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Our reference: FIR/72 620/33/91
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FIRE SERVICE

To all Chief Fire Officers

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16 July 1980

Dear Chief Officer

17 JAN 1991
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SALVAGE OPERATIONS AT FIRES

1. The Joint Committee on Fire Research has examined the results of two studies which have been undertaken to estimate the cost effectiveness of salvage at fires. The first study attempted to assess the potential benefits of salvage and led to the second study, which was a field study designed to determine the amount of salvage which might be achieved in practice.
2. At the request of the Research Committee, the Joint Committee on Fire Brigade Operations has considered the operational implications of the information resulting from the surveys and agreed that there was a need to emphasise to brigades the contribution which good fire-fighting practice can make to salvage and the value of including salvage in fire service training. In the appendix to this letter is summarised the operational guidance which has been agreed by the Joint Committee on Fire Brigade Operations and which the Committee has recommended should be drawn to the attention of chief fire officers.
3. There are no additional cost or manpower implications arising from this letter.

Yours sincerely

No 22 /1980

Amendment to Dear Chief Officer Letter No 17/1980
dated 3 June 1980

telephone number for Mr J Dukelow in paragraph 6 should now read 01-213 6297

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DCO

- i. when breaking in, entering through the back door or windows rather than the front door
 - ii. use of hand controlled branches
 - iii. use of hose reel jets
 - iv. moving to smaller jets or sprays or fog as soon as possible
 - v. taking care when traversing through valuable property or over carpets etc
 - vi. ventilating to release smoke and heat as soon as possible
- d. firemen should, if possible, be made more aware of the importance of salvage in relation to fire losses. As part of their training for example, recruits should be instructed that there are potential benefits to be gained, for example, if one man has the task of closing fire doors (where applicable) or from simply throwing a salvage sheet over a suite of furniture or machinery in the room below the fire;
- e. in addition to training at recruit stage there should be periodic refresher training which should include emphasis on the continued awareness of the value and benefits of measures taken to mitigate damage. A good deal can be achieved from an awareness amongst fire-fighters of the value of salvage when fire-fighting and that salvage work, even at fires of low salvage potential, may be worthwhile.



OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE ON MATTERS RELATING TO SALVAGE AT FIRES

GENERAL

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1. The salvage activities undertaken by firemen during and after a fire can be very important in reducing damage incurred at a fire. Moreover, fire authorities have a statutory duty, under Section 1.1(e) of the Fire Services Act 1947, to secure "efficient arrangements for ensuring that reasonable steps are taken to prevent or mitigate damage to property resulting from measures taken in dealing with fires".
2. It is not possible to define salvage precisely. It will cover activities which are undertaken specifically in order to reduce fire, heat, smoke and water damage but it may also include activities which lie on the borderline between salvage and good fire-fighting practice eg: ventilation may be carried out to reduce smoke damage but as this also improves visibility it aids fire-fighting. Salvage ranges from limited salvage work which may be undertaken by the crews of first line appliances using the salvage sheets which are almost invariably carried on each appliance, to that which could be undertaken using the equipment carried on a salvage tender. In respect of the latter, the level of salvage realised would depend upon the time taken for a salvage tender to get to the fire and whether or not limited salvage had been undertaken before the salvage tender arrived.
3. Salvage studies have shown that the maximum potential savings which could be achieved by "limited" salvage alone may be £11 m per year (at 1976 prices this is equivalent to about 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ % of the total fire losses). The maximum potential savings which could be achieved if "limited" salvage was undertaken, and, additionally, a salvage tender was sent to each fire, may be £14 m per year (at 1976 prices this is equivalent to about 6% of the total fire loss). In both cases the savings quoted are the maximum estimated savings compared with no salvage at all. Apart from the type of salvage work undertaken, the value of the salvage likely to be realised at a fire will depend on the nature of the premises and its contents and on the state of the fire when salvage operations are begun.

OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR FIRE BRIGADES

4. The studies on salvage have a number of implications for fire brigade operations and highlight the value of good fire-fighting practice in minimising losses from fire. The following particular aspects are of note:
 - a. the salvage potential of particular premises may be identified during inspections carried out in accordance with section 1(1)(d) of the Fire Services Act 1947;
 - b. it is important that salvage work should be started early, preferably at the same time as fire-fighting commences. The studies showed that if early salvage work is not undertaken, it is unlikely that later salvage will compensate for the earlier losses;
 - c. the points outlined above are covered in some detail in the Manual of Firemanship Part 6a Chapter 38 under the headings of "Salvage at Fires, Pre-planning for Fire Salvage, and Salvage Equipment". In addition there are a number of basic points of good fire-fighting practice of relevance to salvage including the following:-