

# COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

## PRACTICE NOTE NO. 4



## FIRE SAFETY POLICY DOCUMENT

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## **PRACTICE NOTE NO. 4**

### **COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

#### **SERVICE DELIVERY**

#### **FIRE SAFETY POLICY DOCUMENT (amended 18/05/11)**

#### 1. **INTRODUCTION.**

- 1.1 This document has been revised and redrafted to meet the needs of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order **(amended 20/08/09)**
- 1.2 “Fire Safety” for the purpose of this document may be defined as the administration and enforcement of statutory standards including:-
- a. The Audit of any Place (as defined by the Fire Safety Order) to ensure compliance with Fire Safety Standards and current Legislation. **(amended 20/08/09)**
  - b. The giving of goodwill advice to owners/occupiers.
  - c. The enforcement of current Fire Safety Legislation.
  - d. The investigation of complaints regarding Fire Safety matters.
  - e. Fire Safety consultation with other enforcing authorities such as Building Control Bodies, Licensing Authorities, Housing Authorities and Care Standards Agencies.
  - f. Miscellaneous advice and consultation with other enforcing authorities.
  - g. Fire Safety administration and enforcement in relation to current Petroleum Regulations.
  - h. Fire Investigation.

- 1.3 The objectives of these processes is to ensure that, as far as practicable any place is occupied, managed, maintained, erected or altered in accordance with prescribed standards relating to all aspects of fire safety.
- 1.4 Fires are investigated in accordance with the statutory duty as defined by the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. **(added 20/08/09)**

## 2. RESOURCES.

- 2.1 Sufficient resources will be maintained to ensure reasonable skill, care and experience can be allocated to the discharge of Fire Safety statutory duties and meet the needs of the Service.
- 2.2 The Fire Safety staff will review all projects and initiatives both collectively and individually to ensure that adequate resources are allocated. **(amended 18/05/11)**
- 2.3 It must be borne in mind that as a Statutory Authority we cannot turn away any approach or suspend inspection programmes or regimes to the detriment of our statutory duty, therefore, any review must address regular under resourcing issues and take all reasonable steps to remedy the situation. **(amended 20/08/09)**
- 2.4 All ongoing responsibilities as outlined in the introduction to this document will be monitored to ensure effective control.
- 2.5 The staffing of the Fire Safety team will be monitored to ensure that adequately trained, qualified and experienced professionals are employed to fulfil statutory duties.
- 2.6 Adequate resources will be maintained to ensure that quality management systems and procedures are maintained.

## 3. CONSULTATION.

- 3.1 The Fire Safety Team will throughout its full range of responsibilities, carry out all necessary consultations and act upon the findings as appropriate, observing any prescribed time periods. Quality management systems and procedures will be followed.
- 3.2 Consultations will not be limited to those required by statute; observations beyond the scope of the relevant legislation will be shared.
- 3.3 The Fire Safety Team will actively work towards and support partnerships with external agencies in order to promote a joined up approach and smoother legislative control.
- 3.4 The Fire Safety Team will routinely be consulted in relation to changes/improvements to fire safety policy procedures or activity. **(added 20/08/09)**

#### 4. ASSESSMENT OF PLANS,

- 4.1 All plans and information received as part of statutory consultation will be examined. On completion of the plan examination, the examining officer will communicate all findings to the relevant Statutory Authority, Applicant or Agent as appropriate to the case in hand.
- 4.2 A policy of pedantic plan examination will not be nurtured and the consistency of examination will be monitored via the Quality Management Systems.
- 4.3 The Fire Safety Team will advise other Statutory Authorities, applicants, or Agents of legislation outside the scope of Fire Safety Legislation which is likely to be relevant to the project in question.
- 4.4 Records of Plan Assessment.
  - a. A full accurate record will be maintained of all plan examinations. **(amended 20/08/09)**
  - b. A record will be maintained of any special or unusual circumstances affecting the building and agreed deviations from accepted guidance will be recorded.
  - c. All plan examination will be in accordance with Fire Safety Quality Management Systems and Procedures.

#### 5. FIRE SAFETY INTERACTIONS (amended 13/09/11)

- 5.1 The Fire Safety risk based audit regime will ensure that audit intensity and frequency are appropriate. It must however, be accepted that every item relating to Fire Safety cannot be examined.
- 5.2 Audit priorities have been established via the development of a risk based Audit regime. Fire Safety Staff shall use their professional skill and judgement having taken account of current guidance. **(amended 20/08/09)**
- 5.3 Places of a complex nature may need to be audited by staff with greater experience in particular fields. **(amended 20/08/09)**
- 5.4 Remote Inspection Techniques. Such methods will not be adopted as an alternative to physically visiting premises, however, methods such as video tapes, photographs etc may be used to supplement inspection records.
- 5.5 Fire Safety Audit. An audit consists of a thorough and comprehensive examination of a premises. Should the premises require a number of visits to establish compliance the outcomes of each visit should be recorded in full.
- 5.6 Follow Up Audits. Follow up audits will be carried out as appropriate to each case, however a follow up audit will be carried out in every case where a notice has been served in order to establish compliance.

### 5.7 Specific Audit.

- a. A Specific Audit is one that is carried out to examine a specific aspect of a premises and will not in normal circumstances constitute a thorough and comprehensive examination of the premises.
- b. Care must be taken during any such audit in order to ensure that aspects of the premises giving cause for concern are not missed as a court or ombudsman could determine that as we had visited the premises, defects should have been noted and remedial action required of the owner/occupier.

### 5.9 Peak Performance Inspections. **(amended 20/08/09)**

- a. Peak Performance Inspections are carried out in places of entertainment/licensed premises, either before or during the use of premises. **(amended 20/08/09)**
- b. They are intended to ensure that fire safety standards are being complied with.

### 5.10 Goodwill Advice. Inspections are carried out as necessary in order to offer best practice advice to building owners or occupiers.

### 5.11 Dangerous Premises.

- a. Any report regardless of source alleging that a dangerous situation exists will be investigated immediately.
- b. Where necessary officers should be accompanied and Durham Constabulary should be asked to attend in situations where by public order or threat to Fire Safety Staff can be anticipated.

### 5.12 Inspection/Audit Records

- a. Records will be maintained as a vital method of ensuring effective continuity of control and as evidence of the Fire Safety input, records will confirm areas inspected/audited, the results of inspection/audit and any remedial action considered necessary.
- b. All records will be maintained in line with Fire Safety Quality Management Systems.
- c. The method of recording inspections is the CFRMIS Database, which forms part of the Management Information System. **(amended 20/08/09)**
- d. The recorded data will form the basis for returns to the CLG, providing accurate PIs. **(amended 20/08/09)**
- e. Wherever possible inspections/audits will be carried out in conjunction with other agencies or authorities. In order to avoid duplication of effort or disruption to the client.

### 5.13 Contraventions of Fire Safety Legislation.

- a. Any contraventions will be clearly and promptly communicated, identifying the problem and necessary measures to achieve compliance. Decisions regarding compliance especially formal notices will be clearly communicated to those responsible in accordance with Service Policy and Fire Safety Quality Management Systems.
- b. In the event of dispute Fire Safety will furnish the client with all necessary assistance in determining their statutory rights and appropriate procedures.

### 5.14 Fire Investigation (amended 13/09/11)

Fire Investigations will be carried out and co-ordinated in accordance with Fire Safety Procedure 26. **(amended 14/11/07)**

### 5.15 Partnerships/Fire Related Forums (added 13/09/11)

The Fire Safety team will support partnership working within the remit of the Fire Safety Order providing appropriate response to consultations and attending meeting with relevant agenda items. An example of such forums would include Safety Advisory Groups.

### 5.16 Statutory Consultations (added 13/09/11)

All statutory consultations will be responded to in a timely manner providing guidance and advice within the remit of the Fire Safety Order. Statutory Bodies will include but not limited to:

- Building Control Bodies
- Licensing Authorities
- Housing Authorities

### 5.17 Unwanted Fire Signals (added 13/09/11)

The Fire Safety team will strive to drive down unwanted fire signals through a targeted approach focusing on both local and service wide issues.

## 6. ARCHIVING RECORDS.

- 6.1 Fire Safety will maintain a permanent record of all premises. Records will be either hard copy or electronic.
- 6.2 Fire Safety will maintain a record of all Fire Investigations for a period of 7 years. **(added 20/08/09)**

## 7. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

- 7.1 Fire Safety will maintain a system of planned and recorded development and training to ensure that staff are kept abreast of new technology and to instruct and refresh on legislative requirements and their practical interpretation.
- 7.2 CPD will be monitored via Fire Safety Quality Management systems and in some cases Officers professional body.

## 8. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE.

8.1 The Fire Safety Team's performance is reviewed via the following methods:

- National Performance Indicators. **(amended 18/05/11)**
- Local performance Indicators.
- Questionnaires.
- Client Forums.
- Quality Management Systems.
- Internal Audit.
- Member Involvement.

## 9. QUALITY MANAGEMENT.

9.1 The Fire Safety Team will work towards high standards of performance which will be maintained by rigorous application of quality management principles. We will strive towards maintenance of ISO 9001:2008 status which will include the application of both internal and external audits. **(amended 20/08/09)**

9.2 The Fire Safety Team will strive to achieve and maintain standards of customer care in line with the principle of "Charter Mark".

## 10. BUSINESS ETHICS.

10.1 The conduct of Fire Safety Staff will be governed by the Services Policies, Standing Orders and Procedures, together with the codes of conduct of the Authority and Officers own professional bodies.

10.2 The Fire Safety Team will treat all sections of the community in a fair and equitable manner, showing no bias towards any sector.

## 11. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE.

11.1 The Fire Safety Team will maintain and make available on request, to any interested party, an appropriate complaints procedure utilising the following:

- Fire Service Complaints Procedure.
- Questionnaires.
- Quality Management Procedures.

## 12. LETTERS/COMMENTS OF APPRECIATION.

12.1 All expressions of appreciation will be:

- Relayed to the Team Member concerned.
- Reported to the Head of Operations. **(amended 18/05/11)**
- Placed in the regular Information Bulletins.
- Records in the fire Safety Quality Management System.