

Appendix 1

ORDER NO. 17/13

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE HOME APPROACH POLICY

1. POLICY

It is the policy of West Midlands Fire Service to have a clear code of conduct for personnel to adopt when carrying out specific activities to gain Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) referrals. The code of conduct will give protection to older adults and vulnerable members of the community from becoming victims of doorstep crime.

The Policy has been developed in accordance with the Trading Standards Institute National "Doorstep" Cold Calling Protocol.

2. STRATEGY

This protocol will dramatically increase the ability to target those people within specific communities known as the hard to influence or the hard to reach.

Personnel will target specific communities to extend HFSC in support of Directed Action Plans by making face to face contact and explaining what the HFSC entails, its importance in reducing risk within the home and local community. Details of the occupier can then be taken and an appointment arranged to attend the property at later date to carry out the HFSC. In addition this protocol will extend the effectiveness of quick strike campaigns following a fire in the area by allowing firefighters to talk directly with neighbours after a fire has occurred in the neighbourhood.

3. PROCEDURES

Personnel will use the "Home Approach" procedure as part of their Directed Action Plan work including HFSC. This will take the form of delivering leaflets to targeted homes and making a "Home Approach" call within 10 days of the leaflet delivery.

3.1 Home Approach Protocol

Officers will plan any "Home Approach" activity, to ensure that where possible community groups, tenants associations and community leaders are aware of the proposed activity, prior to it being carried out.

- Personnel should work in pairs when carrying out the "Home Approach". This is to be both the minimum and maximum number of personnel at each property.
- On arrival at a property, personnel will produce and physically hand a large scale identification card to the occupier, declare their name and that they are working on behalf of the West Midlands Fire Service. They will request that the occupier compares their face with the photograph on the card.
- Personnel will explain the purpose of the visit, i.e. to inform them of the HFSC service, to take details and if possible arrange an appointment to return and carry out the assessment at a later date.
- Personnel will explain that the occupier can check their identification by telephoning WMFS control hotline and should encourage them to do so. If necessary utilising the appliance mobile telephone.

- On return to station all HFSC requests will be entered onto the booking system and a standard letter of confirmation sent to individuals confirming their booking arrangements. If due to time constraints a letter is not practicable, then the appointment should be confirmed by telephone prior to returning to complete the Home Fire Safety Check.
- If a responsible adult is not available at the home, then the visit should be terminated immediately until a time when an adult would be available.
- "Home Approach" should only be undertaken in daylight hours in order to protect fire service personnel and more vulnerable members of the community.
- HFSC and other prearranged appointments can be undertaken at any convenient time including the hours of darkness.

3.2 Quick Strikes

Pre-planning for "Home Approach" will be adopted for all Directed Action Plan work with the only one exception - "Quick strikes".

The "Quick Strike" strategy consists of firefighters being quickly deployed into the neighbourhood where a fire has occurred to provide local people with simple fire safety messages and offer them a Home Fire Safety Check.

This method of engaging with the community has proven to be very effective throughout the service; this is largely due to the fact that people are more aware of the dangers of fire in the aftermath of a fire which has occurred in their neighbourhood.

To maximise the effectiveness of "Quick Strikes" firefighters should be deployed into the neighbourhood as soon as resources are available after the fire has occurred. Firefighters may adopt the "Home Approach" protocol without prior warning to the occupier, where appropriate.

3.3 Identification

Personnel will be issued with a large print identification card, which will bear print of at least size 14 font and display an enlarged photograph. The card will also hold the identification hotline number to be used for identification of personnel.

3.4 Identification Process

When a householder calls the Fire Control identification hotline (0121 359 5161) they will be asked to check the photograph on the card and the name and job title.

The call handler will get the householder to ask the visiting officer for their PIN (roll) number, the householder will tell the call handler the PIN number quoted by the officer, they will confirm if this is correct.

If these checks are completed satisfactorily the householder will be informed it is safe to admit the officer if necessary.

3.5 Risk Assessment

It must be clearly understood by each individual that "Home Approach" may pose its own unique (but generally, low level) problems. Where doubt exists about the safety of personnel, then the activity should be cancelled, firefighters withdraw, and advice sought from the Station Manager or Duty Command Officer.

All personnel should be made aware of the generic risk assessment for "Home Approach."

3.6 Complaints

Should an occupier not be satisfied with the level of service received they should be referred to the Station Manager who will then take appropriate action in line with the current Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure.

4. CROSS REFERENCES

Standing Order 01/04, Identification and Authorisation Documents

Standing Order 02/16, Data Protection

Standing Order 17/4, Home Fire Risk Assessment

Standing Order 19/07, Lone Working

Standing Order 19/08, Risk Management

Standing Order 19/28, Violence at Work

Standing Order 21/01, CCC Policy

5. RESPONSIBILITY AND REVIEW/AMENDMENT DETAILS

5.1 Responsible Director/Department

Community Protection, Prevention.

5.2 Created Fully/Reviewed

This Standing Order was created by Station Officer, Community Fire Safety Team, October 2005.

5.3 Further Amendments

None.

Appendix 2

Survey 1

An output area of Walsall was identified to form part of the survey. The area consists of a mixture of terraced, semi-detached and 6 three storey blocks of flats.

The population surveyed consisted of an even mix of Asian and white European Caucasian

Survey involved all premises being leafleted giving three future dates for the firefighters to return and carry out a HFSC, this covered two day periods and one evening. The residences were required to place the leaflet in a visible place indicating they required a HFSC.

The initiative led to a take up rate of HFSC of 12%. This figure being higher than normal leaflet drops with no follow up from the station.

The initiative was further extended by the CFS Team who personally called at all households to ascertain the effectiveness of leafleting. After fully explaining what a HFSC involved and that it was a totally free service a further 50% of those residents contacted requested a HFSC.

Station/Dept	No. Properties Targeted surveyed	No. of HFRA Referrals	Percentage Uptake
Walsall (White Watch)	117	15	12.82% of total properties
CFS Walsall Properties Surveyed**	45 (50 less the 5 who had received HRFA)	23	51.11% of those surveyed

Survey 2

An output area of Highgate was identified to form part of the survey. The area consists of terraced housing. The population surveyed consisted of predominantly Asian community.

The survey involved all premises being leafleted with the HFSC flyer.

The initiative led to a take up rate of HFSC of 1.7%. This figure being within normal limits of leaflet drops with no follow up from the station.

The initiative was further extended by the CFS Team who personally called at all households to ascertain the effectiveness of leafleting. After fully explaining what a HFSC involved and that it was a totally free service a further 80% of those residents contacted requested a HFSC.

Station/Dept	No. Properties Targeted surveyed	No. of HFRA Referrals	Percentage Uptake
Highgate	239	4	1.67% of total properties
CFS (Doris Road) Survey	46	37	80.44% of those surveyed

Summary

- Evidence from this survey indicates that, when personal contact is made and the benefits, procedure involved and the service is free are fully explained there is a higher response to accepting a HFSC.
- From the CFS survey, people we spoke to are not adverse to the Fire Service calling at their home without a prior appointment
- The main reason for not taking up a HFSC is that occupiers say 'they have not received a leaflet'. This indicates that the leaflet is being discarded along with other junk mail and is a non effective means of relaying any fire safety message.
- In addition to this HFSC referrals were refused as individuals already had smoke alarms fitted and were unaware that this service offers additional fire safety advice in the home.

