



# Annual Service Plan 2007 - 2008



Making West Midlands Safer

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

# West Midlands Fire Service area



The number of staff employed (July 2006)	
Uniformed (including Retained)	1,886
Fire Control	68
Non-uniformed support staff	564
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,518</b>

Further information about West Midlands Fire Service and our fire station locations can be found on our website at [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)

## Foreword from the Chief Fire Officer : Developing the Service Plan



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Frank Sheehan'.

Frank Sheehan QFSM  
Chief Fire Officer  
West Midlands Fire Service

We are putting our Corporate Strategy at the heart of everything we do, to serve our local community. Our intention is to work towards making risk management the driving force behind all of our actions, so that the service we deliver is the most efficient and effective at managing risk to local people.

- The Annual Service Plan presented here, combines our Integrated Risk Management (IRM) action plan with our Business Plan, to ensure that our corporate objectives are driven by an assessment of risk in the community and an analysis of how we intend to manage our resources as a result.
- As an appendix to the Annual Service Plan, we are publishing on our website [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net), our Performance Targets to give an outline of our expectations for future performance. Details of our achievements in relation to targets and performance indicators up to April 2007 will be released in our Annual Service Review, during the summer.

Our plans for the next year are driven by the need to target resources into prevention activities, at the areas where they are likely to have the greatest impact.

We will also make advances in the methods we use to protect and advise people in non-domestic properties, to allow our service to operate more efficiently.

At the same time, it is recognised that we will always need to provide an effective emergency response service and we will continue to introduce changes where necessary, to make the best use of our resources.



## Our Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and rescue services within West Midlands, are currently delivered from 40 fire stations and five fire safety centres [see map on inside front cover].

The management structure of the service has been changed and is now based upon the local Boroughs that make up our area. We have a network of local Borough Commanders who are responsible for managing local performance and service delivery for the areas of:-

- Birmingham Central
- Birmingham North
- Birmingham South
- Coventry
- Dudley
- Sandwell
- Solihull
- Walsall
- Wolverhampton

By aligning our service provision in this way, we are able to ensure that our Borough Commanders and Station Commanders can play a full and active role in local partnerships and bodies such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Local Area Agreements. By working alongside our partner agencies in the local community, we can achieve much more than would be possible by acting in isolation.

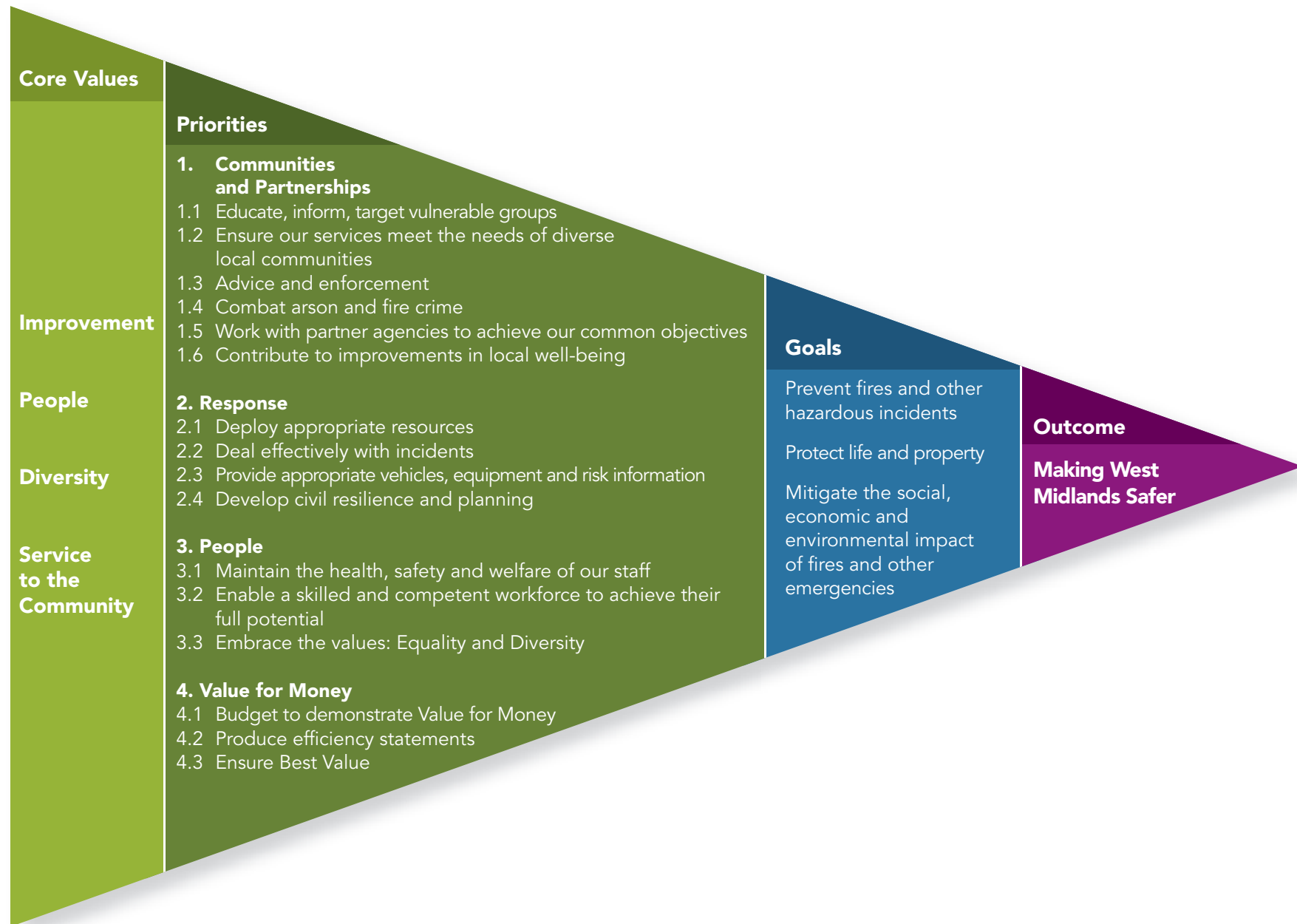
In this way, we can participate fully in planning for the future needs of local communities and responding to issues on a local level. We can contribute to the 'place shaping' process described in the Lyons Report\*, whereby local government act as a voice for the whole community and this includes:

- building and shaping local identity
- representing the community
- regulating harmful and disruptive behaviours
- maintaining the cohesiveness of the community
- helping to resolve disagreements
- working to make the local economy more successful
- understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people,
- working with other bodies to respond to complex challenges.



\* 'National prosperity, local choice and civic engagement - A new partnership between central and local government for the 21st century'. Report of the Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, May 2006

# Our Key Priorities



## How we make a difference

Our most valuable resource in West Midlands Fire Service is our staff.

Everyone contributes towards our aims and helps us to achieve our objectives.

Our fire control staff receive an emergency call from the public and have to act promptly to obtain the correct information, often under difficult conditions. They mobilise the correct fire engines, specialist vehicles and officers to deal with the incident and co-ordinate the flow of information from the scene.

Firefighters respond to the call, dress in protective clothing and navigate through the traffic to arrive at the scene as quickly as possible. They adopt safe working practices and work together in a team to bring the situation under control.

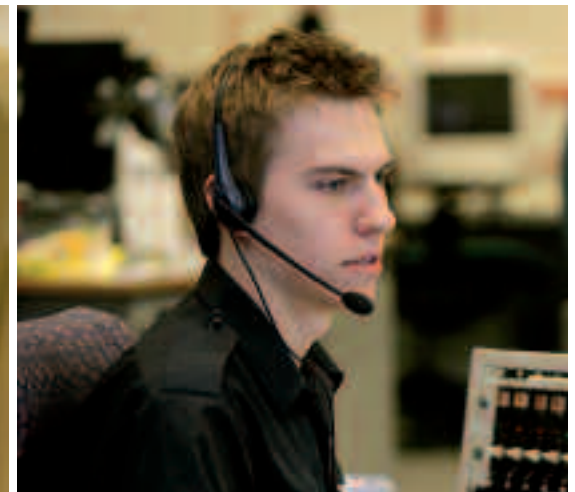
To deal with a house fire, firefighters will wear breathing apparatus to enter the smoke and heat and check that no-one is left inside and then extinguish the fire.

**When a smoke alarm has been fitted in the house, the occupants are given early warning and have chance to escape. By closing the doors as they make their way out, they help to prevent the spread of heat and smoke within the house, limiting the amount of damage.**

As a result of our work in the community, to educate people about the danger from fire, lives and property have been saved.



*Top - Firefighters working with their local community; bottom left - Our Personnel team provide support to all Fire Service staff; bottom right - Fire Control deal with thousands of emergency calls each year.*





# How we make a difference



Top left - Our Personnel and Recruitment teams recruit all our staff, including firefighters; Top right - Damping down at Northbrook Sport Club, Coventry. Bottom: Edwards No8 Nightclub fire, December 2006.

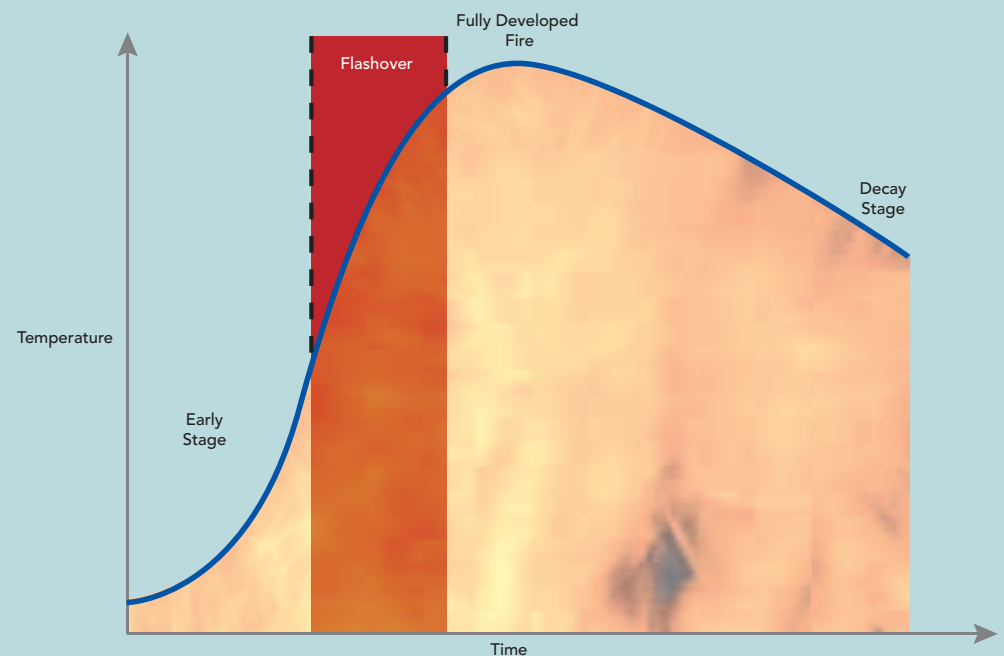


## Fire Development and Flashover

A working smoke alarm senses the unburnt products of combustion before the build-up of smoke becomes life-threatening. This early warning gives people time to raise the alarm and leave the property and should result in fire crews being committed to a fire in its early stages rather than one that has had sufficient time to develop into a flashover.

A flashover (illustrated below) is when the whole room becomes quickly engulfed in fire. The sooner the fire is detected, the quicker firefighters can attend and extinguish the fire before it has chance to reach the critical flashover stage. Risk to the occupier, the firefighters and the property is therefore greatly reduced.

## Compartment Fire Development



## How we make a difference

**By making sure we have the right people in the right place at the right time, with the right skills and equipment, we can make a real impact on saving lives and protecting our local community.**

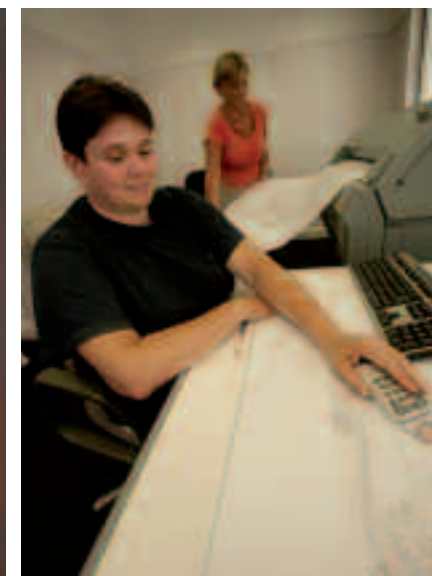
Evidence shows that there is a much greater chance of survival in a fire when we are called in time to prevent the fire spreading beyond the room where it started.

If we can get there within the first few minutes, we can use our skills and equipment to rescue anyone still inside.

A person is unlikely to survive for more than 4 minutes if they are in the same room as the fire, and if the fire continues to develop, there is a good chance that a flashover will occur at about 8 to 10 minutes after ignition. When a flashover happens, everything in the room is involved in fire. The temperature can reach up to 1000 degrees and the chance of survival is remote.

To improve the chance of confining the fire to the room where it starts, a correctly sited and working smoke alarm will buy us that extra time, increasing the likelihood of escape and reducing the amount of damage from fire, smoke and firefighting water and steam.

For these reasons, we need to increase ownership of working smoke alarms in homes across the West Midlands and carry out more Home Fire Safety Checks, to educate people about the dangers from fire and explain the steps they can take to reduce the risk of a fire in the home.



*Top - Computer Aided Design (CAD) provide support by mapping out locations to identify risk; Left - All our firefighters have the latest Personal Protective Equipment; Bottom: Incident Command.*





## How we make a difference

### Home Fire Safety Checks

The majority of fire deaths and serious injuries from fire involve residents within their own home.

Firefighters are developing their role to be more proactive in preventing fires (pictured below). They work in their local communities to raise awareness of the causes of fire and other safety related matters through the delivery of Home Fire Safety Checks, especially amongst the most vulnerable members of our community. Recognising that it is not possible to stop all fires happening, the next best safeguard is to have a means of early detection.

In order to reach those at greater risk in the community, we use our Community Advocates (pictured right). The advocates engage with the community and generate referrals for Home Fire Safety Checks.



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Actions

Our intended actions for 2007-08 are summarised below. These are highlighted in the text that follows.

Further information can be found in our Corporate Strategy, which is available on our website [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)

We intend to:-

- Develop and co-ordinate further activities to reduce the number and severity of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)
- Deliver fire safety education to all children in Key Stage 2 (Year 5), as a minimum
- Deliver a strategy on children, young people and other vulnerable groups
- Deliver at least 40,000 free Home Fire Safety Checks.
- Implement a team of Risk Reduction Officers to co-ordinate Prevention Based Activity across Boroughs and Brigade and provide guidance and assistance to local staff
- Actively gather information about the location and nature of Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) and use operational staff to carry out safety inspections and give advice to the person responsible
- Revise attendance time targets and reporting to provide more effective measure of performance
- Develop the asset management plan
- Deploy Automatic Vehicle Location Systems (AVLS) to enhance efficiency in mobilising and response
- Investigate and report on appropriate Levels of Response (LOR) to various incident types
- Conduct research into future requirements of intervention techniques, equipment and skills
- Review and develop risk-based approach to water supplies
- Develop reinforcement schemes to support regional and national mutual aid
- Revise and improve business processes:
  - Operational preparedness and pre-incident planning
  - Post event analysis.
  - Development of information systems
- Review scale and nature of demountable fleet
- Assess impact of 'Concept Vehicle' and potential refinement of aerial fleet
- Incorporate evidence from district/regional development plans and predicted demographic/social change into risk analysis and forecasts
- Implement and consolidate requirements of Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order 2005

## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Actions

- Review Risk Based Inspection Programme to confirm effective system in place
- Existing paper-based records and plans relating to property and inspection history are to be transferred into electronic format
- Reduce the number of calls from Automatic Fire Alarm systems (AFAs)
- Extend awareness and take-up of arson protection in the commercial and education sectors
- Continue to support the work of the West Midlands Arson Task Force
- Develop and refine partnerships
- Work with strategic partners to carry out research and development into fire protection systems for use in the home
- Investigate potential for greater collaboration within region
- Review and develop data-sharing protocols and systems with other agencies
- Carry defibrillators in service vehicles, following appropriate staff training
- Introduce flexible servicing and maintenance of vehicle fleet to support full availability of front line fire engines
- Lobby for the removal of acetylene from the workplace
- Co-ordinate activities and delivery of key elements of the National Fire Control and Firelink Project
- Co-ordinate and consolidate capacity for resilience and Business Continuity
- Refine and develop pre-arranged overtime and flexible working for staff
- Upgrade rehabilitation facilities for personnel and equipment, to support incident ground operations
- Continue to promote and support a positive health and safety culture and to provide an effective Occupational Health and Welfare service for all our staff
- Continued development of Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) to support a skilled and competent workforce
- Determine and support personnel skill requirements in line with Integrated Risk Management (IRM)/National Framework
- Enhance succession planning to anticipate and meet expected staff requirements in terms of numbers, skills and competence
- Adopt the Establishment Model as a performance management tool in order to provide staff with appropriate skills, to achieve the required staffing levels
- Campaign for introduction of reduced ignition propensity cigarettes



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Actions

- Involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)
- Further research will be conducted into the type and scale of response to be sent to calls that do not pose a significant risk to life or property
- Produce appropriate comparison information of expenditure against available funding to enable pro-active budget monitoring of the Authority's resources
- Review the role of the IRM team to provide an enhanced capacity to supply risk information in support of the decision making process and to promote awareness and consultation in the IRM process
- Ensure all of our staff support Equality and Diversity and our Core Values and appreciate their significance in the way that we work
- Carry out Equality Impact Assessments for all policies and functions. Provide appropriate training in Equality and Diversity for all staff
- Budget holders will ensure the service they are responsible for, represents value for money
- Demonstrate value for money through the Authority's Efficiency Statements

*Right - Transport  
Engineering Workshops  
testing a ladder.*



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention

The Fire and Rescue Service has a duty to promote fire safety and because the great majority of fire deaths and injuries occur in the home, we are directing much of our work at the need to provide advice to people on how to avoid a fire at home and how to increase the chance of escape if there is a fire.

We intend to expand the number of Home Fire Safety Checks (HFSCs) carried out, to at least 40,000 per year. We will target our work to make sure we reach those most at risk from fire.

We will develop our call centre and centralised booking service to make it easier for people to contact us to arrange a safety check. This will allow us to deliver a more efficient service as people will be able to arrange an appointment over the phone.

We will develop partnerships with other agencies who share our involvement in the care and safety of the community. By linking with other organisations that have access to people in their homes, we can efficiently work together to check fire safety and to explain ways in which people can make improvements to reduce the risk of fire. If we help people to understand the hazards, they are less likely to experience a fire and have more chance of escaping if a fire does occur.

We will continue to fit free, long-life smoke alarms in people's homes where this is necessary to reduce the risk. This will be done by our firefighters, our advocates and through the use of partner agencies.

We will provide and fit special smoke alarms for those with particular needs, such as the deaf and hard of hearing, to ensure that they are able to receive early warning of a fire.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 1. Action 4





## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention



*Top left - Firefighters undertake Home Fire Safety Checks and give fire safety advice to 'at risk groups'; Below - West Midlands Arson Task Force; West Midlands Fire Service and West Midlands Police working in partnership to reduce arson and crime.*



Our data system is being refined and further developed, so that we can more closely monitor the work we are doing through home safety checks and the fitting of smoke alarms and the impact this will have on reducing risk.

We now employ a team of advocates to help us in our work to target the fire safety message and deliver advice to local people. Community Advocates can carry out safety checks or refer people to us, for a follow up. The success of this scheme will be monitored and we may extend this initiative where it is proving most beneficial, or to target particular risk groups within the community.

The risk of fire is more likely in properties where a number of people live in small rented units, known as 'houses in multiple occupation' or HMOs. We will be actively gathering information about the location of HMOs and using our staff to carry out safety checks and give advice to residents. We will also be developing our partnership working with local councils and other agencies to identify HMOs and to improve standards of safety.

We will use a team of Risk Reduction Officers across all city and borough areas to co-ordinate our prevention and education activities and ensure that we deliver the most effective service. These officers will be based at local Fire Safety Centres and will help the Borough Commanders to focus their campaigns.

Some of our firefighters on station will be given further specialist training in the delivery of fire prevention education, so that they can advise and assist station personnel to deliver the most effective service in schools and in their work with community groups.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key  
Priority 1. Action 7

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key  
Priority 1. Action 5



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention

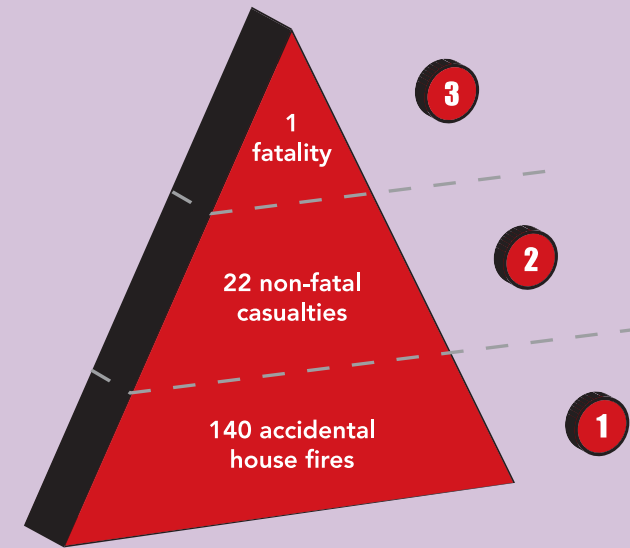
The diagram on the right shows the different ways in which we can make an impact on life safety and increase the chances of someone surviving a potentially fatal fire in the home.

1) If we can intervene early enough to provide advice or to educate people about the danger of fire, we can influence their behaviour to prevent the fire from happening. In this way we can avoid the pain and suffering that will otherwise result from the fire.

2) Despite our best efforts, fires will still occur, but if, as a result of our advice, people have been able to limit the effects of the fire, they will have a much greater chance of survival and damage will be reduced. If there is a working smoke alarm, people are much more likely to receive an early warning; if they have closed the doors within the house, smoke spread will be delayed; if an escape plan has been discussed in advance, occupants will know how to make their way out and call for help.

3) Where none of these things has happened in advance, it will be too late during the fire. With the speed that the fire develops and the rapid spread of hot, toxic smoke throughout the house, it becomes increasingly difficult to survive. Firefighters may still be called, but the delayed call will make their job that much harder due to the spread of fire and smoke from one room to another and the intense heat that has been created.

## The Hierarchy of life-risk from fire



The diagram shows the relationship between numbers of accidental fire deaths with those for casualties and accidental fires in the home.

What this shows is that there are many more opportunities to prevent a fire death through prevention work targeted at people in their homes.

1) By carrying out fire safety checks in the home, we have a good chance of preventing the fire from starting so there is no damage and no-one is injured.

2) The centre of the triangle represents the opportunity for people to be alerted by a smoke alarm when a fire has been allowed to start. The alarm will increase the chance of survival, but people may be injured and their home will be damaged.

3) Without a working smoke alarm and with a poor understanding of fire safety, there is a greater chance of an accidental fire death. The only way to save a life now is through a rescue.

## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention

### Working with children and young people

We have been working in schools to deliver positive messages to local schoolchildren, relating to fire safety and safe living. This has some immediate benefit in developing safety skills and deterring anti-social behaviour such as fire-setting and making hoax calls. Indirectly, it will also help to influence parents and family members.

Targeting children and young people will impact on achieving our Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets and reducing Fire Crime.

- We intend to deliver fire safety education to all schoolchildren in Year 5 (Key Stage 2) as a minimum.
- We will target our school-based fire prevention activities, to have the greatest impact in areas that need it most.
- Where appropriate, we will extend the delivery of safety education to include other age groups.
- We will promote the use of the Red Hot Education Station at Handsworth Community Fire Safety Centre, to achieve a target of 12,000 young people per year.
- We will deliver a service strategy on working with children and young people.
- With our partners, we will contribute to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.

Our contact with children and young people allows us to explain the hazards associated with fire and to act as a positive influence on behaviour from an early age. When children understand how fires are started, they can help to prevent them.

By describing the potential consequences of hoax calls or firesetting, we can help people to see the possible outcomes of these actions and their impact on the local community.

When we visit our local schools we can help to develop positive attitudes towards safety in the home, healthy living and citizenship.



*Left - School children visit the interactive Red Hot Education Station at Handsworth Community Fire Safety Centre to learn about the dangers of fire.*

## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention

### Young Firefighters' Association

The Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) operates from eight centres across the West Midlands through the dedication of uniformed and non-uniformed instructors. All are checked for their suitability to work with young people.

The organisation offers young people a wide range of activities which are physically challenging and suitably stimulating to enhance their life skills. As members of the Fire Services Youth Training Association, the YFA's young people will shortly have the opportunity to achieve the updated BTEC qualification in Fire Service Skills due to come online in September 2007. Additional educational skills programmes are also due to be developed. This will give recognition to those members who may not be as academically gifted as some of their peers, but whose practical skills and application have equal value.





## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention

### Reducing the impact of arson and fire crime

Though a fire in the home carries the greatest risk to life, the cost of arson in the community is a financial burden on businesses and local authorities. We all suffer the impact on the built and natural environment brought about by firesetting behaviour and the resulting loss damages the local neighbourhood and tends to attract further anti-social behaviour. We work in Local Strategic Partnerships and contribute to Local Area Agreements to help tackle the problems of arson and anti-social behaviour and to bring about social, economic and environmental improvement in local communities.

- To raise awareness of the hazard of arson and to promote ways of protecting against it, we will market and deliver our publications aimed at the commercial and education sectors - 'Keep Your Business in Business' and 'Keep Your School in Business'.
- We will continue our support for local Education and Children's Services to develop fire safety management in schools and to provide advice and guidance on arson prevention.
- By working with our partners and other players, we will take action to control the increasing incidence of fires in void properties.
- Our Fire Research and Investigation Section will make use of Hydrocarbon Dogs to detect the presence of accelerants at fires and to assist with the collection of evidence for use in the prosecution of arsonists.
- With our partners, we will continue to develop schemes to help ensure the prompt removal of abandoned vehicles and refuse.

### West Midlands Region Arson Reduction Team

As part of demonstrating value for money and enhancing service delivery, the West Midlands Arson Task Force has joined forces with Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire to create the West Midlands Region Arson Reduction Team (WMRART).



All deliberate fire reduction strategies must start with an analysis of local fire problems and an appraisal of the community's needs. This can be addressed by the provision of resources in terms of finance, personnel, and the construction of partnerships.

The strategy will revolve around four proven strands:

- Prevention
- Education
- Detection
- Investigation

*Below: Demonstration of firefighting techniques to preserve forensic evidence in a deliberate vehicle fire.*



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Prevention

### Working in Partnership to Reduce the Impact of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)

Every year in the UK nearly 5,000 children under the age of 16 are either killed or seriously injured as a result of road traffic accidents. Statistics show that children from low income families are five times more likely than those from a high-income family to be killed on our roads. Children from an ethnic minority are involved in up to twice as many accidents as the national average. Being able to identify and recognise these trends enables us, by working closely with partner agencies, to develop and promote initiatives aimed at reducing the number of RTCs and the resulting deaths and injuries, based on the '5 Es' approach:

- **E**ngineer out the problems
- **E**nforce against poor driver behaviour
- **E**ducate the community in road safety and promote good driver behaviour
- **E**mergency response to be casualty centred
- **E**valuate the impact of reduction activities

We will develop a Road Traffic Collision reduction strategy to direct and support our partnership working with other agencies. This collaboration will assist us in reducing the number of deaths and injuries in line with the Government's national target of reducing child deaths and serious injuries that occur on our roads to 3,430 by the year 2010.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1. Action 1







### Road Safety Education

The 'Dying 2 Drive' programme has been running across West Midlands Fire Service stations successfully for many years, educating youngsters in the dangers of stealing cars or accepting lifts in stolen cars. The initiative is run in conjunction with both West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service and provides a very effective, dramatic and visual way of getting across a clear safety message. This programme will be expanded to form part of a range of activities aimed at reducing the number of road traffic accidents. Every year over 200 children are involved in fires in the West Midlands and while this figure is alarming, what really should be emphasised is that over 15 times more children are involved in accidents on the region's roads.





# Our Plans for 2007-2008: Protection – Advice and Enforcement

This part of our service is currently delivered by our Fire Safety Officers based at local Fire Safety Centres.

One of our core functions is to promote fire safety and to give advice on restricting the spread of fire and maintaining escape routes in buildings. We also have a duty to enforce the relevant legislation - in particular the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, which relates to virtually all non-domestic premises.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1, Action 14

## Risk-Based Fire Safety Inspection Programme

We have introduced a risk-based fire safety inspection programme, to ensure that the work carried out by Fire Safety Officers is targeted at the places of greatest risk. Buildings occupied by people who may be vulnerable, such as hospitals or residential homes, are visited more often than a low risk factory or office building.

This system currently allows us to target our fire safety inspection and enforcement activity within the area covered by each fire safety centre;

- Birmingham and Solihull
- Coventry
- Sandwell and Dudley
- Wolverhampton and Walsall

Our intention now, is to enhance this system to reflect the true distribution of risk across the West Midlands area.

Corporate Strategy  
2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1, Action 16

## Fire Safety Inspections

In the West Midlands we carry out over 20,000 legislative fire safety inspections every year. We inspect many different types of premises including workplaces, places of entertainment, schools, shops and petrol stations.

The aim of these inspections is to highlight any areas of potential risk to the people of the West

Midlands, to offer professional guidance on limiting this risk and to take enforcement action where necessary. Our team of inspecting officers are trained, experienced, and play a valuable part in the overall risk reduction strategy for the community. They are strategically located throughout the West Midlands to allow easy access for the community.

*Right - Fire Safety Inspection at Coventry Cathedral; below - Operational Site Risk Survey of a premise in Birmingham.*



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Protection – Advice and Enforcement

By combining the inspection lists for our fire safety centres, we can target more of our time at inspecting those places that have the highest risk score attached to them, regardless of which city or borough they occupy.

We have traditionally maintained paper-based fire safety files on premises within West Midlands to provide a record of correspondence and inspections carried out. To enable the move to a service-wide inspection list, and to allow our officers to gain access to the information they need, it may be necessary to convert our property files to electronic format. We will be investigating the most effective way of achieving this, to support our staff in their work.

- We will continue to raise awareness of the recently updated fire safety legislation and the requirements it places on those responsible for premises.
- Legal action will be instigated where appropriate, against those who fail to comply with their duties under fire safety.
- Although our inspection list is designed to target those places where the risk to life is greatest, we will still ensure that relevant premises of all types are inspected as necessary to maintain adequate standards of fire safety.
- Station based personnel will also become involved in fire protection inspections. Firefighters will carry out inspections of some types of places such as licensed premises and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

We will take steps to reduce the number of calls received from Automatic Fire Alarm systems (AFAs).

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1: Action 17

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1: Action 19

Through our work with strategic partners, we will continue to promote fire protection systems, including fire sprinklers, in both domestic and other buildings.

We will campaign for the use of Reduced Ignition Propensity tobacco in cigarettes.

There are safer alternatives to the use of acetylene and we will raise awareness of this, to encourage the reduced use of acetylene cylinders where possible.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Actions 26, 39, 8.

Another area for improvement involves the further development of our firefighters, with regard to their knowledge of fire safety and fire protection. In the 21st Century, we will continue to see rapid developments in building construction, with more complex building designs, some of which are based on fire-engineered principles. Our firefighters need to be equipped with an understanding of building construction and how this can influence their tactical plans and actions during fires. We will establish a programme of training to develop a stronger understanding of the link between fire safety and practical firefighting techniques.

*Right - Sprinklers prevent wide-spread fire damage.*



# Our Plans for 2007-2008: Emergency Response

## Attendance time targets

As part of the process of modernising the fire and rescue service nationally, Fire and Rescue Authorities have been given the freedom to set local response standards, in terms of the speed and number of fire engines that are sent to deal with emergency incidents. We decided initially, to adopt a standard based on our existing average attendance times to all incidents. This principle meant that we would try to ensure a fire engine arrives on average, within approximately 5 minutes. If a second fire engine is sent in support, its attendance time should be within approximately 7 minutes.

**However, it is now time to review this standard.**

We believe that there are more reliable and significant measures of our attendance times, rather than a blanket statement of our average times taken to arrive. We will therefore be examining ways to refine the way in which we report our attendance times, to provide a more exact and meaningful measure of our performance.

In line with our risk-based approach to emergency response, it would also be more effective to examine the nature of the calls we receive, to see whether we can improve on the way we use our resources. It may not be appropriate to apply the same attendance time expectation, when responding to a small fire involving rubbish, as we would to a house fire or a road traffic collision where people are trapped. If we accept that some categories of call are of a lower priority, then we can target our response in the right way. In order to do this, we will need to re-assess our targets in relation to response times. In this way, we can continue to achieve a fast response where needed, whilst allowing more flexibility in our response to incidents of low impact, such as grass fires.

*Picture - Fire destroys a semi-derelict listed Victorian property in Belmont Row, Birmingham January 2007.*



Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1. Action 9



## Incident Response

We will continue to carry out analysis of our performance in dealing with fires and other emergency incidents and to monitor the nature and level of response that we send. This is to ensure that we match the level of response to the risk, so that we have the right people in the right place at the right time.

Part of our analysis involves examining where our fire engines and other resources are located throughout the day. By examining previous incident details over a number of years, we can build a picture of where and when the demand for our service arises.

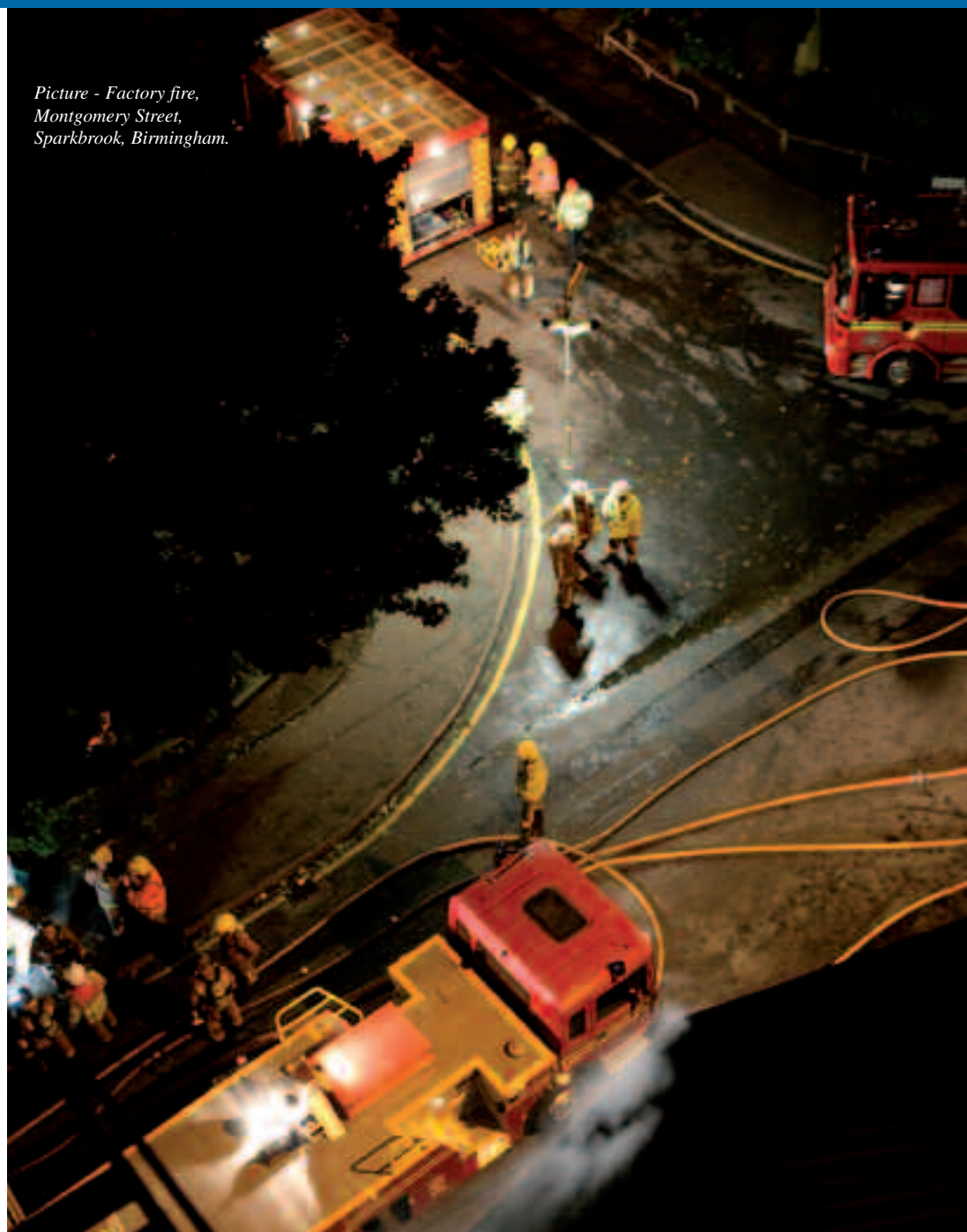
We currently operate a fleet of fire engines that carry the same type and range of equipment, regardless of the nature of the call they are responding to. A full crew of four or five firefighters staff each fire engine. Many of the calls that we deal with do not require this standard response. For example, grass fires occur in large numbers in hot, dry weather and this can place a heavy demand on our resources. We also respond to a significant number of calls that are generated by automatic fire alarm systems in places such as factories and office buildings. The great majority of these calls turn out to be false alarms, but we currently send a fire engine and its crew to investigate.

We intend to carry out research into the feasibility of introducing alternative ways of managing our response to some types of incident.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 2. Action 30

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 2. Action 28

*Picture - Factory fire,  
Montgomery Street,  
Sparkbrook, Birmingham.*



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Emergency Response

### Tornado

Members of the West Midlands Fire Service international response team (UKFSSART) also form the West Midlands Fire Service Urban Search and Rescue Team (USART). They have a local, regional and national responsibility to respond to incidents where people are believed to be trapped by collapsed structures. On July 7th 2005, USART were offered to London Fire Brigade in response to the bombings on the underground, but were not required once the minimal structural damage was known. However, on July 28th, following the tornado which struck in Birmingham, USART were mobilised to assist fire crews in searching damaged properties. Specially trained search dogs from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service were brought in to assist in the search.





# Our Plans for 2007-2008: Emergency Response

## Small Fires

To deal with fires involving grass, rubbish or a car in the open, we will investigate the option of developing a small fire response unit. This could operate with fewer crew members and make use of the latest developments in technology to handle fires without the need for a standard fire engine.

## Automatic Fire Alarms

We intend to investigate more efficient ways of responding to these calls. For example, it may be feasible to send one person to check on the alarm and ascertain whether any further response is needed. For any call where there is a confirmed fire, we would still send fire engines with a full crew.

## Small Fire Units (SFUs)

SFUs have been adopted by some fire and rescue services and we are investigating their potential value. The role of the SFU is to tackle bonfires and anti social (nuisance) fire calls in the open.

A SFU vehicle requires a crew of three, as opposed to a traditional fire engine which needs four or five and has been designed to deal with small, minor fires where there is no threat to life.

Compressed Air Foam Systems (CAFS) can be used on this type of vehicle. They combine an agent to reduce the surface tension of water with compressed air, to produce an expanded volume of fire extinguishing agent. The resulting foam bubbles are more efficient at absorbing heat than plain water and allow the use of a vehicle with a small tank of water.

We make use of a wide range of specialist equipment at emergencies and to carry out rescues. This includes specialist cutting and lifting gear for use in road traffic collisions, water rescue and rope rescue equipment. In many cases, these resources are carried to an incident in demountable units or 'pods'. We can then transport the right equipment, depending on the nature of the emergency.

Part of the analysis we will undertake, is to examine the pattern of demand for these specialist units, so that we can locate them in the most appropriate centres. We will review the scale and location of our demountable unit fleet to ensure that they accurately reflect the demand for their deployment.

As part of the Government's New Dimension programme to meet the threat from terrorism and other large-scale incidents, we have received a number of specialist resources such as:

- Equipment for use in search and rescue after buildings have collapsed
- High-volume pumping equipment to supply or remove large amounts of water
- Heavy-duty lifting and rescue equipment

We already have the capacity to respond to emergencies and deploy some types of specialist equipment, so it will be necessary to review the distribution of our resources (described above) so that we can ensure these are used in the most efficient and effective manner.

We will be building a facility to accommodate some of the new equipment received under the New Dimension programme, together with a dedicated training unit, at Bickenhill. Our intention is to develop this facility into a

Corporate Strategy  
2007-2010:  
Key Priority 2: Action 35

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2007-2010:  
Key Priority 2: Action 41



# Our Plans for 2007-2008: Emergency Response

regional centre of excellence in the field of technical rescue, with a team of specialist staff equipped with the high level of skill required to operate these resources.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 2. Action 41

Some of our resources are supplied by the Government and will be made available to respond to emergency calls across the region, or nationally, should the need arise.

We intend to develop reinforcement schemes to enable support for regional and national mutual aid.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 2. Action 33

We will communicate and collaborate with our neighbouring fire and rescue services in the West Midlands region, when we examine the distribution of our fleet of fire engines and specialist vehicles and equipment, to support the move to integration in the provision of our services. There are already agreements in place to enhance our response across borders within the region.

More work will be carried out to promote potential for improvements where necessary, such as in shared access to resources like:

- Firefighting and specialist vehicles
- Fire investigation function
- Senior officer cover

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 1. Action 24

Plans will be produced and tested, to develop our capability to meet emerging threats including terrorism. We will build capacity and links with partner agencies including other emergency services and the military.

Part of our work will involve research into the future needs of our service in the light of new techniques, equipment and skills. There will always be a need to monitor new and future developments and to propose changes to the way we do things, where there is scope for improved efficiency or to reduce the environmental impact of fires and other incidents.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 2. Action 31



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Emergency Response

### High Volume Pumping Unit

Early in 2006, West Midlands Fire Service took delivery of the High Volume Pumping Unit (HVPU). This specialist pump was supplied as part of the New Dimension Programme and enhances our capability to deal with not only large scale flooding but also to deliver volumes of water to a fire, a task that has previously needed several fire engines.

In addition to the HVPU, we have taken delivery of two mass decontamination modules which have been provided to support the mass decontamination process at a Chemical, Biological, Radioactive or Nuclear (CBRN) incident.

West Midlands Fire Service has embraced the Government's modernisation agenda by actively working with them to make use of vehicles and equipment to enhance our resilience and service delivery.





## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Emergency Response

There are over 50,000 hydrants in the West Midlands and we make use of these to supply water for firefighting. The need to test and maintain this number of hydrants represents a significant cost to the organisation, while the number of hydrants actually put to use for fire-fighting is small. With this in mind, it is appropriate to develop a risk-based approach to the provision and maintenance of hydrants, so that those which are more likely to be needed will be given priority.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 2. Action 32

A defibrillator is used to restore a normal heart rhythm by delivering an electrical shock to the heart when the heartbeat is dangerously fast or irregular. This condition can be life-threatening, possibly causing the heart to abruptly cease pumping blood to the body (cardiac arrest) and leading to sudden death. Cardiac arrest is one of the biggest causes of death in the UK and rapid intervention with a defibrillator can mean the difference between life and death.

We intend to carry defibrillators in fire service vehicles, so that our personnel may have the opportunity to use this equipment at incidents they attend, or on other occasions. We do not intend to replace the skilled intervention of paramedics, but if our staff are supported with appropriate equipment and training, we can help to save more lives in the community.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 2. Action 37

### 'The Golden Hour'

Following a traumatic injury it is critical that rescue personnel are on scene as soon as possible if the casualty is to have a good chance of survival. At an incident where someone is trapped, our aim is to liaise with paramedics as part of a team approach. Using the latest rescue equipment, we will then release the trapped casualty as soon as possible. The victim's chances of survival are greatest if he or she can be in the operating room within the Golden Hour. The Golden Hour is the first sixty minutes after the occurrence of major multi-system trauma. It's a narrow window of time when care must be well managed if the casualty is going to survive. The Golden Hour can be summarized by the 3 'R' rule: Getting the **right** patient; to the **right** place; at the **right** time.





## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Organisation

There are a number of functions the organisation needs to fulfil to enable it to deliver its service to the community. We will continue to meet our legal obligations and our corporate responsibilities. In addition, we will support and develop our staff and manage our resources as efficiently and effectively as possible.

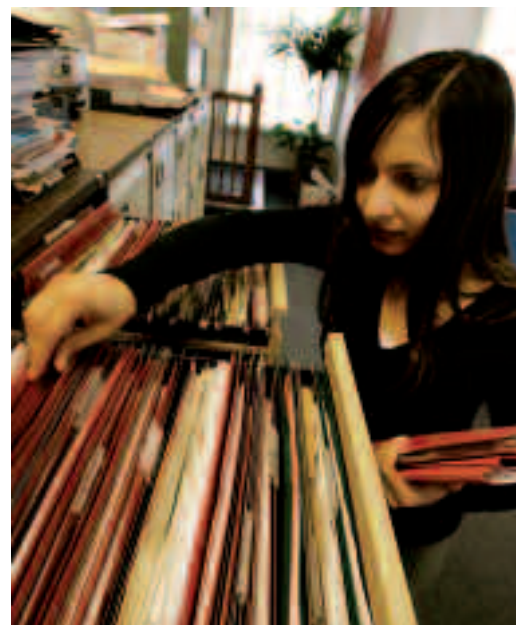
Our people are our most valuable asset and we recognise the importance of learning and development. We are committed to the development of a skilled and diverse workforce, through the application of the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS). Linked to this is the process of monitoring performance and supporting achievement through Individual Performance and Development Reviews. Through the use of these processes, everyone can see the vital contribution they make to the organisation achieving its vision of 'Making West Midlands Safer.'

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 3. Action 45

We are developing a system to support our firefighters to collate information about the premises in their boroughs that present significant risks in the event of a fire or other emergency incident. Relevant information will be collected from a range of sources, such as familiarisation visits by local firefighters and inspection reports from fire safety officers, but the results will be combined to form a picture of risk within each area. Data gathered in this way can then be made available to firefighters during an incident, to make their job safer and to help them in formulating a plan to bring the situation under control.



*Left - Firefighter CBRN incident training; below left - Administrative Support to support our training; below: Emergency fire engine driver training.*





*Top - Equality and Diversity seminar for all staff; Right - iLearn provides computer-based training in the work environment.*



### Integrated Personal Development System

The Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) is a framework that supports individual and organisational learning, so we make best use of our experiences. It involves all of our staff, whether they are uniformed, non-uniformed, full time or part time.

To enable us to be successful in making our communities safer, we need to develop the skills we already have with new initiatives and enhance performance by building new skills that are needed to support our Corporate Strategy.

Through learning and the application of learning, we can reduce the risk to ourselves and the communities which we serve, therefore 'Making West Midlands Safer'.

The Core Values of the Fire and Rescue Service form the foundation of the IPDS.

- Anyone can develop, whether they want to stay in their current role or progress
- Anyone can progress if they show potential, even if they haven't been in formal education
- It sets national standards for skills and behaviour so there is a level playing field
- IPDS is an objective tool for individual assessment



## Our Plans for 2007-2008: Organisation

By building a risk profile in this way, we will also be able to co-ordinate our training activity so that we can test our operational preparedness by conducting exercises at identified premises and capturing the outcomes as part of our process of organisational learning.

Tools to guide the targeting of prevention activities at areas of greatest risk will be refined. This will support a consistent approach to identifying risk areas and vulnerable groups when creating our plans.

We will continue to develop systems that allow us to measure the effectiveness of prevention activities and campaigns, so that we can identify and promote examples of best practice, based on our experience. Resource planning and deployment will be guided by the results of our analysis, making use of appropriate software systems.

A centralised call centre is to be established, so that people requesting a Home Fire Safety Check can make use of a simple booking service where their request can be received and processed.

Our asset management plan will be reviewed to check that our plans for future development of our building stock, vehicles and infrastructure are aligned with our forecast of where these are likely to be needed in future years. We will liaise with our neighbouring fire and rescue services, to ensure compatibility of our plans.

When we create our plans for future developments, we will take account of the environmental footprint of our buildings, vehicles and operating procedures and take steps to minimise the impact of our activities.

We will ensure that all our staff support our Core Values and promote Equality and Diversity in the way we work. We will provide appropriate training in Equality and Diversity.

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010: Key Priority 3. Action 49



Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1: Action 10

Corporate Strategy 2007-2010:  
Key Priority 1: Action 11



## Our consultation

We consulted on any issues that were thought to have a potential impact on our service to the community.

The specific points we consulted on are listed below:

Deliver at least 40,000 Home Fire Safety Checks.

Reduce the number and severity of Road Traffic Collisions in collaboration with partner agencies.

Enhance the management of fire safety inspections (through the risk-based inspection programme) to ensure inspection activity is targeted at higher risk premises (ie across the West Midlands).

Investigate potential alternatives for operational response to certain incident types:

- Small fires (grass, rubbish etc).
- Calls generated by automatic fire alarm systems.

Carry defibrillators on fire service vehicles.

Develop a Technical Rescue facility at Bickenhill Station to consolidate our specialist rescue equipment, personnel and training into a regional centre of excellence.

## Changes to our Plan following Consultation

A summary of the responses received during the consultation period, which ran from 25th October 2006 to 17th January 2007, can be found on the Authority's website [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net).

We are grateful to all those who took the time to respond.

A number of practicalities and concerns were raised which will be fully taken into account in developing our proposals.

A number proposals were welcomed and supported by consultees.

Full details of the Authority's responses to the consultation can be found on the Authority's website at [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net).

The level and nature of responses did not lead to any major changes to the original proposals.

## Other formats

This document contains information about how we intend to improve your Fire Service. This information can also be made available in other languages and formats including large print, Braille and audiotape. Please phone 0121 380 6116 (24 hour answerphone).

### Arabic

هذه الوثيقة تحتوي على معلومات حول ما ننوي القيام به لتحسين خدمة الإطفاء والإنقاذ. إذا كنت تريد أن تقدم لك هذه المعلومات بشكل آخر فترجو أن تتصل بالرقم أعلاه (خدمة 24 ساعة لتسجيل رسالتكم).

### Bengali

আপনার জন্য 'ফায়ার এবং রেসকিউ সার্ভিস' এর উন্নয়ন আমরা কিভাবে করতে চাই সে বিষয়ে তথ্যাদি এই কাগজপত্রে দেয়া হয়েছে। আপনি যদি কোন বিকল্প মাধ্যমে (ফরমেট) তথ্যাদি চোতে চান, তাহলে অগ্রহণ করে উপরোক্ত নম্বরে ফোন করুন (২৪ ঘণ্টা বারো এলাসারফোন চালু থাকবে)।

### Chinese

這份文件的內容解釋了我們如何計劃改善公共消防拯救服務。如果你想得到其它語言或其它版式的這份文件，請致電上面列出的號碼（24小時電話錄音）。

### Czech

Tento dokument obsahuje informace o tom, jak choeme zdokonalit Vaši požární službu. Tyto informace můžeme Vám můžeme zprostředkovat také v dalších řečech a formátech, mimo jiné vytištěné velkými literami, slepeckým písmem a ve zvukové nahrávce na páse. Volejte, prosím, 0121 380 6116 (záznamník v provozu 24 hodin).

### Farsi

این مدرک حاوی اطلاعات درباره نحوه اقدامات ای که در نظر داریم جهت بهترساختن خدمات آتش سوزی و نجات شما انجام بدهیم می باشد. اگر میخواهید جاب اطلاعات را به شکل ونوع دیگر دریافت کنیدلطفاً به شماره بالا تلفن کنید (تلفن پیام گیر24 ساعته موجوداست).

### French

Ce document contient des renseignements sur la manière dont nous envisageons d'améliorer votre service Secours et Feu. Pour obtenir des renseignements sous un autre format, veuillez appeler le numéro indiqué ci-dessus (répondeur 24h/24).

### Gujarati

આગ અને આગથી બચાવની તમારી સેવાને સુધારવાનો અમારો કેવો ઇરાદો છે તે વિષે આ દસ્તાવેજમાં માહિતી છે. એ તમારે વૈકલ્પિક આકારમાં માહિતી જોઈએ તો કૃપા કરી ઉપર જણાવેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો ( ૨૪ કલાક આ-સર ફોન ).

### Kurdish

لەم بەلگەنامەیدا زانیاری هەیە دەربارەی ئه‌وه‌ی که ئێمه‌ چۆن ده‌مانه‌وت گه‌شه‌ پێه‌ین به‌ خه‌زمه‌تگه‌ڕاری ئاگر کۆژاندنه‌وه‌و فریاکه‌وتن. ئه‌گه‌ر هه‌ر ده‌کهی زانیاریت ده‌ستکه‌وتیت به‌ شێوه‌و نه‌هه‌له‌ی ئه‌ر ئه‌کایه‌ په‌یه‌وه‌ندی به‌که‌ به‌و ژماره‌ ته‌له‌فۆنه‌ی سه‌رموه‌ (24 سه‌عات ته‌له‌فۆنی په‌یام وه‌رگر له‌ کاردایه‌).

### Polish

W niniejszym dokumencie zawarte są informacje nt. sposobu, w jaki zamierzamy usprawnić Waszą służbę przeciwpożarową. Informacje te dostępne są również w innych językach i formatach, włącznie z dużym drukiem, piśmem Braille'a oraz na kasetach dźwiękowych. Prosimy dzwonić 0121 380 6116 (24-godzinny aparat zgłoszeniowy)

### Punjabi

ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਹ ਦੱਸਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਅਸੀਂ 'ਫਾਇਰ ਐਂਡ ਰੈਸਕਿਊ ਸਰਵਿਸ' ਨੂੰ ਕਿਵੇਂ ਸੁਧਾਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਥਰਫਰਮ ਵਿੱਚ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਨੰਬਰ ਉੱਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਸੁਣੇਯੋ ਲੈਣ ਲਈ 24 ਘੰਟੇ ਅੱਸਰਿੰਗ ਮਸ਼ੀਨ ਚਾਲੂ ਰਹਿੰਦੀ ਹੈ।

## Other formats

### Russian

В данном документе содержится информация о том, как мы собираемся улучшить вашу противопожарную службу. Данная информация также может быть предоставлена на других языках и в других форматах, включая крупный шрифт, шрифт Брайля и на аудиокассете. Звоните по телефону 0121 380 6116 (круглосуточный автоответчик).

### Somali

Dokumentigani wuxu ka kooban yahay warar ku saabsan sida aanu ugu talo jiro inaan u hor marino adeegaaga dabka iyo badbaadada. Hadaad rabto inaad wararka ku hesho qaab kale oo kan ka duwan fadlan nagala soo hadal telefoonka kor ku qoran (Telefoon 24ka saacba kuu jawaabaya)

### Urdu

اس دستاویز میں یہ معلومات دی گئیں ہیں کہ ہم آپ کے لیے فائر ایڈز ریسکیو سروس (آگ سے بچانے کی خدمات) کو کیسے بہتر کرنے کا ارادہ رکھتے ہیں۔ اگر آپ چاہتے ہیں کہ یہ معلومات آپ کو کسی اور انداز میں پیش کی جائے تو اوپر دیے گئے نمبر پر فون کیجئے (24 گھنٹہ آسفر فون دستیاب ہے)۔

### Vietnamese

Hồ sơ này chứa đựng các chi tiết về việc chúng tôi dự định làm thế nào để cải tiến phục vụ cứu hỏa cho quý vị. Nếu quý vị muốn có chi tiết trong hình thức khác làm ơn điện thoại theo số trên đây (máy trả lời hoạt động 24 tiếng đồng hồ).

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## Contact us

To contact us with any comments in relation to this Service Plan:

By letter: **Annual Service Plan**  
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,  
Lancaster Circus Queensway,  
Birmingham B4 7DE.

By phone: 0121 380 6116 (24 hour answerphone)  
By fax: 0121 380 7007  
By e-mail: [consultation@wmfs.net](mailto:consultation@wmfs.net)

**If you have access to the Internet, our own website provides everything you need to know about the services we provide, our performance, fire safety advice and recruitment.**

**[www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net)**

For further information about your Fire Service, you can contact our customer care service

By phone: **Customer Care Hotline (0121 380 7404)**  
**(24 hour answerphone)**

By e-mail: **[contact@wmfs.net](mailto:contact@wmfs.net)**

By letter: **Public Relations Team,**  
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,  
Lancaster Circus Queensway,  
Birmingham B4 7DE



## Glossary of Terms

<b>AFA</b>	.....Automatic Fire Alarm
<b>BTEC</b>	.....Business and Technology Education Council
<b>CAD</b>	.....Computer Aided Design
<b>CAFS</b>	.....Compressed Air and Foam System
<b>CBRN</b>	.....Chemical, Biological, Radioactive or Nuclear
<b>HFSC</b>	.....Home Fire Safety Check
<b>HMO</b>	.....House in Multiple Occupation
<b>HVPU</b>	.....High Volume Pumping Unit
<b>IPDS</b>	.....Integrated Personal Development System
<b>IRM</b>	.....Integrated Risk Management
<b>PSA</b>	.....Public Service Agreements
<b>RTC</b>	.....Road Traffic Collision
<b>SFU</b>	.....Small Fire Unit
<b>UKFSSART</b>	.....United Kingdom Fire Service Search and Rescue Team
<b>USAR</b>	.....Urban Search and Rescue Team
<b>WMRART</b>	.....West Midlands Region Arson Reduction Team
<b>YFA</b>	.....Young Firefighters' Association

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**FREE** APPOINTMENT

FREEPHONE HELPLINE:  
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