

Programme update

As you will be aware, the Local Government Association ('LGA') and the Chief Fire Officers' Association ('CFOA')—as the political and professional leaders of the UK Fire and Rescue Service—have taken on responsibility for commissioning National Operational Guidance ('Guidance'). Guidance will be produced in partnership with London Fire Brigade ('LFB') who have provided funding and established a programme team.

This is the first in a series of regular updates to ensure that fire and rescue services are sighted on the progress that the programme is making, ensuring that there will be plenty of opportunities for the Service and other stakeholders to contribute and shape its work.

As happened under the old system which Government operated, many fire services and other experts will be approached to join project groups for specific pieces of Guidance so that the programme team can harness the expertise which exists in the sector. Strategic links will also be established with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) and Standard Operating Procedures so that this work is complementary. Alongside adopting existing projects to develop Guidance, the first priorities of the new National Operational Guidance Programme has been to:

- establish the concept—or definition—of National Operational Guidance for the purpose of this programme;
- develop a method for prioritising Guidance projects within a three-year rolling work programme; and
- review the existing catalogue of Guidance.

The concept of National Operational Guidance

There are different definitions of National Operational Guidance in the Service, specifically regarding the scope of Guidance and who it is be aimed at. Existing Guidance documents have been variable in scope, often ranging across ground traditionally reserved for Standard Operating Procedures ('SOP').

The importance of defining Guidance for the purpose of this programme is to bring focus to future documents, as well as to clearly indicate the limits of Guidance. The latter will be important when building effective links between the National Operational Guidance Programme and the Generic Standard Operating Procedure programmes—and other initiatives—across the Service. Separately, there is a project looking at establishing a national SOP template where technical information can be included in the future.

In September, the programme boards—the Operational Guidance Group ('OGG') and the Operational Guidance Strategy Board ('OGSB')—agreed:

1. That National Operational Guidance will be—
 - a. national and/or supra-regionally driven;
 - b. targeted at strategic and senior managers;

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- c. capability and attribute focussed;
 - d. mindful of national resilience requirements; and
 - e. designed to promote intra- and inter-operability.
2. That the National Operational Guidance Programme will—
 - a. provide Guidance to the UK Fire and Rescue Service within these parameters;
 - b. integrate closely with partners in national and regional training, Standard Operating Procedure, and Resilience Guidance initiatives, to enhance the coherency and connectivity of these programmes; and
 - c. assume responsibility for the development of Generic Risk Assessments.

The work programme

The LGA and CFOA are clear that this programme needs to reflect the needs and priorities of the Service. There are a number of different considerations and principles which anchor this programme and set it in the wider context:

1. **Firefighter safety.** At its heart, National Operational Guidance takes on a particular significance in the Service due to the inherent risks faced by staff, and the responsibility Chief Fire Officers have to maintain safe working practices.
2. **Collaboration, intra- and inter-operability.** To ensure that Guidance is mindful of intra- and inter-operability requirements, to help the assimilation of new Guidance by the Service, and to reflect the needs of local fire and rescue services, the programme must collaborate and draw on subject matter expertise from the Service.
3. **Legacy and extant Guidance.** There is concern among Chief Fire Officers about the potential risks inherent in extant Guidance and a demand for one definitive catalogue of Guidance. The programme will review existing Guidance, including Guidance within the Fire Service Manuals, only publishing recognised good practice. It will produce new Guidance where there currently is none and there is a risk-based need for it. It will also identify a rolling three year programme for the ongoing review of all published Guidance.
4. **Consistency.** The Greenstreet Berman report *'The shape, form and function of operational guidance for the Fire and Rescue Service'* found that there was little consistency in Guidance issued by the UK government departments it reviewed. The report suggested that the purpose of Guidance for the Service *"...is twofold: firstly to improve operational performance and consistency of approach where appropriate and secondly to promote firefighter safety."*

Based on wide input from the Service, the programme will publish its methodology for determining priorities, leading to a forward plan for the production of Guidance for the Service to consider. This will be data driven, but will acknowledge that the programme will need the flexibility to respond to significant events such as Rule 43's, legislative change and other important national inputs.

What happens next and how you can get involved

The programme team will now begin work with the two projects adopted from the previous Guidance programme (*'Working in, on or near water'* and the *'Environment Manual'*) and will establish the two projects agreed by that programme (the *'Incident Command Manual'* and *'Fires in the built environment'*). The programme team will support those currently involved in these projects, providing resources to help bring them to a conclusion. Projects emerging from the development of the Guidance / GRA gap analysis will inform proposals for entirely new Guidance projects, which will then be submitted for approval to the Strategy Board that CFOA chairs.

Once the projects are determined, the programme team will need to identify a project lead. Your help in offering experts and officers to take on this work will be much appreciated. The programme will provide support materials in the form of 'project packs' to support each Guidance project. Project packs will provide the document authors with project support materials including the project scope, Work Package Agreements (laying out the expectations of authors and the support that they can expect from the team), reporting and governance expectations, and more. We believe that this is a significant improvement on the previous process and will provide a structure for projects to be completed on time.

Views, offers of expertise or other contributions to these projects, or the wider aims of the programme, can be made to Steven Adams, National Operational Guidance Programme, London Fire Brigade, 169 Union Street, SE1 0LL or by email at steven.adams@london-fire.gov.uk.

The LGA's Fire Commission will be receiving a presentation on the forward programme at its meeting on 15 February 2013. Elected members will have an opportunity to contribute further views through regular updates to the Fire Services Management Committee.

There will be an update at CFOA FRS Council on 10 October and regular updates at CFOA Operations Committee. Services will be able to input via their regional and devolved administration representatives.