and aggressive behaviour
- Lack of concentration
- Extreme alertness
- Shame
- Regret
- Guilt
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Phobia

These symptoms should subside after approximately 4 - 6 weeks.

Please note that these are common signs of a reaction to a stressful situation and there is no right or wrong way to react and people will respond differently. Also some individuals may not develop symptoms until some considerable time has elapsed, even years after the event.

Where symptoms persist, deteriorate or managers/colleagues have concerns about an individual, referral to Occupational Health is advised.

Sources of support and/or information can be accessed via:

Sources of support and/or information can be accessed via:

- Occupational Health
- Service Chaplain (if applicable)
- Counselling services (if applicable)
- Human Resources
- Trade Unions
- GP
- Fire Fighter Charity
- Line manager

Some Dos and Don'ts for those whose symptoms persist:

- Do - Express your emotions – share your feelings with yourself and others
- Do - Tell people what you need at work and at home
- Do - Take time out – sleep, rest and be with friends and family
- Do - Try to keep your life as normal as possible after the initial period of distress
- Do - Try to do things that make you feel good
  
- Don't – Bottle up your feelings and avoid talking about what has happened
- Don't – Expect the memories to go away quickly
- Don't – Forget that others will be experiencing similar feelings to you
- Don't – Make any big life changes

Some Dos and Don'ts for friends and family:

- Do – Listen carefully to what the person has to say
- Do – Reassure them they are safe
- Do – Help them with everyday tasks
- Do – Give them some private time
  
- Don't – Tell them they were lucky it was not worse – this will not console them – tell them that you are sorry that this has happened and you want to help
- Don't – Take anger or other feelings personally – people show their true feelings to those they love and trust.

## Appendix 4. Family Liaison Officer and communication Requirements

### Supporting the family to deal with managing the media

The death of a firefighter whilst on duty is likely to cause immediate national, local and regional interest on a large scale and the weight of media focus cannot be underestimated. Social media and 24 hour news means that media enquiries and desire for information will come within minutes and be very intense.

KFRS communications team will be managing the media in terms of the incident, and are available to provide support for the family and be a liaison point for them -providing a channel for any media enquiries on their behalf.

The injury on duty or death of a firefighter whilst off duty is also likely to generate local media interest. It is sometimes not appreciated that firefighters are public figures and so something that you may think is essentially a private matter could well trigger the media to want to contact the family for pictures and information.

You have an important role to play in ensuring that the family are protected from potential media intrusion, especially in the case of a firefighter death whilst on duty.

Your first reaction may be to resist having what appears to be a difficult conversation with the family about the media in the first hour of meeting them. However if you do not, then you will not be doing your best job in protecting them from media invasion and offering important support.

The following advice will give you an outline of what you need to do and what assistance is on offer

1. **Before talking to the family speak to the KFRS communications team** and work out a plan of action in line with the nature of the incident.
2. **FLO's media remit** - The FLO is acting on behalf of KFRS and should not give any media interviews or statements regardless of requests from the family. Any media interviews for KFRS must be referred to the KFRS communications team
3. **Regarding the family you may need to:**
4. At an early opportunity explain to the family that firefighters are public figures and that there is likely to be a fast and intense media focus. While some people's first reaction may be to want the media to go away, this will not happen.
5. Whilst you appreciate this will be the last thing the family want to think about at this time, KFRS communications team are experienced in dealing with the media and are able to provide support to the family and be an intermediary in dealing with the media
6. With KFRS communication office support agree a plan of action with the family that is likely to include:
  - a. Agreements on whether they want KFRS to handle media enquiries on their behalf. This can be reviewed at any time if they change their minds
  - b. Explain to them what is likely to happen
  - c. Generally the first thing that will happen is that KFRS would announce there has been an injury or fatality at an incident.
  - d. Following on from that (with the agreement of the family and police) the name of the person would be given out, along with the station they worked at and their age and length of service with KFRS.
  - e. At this point if the family agree then the KFRS communications team can issue a statement to say that all media enquiries should be channelled through them.

- f. Following that a photograph is often issued by the family along with a tribute. This can be chosen by the family, and via the FLO issues via the KFRS communications team.
  - g. This is also the chance for the family to say if they wish the media to allow them to be left alone to grieve and come to terms with their loss.
1. **Photographs and statements** - Media will obtain a photograph and quotes whether there is cooperation from the family or not. If the family provide this then it may discourage media from becoming intrusive or getting a comment or photograph from neighbours or colleagues - so risking upsetting inaccuracies.
  2. **TV and radio** - In terms of TV and radio, they will want a person to say the words (rather than a written statement) A KFRS person can read a statement on your behalf or there may be someone in the family who would wish to do this on behalf of you all. This can be coordinated by the KFRS communications team to avoid it having to be given to each media outlet individually. That would be done by telling them what time this statement would be released and inviting them to film or record it.
  3. **Should the family refuse help** - Attitudes to press coverage may differ within each family. If the family want to handle media management themselves you should still ensure they understand the possible extent of media interest and potential invasion. Remind them KFRS can assist at any point if they need us.
  4. **Funeral or memorial** - Media may want to send photographers or TV cameras to the funeral. Families may not want press photographers there and if KFRS is handling media on their behalf we can get a message out that the family does not want media to attend. A way of helping avoid this is to agree to give a statement on the day of the funeral. If the family are willing to have the media cover the funeral or a memorial service, KFRS communications office may be able to assist in terms of things like agreeing a place where the media can take photographs or filming from, offer agreements such as they may photograph people entering the church or service but are not to take any photographs or filming inside the church or at the graveside.
  5. **Other media interest** – There may be other occasions when the media may want to photograph or film the family in the days following the incident. This could be if the family want to visit the scene of the incident, to lay flowers.
  6. **Media management** - The family should understand that though KFRS can pass on a strong message to the media about the family's preferences, they cannot control media actions
  7. **Online tributes** - Colleagues and friends and also the public will want to pay their respects. One way that this can be done is via an online tribute book. KFRS can organise and manage this for the family. It gives people a chance to express their sorrow over what has happened without bothering the family. Afterwards the information will be compiled and given to the family.
  8. **Social media** – KFRS will do our best to monitor what is being said via social media, but we are not able to control this.

(with thanks to Kent FRS)

## Appendix 5. Holding a press conference - general pointers

### Why hold a press conference?

- You have a captive audience to give out information you want to release.
- You can prepare in advance so they are more structured than an ad-hoc briefing.
- Media will get the same information at the same time.
- It is a useful tactic to use to help limit the damage of bad news – gets it out in the open with the opportunity to state facts.

### When to hold a press conference

- Press conferences can be magnets – make sure you have something to say. Outside of a major incident they should be used sparingly.
- A conference is a two way process – if you don't intend to answer questions, don't call a news conference.
- Press conferences are useful if assuaging huge public interest and are effective where information needs to get out quickly to a large audience.

### Time and frequency

- During an emergency incident press conferences should be held at regular intervals to establish a smooth flow of information and reduce the risk of damaging speculation.
- Sufficient time should be allowed between briefings for officers and those involved in directing the emergency to manage the on-going situation and allow for liaison with all those agencies involved. This time can be used by press officers to monitor the media output and prepare briefings on the potential "lines to take" in the next press conference.
- Consider holding an informal press briefing between operational briefing meetings so that the two processes feed into each other – this should not be filmed and could be led by the press officer if the spokesperson is not available.
- At the outset of an incident inform the media of when and where and frequency the news conferences will be held and provide reminders of this information nearer the time.

### News deadlines

- Radios work to hourly bulletins and are able to news flash.
- Regional daily papers in Lancashire work to early morning deadlines for evening editions which are usually on sale at midday. But all have news websites so footage will be used all day.
- National newspapers have later deadlines which means their coverage of your conference will be more diluted as they have more time to develop their own lines.
- Weekly newspapers usually go to bed on a Tuesday or Wednesday – so if the news breaks on a Thursday their coverage will be limited.
- Regional TV will struggle with a press conference after 3.30 unless they take it live into the evening bulletin – it would need to be a large incident for them to do this.
- Unless it is a MAJOR incident, press conferences in the evening after 8pm are not recommended.
- Remember that the satellite and rolling news channels will probably feed the conference live so be careful what you are seen to be doing and saying before the news conference starts.

## Where should you hold a press conference ?

In an emergency the media will congregate AT THE SCENE. It really is not practical to ask them to travel away from this point of interest too far to attend a news conference. However, if a room can be found in the local vicinity this may be preferable to holding a conference outside.

At Service Headquarters the default location for a press conference is the SHQ conference room. However, if this is not available the Rec Room could be used and staff advised accordingly. Strict restrictions on access for media should be put in place.

### **General considerations**

- Space – for the numbers expected, eg room size, car parking arrangements.
- Convenience – how easy is it to get to?
- Impact – the scene has much more visual and audible impact.
- Diversion – If you need to divert attention from the scene.

### **In a room**

- Choose a room that is big enough for the numbers expected.
- Give camera and radio crews time to set up.
- Make sure it is clean and tidy and re-checked before a conference starts.
- Set out the chairs “theatre” style with a table and chairs at the front for the speakers, with an aisle in the middle and room at the sides for television crews.
- Make sure the top table is big enough to accommodate all the speakers with enough room for microphones.
- Use a display board with the corporate branding as a backdrop if this is possible. If it is not remove any posters, pictures etc from behind the top table.
- Make sure this backdrop doesn’t display smiling faces of people at work – if it is a serious incident people don’t expect to see smiles
- Use name plates for the speakers.
- Make sure speakers can be heard at the back of the room – may need microphone.
- Water for the speakers.
- Make a plan for latecomers – does someone need to be outside the door to stop people entering during the conference? Sign outside the door?

### **At an incident ground**

- Is there enough space and parking facilities?
- Is it appropriate to ask attending media to travel too far away from the incident ground?
- What would be in camera shot – the accident scene, recovery activity or out of the way.
- What is the weather like?
- What access do the public have to the place you have picked?
- Beware of being overheard when talking off-the-record operationally.

### **Format of the press conference**

A conventional format involves the media spokesperson reading a basic statement of fact, followed by questions from the floor.

One-to-one interviews may be held afterwards –by arrangement with the press officer – in the same room immediately after the conference end. Organise appointments for one to one interviews BEFORE the press conference starts. TV usually go first, then radio then newspapers.



A larger incident is likely to require speakers from other agencies. This can help to deflect pressure on the lead agency to answer questions about issues for which they are not the lead (eg health advice following an explosion) but the press officer will need to be clear from the outset what the running order will be and who will be focusing on which issues/key messages.

Allow filming and photography throughout the conference. Be aware that where live streaming of conferences takes place everything you say before and after the conference can be given as live output.

## **The press officer role at a press conference**

### ***Before the conference...***

- Prepare the statement for the media spokesperson.
- Coach the media spokesperson on the statement, likely questions, difficult areas they may face and soundbite responses. (the press officer will gauge likely questions beforehand from the gathering media) Advise on appropriate demeanour (ie do not come in smiling to discuss a tragedy)
- Make arrangements for recording attendance.
- Overseeing set up of the room.
- Plan entrance and exit routes
- Remind spokespeople that they will be filmed and photographed as they are talking and not to go-off record at any point as filming/reporting will continue after the official conference has concluded.
- Have all the information ready for release at the event (photos, footage) – don't keep the media hanging round for hours after.
- Introduce the speakers and specify the format it will take (if questions will be taken; if one-to-one interviews will be available)
- Arrange recording of the conference for our own records (Dictaphone, contemporaneous note, video)

### ***At the conference...***

- Lead the spokespeople to the table
- Thank everyone for attending, ask for mobiles to be switched off, introduce the speakers and specify the format it will take (if questions will be taken; how long will be available for questions, if one-to-one interviews will be available)
- At the end of the spokespeople delivering statements initiate questions – ask people to identify themselves and their organisation before asking the question.
- Tell people you have time for two more questions when you feel it is time to close it (allow too many questions and you can lose control, too few and you look like you've something to hide).

### ***After the press conference***

- Produce a transcript or summary of the conference (this may be required in later months for disclosure).
- Ensure that journalists unable to make the event are provided with the statements and responses given to key questions.
- Put this information onto our website.

## Materials/Equipment required

- Backdrop (but be careful about the imagery, does it reflect the gravity of the situation)
- Name plates
- Tape to stick leads down with
- Sound system/microphone
- Water
- Attendee list
- Recording facility
- Copies of the statement and any other supporting materials to give to media after the event or to those not able to attend.

## Appendix 6. Items to include in a funeral media pack

### Items to include in a funeral media pack

- Details of vantage point if possible. Clear statement to say that all official material is provided in this pack and at the vantage point and there will be no other opportunities to approach families of colleagues if that has been requested.
- Biography of the deceased – including service and personal information. Brief details of the incident (while the day is about paying tribute to the lives of deceased colleagues, it is possible that the media may still need material to support accurate reporting.
- Tributes and any statements from family members obtained ahead of the day.
- Tribute and statement from senior officer / fire authority member and colleagues / watch.
- Background info on the church or location the funeral service is taking place.
- Welcome from and / or details of the person officiating the funeral service.
- Order of service.
- Photographs of the employee / employees involved (both ones that have already been issued and new images).
- Route map of the funeral cortege.
- Explanation of an FRS full honours funeral and what is involved.
- Contact details for Corp Comms team in case they need anything else / have further questions.

## Appendix 7. Sample recovery strategy

### SAMPLE INCIDENT RECOVERY STRATEGY – POST-FUNERAL / PRE-INQUEST

#### Contents

#### 1 Context

- Aim
- Challenges
- Audiences

#### 2 Key messages

- External
- Internal
- Summary

#### 3 Reputational risks

#### 4 Future actions and recommendations

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### 1. Context

The funeral(s) will mark the end of the first chapter of this tragic incident. We will then be entering the investigation phase which could be an equally difficult time and, at the time of writing, we have no clue as to the outcome.

While colleagues, friends, and families will continue to grieve, XXFRS must now commit to, and communicate, that there is a return to some semblance of business as usual. However, we have to acknowledge that there are real reputational risks to the Service, some which we can mitigate with advance planning of statements and good news stories as well as a consistent flow of information to our core audiences and influencers.

Over the coming year there will be specific points in the calendar which will stimulate renewed interest in the event and it is essential that there is continued awareness, media-monitoring and horizon-scanning to mitigate against the threat of lack of preparedness. This document will give some thought to potential scenarios and how we as the Marketing and Communications team deal with them.

#### 1.1 Key aim:

- To protect the reputation of XXFRS and to reassure the public

#### 1.2 Key challenges:

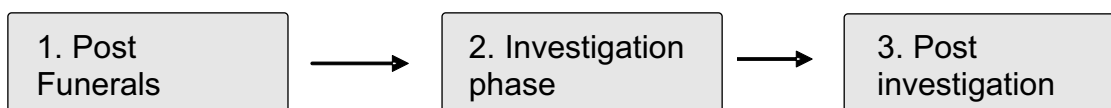
- To create appropriate context for the event for our different audiences
- To remain sensitive to the needs of the families and watch
- To predict and highlight the key communication challenges around the ongoing investigation

## 1.3 Audiences:

Protecting the reputation of XXFRS with its audiences identified as:

Families  
Watch  
Incident attendees  
Media  
Staff  
The Church  
Members of Fire Authority  
Community – both any immediate residents / businesses and wider  
Unions  
Partner Agencies  
General public  
FRSs  
CFRAU  
CFOA

## 1. Phases of recovery:



## 2.1 Key messages post funerals

### Positioning:

As a Service we need to continue to be mindful that for certain audiences, this event will still be a very difficult time for them. Media support should be allocated to:

- Watch
- Families
- Unions
- Incident attendees

### Key message: External

An overarching statement that needs to satisfy both the emotional and sensitive nature of the event but equally shows the service to be pro-active, professional and concerned ultimately with its core business.

This message is an interim message that will not be overt but implied by demonstrating and re-iterating our commitment to programmes of work and community engagement.

“We continue to provide the very best service to the public while responding to the incident and aiding the investigation in a sensitive, supportive and highly professional manner.”

How –

- Support for the audiences most affected as demonstrated by any corporate service groups that have been set up in the wake of the tragedy.
- Re-iterate our core priorities and objectives as set out in our Service plan through our media releases

## Key message: Internal

“Although we are still grieving the loss of our colleagues, we still have an important job to do and the best way of honouring them is to continue to provide the very best service to the public to make life safer for our communities. We understand that people may find it difficult at this time and we will continue supporting colleagues through this.”

## 2.2 Key messages investigation phase

### Positioning:

There is a need to keep staff regularly informed as to the progress of the two investigations even if there is not much to say. Silence could foster rumour and speculation. Ensuring welfare support information and contact details remain available to colleagues through this time is essential. Audiences here are:

- Staff
- Media
- FRSs
- Fire Authority members

### “As a Service we learn and grow from events such as these”

- Firefighting is a dangerous environment and there is scope for things to go wrong. We do all we can to provide sound structure in terms of resources, safe systems of work and procedures and good training.
- Where things go wrong we investigate the cause and look carefully and critically to see where we can improve procedures and reinforce good practice.
- We immediately reviewed both the causes and our systems.
- We continue to support our colleagues through these difficult times and services are available to employees, with a variety of ways to access support.

### “These events are fortunately rare”

How – evidence fire service deaths

## 2.3 Key messages post investigation

### Positioning:

All our identified audiences will be interested and invested in the outcome. These are dependent on the outcome but if we take two possible versions:

### No fault - Action and communication

While the Police investigation has found XXFRS had appropriate training, procedures and equipment in place, we have still suffered the sad loss of two Firefighters. Therefore, we are not complacent. We are using the findings of this investigation and our internal investigation to review:

- Equipment
- Procedures
- Training

## Background information:

The investigation was completed in accordance with the protocol on death at work developed between police and the Health and Safety Executive. This was the first such Senior Accident Investigation that has had to be conducted in XXX since the protocol was introduced.

<<<<CHECK THIS IS RELEVANT TO YOUR SERVICE>>>>

An accident investigation report of this type is not just the work of one person. As is standard practice in most organisations, an individual would work on early versions of the report and the draft would be shared and commented upon by senior managers. When an incident as serious as this happens the investigation must be considered in its wider context to make sure that the likely impacts and underlying causes are fully assessed and that, where necessary, immediate steps are taken if safety lessons have to be learned. This is entirely consistent with good organisational practice and follows the Health and Safety Executive's guidance on such matters, which says " ...senior managers may need to be involved if events have serious or potentially serious consequences."

## Fault – Action and Communication

This would have to be formulated nearer the time but we move back into a crisis communications situation. We will need a robust response and communication plan in order to lead on the front foot.

- Prepared statement
- Press conference
- Staff briefing
- Watch/Station briefing
- Media liaison with families to re-instate
- Union briefing/communication

## 2.4 Summary

<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs of the families are paramount and to be respected.</li> <li>• Emphasise our sorrow at the tragic deaths.</li> <li>• Emphasise that firefighting is a hazardous profession but we do all we can to provide resources, safe systems of work, procedures and training.</li> <li>• Emphasise that we are conducting an internal accident investigation</li> <li>• Emphasise that we are assisting the external Police investigation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Short term Messages:</b></p> <p><b>Longer term messages</b></p>	<p><b>As the inquest has opened and the funerals now confirmed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time for quiet reflection.</li> <li>• Loss keenly felt in the fire fighting communities and families.</li> <li>• Need to find out what happened</li> <li>• Learn the lessons so this can't happen again.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The best way to honour our fallen colleagues is to continue to provide the very best service to the public</li> <li>• We are not complacent. This is just part of an ongoing process of monitoring and review. Our learning from this incident will contribute to this process serve to reinforce our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of health, safety and training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Timeline</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inquest starts on XXXXXX</li> <li>• Verdict and any narrative is expected some months later.</li> <li>• Recces for funerals and agree media vantage point where appropriate</li> <li>• Communications to monitor broadcast, web, social and print media</li> <li>• A member of the communications team will attend the Inquest, act as the focal point for any media enquiries and prepare and/or amend any press statements and interviews as required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication methods</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factual statements via intranet, website, emails and briefing system</li> <li>• Briefings prepared by communications for spokespeople</li> <li>• Media statement prepared by communications and circulated to relevant audiences</li> <li>• Statements/spokespeople prepared on verdict</li> </ul>
<p><b>Spokespeople (TBC)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFO</li> <li>• Police</li> </ul>
<p><b>Analysis</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media coverage and tone, and staff response</li> </ul>



## 1. Reputational Risks

The reputation of the Service can be under threat from a variety of sources:

### Media Relations

A robust media relations strategy needs to be implemented that would consist of face to face meetings with local media. The release of photos and statements/information from the families. The offer of an exclusive interview with CO in the fire trade press.

### Calendar

- Funerals
- Birthdays of children
- Unveiling of Memorial at HQ
- Memorial Service
- Service of remembrance at which time their names are added to the firefighters' memorial??
- Investigation Report published(?)
- First anniversary
- Closure of the Book of Condolence
- Closure and hand over of the Memorial Fund
- Celebrating Success

### Industrial Relations

We need to be conscious that our good relationship with the FBU could alter, depending on both the progress of the investigation and the incident.

Additional 'hard to predict' events such as a turn in the investigation also need to be factored in.

## 3.1 Reputation Management

In order to mitigate against the possibility of blame or criticism we need to identify and contain the risks outlined below

### What can happen after an event like this?

We have seen from the events involving FRS deaths in the workplace, that there is a powerful human urge to apportion blame.

This can take several forms:

- Blame the Service for inadequate training, working fitness and equipment provision
- Blame on the FFs themselves for their recklessness
- Blame on the Service for poor education of the affected community
- Blame on the residents / business owners / other members of the public involved for their recklessness / failure to follow fire safety advice
- Blame on the incident officers for poor guidance and decision-making

These blames can be counter-balanced by feeding through the key messages on all our communications.

## What can we do?

Before delivering any communication be internal, external, written or verbal it is useful to consider the following:

- What perceptions can this communication usefully influence?
- What useful opinions can be expressed?
- What useful facts can be stated/restated?
- How can this communication be used to re-enforce key messages?

## Reputation and profile of the Chief Officer

Throughout the immediate aftermath of the incident, Chief Officer / other suitable principal officer has represented the Service; he / she is perceived to be an extremely able spokesperson with a good range of media experience. He / she should remain the main spokesperson for the remainder of communications activity connected to this matter.

## Proactive stories around the incident to defend reputation

The ongoing delivery of positive news stories that manage the reputation of XXFRS will do much to influence perceptions that might impact on the Service.

- 1) Memorial service announcement
- 2) Fund-raising events
- 3) Closure of incident ground and handover of Memorial Fund to families
- 4) Post investigation response – what we have done, intend to do, etc
- 5) Business as usual
- 6) Celebrating Success

## 3.2 Risk Identification

Once risks have been identified, plans can be put in place to manage them. However, the strongest control measure to minimise any reputation damage is to ensure that messages are consistent. Some will require a robust response and rebuttal approach and some will be more pro-active. The identified risks are outlined in the Appendix.

## 4 Future actions

While the investigation may have an impact on the reputation of XXFRS, it is essential that proactive good news stories continue to be delivered leading up to and after the findings of the investigation. This can be achieved by:

- Implementing a plan for positive pro-active good news stories for local, regional and national press
- Issuing media guidelines to staff and update as necessary
- Internal communications: daily regular update, FAQ on intranet and ensure that staff have a two way dialogue with principal officers to ask any questions or raise concerns about the investigation – consider a face to face debrief.
- Issue regular updates on investigation to stop rumour or hear-say
- Continue to provide a robust response and rebuttal service

## 4. 1 Other considerations and recommendations

Help and advice from other FRSs / CFOA identified (e.g. document support). Secondment from other services requested and answered.

If the situation becomes critical, consider crisis management support such as Register Larkin.

Organise high level media training for senior officers in order to provide resilience for the Chief Officer.

## 4.2 Improving

We need to fully evaluate the role and the impact of Marketing and Communications in reference to this incident. This will help us to:

Examine the contribution that the department has made to the dissemination of timely relevant and accurate information to all audiences.

Improve our plans and strategies in the areas of Business Continuity, Warning and Informing and Resilience a crucial part of which will be how effectively and appropriately we link to other partners, services and the ownership of the process.

Conduct a Communications audit with a view to improving processes in future.

Analysis of cuttings and coverage to extract meaningful data that will show us where we need to build or improve media relations and use this to underpin a specific media outreach programme with our local papers.

## 4. 3 Evaluation

Communications for the incident, awful though it was, should be evaluated just like all other marcomms activity to demonstrate effectiveness, value and importance as well as to learn what may have been done differently. It also shows how a crisis was handled in a professional and skilful manner. We should consider the following:

- Create a Media report for the Fire Authority
- Create a case study for CFOA/FiRePro
- Write an article for PR Week – this could be on the use, value and importance of social networks in crisis management
- Seek opportunities to share and learn with colleagues internally and externally via conference presentations – FiRePro conference, for example



# **Death** in the Workplace